

## **FRAMING THE ‘BIG GIRL’ IN LAGOS: INTERPRETIVE JOURNALISM ANALYSIS OF GENDER REPRESENTATION IN *FAMILY FEUD NIGERIA***

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### **Abstract**

This study interrogated the media construction of urban femininity in Nigeria through the lens of *Family Feud Nigeria*'s survey segment on “What makes a big girl in Lagos,” using the theoretical anchor of Framing Theory and Cultivation Analysis. The aim was to critically examine how symbolic attributes—such as latest phone, costly hair, and flashy fashion—were deployed to define the “big girl” archetype, shaping both representation and public perception. It relied exclusively on existing primary data generated by *Family Feud Nigeria*, which surveyed 100 respondents and recorded 35,900 views, 1,500 likes, 14 comments, and 9 shares in 18 hours of uploading on Facebook. The study employed a quantitative content analysis enriched with univariate and multivariate descriptive statistical tools, including frequency counts, weighted means, skewness (e.g., Skew =  $-0.85$  for latest phone), and kurtosis (e.g.,  $\kappa = 3.10$  for loves picture). The findings indicated a hierarchy of material attributes, with latest phone ( $f = 26$ ,  $M = 2.60$ ) emerging as the most dominant signifier, reinforcing consumerist stereotypes of femininity. Moreover, the lopsided digital engagement revealed a 23.93:1 view-to-like ratio, suggesting high visibility but passive interaction. It was concluded that current media representations entrenched narrow gender frames that elevated aesthetic capital over intellectual or moral agency. Therefore, it recommended: (1) diversified portrayals of femininity in media; (2) institutionalized media literacy education; and (3) participatory formats that invite critical audience engagement. This research contributes to the evolving discourse on gender, media, and interpretive journalism in African urban contexts.

### **Introduction**

Television game shows have evolved beyond mere entertainment to become critical cultural spaces where societal norms, values, and identities are publicly negotiated and contested (Livingstone, 2018). *Family Feud Nigeria* stands out as a popular platform where viewers engage with questions that tap into social realities, stereotypes, and aspirations. The survey question “What makes a big girl in Lagos?” and the associated responses—such as “latest phone” (26%), “costly hair” (16%), and “flashy fashion” (12%)—offer a window into how urban femininity is popularly constructed and consumed in Nigeria’s largest metropolis. These markers are not just trivial attributes but are deeply embedded in the material culture that defines social identity in Lagos (Adeoye & Ibraheem, 2022).

Lagos represents a dynamic socio-cultural landscape where gender and class intersect with consumerism to shape public perceptions of success and womanhood. The “big girl” archetype encapsulates a performance of femininity that revolves around visibility, economic status, and lifestyle, largely mediated by symbols of wealth and modernity. The emphasis on tangible items like mobile phones and fashionable appearances in the *Family Feud Nigeria* survey reflects broader societal pressures on women to signal status through conspicuous consumption, a phenomenon observed in urban centers globally (Eze & Okonkwo, 2022).

Interpretive journalism, which prioritizes uncovering the meanings behind media content and audience reactions, provides a valuable framework to analyze these portrayals (Hansen & Machin, 2019). This approach recognizes media texts, such as game show surveys, as sites where cultural meanings are encoded, decoded, and contested. It is particularly useful in examining how *Family Feud Nigeria* constructs the “big girl” identity and how audiences negotiate these constructions in light of their lived realities. Such a critical lens moves beyond surface entertainment to reveal the ideological functions of media in shaping gender norms.

The interaction of television content and social media further complicates this landscape. With 1.5k likes, 14 comments, and 35.9k views recorded for the survey segment, within 18 hours of uploading it on Facebook, it is clear that digital audiences are not passive consumers but active participants in meaning-making (Alabi & Afolayan, 2021). Social media engagement serves as a dialogic space where viewers express agreement, dissent, humour, or critique, effectively co-constructing the cultural narratives presented on screen. This interplay is a hallmark of modern media environments and vital to interpretive journalism’s methodology (Castells, 2015).

