

Social Variables as Correlates of Students' Proneness to Cultism in Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study investigated social factors as correlates of students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State. The study adopted the correlation research design. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised all 71,449 undergraduate students in the three government-owned universities in Rivers State, Nigeria (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Igbui University of Education, Rumuolumeni). The purposive sample sampling technique was used to select 600 students as the sample for the study. Three instruments (questionnaires) were used in collecting data for this study. They include; the Students' Cultism Proneness Scale (SCPS), Parenting Styles Scale (PSS) and Peer Pressure Scale (PPS). The face and content validity of the instrument were ensured. The reliability of the instruments Students' Cultism Proneness Scale (SCPS), Parenting Styles Scale (PSS), and Peer Pressure Scale (PPS) were determined using the Cronbach alpha method of internal consistency. The reliability coefficients obtained for Students' Cultism Proneness Scale (SCPS) was 0.71, Parenting Styles Scale (PSS) 0.74, and Peer Pressure Scale (PPS) 0.71. The research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient values and Multiple Regression Analysis while hypotheses were tested with ANOVA and t-test associated with regression at 0.05 Alpha level of significance. The finding of the study showed that peer pressure, and parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) relate significantly with students' proneness to cultism in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that, since parenting styles relate significantly to students proneness to cultism, parents and caregivers must be mindful of the type of parenting style that they adopt in raising their children. This could have a positive or negative influence on their children's behaviour both in new and unfamiliar situations. Moreso, parents, and caregivers should endeavour to check and moderate the activities of their children from time to time, as this will help in reducing some mischievous behaviours that are carried on by students both at home and in school.

Keywords: Peer pressure, Parenting, Proneness, Cultism

Introduction

The university community is built to promote intellectual development, mould character, and teach individuals to become functional members of society and accelerate human progress. Little wonder, that degrees in universities are awarded to individuals who have been found worthy in learning. This suggests that the university community is intended to be a serene and peaceful one. Indeed the university community is expected to be peaceful and a breeding space for intellectual, character development and skills acquisition until the advent of campus cultism. The formation of the Pirates Confraternity in 1952 by Wole Soyinka, Olumuyiwa Awe, Ralph Opara, Tunji Tubi, Diag Imokhuede, Pius Olegbe and Olu Agunloya laid the foundation of youth rascals that unleashed students' gangsterism in the citadel of learning (universities). It also gave a national boost to undergraduate involvement in cultism. The paradox, however, is that Soyinka and his friends did not realize beforehand, the extent to which their pioneering efforts in students' activism would reshape students' activities in higher educational institutions in Nigeria and the society at large (Nnajieta & Ahamefula, 2015).

The quest for higher education usually comes with harrowing experiences induced by separation from families and established friendships. Normally, individuals grow among known and friendly others. This in turn causes the development of familiar patterns of interactions and associations. However, most of these familiar living conditions are often disrupted when the individual secures admission into a higher educational institution. Higher educational institutions constitute new environments, requiring the development of new adaptive mechanisms in individuals. Whereas this adaptation is relatively easier for some individuals, it is not exactly so for others. To an undergraduate facing the daunting challenge of coping with life on campus, it is maybe a good feeling to be wanted, and flattering to be asked to join a group. Several organized and informal social, religious, or political groups scout for membership among students. Some are well-organized, and some are very informal. Choosing to belong to a group is an important decision in a student's life on campus. How to differentiate a psychologically manipulative group from a group that is not harmful is also a significant decision for undergraduate students.

Undergraduates often become homesick, and feel unloved or overwhelmed (Egbochuku, 2009). Life to them has taken a turn that they cannot straighten. It is in times like this that undergraduates are lured or tempted into making new friends and belonging to groups; be they religious, political or social. It is also in times like this that cult groups take advantage of

naïve and unwary students. They cajole them with promises of friendship, fun, and other goodies on campus or intimidate them with threats. Students therefore get involved in cultism on campus due to several factors that are either internal or external to individual students. While some dabble into cultism out of sheer naiveté, others are lured into cultism with the promise of safety and security, while yet others join cult groups with the hope of earning favours and enjoying “the goodies” on campus.

Cultism has been conceptualized as a movement that exhibits excessive devotion to some person, idea, or thing. It employs manipulative and coercive methods of persuasion and control, designed to advance the goals of the group’s leader to the actual or possible detriment of members, their families, or communities (Olayiwola, Dada, Eyo & Abiona, 2016; Adesina & Oribabor, 2012). Cultism involves activities that are essentially covert, disguised, and are usually carried out behind closed doors (Adesina & Oribabor, 2012). Their methods include isolation of members from former friends and family, debilitation, use of special methods to heighten suggestibility and subservience, powerful group pressures, information management, suspension of individuality or critical judgment. Promotion of total dependency on the group and fear of leaving it (Olayiwola et al), 2016).

