

Parenting and Mass Media as Determinants of Cultism among Students of Delta State University, Delta State

Abstract

This study examined parenting, and mass media as determinants of cultism among students at Delta State University. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The study was a survey and it adopted an ex-post facto correlational design. The population comprised of 5,272 students from the three campuses of the university (Abraka, Oleh and Asaba). The sample size of 600, comprising of 240 males and 360 females were selected from the students for the study, using the multistage random sampling technique. The research instrument used for data collection was a validated self-constructed instrument titled "Parenting, Mass Media and Cultism Scale" (PMCS). The reliability indices for the sub instruments were parenting $r = 0.65$, mass media $r = 0.55$, and cultism 0.53 but had an overall reliability coefficient of 0.79. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical tool was used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that parenting had no significant relationship with cultism while Mass Media had the greatest influence (4.1%) in determining students' involvement in cultism at Delta State University. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others, that government should create an agency that will censor the type of films and images produced by the members of Nigeria Movie Producers Association (NMPA) before selling them to the public and an awareness campaign against the negative impact of cultism in the media should be organized by corporate bodies, government, parents, counsellors and other individuals.

Introduction

Universities have always been seen all over the world as learning citadels and this also applies to all Nigerian universities until recently, they became centres of violence because of unending cultism. The early days of formal education was usually a great privilege for a student who gains admission into one of the few universities in Nigeria and their parents looked forward to it. Those were the days when the universities were receptacles for high ideal and enviable academic tradition. Things have changed today as it is now a fact that, studying at the university in Nigeria today, is a nightmare and a necessary evil with crimes waxing stronger and stronger due to the hydra-headed monster called cultism. The practice of cultism has been seen as one of the biggest challenges bedeviling Nigerian universities for years. Chike and Ezeali (2018) in

referring to cultism on campus noted that Nigeria universities now offer a B.Sc. in violence and an M.A in cultism. They also observed new stories of devilish acts and several ill-activities perpetrated each day by cult members.

Chile et al, (2020) asserted that cultism in Nigeria's education system can be traced back to 1952 when the first African Nobel Laureate, professor Wole Soyinka and his peers, popularly known as the G7 founded the Pirates Confraternity at the University of Ibadan. The objectives of the group at that time were to fight non-violently, but intelligently and effectively against the imposition of foreign cultures, to revive the age of bravery, and to find a lasting solution to the problems of white - superiority. Just how this cult spread to the other universities in the country or how, according to a Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) report, 33 cult groups sprang up from the social clubs remains a puzzle to many. Soyinka and his colleagues did not know that they were making history, neither did they realize that student and indeed, youth radicalism was being formed and given a boost towards the unleashing of a national vanguard.

The word cultism originated from the latin word "occulere" which denote something hidden or concealed. Cultism is an evil association that is deadly engaged in ritual practices and imposes bondage on members. Thereby, denying them of their personal liberty but often clash with the values of everyday life in school and the society at large (Chike & Ezali, 2018). As a social crime whose activities are usually laden with blood, this kind of gang behaviour is practiced and carried out by individuals with the same ideological orientation (Thompson, 2015). Ajoku (2020), argues that cultism is a societal evil, practiced spiritually by a group of people whose activities, ideas, ethical conduct, names, meeting days, membership, admission policy, initiation formalities as well as mode of operation are kept secret with their activities having negative effects on both members and non-members alike.

Universities are offshoots of the various macro societies and reflect society's increasing use of violent methodologies to resolve frustrations and conflict situations (Ndu, 2018). It has caused great concern among parents, university administrators, policy makers, researchers, and educational planners. Wole (2019) sees the recent campus cultism as criminal gangs like armed robbery gangs, assailants, drug syndicates, advance fraud syndicates, mass suicide, pedophilia and even terrorist's attack. They clearly show no regards for their own lives or lives of others, which calls many to question their motivation in committing such heinous crimes. Academic programmes and calendars of many universities have been disrupted by their activities which are not limited to campuses and schools but rather, now affects the entire society. Cults in Nigerian universities, secondary and primary schools, now exist in many forms bearing various names, some mostly male while others mostly female students. Their names are as frightening as their operations and their activities are worrisome and that these groups now have become tools for power, revenge and status is not new to anybody (Paddy, 2019).