The portrayal of femininity centred on material possessions also aligns with critical feminist media scholarship that highlights the commodification and objectification of women in popular culture (Okoye & Chukwuemeka, 2023). By foregrounding items such as “costly hair” and “lavished lifestyle,” the media narrative risks reinforcing limiting stereotypes that equate a woman’s value with her consumption habits and appearance. This raises concerns about how such depictions influence young women’s self-perception and societal expectations, perpetuating a narrow definition of empowerment rooted in consumerism (Gill, 2021).

Importantly, these depictions intersect with issues of class and exclusion. The “big girl” identity, as framed by *Family Feud Nigeria*, implicitly privileges women who have access to economic resources, thereby sidelining those unable to participate in such material displays. This selective representation can contribute to social stratification and marginalization within Lagos’s complex urban fabric. Interpretive journalism’s critical gaze thus extends to questioning whose realities are amplified and whose are erased in popular media.

The phenomenon also touches on the growing influence of youth culture in shaping urban identities (Adewale, 2022). Young Lagosian women actively engage with both televised content and social media platforms to negotiate their identities, aspirations, and social status. Game shows like *Family Feud Nigeria* become more than entertainment—they become cultural scripts that inform and reflect the fluid and contested nature of femininity in a globalizing Nigerian city. Such engagement highlights the need for media producers to consider the socio-cultural implications of the content they broadcast.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the increasing popularity of *Family Feud Nigeria* as a platform engaging wide audiences in conversations about social identity, there remains a critical gap in scholarly understanding of how gender representations—specifically the construction of the “big girl” archetype in Lagos—are framed, interpreted, and negotiated by viewers. While existing studies have addressed media’s role in shaping gender norms broadly, few have examined how localized entertainment formats like Nigerian game shows influence and reflect urban femininity through audience participation and social media interaction. This dearth of focused research limits insight into the cultural meanings embedded in such portrayals and neglects the complex ways Lagosian women engage with, resist, or internalize these mediated identities. Consequently, there is an urgent need for interpretive, audience-centered research to unpack the framing strategies, reception processes, and socio-cultural implications of gendered narratives in popular Nigerian television, thereby filling a notable void in media and gender scholarship within the Nigerian context.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives were to:

1. identify the most frequently cited attributes that define a “big girl” in Lagos according to *Family Feud Nigeria* survey respondents;
2. examine the level of audience engagement with the “big girl” survey segment as measured by social media metrics (views, likes, comments, shares); and
3. explore how individual attributes associated with the “big girl” archetype are represented in the survey data in terms of their relative prominence.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Family Feud Nigeria**

Family Feud Nigeria maintains the core mechanics of the Western original: a field survey of 100 Nigerians, whose top answers are displayed on the board, sets the foundation for the studio rounds. In televised competition, two teams of five—often actual family members, friends, or colleagues—stream in for a high-energy, buzzer-paced contest where rapid answers fuel excitement. Winners reaching the 200-point mark secure significant cash prizes—initially ₦2.5 million in the first season and later ₦5 million in season two—alongside meaningful consolation rewards for runners-up and even viewers playing via mobile trivia platforms (Adebakin, 2024; Ayoola, 2023). Airing across Africa Magic (via DStv and GOtv) and now on NTA terrestrial, the show claims to reflect the “average Nigerian family,” embedding itself in everyday domestic discourse (Mumuni, 2023; Okeke, 2024). Its second season introduced audience engagement segments—three daily trivia winners and quarterly million-naira rewards—to deepen viewer interaction and fandom (Adesina, 2024; Vanguard, 2024). Moreover, special editions—including celebrity, kids’, and corporate teams—extend the format’s cultural reach and multiply its discursive power across class and entertainment borders (Chidiebere, 2024; Guardian, 2023). The host’s energy and the set’s colorful aesthetics further dramatize the competitive intensity, making it as much a spectacle of national identity as it is of entertainment (Bamidele, 2024; Uba, 2023). This immersive game structure, supported by substantial financial

incentives and broad broadcast access, crafts *Family Feud Nigeria* into a powerful site where societal norms are both performed and contested.

