

## **Influence of MTN'S Project Fame Reality TV Show on the Social life of Youth**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the influence of MTN Project Fame reality TV show on the social life of youth from Lagos State. Four research questions guided the study with survey as the research design. Using a multi-stage sampling technique, a sample size of 384 was drawn from Lagos Island, Ikorodu and Mushin. With the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), simple percentages, Mean standard deviation and Chi-Square test of independence were used for the analysis. Findings showed that even though the exposure to the programme is very frequent, the extent to which it influences the social life of youth was found to be low. This result largely contradicts most of the reviewed studies and also has implications on the social category and cultivation theories. The researcher recommends, among others, that further studies should be expanded to cover more states in Nigeria so as to allow for the generalization of the result.*

**Keywords:** *Influence, MTN Project Fame, Realty TV show, youth.*

### **Introduction**

The association between TV contents and behaviour of viewers has been an interesting researcher areas over many years ago. This is arguably because of the impact of TV contents, unlike radio combine both visual and audio elements. That is to say that TV has the capacity to show as well as demonstrate its contents. What this means is that TV contents posses powerful potential for changing the behaviour of viewers, perhaps, more than any other medium of mass communication. Jacqueline (2012) recalls that a psychologist by named Jerome Bruner of *New York* carried out a survey and demonstrated there is higher chances that people will remember; 10% of the things they only hear of but they will recall two times (20%) of the things they read. However, people will recall seven times (70%) of what they see compare to what they hear. This goes to illustrate the power that TV messages have on the viewers. It is perhaps in recognition of this fact that corporate bodies and institutions use the TV for strategic projects aimed at influencing public behaviour. One of such strategic programmes is MTN Project Fame.

The MTN Project Fame, equally known as MTN Project Fame West Africa is a musical reality television talent competition that provides an avenue for 15 contestants to compete for the title of Best Musical Act in Africa. The TV reality show is filmed in Lagos, South West Nigeria and aired in West African (Olufeme 2014). The show was introduced in 2008. Since its inception, the project has attracted the attention of participants from different countries. This includes Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This goes to show that it is an international events that draws people from different countries. The project is aired through networks in four countries in Africa. The project also attracts the attention of people from countries other than those four mentioned above.

MTN Project Fame West Africa is produced by Ultima Limited that is also a major TV content and production company. (Bella 2010). MTN Project Fame has a format of production which is made up of gala evenings that takes place each Sunday night in prime time. The programme is hosted by Joseph Benjamin and Adaora Oleh. In season 7, Adaora was replaced with Bolanle Olukanni. The programme is equally made up of a weekly recap show along side with an Eviction night that takes place on Saturday night. Regarding the jury, it is formed by three judges. They are Bibie Brew, Ade Bantu, and Tee-Y Mix. Also part of the jury are Joke Silva, Kaffy, Ige and Ben Ogbeiwi who are Faculty members of the Academy.

Since the inception of the show in 2008, it has produced eight winners. The first winner was Iyanya Mbuk who had gone on to release his successful debut album, My Story. The winner of PFWA Season 2 was Mike Anyasodo whose 'Fine Fine Lady' single is now a radio and a regular on TV Channels across the country. Other winners are Chidinma Ekile, Monica Ogah, Ayoola Ayoola, Olawale Ojo, Geoffery Oji and Jeffrey Akoh in that order (Marapolsa 2015). Youth are among the viewers the of show, thus raising concern on the extent this influences their social life.

The youth of any nation are very central to its development agenda. This is because the future of any nation belongs to the youth. The youth also have the energy to engage in activities that could impact on the future of their countries. A nation whose youth are not resourceful or have the wrong ideas is doomed because it will have a negative impact on its future. Negative behaviour of youth could also spill over to increase in crimes and criminality. That is to say that when youth are not properly guided, they could be misled, thus resulting to an increasing in crime rate. This, therefore, makes the social life of youths a subject of interest to scholars and other stakeholders. Youth are important assets to the collective development of any nation. Gever (2015) notes that the thoughts, beliefs, actions and inactions of youths have direct effects on a nation's political life. According to the National Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action of the

Federal Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001) defines youths as individuals between the ages 18 and 35. On the other hand, the Africa Youth Charter (Africa Youth Charter (2006), defines youths as people between 15 and 35 years. This study adopts the definition of youth as provided by the Africa Youth Charter. Therefore, for this study, youth are people within the age of 15-35. This, is an active age in the life time of anybody. It is the age when people lay the foundation for their life, it is the age when people have the vibrancy to contribute to the development of their countries. Therefore, the influence of MTN Project Fame on the social life of youth is worth interrogating.

