

Research Report

Pilot Study: Audience Perceptions and Effects of The Entertainment-Education Drama “The Station”



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Introduction

A Narrative Engagement/Entertainment-Education Approach to Understanding the Influence of “The Station”

Regions struggling with democracy are often characterized by conflicts between different ethnicities and religions. Likewise, in these countries marginalized populations are often easily manipulated by leaders over in struggles for power. To support the building of a functioning society, dramas focused on peaceful problem solving and more productive communication (i.e., fictional television or radio series containing pro-social messages) are broadcast in conflict regions to promote attitudes and behaviors that are supportive of social stability and progress, such as individual responsibility, good governance and tolerance.

These dramas present pro-social messages in a narrative format that is entertaining and potentially engaging. Viewers choose to watch these programs for entertainment reasons. They do not expect to be educated or persuaded by the program. Nonetheless viewers learn from fiction. They may adopt and internalize the beliefs and attitudes that are implied in the story because they identify with the characters who experience conflict and find resolution. In fact, fictional stories have some crucial advantages over other rhetorical forms of communication that have an explicitly persuasive intent (such as educational material used in schools, overtly persuasive appeals, news reports). Because audience members are not aware of the pro-social intent of the program, instead seeing it as entertainment, they are less likely to react by critically evaluating the program’s intention or content. Further, stories that tend to not explicitly state the key message, allow and encourage the audience member to draw their own guided conclusions, attitudes, values and actions. These conclusions are based on the program’s plots and themes and characters’ situations and behaviors. Thus, audience members feel as though they have drawn their own conclusions rather than being forced to accept someone else’s.

The greatest advantage of stories over other rhetorical forms is that stories have the power to engage. They transport viewers psychologically into the world of the story, allow them to understand the emotions and motivations of the characters, and make them care about the characters’ fates. This type of narrative engagement has important consequences for the effects of stories. Being highly engaged in a story facilitates changes in attitudes and beliefs, as

numerous empirical studies have shown. So far, narrative engagement has not been part of research on entertainment-education dramas. The approach we are taking in this study is to make use of narrative theory to advance our insights into the viewing experience and effects of entertainment-education dramas.

Background to the Drama

The Station is an intended-outcome, character-driven television drama series that is set in a fictional Nigerian television news station. Intended-outcome drama is defined as “the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms and change overt behavior” (Singhal & Rogers, 2004, p. 5).

The show primarily tells the story of Aisha, a forty-ish married Hausa-Fulani woman who against all odds establishes a news television station. Her story is one to which many professional Nigerians can relate – a business owner trying to fulfill her vision against the backdrop of harsh and corrupt financial environment. As the central character Aisha is a persuasive role model for upward social and economic mobility, moreover she is a template for a modern and transparent Nigerian journalist. Aisha and the other characters offer the viewer and community an image of self and collective efficacy.

Through *The Station*, SFCG aims to provide alternative solutions to the problems Nigerians have identified as impediments towards the attainment of peace and unity by highlighting these critical issues. It aims to stimulate debate and encourage viewers to look for the much-needed solutions themselves. Moreover, by depicting positive role models and realistic consequences of these behaviors, the show allows viewers to draw their own conclusions because they relate to the characters who are delivering the messages.

Selected Themes

Five main themes of the series were identified that frequently determine story plots and often runs in parallel story plots to reinforce the message. The themes are:

1. Conflict Resolution (violence vs. dialogue)

Definition/Key message: Violence doesn't solve underlying problems; dialogue helps.

Episodes in series: A hopeless situation and powerful adversaries who will not listen fuel violence. (e.g., violent student protests prevent education conference in episode 1; conflicts between different ethnicities in episode 1; violent protests against Niger Delta polluters in episode 5).

2. Empowerment

Definition: “a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations” (Gutierrez, 1990, p. 149).

Key message: Do something to be taken seriously and force those in power to listen to you. Exercise your rights, make yourself heard. Summon energy and courage to break out of oppressive social structures and male dominance. (Authority and social pressure vs. individual rights and dreams)

Episodes in series: Early marriage is shown in Aisha's life, in the fate of Mustapha's sister and in an interview with woman who was married early; another plot line is concerned with Sidi's father and his need to control her. Youth empowerment is visible in Aisha's son and his protests against exam malpractice.

3. Tolerance & Mutual Respect (ethnicity, religion)

Definition: Tolerance: “Acceptance for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own”; Mutual respect: “A proper regard for the dignity of a person”

Key Message: Our diversity is an asset not a liability (tolerance and respect vs. prejudice and ostracism)

Episodes in the series: Examples are the discussion between Yinka and Azuka in episode 1; news team efforts to get both sides to dialogue during inner-city ethnic clash in episode 3.

4. Social responsibility:

Definitions: an individual can be said to be responsible for morally good deeds that benefit the wider community only when they are carried out voluntarily and with full cognizance of the relevant circumstances and personal repercussions. Volition here is not synonymous with arbitrariness. It essentially refers to the fact that the individual is aware of what an act entails and carries it out willingly (Aristotle, 1995).

Key message: Individuals, as members of a community/society, have responsibilities for the good of the larger group. (Individualistic behavior vs. social benefit)

Episodes in series: Examples are: Azuka gets bribe offer for footage of beating, the sister gets a bribe offer for the treatment of brother's illness due to battery factory; both put public over personal benefit.

5. Social/Political Engagement

Definition: The capacity and ability of citizens to scrutinise public institutions and hold them to account.

Key message: Apathy doesn't solve anything. When something affects oneself, one should take action to resolve it.

Episodes in the show: Examples are the pollution through the factory in episodes 5 and 7, protest against exam malpractice, report rape, go to doctor and confront the boyfriend about STD.

Goals of the pilot study

The study investigates the viewing experiences that are enabled by the *The Station* as well as its effects on viewers' attitudes and beliefs. Ultimately, the main hypothesis of the study is that the more viewers engage with the entertainment-education program, the more they will adopt attitudes implied in the series. This can tell us about how viewers engage with pro-social narratives, about possible strengths and weaknesses of programs, and how to better achieve entertainment-education goals through narrative in the future.

The method is an experiment designed to test effects of the series, and an exploration of the viewing experience that captures perceptions of the show and the characters. The experiment is based on a comparison of two groups. Participants in the experimental group watch all 13 episodes of the series. They respond to a questionnaire measuring story-consistent attitudes. The control group participants complete the same questionnaire before watching any episodes of the program, thus providing a baseline.

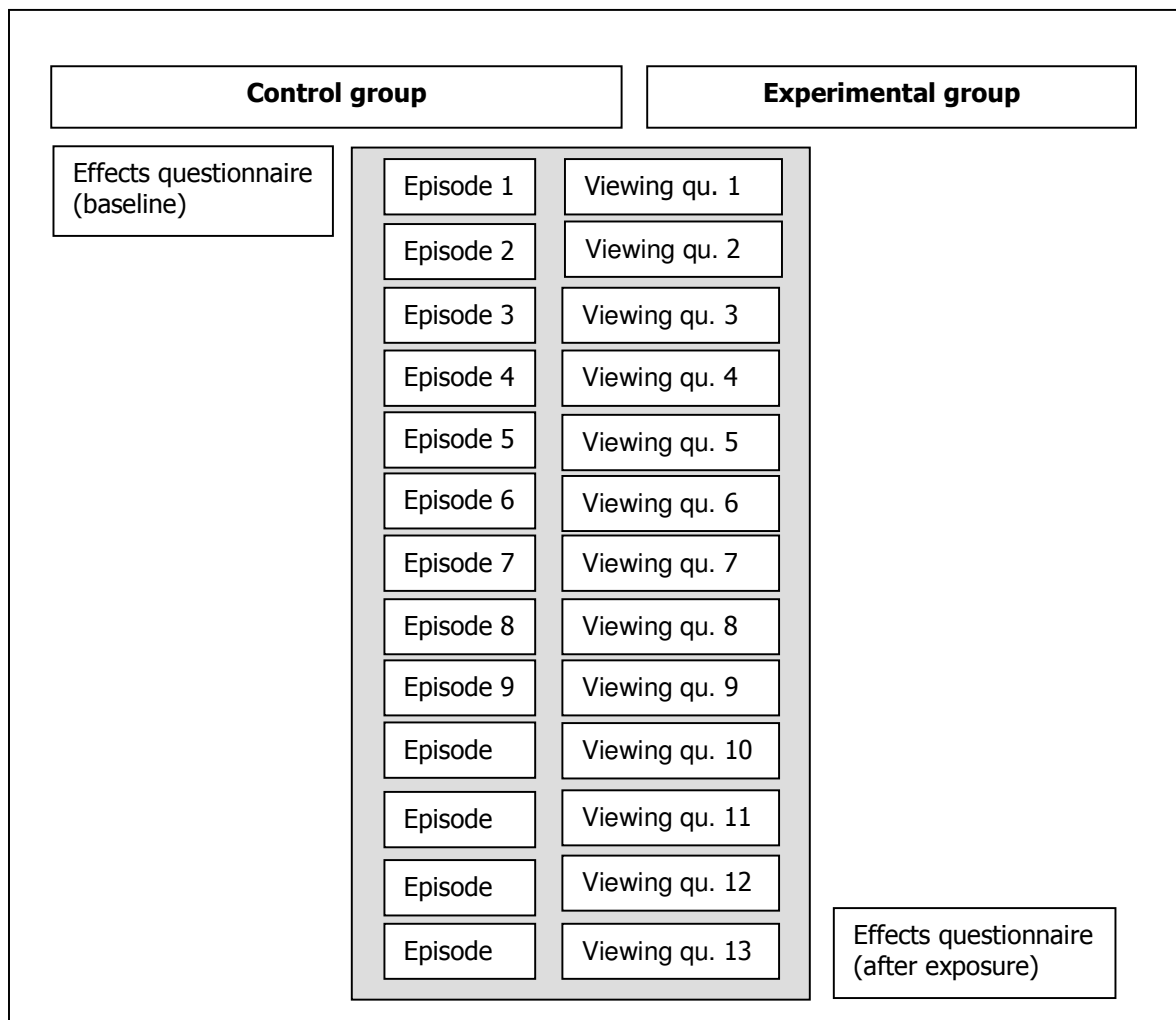
To draw conclusions about effects, we will compare the post-viewing attitudes of the experimental group participants with the pre-viewing attitudes of the control group participants. It is expected that the attitudes of the experimental group participants, who filled out the questionnaire *after* watching the series, will be more consistent with series' themes than those of the control group participants who reported their attitudes before watching the series.

