

INVESTIGATING THE PERCEIVED MORAL DECADENCE IN BBNAIJA'S THURSDAY
POOL AND SATURDAY NIGHT PARTIES ON UNDERAGE VIEWERS IN OWERRI
MUNICIPAL

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Abstract

Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) reality television program has become a prevailing popular cultural phenomenon in Nigeria, with massive media coverage, audience accessibility and sturdy fan followership. Of all the scenes in BBNaija's screen, the Thursday pool and Saturday night parties have more memos of immorality expressed through erotic dance styles, excessive alcohol consumption, partial nudity, adult conversations, flirtations, and suggestive sexual intimacies. The aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which these contents contribute to moral decadence of underage viewers. This study is analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, using questionnaire items administered on 218 randomly selected students and teachers, with a structured interview on parents. Social Learning and Cultivation Theories were used to establish that constant exposure to licentious behaviours affect underage viewers' moral perception. Though BBNaija program is designed for adult entertainment, however, children's unfettered access to these persuasive contents via social media platforms raises timely concern. These parties have increasingly fore-grounded sexual immorality and youthful leisure aesthetics to the level of acceptance as standard contemporary behaviour, which contradicts the traditional and religious ethical concept of Nigerians. It concludes that while the motifs of the showbiz targets visibility and stardom of housemates, at the same time, the morally ambiguous and profligate contents could derail value systems, and weaken self-control of children who could replicate the actions. The paper recommends stringent broadcasting regulations, parental intervention and reorientation of entertainment media towards artistically grounded principles, in order to dispel moral and psychological deficiencies among minors.

Keywords: Big Brother Naija, Moral decadence, Underage viewers, Nigeria, Social Media.

Introduction

Reality television programs are gradually dominating other forms of entertainment in contemporary Nigeria media space, with Big brother Niger (BBNaija) taken the lead. BBNaija show has been adjudged by many critics as one of the most pervasive and persuasive television reality programs in Nigeria. This show has swiftly crept into the consciousness and perception of its audience, sparking competitions and debates among audience and fans. The increasing popularity of this reality television program in Nigeria has immensely redefined entertainment, culture, and morality among its audiences. Perceptively, the program has remained the most-watched reality show that compellingly connects its viewers to multifaceted scenes and actions.

Two of the most anticipated weekly episodes of BBNaija are the Thursday pool and Saturday night parties. These activities feature housemates seductively dancing to the rhythm of loud music, dressing provocatively, abusing alcohol, engaging in flirtatious interactions, with extreme sexual suggestive depictions. All these are consciously projected to global viewers, irrespective of age and class distinctions.

On this premise, the influence of this show on underage viewers should be a subject of intense academic deliberation because; the unintended minors mostly access and consume the debased contents, with their handheld devices. These diverse media outlets have availed underage viewers the opportunity to sight BBNaija programs in numerous settings and situations, either alone or with friends. It is on this note that Utoh-Ezeajugh (2011, p. 57) observes that

The addictive nature of film and the freedom to sit at home and slot in DVDs and VCDs or tune to any cable network has made it possible for even underage kids to watch obscene portrayals irrespective of the fact that they are meant for adult viewership. Even in the case of adult viewership, it has been noted that people with low critical abilities see even negative portrayals which are meant to correct social attitudes as a way of life.

While BBNaija is officially fashioned for adult viewership, its availability on social media and digital streaming platforms makes it reachable to underage children, who consume the high doses of the explicit contents unmonitored. The unequivocal display of illicit behaviours during these parties presents a misleading version of social life and moral definitions. Consequently, many studiessuch as Olayinka and Musa (2020)have identified the rising dysfunctional aspect of BBNaija's glamorization of immorality as standardized value in contemporary Nigerian society. It is worthy to note that Nigeria's cultural and religious contexts value modesty, discipline, and respect for moral order. This could be the reason why some cultures in Nigeria have high value for sexual sanity among adolescents. Onwukwe (2008, p. 63) observes that:

Nigeria has been a sex conscious society in relation to gender roles, childhood and adulthood sexuality and gender issues. Different communities of the Nigerian society have traditional laws about issues relating to sex. As some communities show permissiveness, others seem to be more stringent and less permissive about sexual matters, sex roles and gender issues.