Social life by its very scope describes the generality of the informal activities of youth. It describes the interpersonal relationships of youth. An interpersonal relationship is the association that exists between two or more people that could be short or long. This association may be determined by different factors ranging from love, to family, to work place to religion, to business among others. Alexander (2003) notes that the social life of people are largely sub-conscious and full of irrationality as people can hardly give reasons for their social life. Alexander submits further:

Social science has always assumed that men and women act without full understanding. Sociologists have attributed this to the force of social structures that are “larger” and more “powerful” than mere individual human beings. They have pointed, in other words, to the compulsory aspects of social life. But what fascinates and frightens me are those collective forces that are not compulsory, the social (p. 4).

The submission of Alexander above indirectly points to the fact that social life is influenced by forces in the society. It is not, however, clear if the MTN Project Fame constitutes parts of the societal forces that influence the social life of Nigerian youths. Based on this background, this study investigated the influence of MTN Project Fame on the social life of Nigerian Youths.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although previous studies have investigated the influence of TV reality show on the viewers, significant studies focusing on Nigerian youth are largely scanty, hence, the problem of scanty literature. Also problematic is the fact that there appears to be conflicting accounts by previous studies with regards to the influence of reality show on the viewers.

The perceived change in the social life of Nigerian youth has even made an investigation into the influence or otherwise of MTN Project Fame reality TV show very important to determine if any, the relationship between exposure to the reality programme and the social life of Nigerian youth. Even though the MTN

Project Fame has continued to feature consecutively from 2008 to date, the extent to which this has influenced the social life of its viewers and Nigerian youth in particular to subject is empirical proof. The need to test the validness of social category the theory vis-à-vis youth social life and MTN Project Fame reality show also constitute a problem for the current study. The problem of this study posed as a question is, what is the influence of MTN Project Famereality TV show on the social life of Nigerian youth?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to find out the influence of MTN Project Famereality TV show on the social life of Nigerian youth. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following:

1. To determine the frequency of exposure to MTN Project Fame TV reality show.
2. To the extent the MTN Project Fame TV reality show influences the social life of youth in Lagos State.
3. To determine the kind of influence MTN Project Fame TV reality show influences the social life of youth in Lagos State.
4. To find out how MTN Project Fame reality TV show can better be adjusted to positively influence the social life of youth in Lagos State.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

**H1:** There is a significant relationship between exposure to MTN project Fame and the social behaviour of youth.

**H2:** The time spend in watching TV will significantly moderate the influence of MTN Project Fame on social life.

### **Literature Review**

Television reality show is one of the popular genres of TV programme. Communication scholars have viewed this type of TV programme in different ways. Omowale (2015) sees reality television as an aspect of television programming that pays attention to spontaneous dramatic events that are normally not scripted. Such event host persons who are not professional actors to participate in a contest that has a prize reward. In the views of Barton (2007, p. 462) reality shows is, describes any show with non-actors who are closely monitored who respond in a manner that is not predetermined. The researcher adds that in TV reality show, each participant tries to outsmart the other. Hall (2009) on her part, states that scholars make use of the term “reality programme”

in reference different material that differs largely in aspects such as the format, the central idea and subject matter. She adds existing definitions of the early conceptualization of reality programmes were broad, such that they cover news programmes and traditional documentaries. For this study, TV reality show has been conceptualized as a TV competition related show which is usually unscripted. The essence of such a show is to win a prize. In the case of the MTN Fame Project, the essence is to win the title of Best Musical Act in Africa.