Another goal of the study is to test a new set of instruments for future use in evaluations of educational drama. First, the methods used are quantitative and may exactly determine the amount of effects a series has. Second, we integrate measures of viewing experience that may be helpful in exploring the potential of a series to engage large audiences. Third, we use an innovative method for measuring attitudes. These are the narrative vignettes that may be more appropriate for conducting research about educational narratives, because they provide concrete, emotional situations, not unlike the drama itself, to which respondents may react.

Study design and method

As outlined before, one group of participants provides the baseline for attitudes – the baseline that should be present when people do not watch the series. This is the control group. The second group is exposed to all 13 episodes of the series; attitudes are measured with a questionnaire after exposure. This is the experimental group. The control group is also exposed to the whole season, but attitude measures are taken before exposure (see Figure 1). The effects questionnaire for both groups is identical.

Figure 1: Design of the Study



After each episode, all participants receive another short questionnaire that assesses viewing experience; this instrument is the viewing questionnaire. Thus, the study generates one set of data

for each person that captures attitudes, and 13 sets of data that describe the viewing experience for each episode.

This report will cover only the effects questionnaire and viewing experience data for the first and the last episode, as data entry at this time is not yet finished.

Recruitment of participants and procedure

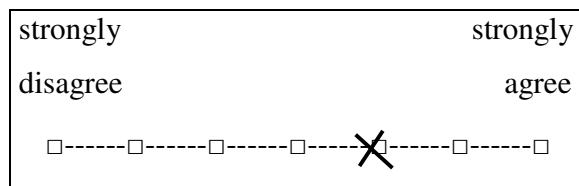
The study was conducted at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria, and supervised by Yusuf Atang. Five research assistants recruited student participants who received a financial reward for attending the 13 sessions. Each day, two experimental sessions were offered to participants, one at 9 am and the second at 4 pm. Students chose the sessions according to their schedule. The episodes were shown in a University classroom; none of the sessions was attended by more than 50 participants. Data were collected in June and July 2009.

Measures I: The effects questionnaire

The effects questionnaire includes attitude measures for each theme we identified as being key messages of the series. Two types of measures for attitudes were used: The first, conventional attitude scales, were specifically constructed to capture the messages of the show. The second, the narrative vignettes, were short stories based on the show's themes, which contextualize attitudes with concrete situations, people, motives and justifications. The vignettes were not about the programs themselves, and could be understood by anyone regardless of whether they had seen the program or not. The reason for using this innovative method is that most of the messages put forward by educational dramas are hard *not* to agree with, because the messages often represent general values. On an abstract level, everybody endorses these values, but in real life situations they are often hard to pursue. Thus, making the attitude measures more complex and closer to real life should improve the way in which we can observe effects of educational series.

Attitude scales

Each of the scales consists of 4-5 statements that covers a topic identified a key theme in the show. Respondents indicated their answers on 7-point scales, for example:



Below are all items used in the effects questionnaire.

Theme 1: Preference of dialogue over violence

- Sometimes violence is the best way to solve a problem or a dispute.
- There is always an alternative to violence when solving problems.
- Sometimes there is no point in talking because force is the only effective strategy.
- It's always better to discuss things calmly before resorting to violence.
- No matter how severe the problem it can be solved through dialogue.

Theme 2.a: Youth empowerment

- If an important decision needs to be made, all family members including the youth should be heard.
- Youth should never be told to do something without an explanation.
- Youth should be allowed to make their own choices when it comes to important life decisions.
- Sometimes, parents are right to force their decisions on their children.

Theme 2.b: Gender empowerment

- Women should have a say when important family decisions are made.
- Girls should have as much right as boys when important decisions are made about their own lives.
- Women should have the right to fulfil their own dreams in life, regardless of what their family wants.
- Even if it takes a lot of courage, sometimes women and girls must go against their family's will.

Theme 3: Acceptance of the Other

- People of different ethnicities would get along better if they made more of an effort to understand each other.
- Even if people are from different religious groups they have more in common than they think
- In a peaceful community it is necessary that different groups respect each other.
- Some differences between groups are just too difficult to overcome.

Theme 4: Social Responsibility

- It's important that people think of the community before they think of themselves
- In the end self-interest destroys the community
- People shouldn't harm the community for their own benefit
- Sometimes there is no real harm in taking a bribe
- People should speak out when they know of injustice even if it serves them or their group/family.

Theme 5: Civic/Political Engagement

- In Nigeria too few people are politically active.
- We should engage more politically to be able to make the government's work more transparent.
- We need to be more active politically to influence political decisions.
- People like me cannot have any influence on the government anyway.
- Apart from voting there is no other way to influence what the government does.
- Sometimes politics are so complicated that someone like me does not understand what is going on.
- Even people who are not in a position of power can bring public attention to crimes and corruption.

Answers on the 7-point-scales were coded from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). For each theme, the mean score of all relevant items was computed; this value is the scale for the respective attitude with lower values representing low levels of attitudes and higher values representing high levels of attitudes.

Narrative Vignettes and response options

The narrative vignettes also deal with the most recurring themes in the show: Violence and dialogue, empowerment, mutual respect, and social responsibility. The vignettes are short stories that present similar plots as the ones used in *The Station*.

The story lines of the narrative vignettes were determined by the researchers; the stories themselves have been culturally adapted, elaborated and written by professional script writer Singto Saro-Wiwa from SFCG.

Participants were instructed to read the story. Each story ended with a situation in which the main character needed to decide how to act. Respondents were asked to choose a course of action from four response options. The responses were constructed in a way that scaled agreement to the show's messages: The very first response option was designed to represent an action strategy opposed to the show, the last one was supportive of the show's message, and the two other options expressed more moderate positions in between. Thus, the options can be regarded as a 4-point-scale and it was used accordingly in data analysis (1 means no support for the show's message, 4 means full support of the show's message).

The stories in the four vignettes were connected to each other through plot and characters. Below are the four vignettes and the response options as they were used in the study.

Narrative vignette 1: Violence and dialogue

A small group of recent university graduates from diverse backgrounds has decided to form an organization that will provide job application and interview training for young adults. Their experiences in the post-graduate job market have taught them the importance of having the necessary skills and attitudes that will impress potential employers, and they want to ensure that, in the future, their peers will not have to suffer the same hardships that they went through before landing their respective jobs. After several months of preparation and fundraising in their community, they have managed to raise enough money to set up their enterprise. Excited and optimistic about this challenging project, they approach Ladipo, a junior staff member of the local government council to ask him the best way to proceed with registering their initiative, and begin operations. Ladipo is impressed by their selflessness and ambition, and praises them for wanting to help their younger counterparts succeed. To reward their spirit of service, he offers them free use of a small office space in what appears to be a government-owned office complex in town, and encourages Akin, the group president, to let him deposit their money in a government-backed business account until they have completed their budget. The group feels it's a wise suggestion, and collectively agree to let him safeguard the money. They then regroup to finalize their budget and organizational plan.

Soon, the graduates are ready to withdraw some cash so they can buy stationery to print their training kit. Kunle and Taiwo, the group treasurer, go to the bank early one morning to make the withdrawal, but are told upon arrival that there is no money in their account. Bewildered, they hurry to Ladipo's office to get some answers. His secretary won't allow them into the office, saying that he is busy with government affairs, but they insist on waiting until he agrees to see them. However, Ladipo

doesn't come out of his office until 5pm, when everyone is going home for the day. To their surprise, he walks straight past them to his car without saying a word! By the time they catch up to him, he is already getting in the driver's seat, preparing to drive off. Kunle hurriedly explains the situation to him, and asks him what happened. As Ladipo starts his car, he responds, dismissively, "Well, we had to use the money to pay for the office rent, electricity, the security guard...as you know, those things don't come cheap."

