

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. The menace of cultism has eroded the conducive healthy social learning environment existing hitherto in Delta State University campuses. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses 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.

Keywords: Parenting, Mass media, Cultism scale, Somatic symptom disorder

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 centers of violence because of unending cultism. The early days of formal education were usually a great privilege for a student who gained admission into one of the few universities in Nigeria and their parents looked forward to it. Those were the days when 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 [1] in referring to cultism on campus noted that Nigeria universities have become breeding grounds for cultism. They also observed new stories of devilish acts and several ill-activities perpetrated each day by cult members. Bakare [2] 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

30 objectives of the group at that time were to fight non-violently, but intelligently and effectively
31 against the imposition of foreign cultures, to revive the age of bravery, and to find a lasting
32 solution to the problems of white - superiority. Just how this cult spread to the other
33 universities in the country or how, according to a Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC)
34 report, 33 cult groups sprang up from the social clubs remains a puzzle to many. Soyinka
35 and his colleagues did not know that they were making history, neither did they realize that
36 student and indeed, youth radicalism was being formed and given a boost towards the
37 unleashing of a national vanguard.

38 The word cultism originated from the latin word "occulere" which **denotes** something hidden
39 or concealed. Cultism is an evil association that is deadly engaged in ritual practices and
40 imposes bondage on members. Thereby, denying them their liberty but often clash with the
41 values of everyday life in school and the society at large [1]. As a social crime whose
42 activities are usually laden with blood, this kind of gang behaviour is practiced and carried
43 out by individuals with the same ideological orientation [3]. It has been argued that cultism is
44 a societal evil, practiced spiritually by a group of people whose activities, ideas, ethical
45 conduct, names, meeting days, membership, admission policy, initiation formalities as well
46 as **a** mode of operation are kept secret with their activities having negative effects on both
47 members and non-members alike [4].

48 Universities are offshoots of the various macro societies and reflect society's increasing use of
49 violent methodologies to resolve frustrations and conflict situations [5]. It has caused great
50 concern among parents, university administrators, **policymakers**, researchers, and
51 educational planners. Wole [6] sees the recent campus cultism as criminal gangs like armed
52 robbery gangs, assailants, drug syndicates, advance fraud syndicates, mass suicide,
53 pedophilia and even **terrorist attacks**. They clearly show no **regard** for their own lives or lives
54 of others, which calls many to question their motivation in committing such heinous crimes.
55 Academic **programs** and calendars of many universities have been disrupted by their
56 activities which are not limited to campuses and schools but rather, now affects the entire
57 society. Cults in Nigerian universities, secondary and primary schools, now exist in many
58 forms bearing various names, some mostly male while others mostly female students. Their
59 names are as frightening as their operations and their activities are worrisome and that these
60 groups now have become tools for power, revenge and status is not new to anybody [7].

61 Parenting which is defined as the process of caring for a child, involves complex activities
62 which includes specific **behaviors** that should be worked individually and collectively to
63 influence the development of the child in all aspects of personality and value system [8]. If
64 this must be achieved, parenting will require time, self - discipline, patience, and
65 determination on the part of parents or parenting partners [9]. Therefore, it consists of
66 influences from parents, guardians, parental styles, family type and the family structure that
67 may promote cultism. Some parental characteristics, parental socioeconomic status, family
68 processes and dynamics may also encourage cultism. Cultic **behaviors** such as drinking,
69 fighting, bullying, rape, stealing, killing, kidnapping, abduction, blackmail, to mention a few
70 usually may result from early socialization pattern at home. They could manifest in homes
71 with serious intra-parental and inter-parental conflicts, but Bernburg [10] reported that the
72 nature of the family structure does not influence cult membership. Ugoji and Ebebuwa-Okoh
73 [11] also, revealed that **behaviors** in families particularly codes of good conduct, discipline,
74 and parental monitoring influence children throughout their youthful period, hence they avoid
75 cult activities. It has been emphasized that distress in families because of divorce and
76 broken home not only lead to poor monitoring in child upbringing but may increase cult
77 involvement [5]. In a related study, it was found out that the influence of parents who are in
78 secret cults have a mean of 2.99, broken homes and aggressive traits of being sadists had
79 mean scores of 2.76 and 2.73 respectively [12]. This means that parents who are in secret
80 cults influence their children to join cult groups. Another research reported that most initiated
81 members of cult groups come from average and wealthy families due their parental influence