Over the years, empirical studies have been conducted that are related to the subject matter. Ugwanga (2014) cited in Nwafor and Ezike (2015) led an empirical study to ascertain the influence of reality TV shows on youth of Windhoek capital city of Namibia. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research designs using a triangulation of data collection methods. A total of 90 copies of questionnaire were distributed to three selected tertiary institutions in Windhoek, namely: University of Namibia main campus, Polytechnic of Namibia and International University of Management, Namibia. The main research question was: ‘To what extent do reality TV shows influence youth in positive and negative manners? The research findings suggest that majority of youth spend most of the time watching TV and most of them watch popular reality TV programmes such as ‘American Idols’, “Survivors”, “Big Brother Africa” and “Star Performers.” And that since the 2013 BBA winner was a Namibian, Delish Matthew, it seems this inspired many youth in Windhoek and they are well motivated to keep watching BBA. Contrary to the widely held negative views about reality TV shows, the study argues that they are important social phenomenon. It does not suggest that there are no problems with reality TV shows, but indicates that there are positive and negative influences that reality TV shows impose on youths of Windhoek. This study is relevant to the current study because it investigated the influence of TV reality show on the viewers. The researcher however, did not specifically investigate youth, the current study will address this.

Also, Nwafor and Ezike (2015) did a study on viewership of big brother Africa reality TV show and its influence on the moral conduct of undergraduate students in Ebonyi State university, Abakaliki, Nigeria. The result showed that Big Brother Africa has wide viewership among Ebonyi State University undergraduate and it influences their perception and attitude towards decency and morality. The result suggest that 33% debases their sense of indigenous culture 18% reported that it encourages indecent language and dressing among them 26% reported that it imbues in them culture of infidelity, gangsterism and violence against women, 13% reported that it teaches those susceptible youths cheating while 11% reported that it teaches them voting malpractice and unfairness. This study is related to the current one because it investigated the

influence of TV reality show. The difference is that that researcher did not focus on youth nor did he investigate MTN Fame Project. See also (Asogwa & Onuh, 2014; Asogwa & Ogwo, 2014; Greg, Asogwa & Onwukaeme, 2013; Greg & Asogwa, 2013; EdOgor & Asogwa, 2012; Asogwa & and Amana, 2012).

Also, Omowale (2015) did a study on the influence of reality TV show on youth patronage. The researcher adopted a survey research design and studied 240 respondents. The researcher reported that exposure to brand during TV reality show programmes does not significantly influence patronage. Rather, most of the respondents were found to have been neutral about it. However, exposure to brand that were advertised during TV reality show was found to be significantly associated with brand image. This study is related to the current one because it investigated the influence of TV reality show on the youth. The difference is that the researcher did not specifically investigate social life but only patronage. The current study will address this missing gap. (See also Asemah & Asogwa, 2012a, Asogwa & Orjih, 2013; Asogwa, 2012, Asemah & Chika, 2012b; Asogwa, 2018).

Another study considered for review was that of Common Sense Media (2012). The researchers survey research design and studied 1,030 13- to 17-year-olds. The results showed that the social life of the sample studied is influenced by digital media. This study is relevant to the current study because it examined the social life of teens. The difference is that the study focused more on social media and not TV reality show. It is expected that the current study will take care of this.

Also, Bassett, West and Shores (2011) conducted a study to ascertain the associated between asynchronous music and the physical activities of youth in supervised recreation activities. The result showed that a significant association exists between both variables. This study is relevant to the current study because it investigated the influence of media on youth. The only difference is that the researcher did not investigate MTN Fame Project, which the current study will address. The study nonetheless provide empirical study by understanding youth behavior. See also (Asemah & Asogwa, 2012a, Asogwa & Orjih, 2013; Asogwa, 2012, Asemah & Chika, 2012b; Asogwa, 2018).

### **Theoretical Framework**

In this study, the researcher made use of two theories. They are the social category theory and the cultivation theory. The theory was propounded by Melvin Defleur in 1970. The critical assumption of the theory is that the audience members are categorized in groups based on certain features. These features may be gender, age, religion, among others. The theory therefore assumes that members of each social group are likely to react the same way to media messages. (McQuail 2005). In this study, the category is age. That is youth who

are within the age of 15-35. This theory is useful for this study because it provides the theoretical foundation for explaining the influence of MTN Project Fame reality show on youth. In this study, youth were considered as a social category because not everybody is a youth. Some people by age classification are children, some teen, some adult. The age classification is largely dependent on who is classifying it. For this study, youth are people within the age bracket of 15-35 years. The simple implication is that, those who do not fall into this age classification do not belong to the age category, hence, are not subject of interest here. The research made use of cultivation theory to augment the social category theory.