However, BBNaija program is utterly challenging these values by promoting Westernized philosophies of life choice, celebrity instincts, and autonomy to self-expression without moral restraints. It is on this light that the study investigates the latent implications of children's exposure to morally debased contents such as; Thursday pool and Saturday night parties in Big Brother house.

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on two complementary theories which are Social Learning and cultivation Theories. The social learning theory by Albert Bandura in 1977 posits that individuals, especially children, learn behaviours through observation and imitation of models within their environment, including those portrayed in the media. Social learning therefore, is the total sum of all the ways children have learnt to act, think and feel. This theory has its root in the cognitive view

of children's learning. The cognitivists argue that personality is no more than learned behaviour, and through the process of learning a personality is developed. According to Mwanwenda (2009, p. 29) "Social learning is facilitated by a number of factors which include; attention, memory, motor skills, reinforcement and identification." The key concept in the study of personality from the view point of social learning theory is basically modeling. BBNaija housemates serve as models to many young viewers who have the tendencies of replicating their actions; speech, and attitudes without discerning moral consequences. Huesmann (1998, p. 191) observes that:

As children grow older, they learn progressively more complex issues and generalized scripts for behaviour through continuous observation of family members, peers, others in the community and characters portrayed in the media. The scripts become more complex, abstract, and automatic as children's social cognitive schemas about the world around them become more elaborated, and as children mentally rehearse the scripts.

In the same vein, the cultivation Theory by George Gerbner in 1976 explains that prolonged exposure to television contents shapes an individual's worldview and moral perceptions. As such, the more people watch television, the more likely they are to attach the real world in ways that reflect the television world. In essence, media cultivates people's worldview overtime, especially with themes of violence, gender roles, relationships, success, morality and social norms. Gerbner posits that continuous exposure to sensual and hedonistic scenes cultivate a worldview among underage viewers. It is worthy to state that the continuous viewing of BBNaija's erotic scenes may normalize and promote indecent dressing, alcohol abuse, and sexualized behaviours thereby; cultivating moral permissiveness among impressionable audiences. Suffice it to state that young viewers of BBNaija's pool and night parties may unconsciously begin to model the behaviour of the housemates who are often admired and rewarded with cash gifts, and fan loyalties.

The standpoints of social learning and cultivation theories have established that children's behaviours are gotten through observation, retention, motivation and reproduction. In essence, when certain behaviours are observed, retained and reproduced as a result of the motivation and the level of admiration the viewers' attach to the model, it is then capable of stimulating new style of behaviours.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the rating of BBNaija as an adult content, underage children still access the contents through various technological devices, using social media platforms. This exposure raises concerns about the possible erosion of moral values among children and adolescents who may believe the behaviours to be contemporal standard norm. Empirical studies of Ekeanyanwu and Okeke (2019) have examined the perceived moral implications of BBNaija television program on underage viewers. But none has investigated the heightened immoral display on the parties and their negative effects on underage viewers. This is the main direction of this study.

Significance of the study

This study will help parents, educators, and media regulators to understand the negative consequences of underage exposure to BBNaija reality television contents. It will also proffer

solution on ways to guide responsible media consumption, and inform policy decisions aimed at protecting minors from morally harmful contents.

The aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to examine the perceived decadent behaviours exhibited in Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) Thursday pool and Saturday night parties and their negative consequences on underage viewers in Nigeria. The stated objectives are as follows:

- To assess the level of exposure of underage viewers to BBNaija contents.
- To investigate the perceived moral decadent behaviours portrayed by housemates in BBNaija parties.
- To examine public perception and the role of parents, teachers, regulatory bodies in controlling the exposure of minors to such contents.
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Research questions

1. How often are underage viewers exposed to BBNaija programs?
2. What are the decadent behaviours portrayed by housemates in BBNaija parties?
3. What are the views of parents, teachers, and the public about the immoral contents of the program?
- 4.