82 in the society, (political affluences and influences) where some of them are used as thugs
83 during politics [13].
84 Mass media are communication channels such as radio, television, the print media, and
85 other electronic devices that may disseminate dangerous information that influences
86 students negatively to join cult groups in Nigeria [7]. The importation of violent films which
87 are shown on televisions and the internet, as well as everyday brutalities of Nigeria life such
88 as cult clashes, assassination, and public violence, with all the gory details and photographs,
89 merge the frontiers of fantasy with reality on the youths [1]. It is possible that many of these
90 delinquent students may merely act and imitate what they have seen on video, television, or
91 internet, in their cult groups [14]. They may model acts of violence thereby absorbing the
92 idea that it is an appropriate and acceptable **behavior**. Media portray images, films and video
93 games that justify crimes including but not limited to robberies, murders, kidnappings, ritual
94 killings, car-jacking and other violence [15]. It is argued that while the media provides a form
95 of entertainment, relaxation, and a form of acquiring knowledge, it also can contribute to the
96 changes in **behavior**, attitude, and character of an individual. The mass media campaign and
97 their reports against cultism and violent activities, could also stem the tide of students'
98 involvement in schools. A finding indicates that regular viewers of crime show, are more
99 likely to hold negative attitude which finally they transfer to practice thus, influencing the
100 student's decision to join cult groups and this is the Catharsis Model [16]. But in contrast, two
101 other studies with video games and violent films have added credence; it was found that
102 effects of violent video game played, to vary from player to player with some players
103 showing effect, most players had no effect, and a small group also became more aggressive
104 [1]. Also, recent study revealed that adolescent boys commonly reported feeling calmer and
105 less angry after violent video game play and used violent video games to reduce aggression
106 and so not prone to cultists [6]. This is the Stimulation Model which argues that viewing
107 expressions of hostility reduces aggression because a person who watches filmed or
108 televised violence is purged of his or her aggressive urges.

109 **Statement of the Problem**

110 Delta State University has been known to provide the social atmosphere which allows
111 students, lecturers, administrators, and academics alike to enjoy peaceful co-existence and
112 excellence in academics until cultism reared its ugly head and posing a serious threat to the
113 realization of this noble objective. It is common to see students (male and female), conduct
114 themselves as tout do, parade themselves quite exuberantly, very daring, aggressive,
115 adventurous, having satiable desire for recognition, power, and success with little respect for
116 lives and properties. Many students have lost their study opportunities, died, harassed,
117 maimed, raped, threatened, extorted, attacked, robbed and so on. They now engage in illicit
118 sexual escapades, drug abuse, arson, blackmail, and other inhuman practices outside the
119 campus. So many factors have been identified as determinants of cultism and include
120 availability of cults in schools, fame students feel they get, power, academic failure, freedom,
121 protection and so on. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the role of parenting and
122 mass media in determining cultism among students in Delta State University, Delta State.

123 **Research Questions**

124 The following questions were raised to guide the study:

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

129 **Hypotheses**

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

- 132 1. there is no significant relationship between parenting and cultism among students in
133 Delta
134 State University, Delta State.

135 2. there is no significant relationship between mass media and cultism among students in
136 Delta
137 State University, Delta State.