Cultivation theory was suggested by George Gerbner in 1976 (McQuail 2005 ). It holds that TV viewing is significantly associated with behaviour change. It says heavy viewers of TV are thought to be ‘cultivating’ attitudes that seem to believe that the world. The theory suggests that when a person spends long time watching TV, it has a possibility of influencing their behaviour than those who spend less time watching the same TV. George Gerbner breaks down the effects of cultivation into two different levels. The first one is a general assumption regarding our world, and second order is certain attitudes like a hatred or reverence for law and order, pedophiles. The theory suggests that this cultivation of attitudes is based on attitudes already present in our society and that the media take those attitudes which are already present and re-present them bundled in a different packaging to their audiences. The area of interest in the study by the researcher is not the violent part of the theory but the influence which television has on the receivers. This theory thus gives an insight on how television influences the activities of viewers.

## **Method**

This study adopted descriptive survey method to achieve its aim. Survey is usually a suitable method for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes (Wimmer, & Dominick, 2013) therefore, hence the study sought to find out the influence of MTN Project Famereality show on youth, survey was considered useful. This study was conducted in Lagos State. The researcher decided to conduct the study in Lagos because it is like the home of MTN Project Fame bearing in mind that the TV reality show is filmed in Lagos. The population of this study was all the youths in Lagos, Nigeria. The total population of youth in Lagos State according to the National Bureau of Statistics (National Bureau of Statistics 2013) is 3,885,222.

## **Sample Size**

The sample size for this study was 385 youths. With 95 percent level of

confidence (confidence interval -  $\pm 5\%$ ), an estimate 50% (.5) and a permitted margin of error at .05 (5 percentage points), the researcher determined the sample size for the study with the Cochran (Cochran 1963) Equation '1' which yields a representative sample for population that are large and it is as follows:

$$n_0 = \frac{[Z/2]^2 (p q)}{e^2}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{[Z/2]^2 (P) (1-P)}{e^2}$$

Where:  $n_0$  = sample size,  $Z^2$  = confidence level (the abscissa of the normal curve that cuts off an area  $\alpha$  at the tails),  $p$  = rate of occurrence or prevalence (the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in a population),  $q$  = complement of  $p$  and  $e$  = margin of error. Therefore;

$$n = \frac{[1.96]^2 0.5 (1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2} \qquad n = \frac{3.8416 (0.25)}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 384$$

### Sampling Technique

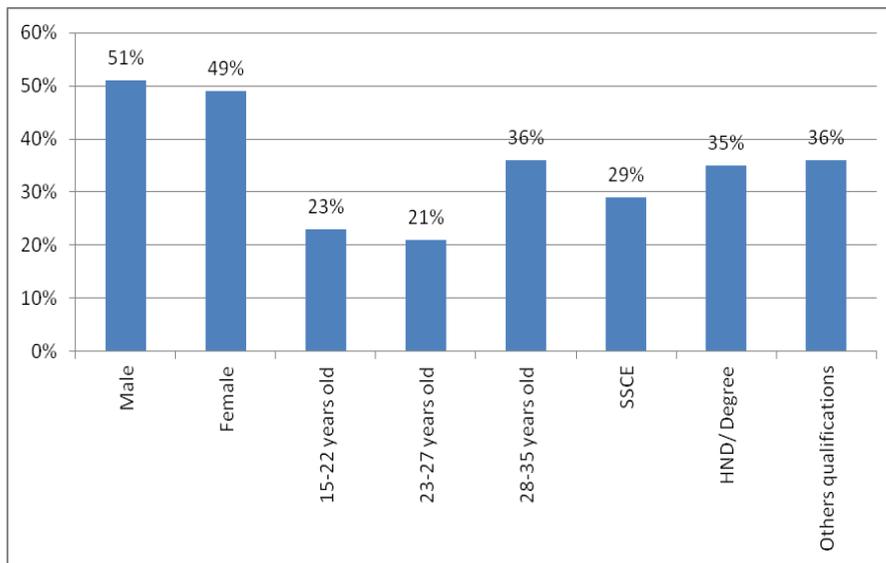
Multi-stage sampling technique was used for this study. The reason for this was because of the unavailability of a sampling frame that contains the lists of elements in the area. The researcher started the first stage by stratifying Lagos into senatorial zones likes Lagos Central, Lagos East and Lagos West. This led to three sampling frames containing the lists of the local governments in the senatorial zones. At the second stage, the researcher randomly selected one local government area in each of the zones. Therefore, Lagos Island, was selected from Lagos Central, Ikorodu from Lagos East Senatorial zone and Mushin from Lagos West. To sample for the individual respondents, the researcher adopted purposive sampling. To achieve this, the questionnaire instrument was taken to the selected areas and only people who agreed they were within the age range of 15-35 were administered the instrument. It should be noted that each of the areas was administered 128 copies. The instrument of data collection for this study was a structured, self-designed questionnaire instrument. The reason for the choice of structured questionnaire was to give respondents a balanced avenue to attempt questions that will generate data that is quantifiable and measurable.