Parenting which is defined as the process of caring for a child, involves complex activities which includes specific behaviours that should be worked individually and collectively to influence the development of the child in all aspects of personality and value system (Sonia and Amar, If this must be achieved, parenting will require time, self - discipline, patience, and determination on the part of parents or parenting partners (Gupta & Mechtani, 2015). Therefore, it consists of influences from parents, guardians, parental styles, family type and the family structure that may promote cultism. Some parental characteristics, parental socioeconomic status, family processes and dynamics may also encourage cultism. Cultic behaviours such as drinking, fighting, bullying, rape, stealing, killing, kidnapping, abduction, blackmail, to mention a few usually may result from early socialization pattern at home. They could manifest in homes with

serious intra-parental and inter-parental conflicts, but Bernburg (2019) reported that the nature of the family structure does not influence cult membership. Ugoji and Okoh (2015) also, revealed that behaviours in families particularly codes of good conduct, discipline, and parental monitoring influence children throughout their youthful period, hence they avoid cult activities. Ndu (2018) emphasized that distress in families because of divorce and broken home not only lead to poor monitoring in child upbringing but may increase cult involvement. In a related study, Depestele (2017) found out that the influence of parents who are in secret cults have a mean of 2.99, broken homes and aggressive traits of being sadists had mean scores of 2.76 and 2.73 respectively. This means that parents who are in secret cults influence their children to join cult groups. Another research by Akinnawo et al (2020) reported that most initiated members of cult groups come from average and wealthy families due their parental influence in the society, (political affluences and influences) where some of them are used as thugs during politics.

Mass media are communication channels such as radio, television, the print media, and other electronic devices that may disseminate dangerous information that influences students negatively to join cult groups in Nigeria (Paddy, 2019). The importation of violent films which are shown on televisions and the internet, as well as everyday brutalities of Nigeria life such as cult clashes, assassination, and public violence, with all the gory details and photographs, merge the frontiers of fantasy with reality on the youths (Chike & Ezali, 2018). It is possible that many of these delinquent students may merely act and imitate what they have seen on video, television, or internet, in their cult groups (Zhang et al, 2017). They may model acts of violence thereby absorbing the idea that it is an appropriate and acceptable behaviour. Media portray images, films and video games that justify crimes including but not limited to robberies, murders, kidnappings, ritual killings, car-jacking and other violence (Amenaghawon, 2016). It is argued

that while the media provides a form of entertainment, relaxation, and a form of acquiring knowledge, it also can contribute to the changes in behaviour, attitude, and character of an individual. The mass media campaign and their reports against cultism and violent activities, could also stem the tide of students' involvement in schools. Olashore et al (2017) finding indicates that regular viewers of crime show, are more likely to hold negative attitude which finally they transfer to practice thus, influencing the student's decision to join cult groups and this is the Catharsis Model. But in contrast, two other studies with video games and violent films have added credence; Chike and Ezali (2018) found that effects of violent video game played, to vary from player to player with some players showing effect, most players had no effect, and a small group also became more aggressive. Also, recent study by Wole (2019), revealed that adolescent boys commonly reported feeling calmer and less angry after violent video game play and used violent video games to reduce aggression and so not prone to cultists. This is the Stimulation Model which argues that viewing expressions of hostility reduces aggression because a person who watches filmed or televised violence is purged of his or her aggressive urges.