Research Design and Methodology

The study adopts a mixed method design, combining both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) methods. This allows for a comprehensive analysis of perceptions, experiences, and patterns of influence.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of parents, teachers, and young adults who are familiar with BBNaija episodes in Owerri Municipal.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study combines purposive and stratified random techniques;

- The purposive sampling helped to select respondents knowledgeable about BBNaija programs.
- Stratified random sampling ensured equal representation across gender and age group. A sample size of 250 respondents was used for this study.
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Research Instruments and Data Analysis

- The study issued out 250 questionnaires to respondents. Only 218 were returned and used to measure perceptions of moral influence of BBNaija. This quantitative data was analyzed using Likert scale, frequency tables, percentages, and mean scores.
1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.
- Structured interview was used to gather deeper insight from mostly parents and thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and opinions.
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Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

- Age: 10-17 (underage viewers)
- Age: 25 and above (adult; parents and teachers)

Gender of Respondents: Male and Female

Male: 90% = 45%

Female: 128% = 55%

Total: 218 = 100%

Educational level: Junior secondary, Senior secondary, Tertiary, Graduates and undergraduates.

Location: Owerri Municipal.

Literature and Empirical Review

Right from the inception of BBNaija reality television show, it has consistently generated widespread debate and panic concerning its social and moral relevance to both adult and children, (Stanley,1972). However, numerous studies have interrogated the moral implications of the reality television in African societies. Adegoke (2020), observed that reality TV programs like BBNaija promote Western values that conflict with traditional African moral standards. Odeyemi and Faleye (2021), found that unsupervised exposure to adult-themed shows increases moral laxity and precocious behaviour among adolescents. Similarly, Okafor (2019), noted that BBNaija's party scenes often blur the boundary between entertainment and immorality, by projecting hedonistic lifestyles as aspirational. In effect, scholars such as Nabi, Biely, and Carroll (2003), argue that reality-based television promotes voyeurism, materialism, and hedonism. Olayinka and Musa (2020), observed that BBNaija's content often contradicts African cultural norms of modesty and decency.

Moreover, Eze and Otu (2022), reported that underage viewers who frequently watch such programs exhibit a higher tendency to trivialize modesty and moral discipline. Parental concern studies by Nwankwo (2020), emphasize that the lack of content classification enforcement by regulatory agencies allows children to consume media intended for mature audiences, thereby reinforcing the cycle of moral decay. According to Ekeanyanwu and Okeke (2019), Nigerian teenagers increasingly imitate the fashion sense, language, and social attitudes displayed by BBNaija housemates, suggesting the show's deep influence on youth culture. Akintunde (2021) identifies BBNaija as a catalyst for moral decline, noting that its explicit sexual content and glorification of luxury encourage moral laxity. Similarly, Afolayan (2022), reports that moral sensitivity among Nigerian adolescents who regularly watch BBNaija is declining. Other empirical evidence from global studies (Strasburger & Wilson, 2014), also confirms that children and adolescents exposed to sexualized and violent media contents are more likely to adopt risky behaviours.

These findings align with the studies observations that unrestricted media exposure is contributing to moral decadence among minors. These empirical findings support the perception of moral decline linked to BBNaija's content. Akinlabi and Adeoye (2022) conducted a survey among secondary school students in Lagos, revealing that 68% of respondents had watched BBNaija despite parental restrictions, and 74% acknowledged that the show influenced their perception of modern relationships and social behaviour.

Chukwuemeka (2021), also discovered a correlation between frequent exposure to BBNaija and increased acceptance of sensual dressing among teenage girls. In a related qualitative study, Ogunleye (2023), found that adolescents frequently reference BBNaija housemates in peer discussions as role models for confidence and fame, yet unconsciously emulate their moral excesses. These findings collectively validate the argument that BBNaija's programs with emphasis to Thursday pool and Saturday night parties contribute to the moral deterioration of underage viewers.

Overview of Big Brother Naija

Big Brother Naija is the Nigerian adaptation of the global Big Brother franchise, a format developed in Netherlands by John de Mol Jr. in the late 1990s. The original Big Brother format was premiered in 1999 and expanded internationally, with localized versions produced in multiple countries. The Nigerian edition first aired as Big Brother Nigeria in 2006, and was re-launched and rebranded as Big Brother Naija in 2017, produced and broadcast through Multi-choice platforms, Africa Magic / DStv.