The questionnaire instrument was administered to the respondents through the help of three research assistants. They are Bayo Adegboyega from, Lagos Island Adewale Akin from Ikorodu and Balengun Osijanjo from Mushin. It was decided that research assistants will be needed because of the difficulty of administering the instrument personally by the researcher. The research assistants were briefed through a training manual that was mailed to them. To ascertain the reliability of this study, a pre-test questionnaire of 20 copies were designed and

administered to selected youth in Enugu metropolis. After two weeks interval, the same pre-test copies of questionnaire were administered again to the same respondents with the aid of SPSS version 16.0, the correlation coefficient was determined and this yielded 0.85 reliability which was considered high. The analysis for this study was done with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16.0). Consequently, simple percentages, mean and standard deviation were used in the study. The researcher adopted the likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The bench mark for accepting or rejecting a statement was 3.0 because it was a five-point scale.

**Results**

Out of the 384 copies of the questionnaire administered, 355 (92%) were returned and found useful. This showed that the returned rate was 92% and high enough for analysis. The graph below shows the demographics of the respondents.



**Fig: Respondents’ demographics**

. 182 (51%) of the respondents were male while 173(49%) were female .Also, 82 (23. %) of the respondents were between the ages of 15-22, 144 (41%) were within the ages of 23 and 27 while 129 (36. %) were within the ages of 28 and 35. In the area of educational competence 104 (29%) of the respondents were secondary school holders, 125(35%) were holders HND/first degree 127 (36%) indicated others.

**Table 1 The frequency of exposure to MTN Project Fame TV reality show by Nigerian youth**

<b>Extent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
Very frequent	247	70
Occasionally	108	30
Total	355	100

The result from table I above showed that most of the respondent (70%) reported they are exposed to MTN Project Fame very frequently while 30% reported that they are exposed the occasionally..

**Table 1 The extent MTN Project Fame TV reality influence the social life of Nigerian youth**

<b>Extent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
To a large extent	76	21
To an extent	111	32
To a low extent	168	47
Total	355	100

The result from table II above showed that most of the respondent (47%) reported they are the MTN Project Fame influence their social life to a low extent while some (32%) reported that the reality show influences their social life to an extent with few (21%) reporting large extent.

**Table III The kind of influence MTN Project Fame TV reality has on the social life of youth in Lagos State**

<b>Extent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
Negative	153	43
Positive	105	30
Neutral	97	27
Total	355	100

The result from table III above showed that 153 of the respondents representing 43% reported the MTN Project Fame has negative influence on their social life 105 representing 30% reported that the program has positive influence on their social life while 97 representing 27% reported neutral. This suggest that most of the respondents reported that most of the respondents reported that the MTN Project Fame has negative influence on their social life.

**Table IV How to adjust the MTN Project Fame show so as to positively influence the social life of Nigeria youths**

Item	Mean	SD	Decision
Airing only contents that promote moral decorum among youth	3.0	0.43	Accepted
Airing only contents that promote self-discipline among youth	3.3	0.78	Accepted
Airing contents that discourage social vices among youth	3.2	0.99	Accepted
Expanding the scope to include other aspects like skill acquisition	3.4	0.67	Accepted
Airing contents that do not promote indecent dressing	3.1	0.69	Accepted

**Source :** Field Survey, 2016

The result from the table above showed that all the items presented in table one above were accepted as ways through which the MTN Project FameTV reality show should be adjusted to positively influence the social life of Nigerian youths. This is because, all the items had a mean score that range from 3.1-3.4 which is within the acceptable limit for the study.