Kunle is shocked. "But you said you were giving us the space free of charge!" he sputters. Taiwo chimes in: "We were counting on that money to start our operations this month!"

"You should be grateful that you even have a place to work from," Ladipo retorts. "Do you know how many people wish they could have an office in the area we gave you? And you got it at a discounted rate. So I suggest you learn some gratitude, and stop biting the hand that feeds you!" With that, he drives off, leaving Taiwo and Kunle standing agape in the parking lot.

Later that evening, Kunle calls an emergency meeting to inform the rest of the group what happened that day. All the members feel cheated and angry: Ladipo had promised to give them the office for free; how could he have reneged on his word so completely, and without informing them? Where were they supposed to get money to replace what was taken? How were they going to get their training kits printed? How was their project going to survive such a monumental setback? As the discussion continues, their frustration grows and tempers are rising quickly. Their voices are getting louder and louder, as they grow angrier.

"What are we supposed to do now?" someone shouts.

Response options:

What should the youth group do?

1. Request a meeting to present their concerns to a larger group within the local administration, in spite of previous efforts to discuss the issue with Ladipo peacefully.
2. Break local administration windows or burn the office to send a message
3. Blockade the entrance to the local administration to prevent any work from being done until they got their money back
4. Inform the larger community that their money was stolen by the local administration to sensitize people about the injustice (make it public)

 Narrative vignette 2 : Empowerment

After the meeting breaks up, Taiwo goes home and discusses the day's events with her father. He is just as shocked as she was to hear what Ladipo did, and vows to help her resolve the issue.

“He can't be allowed to get away with this,” he says. “Don't you worry, my daughter. First thing in the morning, I'm going down to the council to have a word with him.”

“Thank you, Daddy,” says Taiwo, “but I think we should be the ones to sort out this mess. It's our group after all, and the council has to learn to take us seriously. How will we ever learn to handle other complex issues that arise if we can't take matters into our own hands?”

Taiwo's father answers, “Taiwo, some problems are better left for experienced people to solve. This isn't a reflection of your ability to manage your organization, but believe me when I say that you are not as well-equipped to handle this very delicate matter as I, your father, am.”

Taiwo opens her mouth to say something else, when he interrupts: “Leave it for now, all right? Go and get ready for bed. Tomorrow morning, we'll go down to the council together and see what we can do.” Taiwo isn't completely satisfied, but at least her father said “we”, which she takes to mean that he is willing to let her be a part of finding the solution. Reluctantly, she goes to bed, but first she texts Kunle to let him know what time he should be at the government council office.

The next day, Taiwo and her father arrive at Ladipo's office, where they are met by Kunle. This time, they aren't kept waiting for long: after the secretary informs Ladipo that Taiwo's father has accompanied the two young people, he asks her to usher them in immediately. However, as they start to walk towards Ladipo's office, Taiwo's father turns

back to his daughter and Kunle, saying, “Wait here,” before he strides into the office and shuts the door behind him. Though they aren't pleased by this, there is nothing the pair can do. They go back to the reception, and wait.

Before long, Taiwo's father and Ladipo emerge from the office, laughing and shaking hands. Taiwo's father thanks the man, who graciously accepts, and bids him farewell before re-entering his office. As he approaches the reception, Taiwo's father gestures to the young people to get up and follow him to the car. They obey, but it is clear that they want to know what's going on, what happened in Ladipo's office. They all get in the car, and leave the council premises. As he drives off, Taiwo's dad proudly turns to his daughter, saying, “So you see, I told you that this was a dispute best left to adults to settle. Had we left it to you, you may never have gotten any of your money back.”

“You got the money back, Daddy?” Despite her initial objections to having her father involved, Taiwo is overjoyed.

“Of course! But not all of it. Mr. Ladipo has kindly agreed to return half the funds, and says it will be back in your account by the end of next week.”

As quickly as their excitement grew, so was it deflated. “Half? But why only half, sir?” Kunle interjects.

“Yes, if they can return half, why not all? After all, that wasn't our agreement with them in the first place,” continues Taiwo.

Taiwo's father is losing his temper. “Taiwo, I've told you time and time again to stop arguing with your elders! Now, like I said, half is what you're getting, and half is what you're getting. End of discussion!”

 Response options:

What should the daughter do?

1. Accept resolution and not disrespect the father's decision
2. Accept the resolution but request further explanation from the father
3. Suspend decision until further explanation about the money is volunteered
4. Refuse the resolution and demand to renegotiate with the two men because no one from the youth group was involved in the discussion

 Narrative vignette 3 : Mutual respect

At the next group meeting, Kunle solemnly shares the disappointing update. Almost immediately, the group erupts in indignation. Emeka, a particularly spirited member of the group, is the first to lose his cool as he starts hurling out all kinds of insults.

“Why are you people even surprised? Is Ladipo not an Ijebu man? The first thing these people do when they see money is start plotting how to spend it, even if it’s not their own! Greedy bastards, all of them!”

Several members of the group are taken aback by this outburst. A number of them are indeed of Ijebu origin, but there are other ethnic groups represented in the youth group as well. In any case,

the question of ethnicity has never been an issue before, so many of them are wondering why Emeka would choose to raise this matter now, and in such a hot-tempered manner. Taiwo is the first to gather herself and responds, “Emeka, what does being Ijebu have to do with this? I am Ijebu, and the treasurer of this group on top of that; have I ever stolen money from you?”

Before Emeka can respond, another member, Amina, jumps into the argument: “So what? There’s a first time for everything. How are we to know that you and Kunle didn’t conspire to take half the money to share between yourselves? Now you’re coming to tell us stories...”

Response options:

What does the youth leader Kunle say? He says...

1. “How dare you call me greedy bastard, you are no better?”
2. “Ok then! These people are working against our group. If you are against us you can leave”
3. “Ok I know we’re different but we all want to get our money back, right?”
4. “We are a student group and ethnicity has nothing to do with it!”

 Narrative vignette 4 : Social responsibility

Ladipo is sitting quietly in his office, alone. He is deep in thought, musing over the events of the past few days. A big part of him feels guilty about what has happened between him and the youth group, and he is wondering how to handle it. He, of course, remembers that he promised them the office space free of charge; it was the least he could do, he thought, for such an inspirational group of young people. When they initially approached him, he remembers saying to himself, “How often do youth in Nigeria remember to help those less fortunate than themselves, and before they even have much to speak of themselves? I must find a way to help them out, in any way possible.” And as for the money, he thought it was a good idea for them to keep their hard-earned cash in a safe place, rather than risk losing it in theft at the office or anywhere else. He wouldn’t have made the suggestion to put it in the bank for any other reason.

As he continues to reflect on the matter, Ladipo grows increasingly distraught. I am an honest man, he thinks, I know I am an honest man. But how could I even begin to tell them what really happened to their money?

The truth of the matter is that the local government has been sapped of funding for several months. In fact, the only reason that there was any office space available at all was because his deputy had abandoned the space when he officially resigned to start a brickmaking business and finally start making a living for himself and his family. Ladipo

himself had not been paid for four months, and the financial strain on his family was starting to show in several areas. The final straw had come a few days after he opened the bank account for the group, when he got home to find his eldest son, a 10-year-old, in tears. Apparently, the boy had been sent home from school because his fees were more than three months overdue, and he was told not to return until the school had received payment in full. Ladipo had been overwhelmed with pity and shame for the boy, promising him fervently that he would do everything in his power to ensure that he went back to school very soon. How embarrassing it must have been for the boy, he had thought.

And how embarrassing for him. Every other month, it seemed, he was going from one relative to another, asking them to loan him varying amounts just so he could provide the basics for his family. It was getting harder to face them, particularly since it was obvious they were all affected, in one way or another, by the economic strain of the nation. Even those who were relatively well off were growing scornful of him and his constant begging, wondering why he couldn’t leave the civil service and begin a more lucrative career. Some of them had started to tell their security guards to stop him at the gate and inform him that they weren’t home, whether he could see their cars parked in the driveway or not. But he wondered how to handle the situation with the youth group now.

Response options:

How should the local administrator react?

1. He feels insulted that the youth challenged him and sticks to the story that the youth group was supposed to pay for office space and other costs
2. He feels sorry but recognizes that’s how the system works
3. He apologizes and asks his family to help him reimburse the youth group so he doesn’t lose face
4. He apologizes, pledges to return the money and asks his superiors for an improvement regarding his salary payments.

Measures I: The viewing questionnaire

The viewing questionnaire was completed after each episode and contains measures of narrative engagement, enjoyment, perceptions of realism and character liking.