The root word from which cultism is derived is cult; and the word “cult” is itself a derivation from the Latin “cultus” which means “to worship or give reverence to a deity” (Maxey, 2004). In its original form, and intended usage therefore, a cult is labeled for a religious group, the object of their veneration notwithstanding; and historically refers to a new religious system, as opposed to a sect, which is a breakaway group from an established religion (Egbochuku, 2009). However, cults today are neither religious nor spiritual in nature. They are rather more inclined to gangsterism and engage in various antisocial behaviours. The concept of cult has thus assumed several dimensions in modern society, and has thus defied universal definition. An attempt at a holistic definition of cult was made by Azelama, Alude and Imhonda (2000) when they note that “a cult is collection of persons unified by shared ideals and symbols; and whose rituals and ceremonies of reverence are unique and shrouded in mysteries with a secrecy that cannot be broken”. It is any form of organization whose activities are not only exclusive to members and are kept away from the knowledge of others; but are also nocturnal and often clash with accepted norms and values of society (Nnajieta & Ahamefula, 2015).

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in section 318 defines a cult as “any association, group, or body of persons (whether registered or not) that uses secret signs, oaths, rite or symbols and which is formed to promote a course, the purpose, or part of which is to foster, the interest of its members and to aid one another under any regard without due regard to merit, fairness, or justice; whose oaths of secrecy and, the names and activities are held in secret”. Although there are many views about cults notwithstanding, cults share similar features which include violence, killings, and intimidation, and this makes them notorious (Ogunbameru, 2004). They are all leader-centred, exploitative, and harmful. The leadership of cults exercises absolute control over the membership and use force to subdue the membership when necessary. Cults are thus exploitative, manipulative and abusive groups in which members are induced to serve the leaders (Langone, 1993). In view of the foregoing, one could infer that cults concern initiated few whose activities are very secretive and revolve around a leader with charisma; and whose inclinations may or may not be religious.

The activities of cultists in the nation's Universities have not only constituted a miasma, they have rightly been described as a national embarrassment. There is thus a societal odium towards cultism and cultists. Hence, one will imagine that the attraction for an undergraduate to become a member of a cult group will be non-existent or very minimal; and that the activities of cultists will naturally fizzle out in our campuses. However, the stark reality is that membership of cult groups and cult activities has been on the increase. A plethora of factors have been suspected to be responsible for this, and scholars have proposed several variables that are either internal or external to individuals as possible causes. However, most such studies did not target undergraduates as their population, did not incorporate both endogenous and exogenous variables in a single study, or were not conducted on campuses where the activities of cultists have been a regular menace. Hence, this will examine social variables as correlates of students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

There are debates that undergraduates' proneness to cultism may be linked to peer pressure. A peer group is a small group of similarly age, fairly close friends, sharing the same activities (Castrogiovanni, 2002). The influence of peer groups on its members is referred to as peer influence, and it is often achieved through peer pressure. Peer pressure according to Kirk (2000) is the influence exerted by a peer group in encouraging individuals to change their attitudes and values to conform to group norms. Ryan (2000) defines peer pressure thus: when people your own age encourage or urge you to do something or to keep from doing

something else, no matter if you personally want to do it or not. A subtle form of peer pressure is peer influence (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014). Peer influence is defined as the changing of one's behaviour to meet the perceived expectations of others or the ability to sway individual behaviour among members of a group based on the norms of the group, and the group's sense of rightful and wrongful behaviour. Temitope and Ogunsarki (2015) define peer influence as "the tendency or readiness in people of the same age or social status to behave in a particular way as a mark of conformity to the opinion, interest, standard, and norms of their peer". Peer influence is an effective avenue through which group leaders control the behaviour of others. Peer influence is not limited to adolescents and young adults. Adults too are sometimes influenced by peers. Professional bodies influence the behaviour of their members. So also do social clubs involving adults. Peer influence operates within peer groups; and a peer group consists of individuals within close age brackets who have a common interest, ideology, or beliefs. Peer group pressure has a bearing on undergraduates' proneness to cultism (Otite & Ogionwo, 2006). Undergraduates who willingly embrace cultism may gradually influence or pressure other students to join them either by displaying extravagant lives that others desire or by out-rightly forcing them to become members (Oyeoku & Azikiwe, 2013).