**Test of Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

**H1:** There is a significant relationship between exposure to MTN project Fame and the social behaviour of youth

**Table 5: Chi-Square test analysis of the relationship between exposure to MTN project Fame and the social behaviour of youth**

Grouping	X <sup>2cal</sup>	Df	Critical value	Decision
Exposure Social behaviour	2.741	1	3.841	Sig

The result from the table above revealed that the calculated X<sup>2</sup> value (2.741) is less than the critical value (3.841) at 1 degree of freedom (df) and 0.05 confidence level. The first hypothesis is therefore not supported and the researcher concludes that there is no significant statistical relationship between exposure to MTN Project Fame and youth social behaviour.

**H2:** The time spend in watching TV will significantly moderate the influence of MTN Project Fame on social life.

**Table 5: Chi-Square test analysis of the relationship between exposure to MTN project Fame and the social behaviour of youth**

Grouping	$X^{2cal}$	df	Critical value	Decision
Time spent on watching MTN project fame Social behaviour	409.644	3	3.841	Sig

The result from the table above revealed that the calculated  $X^2$  value (409.644) is greater than the critical value (3.841) at 1 degree of freedom (df) and 0.05 confidence level. The first hypothesis is therefore supported and the researcher concludes that there is a significant statistical relationship between time spent watching MTN Project Fame and youth social behaviour. That is to say that the more time that a person spends watching the show, the more likely it is to influence his or her social life and vice versa.

### Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the influence of MTN Project Fame TV reality show on the social life of youth from Lagos State. Findings showed that even though the exposure to the programme is frequent, the extent to which it influences the social life of youth was found to be low. The result of the hypothesis testing also showed no significant relationship exists between watching MTN Fame Project and social life of youths. This results run contrary to that of Nwafor and Ezike (2015), Ugwanga (2014) and Omowale (2015) who had all reported that TV reality show has significant influence on the viewers. The result also has implications on the social category theory because it shows that even though TV reality show may have influence on other categories of people, it may not necessarily have influence on the youth. The result further suggests that the programme has negative influence on the social life of youth from Lagos State. The only jus that the extent is low. The result of the hypothesis testing also revealed that time of watching the programme significantly moderates the influence it has on youth. This means the more time that youth spend in watching the programme, the more likely it is to influence their social life and vice versa. This aspect of the result confirms the postulations of cultivation theory as expressed by Gerbner (1976). The result also showed that for the MTN Project Fame TV reality show to positively influence the social life of Nigeria youth, the contents must be overhauled with a view to making sure that they best serve the youth by way of molding them into better adult. This suggests that , organizers of the MTN Project Fame and TV producers have a lot to do in improving the contents of

what they aired as today's youth are more discernible than before and as such, do not take everything hook line and sinker. The researcher argues that the failure of the TV reality show to improve its contents to better serve the social life of Nigerian youth may lead to a decline in viewership and subsequently, lack of interest in the programme.

Based on the result of this study, the researcher argues that the quest by the government of Nigeria to ensure value reorientation among youth in Nigeria may be a mirage if popular TV reality show programmes do not positively influence the life of youth. The future of every country largely depends on the youth and the media contents that influence them is of significant importance. What this means is that, media professionals will do the society good by making sure that contents that reach the youth can propel positive development for the ultimate good of the society. Although this study has successfully provided data on the extent and kind of influence of MTN Project Fame on youth, the study did not clearly outline the ways through which the programme influences the youth. Nonetheless, the contribution of the study is that, it has established a framework for understanding the influence of TV reality show on youth generally.

### **Conclusion/ Recommendation**

Based on the result of this study, the researcher concludes that the MTN Project FameTV show does not significantly influence the social life of Nigeria youth. The researcher also concludes that the need to overhaul the MTN Project Fame TV reality show exists. Therefore, the researcher makes the following recommendation:

- There is the need for experimental design to be used to better test the influence of MTN Project Fame TV reality show on the social life of Nigeria youth.
- Further studies should also be expanded to cover at least 10 states from the existing geo-political zones in Nigeria so as to give room for more generalization.
- Organizers of the MTN Project Fame TV reality show should improve in their content so to positively influence their social life.

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