Statement of the Problem

Delta State University has been known to provide the social atmosphere which allows students, lecturers, administrators, and academics alike to enjoy peaceful co-existence and excellence in academics until cultism reared its ugly head and posing a serious threat to the realization of this noble objective. It is common to see students (male and female), conduct themselves as tout do, parade themselves quite exuberantly, very daring, aggressive, adventurous, having satiable desire for recognition, power, and success with little respect for lives and properties. Many students have lost their study opportunities, died, harassed, maimed,

raped, threatened, extorted, attacked, robbed and so on. They now engage in illicit sexual escapades, drug abuse, arson, blackmail, and other inhuman practices outside the campus. So many factors have been identified as determinants of cultism and include availability of cults in schools, fame students feel they get, power, academic failure, freedom, protection and so on. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the role of parenting and mass media in determining cultism among students in Delta State University, Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between parenting, mass media and cultism among students at Delta State University, Delta State.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. is there a relationship between parenting and cultism among students in Delta State University, Delta State?
2. is there a relationship between mass media and cultism among students in Delta State University, Delta State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. there is no significant relationship between parenting and cultism among students in Delta State University, Delta State.
2. there is no significant relationship between mass media and cultism among students in Delta

State University, Delta State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to establish the relationship between parenting, and mass media on cultism among students in Delta State University, Delta State.

Research Design

The study employed an ex-post facto correlational design to examine the relationship between the variables of parenting, mass media and cultism among students at Delta State University which already occurred. It generally involves the collection of data from a defined population while describing the variables being studied but does not manipulate the characteristics of the human participants.

Population and sample

The target population of this study comprised of 5,272 students from three out of ten faculties from the three campuses of the Delta State University, Delta State. Thus, Abraka, Oleh and Anwai campuses which represents the three senatorial districts of the State. A sample size of 600 students comprising (240 males and 360 females) being 11.4% of the sampled population of 5,272 students as at 2019/2020 academic session were selected using the multistage sampling technique.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for the study is the self-developed questionnaire titled Parenting, mass media and Cultism Scale (PMCS). The instrument consists of two sections. Section “A” is meant to elicit demographic data of the students while section “B” consists of fifty-five items on parenting, mass media, and cultism among students in Delta State University. A four-point rating scale was adopted with the following options of responses: Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. Specifically, it was given to three experts in Measurement and Evaluation who helped to remove and correct ambiguities from it and suggestions made were incorporated into the instrument before subjecting it to reliability test.

Reliability of the Instrument

The Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to determine the consistency of the test items and the reliability indices for the sub instruments are parenting $r = 0.65$, mass media $r = 0.55$, and cultism 0.53 but had an overall reliability coefficient of 0.79 .

Method of Data Collection

The researcher visited the three faculties in the university and obtained permission from the Heads of Department before administering the instrument to the respondents with a research assistant she trained. A total of 600 copies of the questionnaire were administered and all retrieved by the researcher immediately after they had been duly completed by the respondents.

Method of Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics of simple percentage, frequency tables and mean were used in answering the research questions while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PMCS) was used to test if the singular relationship between parenting, mass media, and cultism among students is significant to determine acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis.

Results Presentations

Research Question 1: What is the relationship of Parenting and Cultism in Delta State University, Delta State?

Table 1

Correlation Analysis of Parenting and Cultism in Delta State University, Delta State.

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Sig. (2-tail)
Parenting	600	0.004	0.00	0	0.923
Cultism	600				

Table 1, indicated that the r-value of 0.004 signified a relationship between parenting and cultism in Delta State University. This showed a positive but not significant since the relationship between the two variables is very low at $p < 0.05$ ($R = 0.004$, $N = 600$, $p = 0.923$). Parenting, therefore contributed 0% to cultism in Delta State University. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between parenting and cultism among Delta State University students was accepted.

Research Question 2

What is the relationship between mass media and cultism in Delta State University, Delta State?

Table 2

Correlation Analysis of Mass Media and Cultism in Delta State University.

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Sig.
Mass Media	600	0.205	0.042	4.2	0.000
Cultism	600				

Table 2 revealed that the r value of 0.205 showed the extent of relationship between mass media and cultism. The result indicated a positive relationship as mass media contributed 4.2% to cultism in Delta Stat University. Therefore, mass media was significant at $p < 0.05$ ($R = 0.205$, $N=600$, $p=0.000$). The null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between mass media and cultism among Delta State University students was rejected.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Parenting, Mass Media and cultism in Delta State University, Delta State.