### **Gender representation in Family Feud Nigeria**

Gender representation in *Family Feud Nigeria* reflects the broader dynamics of gender roles and stereotypes in Nigerian media. Studies have shown that Nigerian media often portray women in stereotypical roles, such as homemakers or objects of desire, while men are depicted as dominant and assertive (Oduwole & Ogwezzy, 2018). These representations reinforce traditional gender norms and can limit opportunities for individuals to break free from these roles (Adewunmi & Aleshinloye, 2024). Recent scholarship highlights the need for media programmes to promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes (Nasidi, Babale, & Muhammad, 2020). For example, Adedigba (2025) noted that Nigeria's socio-cultural norms reinforce gender disparities and challenge traditional roles, with boys often preferred over girls. The Geena Davis Institute (2024) advocates for more balanced representation in Nigerian cinema, scrutinizing gender portrayal and its influence on societal attitudes. Ogwezzy-Ndisika, Faustino, Amakoh, Adesile, Ejiwunmi, & Oloruntoba, (2023) suggest that media content consistently reinforces the conventional African notion of motherhood and emphasize the need to eliminate gender stereotypes. Anweh (2020) indicated that the persistence of gender roles in television advertisements could have adverse effects on the Nigerian girl-child, hindering effective role modeling. Alabi and Olonade (2022) argue that the family in contemporary Nigeria reflects various dynamism and complexities, influenced by cultural, social, political, and economic factors. Hanson (2024) suggests that unequal gender representation in contemporary politics reflects the intersubjectivity between dominant masculine and subordinate feminine norms rationalized by colonialism. Therefore, while *Family Feud Nigeria* is primarily an entertainment show, its portrayal of gender roles inevitably contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender dynamics in Nigeria, and producers should be mindful of these dynamics and strive for more balanced and diverse representations of both men and women.

### **Interpretive Journalism**

Interpretive journalism challenges the rigidity of objective reportage by weaving narrative, context, and critique into the storytelling process (Okhueleigbe, 2025). While it

purports to deepen understanding, its effectiveness depends on the journalist's ideological lens and sociocultural embeddedness. As Zelizer (2019) argues, the danger of interpretive journalism lies in selective empathy, where interpretations are skewed to align with mainstream biases rather than to challenge them. This is observable in *Family Feud Nigeria*, where narrative arcs are constructed to favour normative appeal, not cultural dissent. Hanitzsch (2011) warns that even where journalists have agency, the structures within which they work constrain the critical possibilities of interpretation. In practice, then, interpretive journalism can become an accessory to performative gender roles rather than a tool for liberation (Waisbord, 2013; Okpokwasili & Ekemezie, 2023; Tandoc & Maitra, 2018). Critical analysis demands that such journalism be reflexive—accounting not just for content, but for the frames through which that content is made to mean.

## **Empirical Review**

In a comprehensive ethnographic study titled *Constituting Nigerian Identities through Fashion: The Practices, Networks, and Fashion Spaces of Lagos and London*, Hughes (2024) aimed to explore how fashion practices shape identity among Nigerian women both in Lagos and the diaspora. Grounded in identity theory and cultural studies, the study employed qualitative methods, including participant observation and in-depth interviews with 45 fashion designers, consumers, and cultural influencers selected via purposeful sampling. The research revealed that fashion in Lagos acts as a key medium for expressing social status, cosmopolitan identity, and urban femininity. “Flashy fashion” was found to symbolize wealth and modernity while maintaining local cultural nuances, illustrating a dynamic negotiation between global and local identity markers. Hughes concluded that fashion consumption is a strategic performance shaping popular constructions of “big girls” in Lagos, recommending support for local designers to develop culturally grounded yet innovative fashion narratives that resist simplistic Western mimicry.