Since 2017 till date, Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) has become an annual ritual, and has consistently grown in length and breadth as a highly competitive-based reality television show. Housemates are selected through nationwide auditions, and are made to cohabit in a specially designed house; a controlled environment under constant surveillance of Big brother. These housemates are to remain in the house for approximately 10–12 weeks, isolated from the outside world, without phones, monitored 24/7 by cameras and microphones. The unseen authority figure 'Big Brother' assigns tasks, enforces rules, and communicates with housemates through his voice that echoes around the enclosed space. Housemates are given the privilege of speaking directly to Big Brother, without seeing him physically in the diary room sessions. Big brother holds private interviews that capture power dynamics, love interest and shipping strategies in the house. Housemates are usually emotional, as they reflect on their journey and frustrations in the house.

Weekly nomination and public voting determine evictions until a final winner is declared. One of the exciting and intriguing games in BBNaija is the head of house (HOH) game. This is a weekly leadership game that yield privileges and immunity from eviction. The arena games which are physical and mental challenge help to test the strength, endurance and strategies of housemates. These competitive tasks and other activities are intended to test the intellect, creativity, discipline, and teamwork of housemates by Big Brother and crew. The weekly sponsored tasks are often tied to sponsors with thematic goals; success can earn cash, treats, and immunity. They serve both entertainment and promotional objectives, frequently integrating brand activations and audience engagement. Task winners frequently receive cash prizes, gifts and sponsored items. The season's overall winner receives a grand prize package of cash, vehicle, housing and sponsors' packages. These rewards are not static, they change across seasons.

BBNaija's broad viewership across Nigeria and global media space creates rapid public visibility for contestants and propels fame and stardom. Housemates typically experience large increases in social-media fan followership and immediate offers for brand endorsements, media appearances, entertainment projects, and other business ventures. Numerous past contestants and winners have leveraged on the platform to advance their careers in music, acting, entrepreneurship, and brand

ambassadorship, demonstrating the show's role as a career incubator. The show has produced winners such as; Katung Auwak in 2006, Micheal Efe in 2017, Miracle Igbokwe in 2018, Mercy Eke in 2019, Olamilekan "Laycon" Agbeleshe in 2020, Hazel "Whitemoney" Onou in 2021, Ijeoma Phyna Otabor in 2022, Ilebaye in 2023, Kingsley "Kellyrae" Sule in 2024 and Imisoluwa "Imisi" Ayanwale in 2025.

Analysis of Thursday Pool and Saturday Night Parties in Big Brother House

The Thursday pool and Saturday night parties are integral entertainment segments of BBNaija programs. During these events, housemates are seen in swimming outfits that are provocative and highly sensitive to sight; dancing intimately and consuming alcohol, often under flashing lights and loud music. These parties are heavily promoted on social media platforms such as; Instagram, X (Twitter), Facebook and TikTok etcetera. The Thursday pool party presents a more sensual atmosphere, where flirtation, body display, and uninhibited social interaction are normalized. Underage viewers accessing these scenes through online highlights are exposed to patterns of behaviours that contradict moral expectations in Nigerian homes and schools.

On the other hand, the Saturday night party is equally characterized by club-like indulgence; dancing, drinking, and physical contact among contestants. Such scenes can desensitize underage viewers' moral sanctity, and substitute them with the notion that popularity and stardom require extreme indulgence in wild adult behaviours. While defenders of BBNaija argue that the show reflects modern youth culture and global entertainment standards, critics view it as a medium of moral corrosion to underage children.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Section 1: Questionnaire item 1

Table 1: Responses on Exposure to BBNaija Reality Program by Underage Viewers

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	Underage children have frequently viewed BBNaija reality show.	64 29.35% 320	96 44.04% 384	16 7.38% 48	19 8.72% 38	23 10.55% 23	218 100% 813	3.72
2	BBNaija content encourages imitation of adult behaviour by underage children.	98 44.95% 49	71 32.57% 284	13 5.96% 39	19 8.72% 38	17 7.80% 17	218 100% 868	3.98
3	Watching BBNaija increases the acceptance of indecent dressing among underage children.	53 24.31% 265	96 44.04% 384	25 11.47% 75	21 9.63% 42	23 10.55% 23	218 100% 789	3.62
4	Underage viewers often have access to BBNaija through social media.	71 32.57% 355	104 47.70% 416	19 8.72% 57	9 4.13% 18	15 6.88% 15	218 100% 861	3.95