Narrative Engagement expresses how much viewers immerse themselves in a story, emote with the characters and focus on the plot. The measure used here was developed and tested across several studies in the US and Germany (Busselle & Bilandzic, in print). It consists of four dimensions (see below) that are captured by three items each. Respondents evaluate each item on a 7-point-scale. A minus in brackets after an item indicates that the item is reverse-coded; in data analysis, scales were recoded in a way that a higher value represents a higher intensity on the dimension. The three items on each dimension were used to create a mean that represents the dimension; also, an overall mean for narrative engagement was computed with all of the items.

Narrative Understanding

- At points, I had a hard time making sense of what was going on in the program. (-)
- My understanding of the characters is unclear. (-)
- I had a hard time recognizing the thread of the story. (-)

Attentional Focus

- I found my mind wandering while the program was on. (-)
- While the program was on I found myself thinking about other things. (-)
- I had a hard time keeping my mind on the program. (-)

Narrative Presence

- During the program, my body was in the room, but my mind was inside the world created by the story.
- The program created a new world, and then that world suddenly disappeared when the program ended.
- At times during the program, the story world was closer to me than the real world.

Emotional Engagement

- The story affected me emotionally.
- During the program, when a main character succeeded, I felt happy, and when they suffered in some way, I felt sad.
- I felt sorry for some of the characters in the program.

Enjoyment expresses the degree to which a viewer likes the program. It is measured with two items (see below; 7-point-scale); again, a mean was computed with the two items. Also, an open-ended question asked for reasons of enjoyment.


- How much did you enjoy this program?
- Would you tell a friend about the show?

Realism concerns the extent to which the viewer thinks that the show is similar to real life. Three items were used and collapsed into a mean score.

- The issues that come up in programs like *The Station* are very similar to issues in the real world.
- The personal problems characters have are very similar to the problems people have in the real world
- My world is very similar to that in the show

Then, the viewing questionnaire also asked about *liking the characters* of the show. To remind viewers of the characters, we placed a photo of the character next to the 7-point-scale that respondents used to give answers from “don’t like him/her at all” to “like him/her a lot”. Figure 2 shows an example of the instrument.

Figure 2: Instrument for Measuring Character Liking

	<p>Johnny Adukawa:</p> <p>I don't like him at all □-----□-----□-----□-----□-----□-----□-----□ I like him a lot</p> <p><i>Why/why not?</i> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
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Finally, respondents were asked to name one message or idea that they have taken away from the episode they had just seen. Respondents could write down the answers in their own words.

On a methodological note, all scales used in both questionnaires received an immense amount of “strongly agree” levels, so most means score in the upper third of the scale; the consequence is that variance is reduced and many statistical procedures do not work, for example, all methods based on correlations. Another consequence of this is that reliabilities of all scales suffered, because if variance is reduced in this extreme way, reliability measures are drastically affected.

Results

Sample. In all, 126 people participated in at least one part of the study. Of these, eight questionnaires contained only missing data and were eliminated from the data set. Seven respondents completed merely the final effects questionnaire or otherwise could not be matched with preceding data and were also eliminated from the data set. This left 111 respondents in the sample, of which 62 belonged to the experimental group and 49 to the control group. However, not all of these respondents participated in all parts of the study. Of the 62 people in the experimental group, 53 completed attitude scales and narrative vignettes, 33 saw the first episode and 57 saw the last one. Of the 49 people in the control group, 47 completed attitude scales and narrative vignettes, only 20 saw the first episode and 27 saw the last episode. All parts were completed by 33 people in the experimental group and 20 in the control group.

For most analyses, it was not necessary to have all sections completed for each respondent, and therefore, sample size was sufficient for most of our goals.

Exposure to show before. 19 people in the sample indicated that they had seen the show prior to the experimental viewing; however, there was no difference in narrative engagement or enjoyment, so these respondents were left in the sample.

University. Three quarters of our respondents were students at the University of Ilorin; most of the remaining students did not indicate their university.

Religion. 41% were Muslim, and 39% Christian, the rest of responses was missing.

Ethnicity. Most respondents belong to the Yoruba (75%), 20 % again are missing, and the remaining six percent indicated Ebira, Ghanian, Kogi and Nigeria/Ebira.

Gender. 23% were female, 57% male, and the remaining 21% did not indicate gender. There were no differences in narrative engagement or enjoyment, so analyses were not split by gender.

Age. Two thirds of the respondents were between 20 and 25 years old; the average was 22 years.

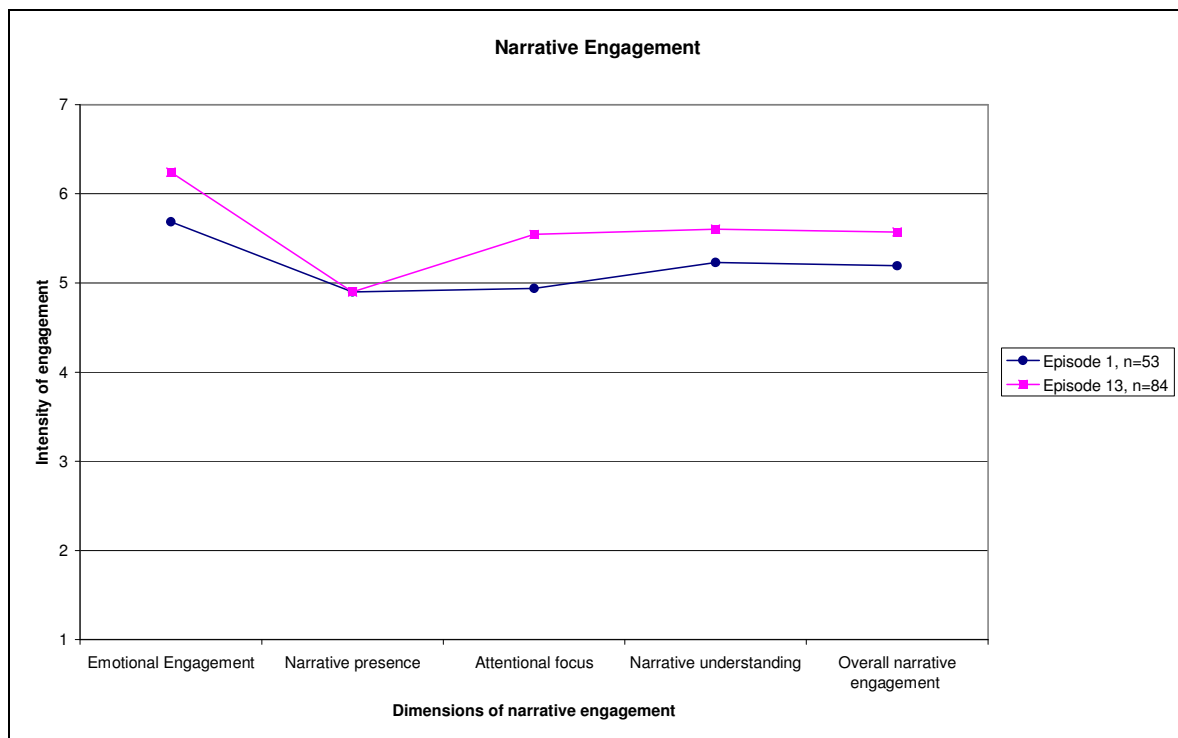
VIEWING EXPERIENCE

1. Engagement

First we compare how narrative engagement in the first episode differs from narrative engagement in the final episode.

All ratings of narrative engagement were very high, and for two dimensions and the overall narrative engagement even increased after the 13th episode (see Figure 3). Dimensions of narrative engagement that increased significantly were Attentional focus (Wilcoxon-Test, $Z=-2.70$; $p < .01$) and Emotional Engagement (Wilcoxon-Test, $Z=-2.02$; $p < .05$); also, the overall score increased (Wilcoxon-Test, $Z=-2.71$; $p < .01$).