138 **Research Objective**

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

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142

143 **2. METHODOLOGY**

144

145 **2.1 Research Design**

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

151 **2.2 Population and sample**

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

158 **2.3 Research Instrument**

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

165 **2.3.1 Validity of the Instrument**

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

170 **2.3.2 Reliability of the Instrument**

171 The Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to determine the consistency of the test
172 items and the reliability indices for the sub instruments are parenting $r = 0.65$, mass media r
173 $= 0.55$, and cultism 0.53 but had an overall reliability coefficient of 0.79 .

174 **2.4 Method of Data Collection**

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

180 **2.5 Method of Data Analysis**

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

185 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

186 **Table 1: Demographic variables of the participants**

S/ N	Sampled Faculties	Sample d Depts.	Gender		Total no. of studen ts	Sampled Students in Each Dept.	Sampled Students (Gender)	
			Male	Female			Male	Female
1	Agriculture	5	135	177	311	30	12	18
2	Science	5	1417	1072	2489	30	18	12
3	Pharmacy	5	181	1017	188	30	12	18
4	Arts	5	516	861	1377	30	15	15
	TOTAL	20	2149	2217	4366	600	285	315

188 Table 1 depicted the demography of the respondents, 285 males and 315 females selected
 189 from faculties of Agriculture, Science, Pharmacy and Arts were involved in the survey.
 190
 191

192 **Research Question 1: What is the relationship of Parenting and Cultism in** 193 **Delta State University, Delta State?**

194 **Table 2: Correlation Analysis of Parenting and Cultism in Delta State University, Delta**
 195 **State.**

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

197 Table2, indicated that the r-value of 0.004 signified a relationship between parenting and
 198 cultism in Delta State University. This showed a positive but not significant since the
 199 relationship between the two variables is very low at $p < 0.05$ ($R = 0.004$, $N = 600$, $p = 0.923$).
 200 Parenting, therefore contributed 0% to cultism in Delta State University. The null hypothesis
 201 which stated that there is no significant relationship between parenting and cultism among
 202 Delta State University students was accepted.

203 **Research Question 2**

204 What is the relationship between mass media and cultism in Delta State University, Delta
 205 State?
 206

207 **Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Mass Media and Cultism in Delta State University.**

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

209

210 Table 3 revealed that the r value of 0.205 showed the extent of relationship between mass
 211 media and cultism. The result indicated a positive relationship as mass media contributed
 212 4.2% to cultism in Delta Stat University. Therefore, mass media was significant at $p < 0.05$
 213 ($R = 0.205$, $N = 600$, $p = 0.000$). The null hypothesis stating that there is no significant
 214 relationship between mass media and cultism among Delta State University students was
 215 rejected.
 216

217 **Table 4: Correlation Analysis of Parenting, Mass Media and cultism in Delta State**
 218 **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				

219 Table 4 revealed that the r-value of 0.0207 is the extent of relationship between parenting,
 220 mass media, and cultism. The coefficient of determination was 0.043 and the amount of
 221 contribution of parenting and mass media to cultism was 4.3% showing a positive
 222 relationship. The result indicated that parenting and mass media contributed to cultism in
 223 Delta State University.
 224

225 3.1 Discussion of Findings

226 Result in table 1, showed that there is no significant relationship between parenting and
 227 cultism among students at Delta State University, Delta State. This shows that parenting to a
 228 large extent does not influence cultism. The reason for this finding could be that these
 229 students are in the university now and may value suggestions from their peers more than
 230 their parents. To them, their peers appreciate the changing nature of the world systems,
 231 accept them, understand their plight and seem to have more impact on their behavior. This
 232 finding agrees with [10] and [11], who reported that students on campus create their own
 233 separate world using coded slangs, body language and expressions that can only be
 234 understood by their peers. Another reason may be that they disregard parental counsel
 235 which they term "old school". This is at variance with the works of Kalil and Ryan [17] and
 236 Akinnawo et al [13] who attested to the fact that family structure, poor parental supervision,
 237 ineffective communication, conflicts, and psychological pressures from students' own
 238 homes, leads to antisocial behaviors like cultism. They noted that students are unable to see
 239 their homes as a healthy environment which provides them with happiness and fun so
 240 become defensive, reject responsibilities, and increase their anger which leads to cultism.