5	BBNaija influences underage viewers to perceive immorality as normal entertainment.	94 43.12% 470	69 31.65% 276	17 7.79% 51	19 8.72% 19	19 8.72% 19	218 100% 835	3.83
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From the presentation and responses on Table 1. It is without ambiguity that most respondents agreed that underage children are not only exposed to the content of BBNaija programs through their various media devices, but also have unrestricted access to them. This suggests the high level of influence in their social lives.

Section 2: Questionnaire Item 2.

Table 2: Responses on Influence of BBNaija Parties on Underage Viewers

S/ N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total	Mean
1	The Thursday pool and Saturday night parties in BBNaija promote indecent dressing among underage viewers.	86 34.45% 430	75 34.40% 300	18 8.26% 54	26 11.93% 52	13 5.86% 13	218 100% 835	3.89
2	Watching the parties encourages early sexual awareness among underage viewers.	75 34.40% 475	80 36.70% 320	13 5.96% 39	23 10.55% 46	27 12.39% 27	218 100% 807	3.70
3	The show influences the way young people perceive morality and decency.	23 10.55% 115	84 38.53% 366	64 29.36% 192	25 11.47% 50	23 10.09% 22	218 100% 715	3.28
4	BBNaija parties promote materialism and show-off culture among youth.	89 40.82% 445	71 32.57% 284	14 6.42% 42	27 12.39% 54	17 7.80% 17	218 100% 842	3.86
5	Repeated exposure to such content weakens children's moral values	82 37.61% 410	66 30.28% 264	24 11.01% 72	18 8.20% 36	28 12.84% 28	218 100% 810	3.72

The responses in Table 2 affirms that Thursday pool and Saturday night parties in BBNaija has the capacity to falsify and derail the moral reservoir of underage viewers because of the heightened immoral messages displayed by the housemates.

Table 3: Structured Interview and Responses on Parental Perception of BBNaija

S/N	Interview Questions	Summary of Common Responses (in Words)	Percentage Summary
1	What is your general perception of the Thursday pool parties in BBNaija?	Most respondents described the pool parties as “sexually suggestive,” “morally misleading,” and “unfit for underage viewers.”	70% Negative, 20% Neutral, 10% Positive
2	Do you think the Saturday night parties influence underage children’s behaviour?	Respondents agreed that the Saturday parties encourage imitation of adult nightlife behaviour, including indecent dressing and dancing.	65% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree, 10% Undecided
3	How do you perceive the language and conduct of housemates during these parties?	Many noted that the language used is vulgar and unfiltered, often exposing underage viewers to inappropriate expressions.	60% Strongly Negative, 25% Mildly Negative, 15% Neutral
4	In your opinion, does BBNaija promote moral decadence among underage viewers?	The majority affirmed that the show promotes moral decline and erodes family values through unregulated adult content.	68% Yes, 20% Uncertain, 12% No
5	What role do parents or entertainment play in restricting children from watching BBNaija?	Respondents observed that both parental control and media control is weak in monitor children’s media engagement.	55% Weak, 30% Moderate, 15% Strong

Most interviewees expressed strong concern over the moral implications of BBNaija’s pool and night parties on underage children. They affirmed recurring themes of failure of parents to control their children’s media habit, and lack of government and National Broadcasting Commissions’ strict regulation to adult contents.