Figure 3: Comparing Narrative Engagement in the first and the last episode



This means that viewers grew more attentive and more emotionally invested in the course of the 13 episodes. For the goals of an educational drama, this is beneficial: People watch the drama on a voluntary basis - if they get engaged more in the course of time, they are also motivated to

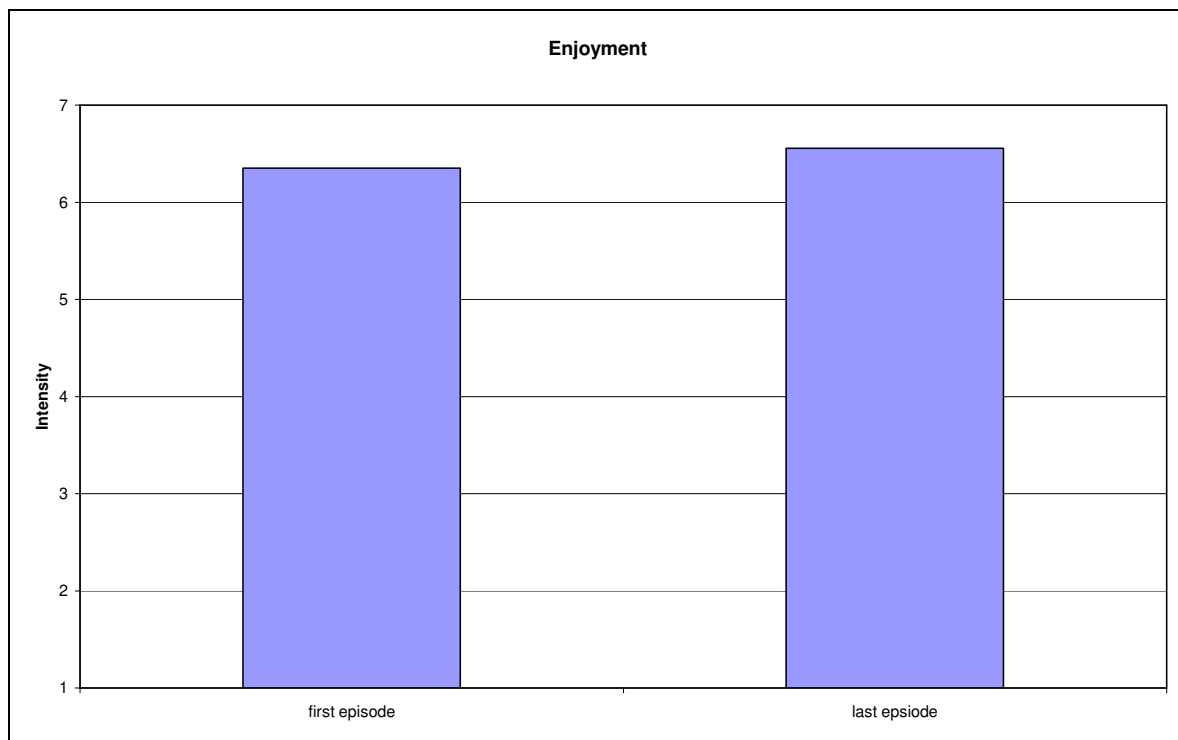
watch the next episode and to arrange their schedules to fit in watching the show. Thus, an increase in narrative engagement is functional for the educational goals as it facilitates exposure to the show – which is the precondition for any effects that the show may have.

It has to be noted, however, that the show achieved exceptionally high narrative engagement scores during the first episode already – most of the means of narrative engagement score around scale point 5 or higher (on a scale of 1, the minimum, to 7, the maximum). Judgments were very homogenous – most of the respondents gave ratings on the upper tier of the scale. This means that the respondents agreed that the show is very captivating. While this is a positive result for the show, because it serves as an indicator for its popularity, virtually no respondents answered in the lower ranges of the scale, which poses statistical problems. Our hypothesis was that viewers would learn more from the show if they are more engaged; if everyone is engaged in the show, we cannot test this hypothesis, because we lack a comparison with people who are not engaged. This will become apparent in the results concerning the effects of the show.

2. Enjoyment

Another indicator for the viewing experience is how much people enjoy the show. Similar to narrative engagement, mean ratings of enjoyment were very high: For the first episode, the mean was well above 6, and approached the maximum even more in the final episode (see Figure 4). The difference is not statistically significant – this means that the increase is not substantial or pronounced.

Figure 4: Comparing Narrative Engagement in the first and the last episode



We also asked for an explanation of the enjoyment judgment in an open-ended question. The answers were grouped into categories, presented according to their frequency and illustrated by examples from the respondents. We only present results for the first episode here; explanations after the 13th episode were very short and stereotypical, and many respondents used phrases from the other questionnaire scales. Consequently, answers are not very informative. Respondents may have tired at this task in the course of the time.

Realism was the most frequent answer. It refers to the extent that the show resembles or mirrors real life events and contexts, and rings true to viewers.

Examples:

- “I enjoyed it because that is what happens in the real world”
- “Mainly because it's something that's really happening in the world of today”
- “It sort of shows the trend of things in Nigeria as a country and it expresses hidden opinions”
- “I enjoyed it very much because it is showing the true life story of the Nigerian education”

Insight was mentioned almost as often as realism and refers to some change in thinking evoked by the show, or a better understanding of what is going on in the real world through the show.

Examples:

- “I enjoyed it because it makes me understand that violence should be settled peacefully”
- “The program teaches much about what is happening now in the country, and I know they give solution to it”
- “I enjoyed the program because it tells us the best way of settling conflict or differences which is dialogue”
- “It brings light into my mind on how to settle a case or present a case officially”

Relevance for one's own life was stated as reason for enjoyment by several respondents. It describes that viewers can relate to show content because they find themselves in a similar situation or have similar problems.

Examples:

“It relates and affects me directly as a student”

“I felt so much concerned due to being a student like them”

“Because I am a student and it is related to what is going on/what will soon happen in my school.

Anolono once said that if you want peace, you must be ready for war.”

Interestingly, in the last example (“you must be ready for war”), the respondent re-interprets the message of the show considerably and associates a fairly aggressive strategy with the show that actually endorses peaceful dialogue over any kind of violence. This phenomenon that viewers focus on a piece of the narrative message (existence of violent student protests) rather than consider the whole narrative message (students gain nothing from violence) and re-interpret the whole message is, from the data we have, a rare phenomenon, which nonetheless exists. This phenomenon will appear again when we present findings on the perceived message.

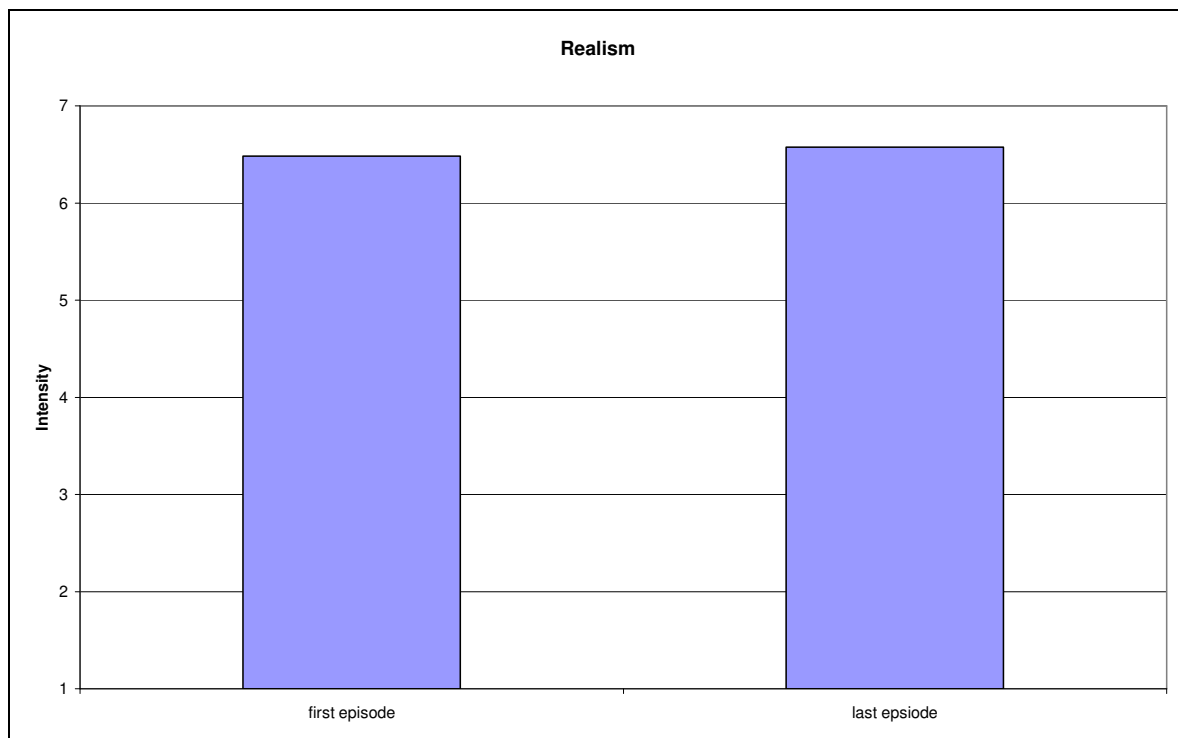
Finally, *agreeing to the show's message* was also mentioned a few times as a reason for enjoyment, e.g. “it tells me that violence will lead us nowhere; it was educational”.

3. Realism

Another indicator for viewing experience is the degree to which people think that the show represents real life and the fictional events could happen like this in reality. Realism is often related to enjoyment, and our respondents mentioned realism often to explain their enjoyment. Levels of perceived realism were exceptionally high for both episodes, comparable to those of narrative engagement and enjoyment. The very slight increase from the first to the last episode was not statistically significant.

The high levels of realism support the results from the open-ended question about enjoyment – realism was an important component of the viewing experience and made the show credible to the audience.