241 Another finding of the study in table 2 revealed that there was significant relationship
 242 between mass media and cultism among students at Delta State University. This is to say
 243 that mass media has a great influence on cultism among students at Delta State University.
 244 This reason for this finding could be the perception of the students who rely on the
 245 information from the media due to lack of knowledge and experience with crime, so form
 246 stereotype of certain criminals in groups like cult. This finding agrees with Appah et al [18]
 247 who reported that people will learn aggressive behaviors from television and then go out and
 248 reproduce them. The finding supports the work of Olashore et al [16], who stressed that
 249 mass media have all popularized the activities of secret cults by triggering off the fire of
 250 curiosity in these youths to join the cults as willing candidates. It does not support Chike and
 251 Ezali [1] who found that effects of violent films on students is relative and varies from person
 252 to person. A related study by Wole [6] also revealed that mass media has no influence on
 253 adolescents who reported being calmer, less aggressive, and so not prone to cultism.
 254

255 4. CONCLUSION

256 Cultism in our universities is a social evil plaguing our schools and this is a rape of the
 257 human intellect: therefore, affecting the economic and socio-political development of the
 258 nation. It is therefore necessary that parents, government, various institutions, and other

259 well-meaning Nigerians, join hands to eliminate this menace from our schools through the
260 instrumentality of a sound and effective moral education as well as avoiding violent views via
261 mass media. The media's capacity to inform, educate and mould public opinion on issues, is
262 a major agent of change, reformation, and reorientation to be capitalized on. Government
263 should create an agency that will censor the type of films and images produced by the
264 members of the Nigeria Movie Producers Association (NMPA) before selling and putting
265 them on air for public view. Parents should assist their children to view and utilize media
266 programs that are not violent as well as spend more of their time in meaningful and
267 worthwhile ventures that will enhance their overall development. The law enforcement
268 agencies should arrest, prosecute, and publish the names of rusticated cultist on the internet
269 to prevent them from being admitted in other universities. Corporate bodies, government,
270 parents, and individuals should organize awareness campaign in the media against the
271 negative impact of cultism on the students, school, society, and the nation at large through
272 radio, television, internet, and other media for students to imbibe. An effective and functional
273 counselling unit should be provided in all higher institutions, to prevent, identify and modify
274 antisocial behaviors where it already exists. Counsellors in schools should work hand in
275 hand with the university management to curb the menace of cultism among students by
276 organizing public enlightenment programs on campus on the effects of cultism, negative
277 influence of mass media and how students should avoid negative peer influence. At the
278 beginning of every session, the counselling center should organize an elaborate orientation
279 program for all fresh students to sensitize them on the ills of cultism and equip them with
280 skills to say no. Counsellors should work with lecturers to trace victims and ensure that they
281 are well-adjusted by proffering solutions to their challenges. Counsellors should liaise with
282 religious leaders to assist in consulting God to help in addressing the issues of cultism
283 among students in schools. Counsellors should ensure that institutions keep vigilante
284 groups/security personnel, to serve as threat that will not allow cult groups to carry out their
285 activities and enable them to denounce their membership.

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287

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289

290 A brief acknowledgement section may be given after the conclusion section just before the
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294 agency, if any, in the study design, collection, analysis and interpretation of data; in the
295 writing of the manuscript. If the study sponsors had no such involvement, the authors should
296 so state.

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301 **COMPETING INTERESTS**

302

303 Author has declared that no competing interests exist

304

305 **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

306

307 Imafidon, Iniabasi Faith designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the
308 protocol, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, managed the analyses of the study and
309 managed the literature searches. She read and approved the final manuscript.

310

311 **CONSENT (WHERE EVER APPLICABLE)**

312

313 Not Applicable

314

315 **ETHICAL APPROVAL (WHERE EVER APPLICABLE)**

316

317 Not Applicable

318

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