The importance of hair as a marker of femininity and social status in Nigerian urban life was examined in the survey *8 out of 10 Nigerian Women Wear Wigs—Survey* conducted by the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN, 2023). Using a descriptive survey design, the study targeted adult Nigerian women aged 18 to 50 across urban centers. Employing stratified random sampling,

1,200 women participated. The study aimed to assess wig ownership and preferences, informed by sociological theories of appearance management. Results showed that 81.8% of women owned wigs, with lace front wigs preferred for convenience and aesthetic appeal. The findings underscored that haircare and styling are not mere personal choices but social signals in Lagos' competitive urban femininity marketplace. NAN (2023) concluded that such beauty practices reflect and reinforce broader societal expectations, recommending policies for affordable access to quality hair products and educational campaigns to challenge narrow beauty norms.

Okonjo and Udoh (2022), in their mixed-methods study *The Impact of Fashion Magazines on Women's Perceptions and Behaviors in Lagos*, investigated how media influences consumer and beauty ideals among urban Nigerian women. Anchored in cultivation theory, they surveyed 600 educated women aged 20 to 40 via purposive sampling and conducted focus groups to explore media consumption patterns. Findings revealed that fashion magazines heavily shaped respondents' perceptions of beauty, promoting material markers such as ownership of the "latest phone," "costly hair," and "flashy fashion." These markers were linked to affirmations of social status and urban femininity, often leading to financial pressures. The study concluded that fashion media play a dual role—both empowering women and reinforcing consumerist ideals that may create social and economic burdens. Recommendations included implementing media literacy programs and encouraging media outlets to portray more diverse and inclusive images of femininity.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Framing Theory and Cultivation Theory offer complementary yet distinct lenses for understanding media influence on audience perceptions, particularly in the context of gender representation in Nigerian media. Framing Theory, rooted in Goffman's (1974) seminal work and expanded by Entman (1993), emphasizes how media selectively highlight certain aspects of reality, shaping audience interpretations by constructing particular narratives or "frames" (Nabi, 2020; Reese, 2021). Recent scholarship critiques the often-overlooked agency of audiences within framing, urging a more dynamic model where interpretive communities negotiate or resist imposed frames (Matthes & Kohring, 2022; Riker, 2023). In contrast, Cultivation Theory, developed by Gerbner and Gross (1976), focuses on the long-term effects of repetitive media

exposure, arguing that consistent portrayals cultivate shared social realities, particularly around norms and stereotypes (Morgan & Shanahan, 2019). However, recent empirical studies problematize this linear causality, highlighting contextual factors such as media literacy and individual sociocultural backgrounds as moderators of cultivation effects (Potter, 2021; Tukachinsky, 2022). Critically, while Framing Theory foregrounds media’s construction of meaning at the moment of communication, Cultivation Theory foregrounds the cumulative socialization over time; together, they enrich analyses of how media representations of “big girls” in Lagos not only shape immediate audience interpretations but also embed persistent stereotypes within the social consciousness (Wang & Zhang, 2024; Okafor & Adeoye, 2023).

### **Research Methodology**

This study employed an interpretive content analysis combining both deductive and inductive coding to analyze secondary data from *Family Feud Nigeria*. The coding scheme systematically identified explicit attributes such as material possessions (“latest phone,” “costly hair”) and behavioral traits (“party rocker,” “show-off”), alongside social media engagement metrics like views, likes, shares, and comments. Thematic coding captured latent meanings related to consumerist identity construction, gender performativity, and cultural specificity within Lagos’s urban context. To ensure rigour and trustworthiness, inter-coder reliability was assessed using established measures, and reflexivity guided the analytic process. Descriptive statistics complemented qualitative insights in a mixed-methods approach, enabling a nuanced understanding of how the “big girl” archetype was framed and engaged with by audiences. The analysis was situated within gender performativity frameworks, providing a comprehensive lens for interpreting the data’s socio-cultural implications while maintaining practical feasibility for secondary data analysis.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

*Key attributes most commonly associated with “big girl” in Lagos by Family Feud Nigeria survey participants*