Figure 5: Comparing Perceived Realism in the first and the last episode

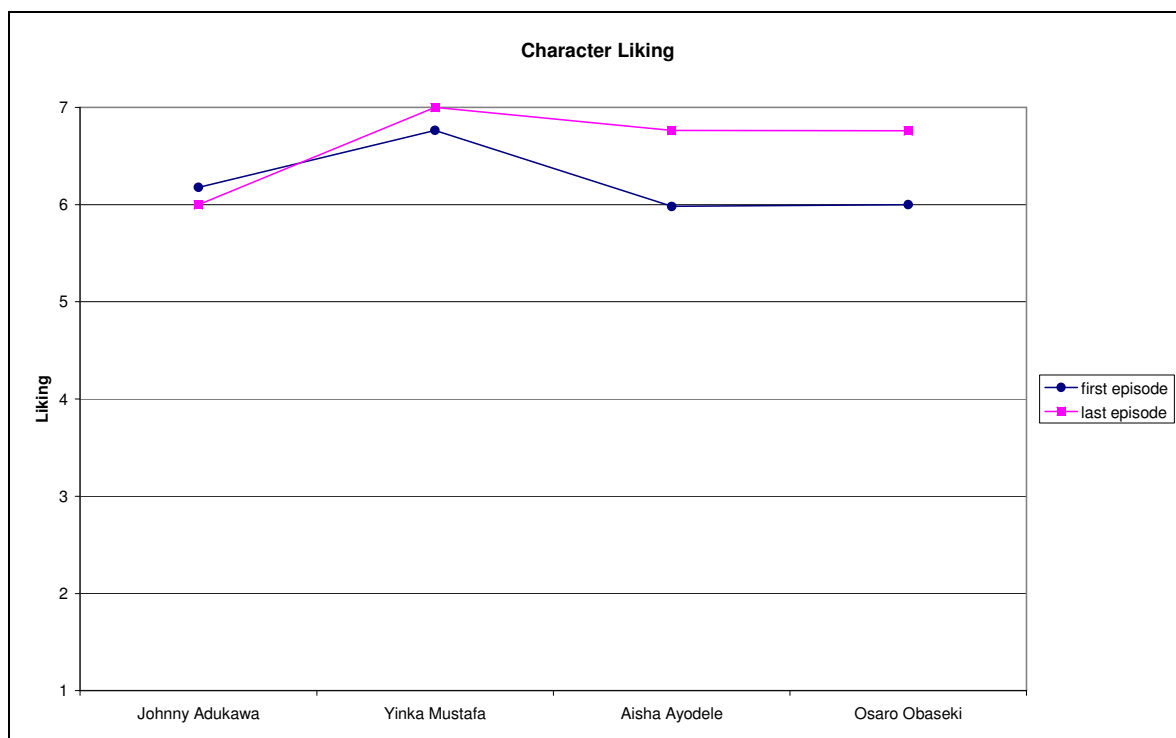


4. Character liking

Characters may serve to gain viewers' commitment to a show. They are vehicles for emotion – viewers identify with them, feel for them, care for their fate and admire or despise them. Over time, familiarity with the characters may create an impression of a relationship in the viewer, and additionally tie the audience to the show. Thus, likable characters are crucial for the success of a serial television format, and especially an educational drama.

In this regard, “The Station” achieved remarkable levels of character liking. We asked respondents to rate their liking of the four lead characters of the show that remained important throughout the 13 episodes. As shown in Figure 6, liking of all four characters was at or above scale point 6 (of 7) after the first episode, and, for the lead characters Aisha and Osaro, even increased further after the last episode (Aisha: Wilcoxon-Test, $Z=-2.31$; $p < .05$; Osaro: Wilcoxon-Test, $Z=-2.56$; $p < .05$).

Figure 6: Comparing Character Liking in the first and the last episode



5. Perceived message of the episode

After each episode, respondents were asked to summarize what they thought was the main message of the episode. In the first episode, 52 people provided an answer, in the last one 81. Again, we categorized responses and listed the most frequent ones with examples.

First episode

- *No violence, but dialogue.* Most people recognized the intended message of the first episode. Here are typical examples of answers:
 - “for every issue or problem that arises, peaceful resolution must be the first consideration”
 - “My understanding of the story that violence cannot solve the problem”
 - “the show basically tries to implore the youth to appreciate peaceful resolution of conflict, dialogue instead of riot or violent means of getting whatever they want”
 - “the message I got from today's episode was that violence is not the way forward to peace, only dialogue and reconciliation are the way forward.”
 - “we should learn to fight in peace not in pieces because the end of the fight will bring sorrow to the people e.g. killing or injuring the innocent ones”

One of the responses shows that viewers re-interpret the message according to their own opinions, e.g. “not always you can solve the problem through violence but sometimes you do solve it through violence” – a phenomenon we encounter before when reasons for enjoyment were listed.

- *The issue of education important:* Several respondents mentioned that education as an issue should be tackled by the government:
 - “Please, I want our Ministry of Education to work hard on the issues of education”
 - “Something must be done on the issue. High expenses in education”

Last episode

- *Honesty:* Again, the majority of people identified the intended message of the episode, be honest under all circumstances:
 - „Honesty pays no matter how hard it is“
 - “It is actually good to be honest in everything one does because of the future, no secret for life.”

- “No matter how difficult it is telling the truth that's important. Johnny later reveals the secret behind his results; they are all fake.”
- “We should at all times be honest because our actions today are a result of yesterday's actions.”
- “The message is it is good for one to be sincere in everything we are doing and our integrity counts a lot in everything we do in life”.

In contrast to the first episode, the last one seems to be much more ambiguous or more diverse regarding its main message. The following answers received attention by several respondents:

- *Know your goals*
 - “Learned to know what you really want and achieve it with clear mind”
 - “Today's play taught us to be focused on what we are doing”
- *Don't lose hope*
 - “Anything we do have to be faithful and never lose hope”
 - “My message is that wherever we find ourselves we should not lose hope”
- *Cooperation is important*
 - “It is good for an organization to work together in unity”
 - “A single tree cannot be a forest as the saying goes, two heads are better than one”
- *Youth empowerment*
 - “A father should not impose all instruction on his child, especially a girl child”
 - “Dictating for children in parent dictating for children is not good at all, it leads to nothing”

Here are some examples of items mentioned by single respondents to demonstrate the diversity of answers:

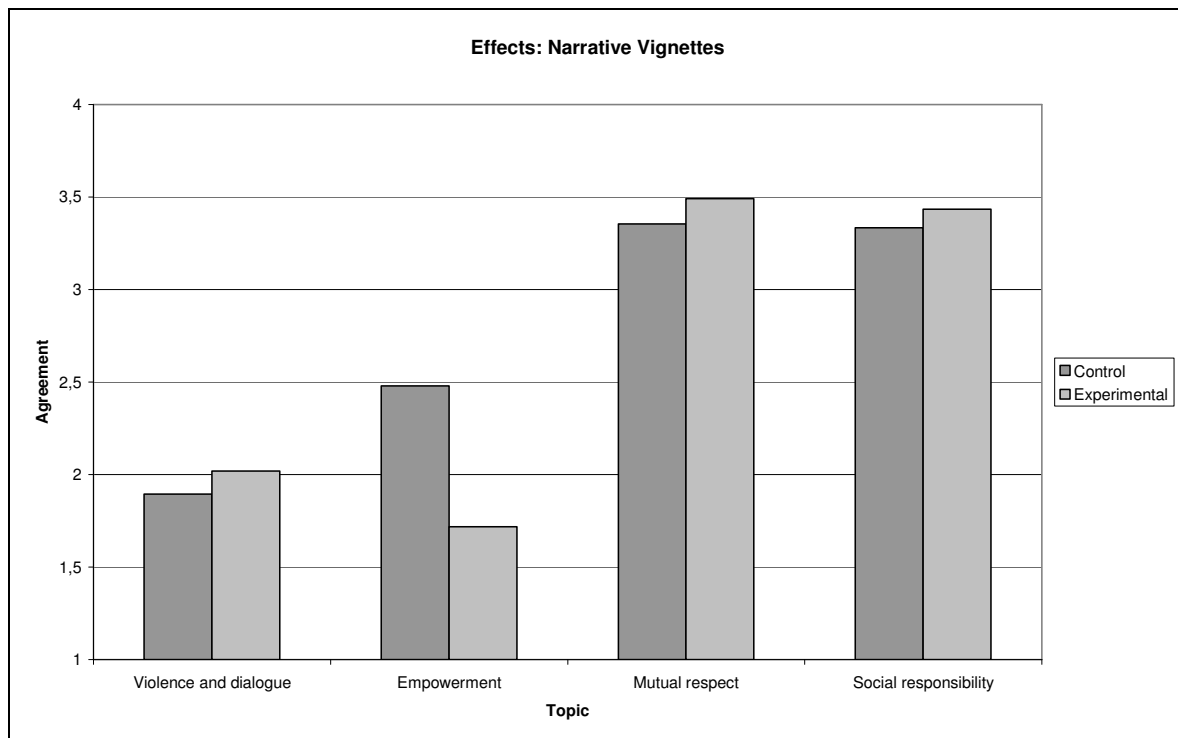
- *Be yourself* (I learned that you should always be yourself at every point in time)
- *Care for others* (Today's story is not really clear but I learned to be my brother's keeper; to always to my north in any condition)
- *Responsibility and effectiveness* (How to be creative in my own little way and expose the corruption of all the evil ones in the country and also help the needy in my own little way)
- *Hard work* (When the people work hard the successes will come one day)

EFFECTS

1. Narrative Vignettes

To explore effects of the series, we first analyzed the differences in answers to the narrative vignettes between control and experimental group. Three of the four vignettes show that the experimental group had higher values (see Figure 7), but none of the differences was significant. The only difference that is significant is that of empowerment (Mann-Whitney-U-Test; $Z = -3.57$; $p < .001$), but the experimental group (the one that was exposed to 13 episodes of the show before answering) actually had lower agreement rates than the control group. As this was not the case in the conventional scale measures (see next page), the narrative vignette may have provoked a more conservative reaction from respondents.