A critical look at selected pictures from Thursday Pool Party



Plate 1



Plate 2

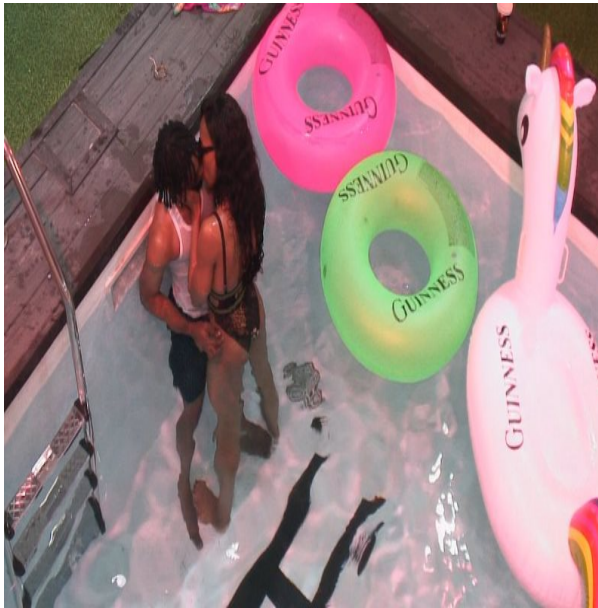


Plate 3



Plate 4

The influence of this level of indecent exposure from BBNaija program on underage viewers cannot be over emphasized. It has been observed that when children are prematurely exposed to morally debased contents; it becomes a breeding ground for other abnormal behaviours such as; promiscuity, prostitution, pornographic addictions and many more. BBNaija has subtly introduced a vampire culture of indecency among its audience. It has consciously or unconsciously raised the appetite of both the underage and adult viewers to explore and exploit the experiences in Big Brother House. It is common thing to hear from these children say that once they are twenty one years old, they will apply to be in Big Brother house. That shows the level of acceptance and fantasy of these young minds. Suffice it to say that indecency is one of the strategies the housemates must possess. This can sustain their stay in the house and determine their possibility of winning the show. Hence, Big Brother's House can be adjudged as an abode of indecent lifestyle

and a safe haven for socially defiant humans. Ayakoroma (2011, p. 11) posits that “the remote cause of the sexually related criminal acts that plague our country today could be traceable to this ugly trend of indecency.”

A Critical look at selected pictures from Saturday night party



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8

From the above pictures, BBNaija is glamorizing flirtation and sexual openness. This act of inappropriate touching and kissing can promote casual sexual behaviours among children. Their sexually suggestive body positions, dance moves and outfits could be termed indecent because they are quite revealing. Big Brother Niger has normalized heavy consumption of alcohol and sexual immorality on screen with frequent scenes of housemates consuming alcohol in large quantities during parties; thereby making binge drinking appear normal or even fashionable. Alcohol intoxicated housemates has often engage in unsolicited touching or inappropriate intimacy, raising ethical and moral concerns. Underage and impressionable audiences may perceive excessive drinking as a sign of maturity, fun, or social acceptance. There is likelihood for

underage viewers to begin to associate social gatherings with alcohol use and sexualized behaviours as normal parts of adult life. These immoral contents are in opposition with traditional African cultural values of modesty. The producers of this show are only focused on the entertainment and financial value over ethical principles; as they prioritize sensationalism at the expense of public morality.

Conclusion

The findings of this study affirm that BBNaija's Thursday pool and Saturday night parties project morally questionable behaviours that could be easily absorbed by underage viewers. Through the adopted methodologies and the lenses of Social Learning and Cultivation Theories, it becomes evident that media exposure significantly influences the moral development of children. The study authenticates that explicit and morally ambiguous contents in BBNaija's Thursday pool and Saturday night parties contribute significantly to moral decadence among minors. The moral danger lies not only in the scenes projected in the show, but also in the ease of access by underage children via digital media platforms. The study discovers a gap in media regulation, parental monitoring, and cultural education of children.

Recommendations

To curb the influences and gaps discovered from this study, it proposes that: The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should strictly enforce age-based content restrictions and broadcast time limitations. NBC should also ensure that adult content such as BBNaija parties is strictly aired within protected hours and censored on replay platforms.

Parents must monitor children's media consumption and provide moral interpretation of contents accessible to underage children. Educational institutions should design programs promoting moral reasoning and responsible media consumption. Religious and community institutions should reinforce moral education as a counterbalance to media-driven decadence.

BBNaija producers should adopt ethical editing to eliminate excessively sensual contents. Social media companies should enforce viewing restrictions for minors on sensitive BBNaija clips. Filmmakers and broadcasters should develop youth-oriented shows that combine entertainment with cultural and moral education. Scholars should conduct more field-based studies on how reality shows such as BBNaija influence child psychology and moral development in Nigeria.

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