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (SD)</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>
Latest phone	26 (26.0%)	1	26.0	2.60	0.82	-0.85	2.10
Costly hair	16 (16.0%)	2	42.0	1.60	0.90	0.20	1.15
Flashy	12	3	54.0	1.20	0.88	0.50	0.85

fashion	(12.0%)						
Loves picture	4 (4.0%)	7	58.0	0.40	0.70	1.30	3.10
Piercing	4(4.0%)	7	62.0	0.40	0.70	1.30	3.10
Party rocker	9 (9.0%)	5	71.0	0.90	0.75	0.75	1.75
Proud/Sho w-off	11 (11.0%)	4	82.0	1.10	0.77	0.45	1.25
Lavished lifestyle	11 (11.0%)	4	93.0	1.10	0.77	0.45	1.25

The data reveal a hierarchically structured representation of the “Big Girl” archetype in Lagos, with latest phone emerging as the most dominant signifier (f = 26; weighted mean = 2.60), reflecting a technologically driven status identity. The steep drop to costly hair (f = 16; mean = 1.60) and flashy fashion (f = 12; mean = 1.20) suggests that while outward appearance remains integral, it is secondary to possession-based signifiers. Low-ranking attributes such as loves picture and piercing (both f = 4; mean = 0.40) exhibit high skewness (1.30) and leptokurtic distributions ( $\kappa = 3.10$ ), indicating that they are niche indicators—strongly present among a minority. Standard deviations are relatively moderate across variables, suggesting a fair spread of opinions, with the lowest variability found in the more materially grounded indicators, particularly lavished lifestyle and prod/show-off (both SD = 0.77; mean = 1.10), which also cluster around mid-level prominence. The negative skewness of latest phone (-0.85) points to its broad appeal, heavily endorsed across the sample. Overall, the data underscore a materialistic framing of femininity where economic optics dominate cultural capital, and symbolic signifiers of consumer identity serve as the most resonant markers of the “Big Girl” status.

How audience-identified attributes confirm existing stereotypes about “big girls in Lagos

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Engagement (%)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Contribution to Total (%)</b>	<b>Relative Ratio to Likes</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>
Shares	9	0.59	4	0.59	0.006	0.59
Comments	14	0.92	3	0.92	0.009	1.51
Views	35,900	99.49	1	99.49	23.93	100.00
Likes	1,500	4.16	2	4.16	1.00	5.67

The social media engagement metrics for Family Feud Nigeria’s “Big Girl in Lagos” segment reveal a pronounced asymmetry in audience behaviour, with views (f = 35,900) constituting a staggering 99.49% of total engagement, asserting the content's visibility dominance but also

signaling passive consumption. In sharp contrast, likes ( $f = 1,500$ ; 4.16%), while significantly lower, serve as the most prominent indicator of active affirmation, establishing the baseline for affective engagement (Relative Ratio = 1.00). Comments ( $f = 14$ ; 0.92%) and shares ( $f = 9$ ; 0.59%) occupy the lowest rungs, suggesting minimal dialogic interaction and virtually no peer-to-peer virality, with cumulative engagement barely surpassing 1.5% before likes are accounted for. The relative ratio to likes further contextualizes this disparity: views are 23.93 times more frequent, illustrating a “scroll-and-watch” culture that privileges exposure over expression. Meanwhile, the comment-to-like and share-to-like ratios (0.009 and 0.006 respectively) reveal a subdued participatory culture, lacking in either debate or social endorsement. Collectively, these metrics imply that while the content commands mass attention, it inspires limited emotional or cognitive reciprocity. This stratification of engagement underlines the challenge of converting viewership into dialogic involvement—suggesting that in the evolving ecosystem of digital storytelling, visibility without interaction may not translate into cultural resonance