Figure 7: Comparison of control and experimental group: Narrative Vignettes

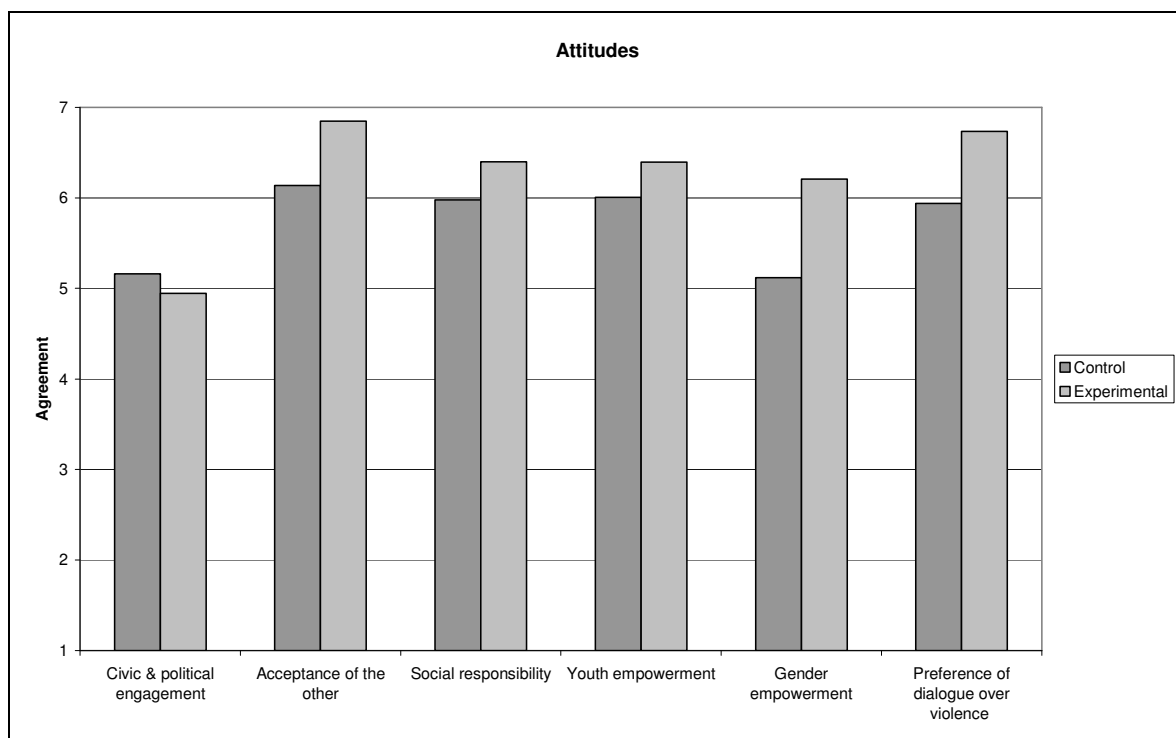


2. Attitude scales

In contrast to the narrative vignettes, the conventional attitude scales did find significant increases after exposure to 13 episodes in all but one case: Civic and political engagement did not change with exposure. All other attitudes were significantly reinforced by exposure: Acceptance of the other (Mann-Whitney-U-Test; $Z = -5.52$; $p < .001$), social responsibility (Mann-Whitney-U-Test; $Z = -2.79$; $p < .01$), youth empowerment (Mann-Whitney-U-Test; $Z = -2.08$; $p < .05$), gender empowerment (Mann-Whitney-U-Test; $Z = -4.49$; $p < .001$) and preference of dialogue over violence (Mann-Whitney-U-Test; $Z = -3.83$; $p < .001$).

This means that the conventional attitude scales indicate an effect of the educational drama in the desired direction, while the narrative vignettes do not. This may be attributed to some extent to the contextualized way the vignettes present a case, which is much closer to real life and real decision situations, and consequently harder to accept than in abstract scales.

Figure 8: Comparison of control and experimental group: Attitude scales



3. The role of narrative engagement

Finally, we want to test the hypothesis that narrative engagement facilitates effects on attitudes. For this analysis, we only use data from the last episode, because too many cases for narrative engagement in the first episode are missing to make a valid analysis.

For this analysis, we created differences between the attitudes of the experimental group (measured after exposure) and the baseline in attitudes measured by the control group before exposure. Positive differences indicate a gain in attitude (as intended by show) after watching the show. Then we split the sample in two equal parts, representing people with high and low engagement scores. Note that due to the immensely high scores on narrative engagement, the low group was only low compared to the high group. In fact, the scores for the low group are still fairly high. Then we looked at the means of changes in attitude in the high and low engagement groups. If our hypothesis is correct, people in the high groups of narrative engagement should have more pronounced differences.

However, as Figures 9 and 10 show, the differences between high and low engagement groups are generally minimal and statistically significant in only one case: In the narrative vignette about empowerment high engagement viewers experienced a less pronounced drop in attitudes compared to the low engagement group (Mann-Whitney-U, $Z = -2,16$; $p < .05$). This means that while all respondents lowered their attitudes as a reaction to watching the series, the viewers who were more immersed dropped their attitudes to a lesser extent.