Variable	N	r	r ²	r ² %	Decision
Parenting	600	0.207	0.043	4.3	Positive Relationship
Mass Media	600				
Cultism	600				

Table 3 revealed that the r-value of 0.0207 is the extent of relationship between parenting, mass media, and cultism. The coefficient of determination was 0.043 and the amount of contribution of parenting and mass media to cultism was 4.3% showing a positive relationship. The result indicated that parenting and mass media contributed to cultism in Delta State University

Discussion

Result in table 1, showed that there is no significant relationship between parenting and cultism among students at Delta State University, Delta State. This shows that parenting to a large extent does not influence cultism. The reason for this finding could be that these students

are in the university now and may value suggestions from their peers more than their parents. To them, their peers appreciate the changing nature of the world systems, accept them, understand their plight and seem to have more impact on their behaviour. This finding agrees with Bernburg (2019) and Ugoji and Okoh (2015), who reported that students on campus create their own separate world using coded slangs, body language and expressions that can only be understood by their peers. Another reason may be that they disregard parental counsel which they term “old school”. This is at variance with the works of Kalil and Ryan (2020) and Akinnawo et al (2020) who attested to the fact that family structure, poor parental supervision, ineffective communication, conflicts, and psychological pressures from students’ own homes, leads to antisocial behaviours like cultism. They noted that students are unable to see their homes as a healthy environment which provides them with happiness and fun so become defensive, reject responsibilities, and increase their anger which leads to cultism.

Another finding of the study in table 2 revealed that there was significant relationship between mass media and cultism among students at Delta State University. This is to say that mass media has a great influence on cultism among students at Delta State University. This reason for this finding could be the perception of the students who rely on the information from the media due to lack of knowledge and experience with crime, so form stereotype of certain criminals in groups like cult. This finding agrees with Appah et al, (2021) who reported that people will learn aggressive behaviours from television and then go out and reproduce them. The finding supports the work of Olashore et al (2017), who stressed that mass media have all popularized the activities of secret cults by triggering off the fire of curiosity in these youths to join the cults as willing candidates. It does not support Chike and Ezali (2018) who found that effects of violent films on students is relative and varies from person to person. A related study

by Wole (2019) also revealed that mass media has no influence on adolescents who reported being calmer, less aggressive, and so not prone to cultism.

Conclusion

Cultism in our universities is a social evil plaguing our schools and this is a rape of the human intellect: therefore, affecting the economic and socio-political development of the nation. It is therefore necessary that parents, government, various institutions, and other well-meaning Nigerians, join hands to eliminate this menace from our schools through the instrumentality of a sound and effective moral education as well as avoiding violent views via mass media. The media's capacity to inform, educate and mould public opinion on issues, is a major agent of change, reformation, and reorientation to be capitalized on.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Government should create an agency that will censor the type of films and images produced by the members of the Nigeria Movie Producers Association (NMPA) before selling and putting them on air for public view.
2. Parents should assist their children to view and utilize media programmes that are not violent as well as spend more of their time in meaningful and worthwhile ventures that will enhance their overall development.
3. The law enforcement agencies should arrest, prosecute, and publish the names of rusticated cultist on the internet to prevent them from being admitted in other universities.
4. Corporate bodies, government, parents, and individuals should organize awareness campaign in the media against the negative impact of cultism on the students, school,

society, and the nation at large through radio, television, internet, and other media for students to imbibe.

Implication to Counselling

1. An effective and functional counselling unit should be provided in all higher institutions, to prevent, identify and modify antisocial behaviours where it already exists.
2. Counsellors in schools should work hand in hand with the university management to curb the menace of cultism among students by organizing public enlightenment programs on campus on the effects of cultism, negative influence of mass media and how students should avoid negative peer influence.
3. At the beginning of every session, the counselling center should organize an elaborate orientation programme for all fresh students to sensitize them on the ills of cultism and equip them with skills to say no.
4. Counsellors should work with lecturers to trace victims and ensure that they are well-adjusted by proffering solutions to their challenges.
5. Counsellors should liaise with religious leaders to assist in consulting God to help in addressing the issues of cultism among students in schools.
6. Counsellors should ensure that institutions keep vigilante groups/security personnel, to serve as threat that will not allow cult groups to carry out their activities and enable them to denounce their membership.

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