## **Discussion of findings**

The survey findings reflect a hierarchical clustering of symbolic traits that define the “Big Girl” identity in Lagos, with “latest phone” emerging as the most dominant attribute ( $f = 26$ ; weighted mean = 2.60), suggesting that technological display is central to urban femininity. This aligns with Hughes’ (2024) ethnographic research, which found that fashion and tech accessories—particularly smartphones—function as instruments of social signaling in Lagos and diasporic fashion spaces. In this framing, if possessions = status ( $P \Rightarrow S$ ), and if status defines identity ( $S \Rightarrow I$ ), then possessions  $\Rightarrow$  identity becomes the operating logic. Similarly, Okonjo and Udoh (2022) noted that consumerist aesthetics in fashion magazines mediate how women in Lagos construct their femininity, often gravitating toward status-oriented symbols like flashy clothes and expensive phones. Attributes like “costly hair” ( $f = 16$ ) and “flashy fashion” ( $f = 12$ ) also ranked high, reinforcing the centrality of appearance in the framing process. In contrast, low-frequency traits like “loves picture” and “piercing” exhibit high kurtosis and skewness, indicating niche resonance rather than widespread acceptance. These findings suggest that materialistic and outwardly performative attributes are framed as necessary prerequisites for one to be perceived—and to self-identify—as a “Big Girl” in Lagos.

The survey attributes appear to reinforce rather than resist the prevailing stereotype of the Lagos “Big Girl” as flashy, tech-savvy, and materially expressive. With “latest phone,” “costly hair,” and “lavished lifestyle” cumulatively dominating perception, the stereotype of consumerist femininity is not only echoed but amplified. This supports Entman’s (1993) theory that media frames function by “defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies.” In this case, Family Feud Nigeria’s audience, by identifying such traits, participates in the problematisation of femininity as a performance of wealth. The absence of alternative attributes like “education,” “work ethic,” or “leadership” from the frame implies selective visibility. The equation here is: if  $F(\text{media}) = \{\text{material traits}\}$ , and  $A(\text{audience affirmation}) \Rightarrow F$ , then  $\text{Stereotype} = F \times A$ , with amplification as the result. This also resonates with NAN’s (2023) study, which showed that over 80% of women wear wigs not for convenience alone, but as social armor in a beauty economy. The findings here confirm a stereotype that is deeply entrenched in both media and audience psyche, and without critical discourse (e.g., in comments or shares), resistance remains latent or absent.

Family Feud Nigeria’s portrayal of the “Big Girl” archetype through its survey segment does more than mirror public opinion; it shapes it. According to Framing Theory, repeated symbolic associations—especially those broadcasted to large audiences—do not just reflect reality; they construct it. The overwhelming visibility of attributes like “latest phone” and “lavished lifestyle” suggests a media environment in which femininity is increasingly defined through consumerist expression. The engagement metrics further reinforce this: with 35,900 views but only 9 shares and 14 comments, we observe a form of passive consumption ( $V \gg I$ ), where visibility  $\neq$  interactivity. This reflects what some scholars call a “scroll culture” (Wohn & Bowe, 2016), where media content is seen but not meaningfully interrogated. In Okonjo and Udoh’s (2022) terms, this creates a feedback loop where the media’s consumerist scripts are absorbed, normalized, and recycled into public consciousness. The logic here is simple but profound: If repeated exposure  $\Rightarrow$  belief formation, and belief formation  $\Rightarrow$  behaviour normalization, then media representation has direct perceptual consequences. Family Feud Nigeria, thus, acts as a low-intensity yet powerful instrument of social pedagogy, silently instructing viewers on who and what qualifies as a Lagos “Big Girl.”

## **Conclusion**

The framing of “big girl” in Lagos within popular media, as exemplified by Family Feud Nigeria, offers more than entertainment—it reflects a mediated reconstruction of gendered identity where social worth is increasingly measured through material optics and performative femininity. This trend, sustained by audience validation and algorithmic visibility, signals a deeper cultural negotiation in which consumerism, beauty ideals, and urban aspiration converge to redefine womanhood in the public imagination. Left unchecked, such representations risk narrowing the horizon of gender possibilities, legitimizing superficial valuations, and entrenching socio-cultural hierarchies that marginalize nuance and authenticity. What is at stake is not merely how women are viewed, but how they are taught to view themselves.

## **Recommendations**

1. Media content producers should intentionally diversify representations of women beyond consumer-based identities, portraying substance, intellect, and agency.
2. Schools, NGOs, and media institutions should incorporate structured media literacy education to empower audiences—especially young girls—to interpret media critically.
3. Public broadcasters and content platforms should encourage formats that invite viewer dialogue, enabling audiences to challenge or redefine limiting stereotypes.

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