Figure 9: Comparison of high and low engagement groups: Narrative Vignettes

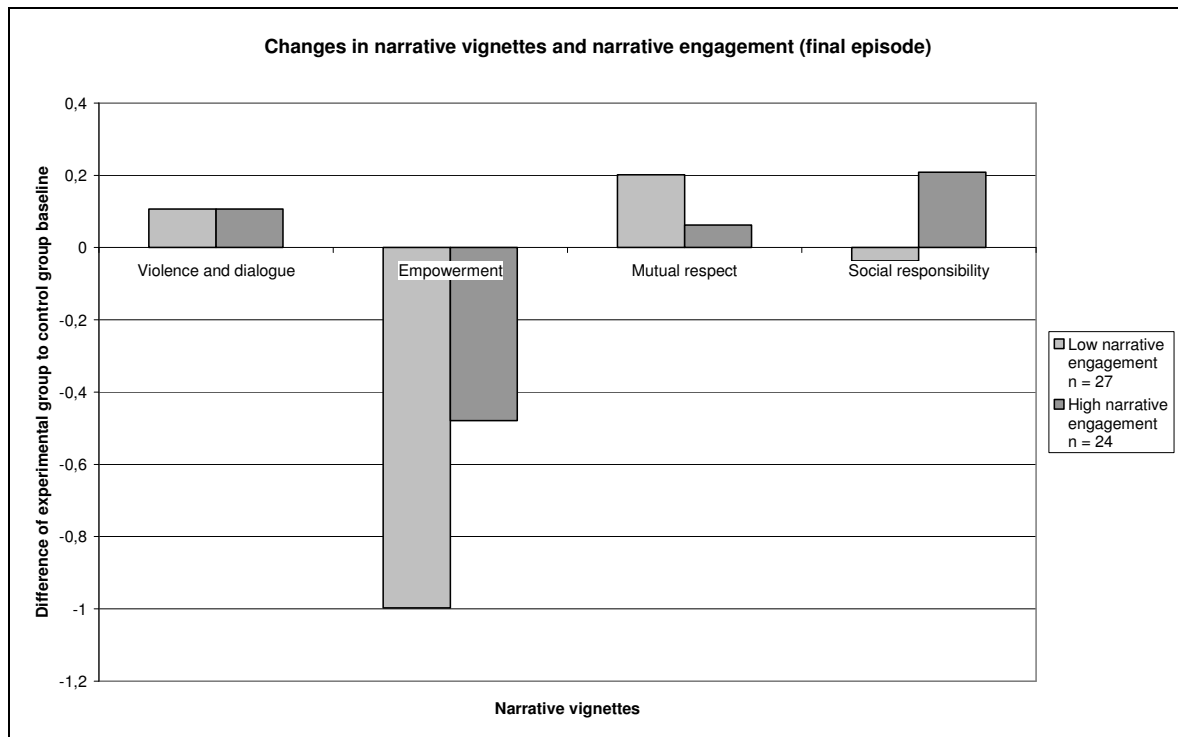
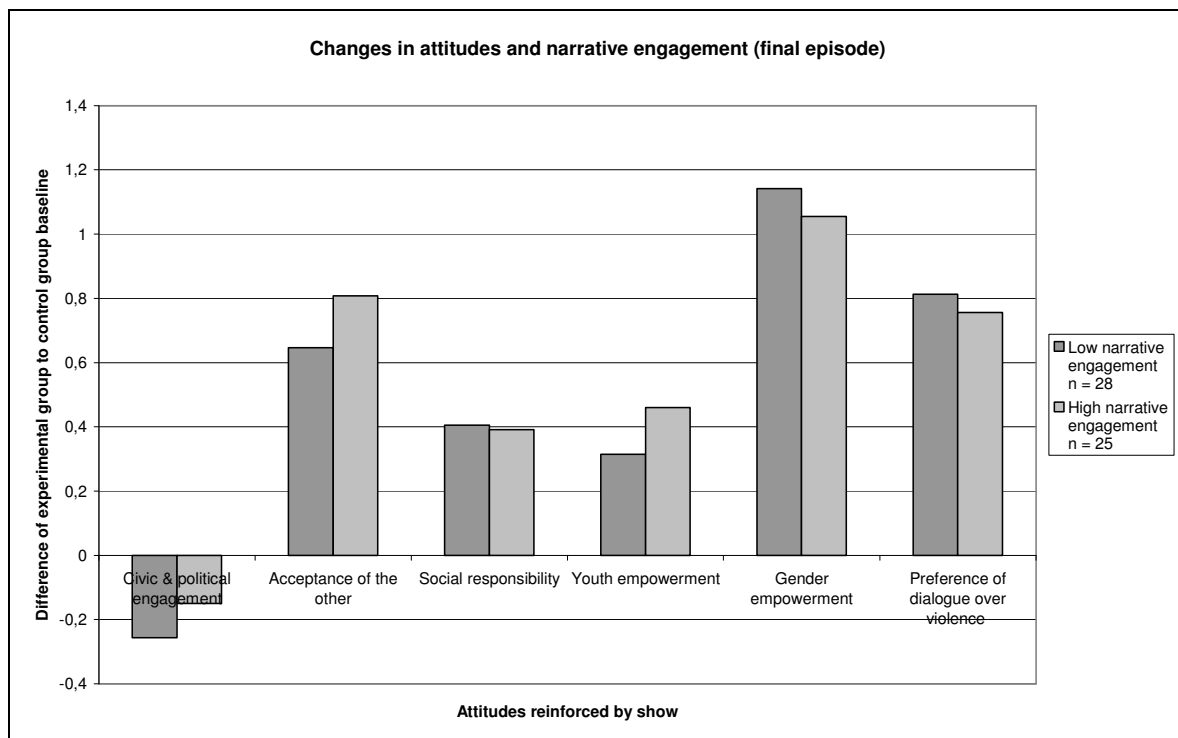


Figure 10: Comparison of high and low engagement groups: Attitudes



Reflections on the method and recommendations for future research

The result of this study suggest that *The Station* was widely accepted among the Nigerian student audience: Narrative engagement, enjoyment, perceived realism and character liking were all intensive, as the remarkably high scores show. This is positive for an educational drama that needs audience popularity in order to effectuate social change. With such intensive viewing experiences, viewers are motivated to watch the next episode of the show and discuss the show with other people. The educational message does not seem to overly bother the audience: Many participants explicitly indicated the educational nature of the show, its relevance for their own lives and its realism as reasons that they enjoyed it.

We also found indication that watching the series reinforces attitudes implied by the show – five attitudes were improved after watching the complete season 1 (more specifically, the experimental group that rated attitudes after watching the whole season scored higher than the control group that rated before exposure): Acceptance of the other, social responsibility, youth empowerment, gender empowerment, and preference of dialogue over violence were increased. Thus, the most important attitudes targeted by the educational goals of the series were achieved. The effect sizes are small, but considering that exposure time and frequency were rather low in this study using only one season, larger effects could not be expected.

This effect on attitudes was only apparent in the conventional attitude scales, but not in the narrative vignettes. While it is tempting to dismiss the new method of vignettes, and accept the results produced by the conventional scales, because they evidence the desired outcome, a few issues need to be taken into account. First, attitude scales are abstract in the sense that they lack context and justifications for behavior that goes against socially desirable conduct. For example, it is easy to say that one should talk rather than use violence, but in everyday life, the decision how to act is embedded in an emotional situation; people justify a violent action in a specific case and of course, the decision most often is not a rational, deliberate one, but an automatic, spontaneous reaction. This means that someone who states in attitude scales that she or he prefers dialogue over violence may not act on this attitude in real life. So the fact that we did find changes in attitude scales, but no change in the narrative vignettes, may be a reflection of this, as the vignettes are much closer to emotionally heated, complex real life situations. Changes

observed in the attitude scales are nonetheless valid – the series does activate relevant attitudes in the audience. For an educational program to be effective however applying the views that were activated by the series is of crucial importance – viewers need to be able to integrate what they have learned into their everyday life, in all its complexities and irrationalities. To capture the latter, narrative vignettes may be useful after all. The method may be more predictive of actual behavior. Of course, this hypothesis needs more exploration in studies that look at actual behavior.

So far, we thought of narrative vignettes merely as substitutes for attitude scales. It makes sense though to use them in a different way to get more qualitative data. As the vignettes present ambiguous and controversial situations, they also may be used to initiate and stimulate conversations in focus groups or educational contexts such as classroom discussions. As conversations among viewers may indeed be helpful for reinforcing and appropriating the education message, stimulating this process of talking about conflict situations may be a valuable goal in itself.

A surprising finding in this study was that narrative engagement did not mediate the effect of the series: People who were high and low in narrative engagement changed their attitudes in similar ways; engagement did not facilitate effects – contrary to our expectations and contrary to a number of studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of engagement. However, levels of narrative engagement were so high in the sample that there was literally no one who did not report being engaged. If all participants were engaged, no effects of engagement on the outcome can be visible. However, the fact that *all* participants were highly engaged, and watching the show strengthened attitudes among *all* participants, is an indication that engagement matters.

While this is an explanation of why engagement did not show any statistical effect, we need to explore in more detail why engagement was rated so highly in the first place. One explanation, of course, is that the show found an exceptionally open-minded audience that was enthusiastic about the show. Still, in a sample, there should be at least some variance in the ratings – and in this sample, variance is very restricted, which means that people answered questions very similarly to each other and only in the high range. This is not only true for narrative engagement, but also for all other scales. There are several explanations for this phenomenon.

The first is that people did not really read the questions thoroughly, but answered in a quick and stereotypical way, for example, by always checking the same scale point. There is some evidence in the data that this happened at least to some extent in our study. Several of the items in the questionnaire were reverse-coded, that is phrased in a way to express the opposite of the scale. Those items were answered in a much more diverse way than the regular items, but still a considerable portion of respondents agreed to these items even though agreeing was inconsistent with the rest of their answers. This may suggest that the questionnaires, even though we made an effort to keeping them short, are still too long for respondents to keep up their interest and patience.

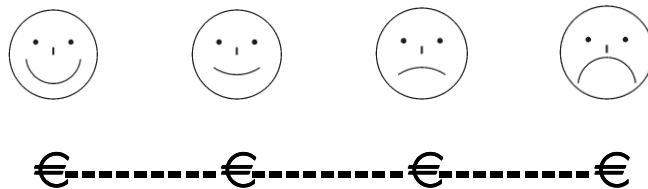
The second reason why people may have answered unanimously positive is a sponsorship effect. Respondents received financial compensation for their participation and may have responded more favorably knowing it was in the interest of the sponsor. This is not a conscious process, but happens without respondents lying or even being aware of sugar-coating their answers. However, without a financial reward, recruitment of participants would not have been possible.

The third reason may lie in difficulties in dealing with the scales. We used standard 7-point-scales, with labels for the scale points at each end only (agree/do not agree). It is not implausible that respondents were unfamiliar with this type of scale; they may have ignored the scales points in the middle and preferred the extreme ones.

From the experiences in this pilot study, we may derive the following recommendations for future research:

- Future studies should shorten the instruments for viewing experience and effects to avoid fatigue in respondents. For narrative engagement, for example, the use of single dimensions should be considered rather than the overall scale.
- Rather than evaluating every single episode, samples of viewing experience may be taken every other or every third episode. An alternative would be to have respondents assess viewing experience of the whole series.
- Long blocks of statements should be avoided as they facilitate stereotypical answers on scales.

- Finally, using a shorter scale may be advisable to increase the intuitive understanding of how to use it. A four-point-scale may be useful and at the same time fulfill the requirements to obtain good data quality. Visual descriptions of each scale point may be useful too, for example (Jäger & Bortz, 2009):



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