Another variable that may be linked to students' proneness to cultism is parenting styles. Parenting styles refer to the various parenting approaches and manners in which parents raise their children. Parenting is mostly adjudged on parental expectations, performance demands, and attentiveness to rules and regulations by the children. Spera (2005) saw parenting style as a psychological construct representing standard strategies that parents use in their child's upbringing. Baumrind cited in Aunola, Stattin, and Nurmi (2000) described three different parenting styles: (1) authoritative parenting, characterized by high levels of both parental responsiveness (e.g., warmth, support, and affection) and demandingness (e.g., limit setting, maturity demands), (2) authoritarian parenting, characterized by high demandingness (e.g., harsh and punitive control) and low responsiveness, (3) permissive parenting, characterized by high responsiveness but low demandingness.

Barber as cited in Rodrigo and Byrne (2013) explained that the authoritative parent attempts to direct the child's activities in a self-oriented and rational manner, shares with the child's reasoning, and encourages verbally. The authoritative parent affirms the child's present qualities but sets the standards and limits for future activities. The authoritative parent uses power, reason, and shaping by reinforcement and regime to achieve desired objectives and

does not base decisions on group consensus or the individual child's hopes (Hart as cited in Moreno, 2011). The authoritarian parenting style attempts to control, shape, and evaluate the behaviour and attitudes of a child by a standard of conduct (Morrow, 2010). Barber, Stoltz, and Olsen (2005) observed that this type of parent values obedience, commands the child about what to do and what not to do, and rules are clear and unbending. The parent pours the right information into the child who is considered an empty vessel, and misbehaviour is strictly punished. Kiuru (2012) maintained that a permissive parenting style allows children to regulate their activities as much as possible, avoiding the exercise of control and standards of parenting limits. Permissive parenting style is a type of parenting style where the parents expect little from the children as regards to standard and progress. Instead of following the strict rules of parents, children are encouraged to think for themselves, avoid inhibitions, and not value conformity. Parents take a hands-off approach, allowing children to learn from the consequences of their actions, and misbehaviour is usually ignored (Landry, Smith, & Swank, 2006). Silsby (2012) stressed that the type of parenting style that is adopted in a home is directly linked to students' proneness to cultism. He further explained that where the parenting style is too carefree, the tendency for children to behave unruly and engage in cult activities is high. But where a family adopts a strict parenting style such as authoritative parenting, the children's behaviour will be properly regulated and their susceptibility or proneness to cultism will be minimal. Fakhar (2014) maintained that students' proneness to cultism is significantly related to parenting styles. He explained that a permissive parenting style promotes indiscipline in children and further results in indulgence in cultism. This study therefore investigated social variables as correlates of students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined social variables as correlates of students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following;

1. ascertain the extent peer pressure relates to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.
2. determine the extent parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) independently relate to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.
3. examine the extent parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) jointly relate to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. To what extent does peer pressure relate to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State?
2. To what extent do parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) independently relate to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.
3. To what extent do parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) jointly relate to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study;

1. Peer pressure does not relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.
2. Parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) do not independently relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.
3. Parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) do not jointly relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted the correlation research design. The population of the study comprised all 71,449 undergraduate students in the three government-owned universities in Rivers State, Nigeria (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni). The purposive sample sampling technique was used to select 600 students as a sample for the study. Three instruments (questionnaires) were used in collecting data for this study. They include; the Students' Cultism Proneness Scale (SCPS), Parenting Styles Scale (PSS), and Peer Pressure Scale (PPS). The face and content validity of the instrument were ensured. The reliability of the instruments Students' Cultism Proneness Scale (SCPS), Parenting Styles Scale (PSS), and Peer Pressure Scale (PPS) were determined using the Cronbach alpha method of internal consistency. The reliability coefficients obtained for the Students' Cultism Proneness Scale (SCPS) were 0.71, the Parenting Styles Scale (PSS) 0.74, and the Peer Pressure Scale (PPS) 0.71. The research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient values and Multiple Regression Analysis while hypotheses were tested with ANOVA and t-test associated with regression at 0.05 Alpha level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: To what extent does peer pressure relate to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Simple Regression Analysis on the extent peer pressure relate to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.882 _a	.778	.777	2.44401	.778	2091.957	1	598	.000

Table 1 revealed that the regression coefficient R was calculated to be 0.882 while the regression squared value was computed to be 0.778. This shows that students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State is positively and highly related to peer pressure. Judging by the coefficient of determination, it shows that 77.8% change in students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State can be predicted by peer pressure, while 22.2% was accounted for by other variables not considered in this study.

Research Question Two: To what extent do parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) independently relate to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis on the extent parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) independently relate to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State

		Proneness to Cultism	Authoritarian	Authoritative	Permissive
Pearson Correlation	Proneness to Cultism	1.000	.888	.846	.866
	Authoritarian	.888	1.000	.922	.941
	Authoritative	.846	.922	1.000	.912
	Permissive	.866	.941	.912	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Proneness to Cultism	.	.000	.000	.000
	Authoritarian	.000	.	.000	.000
	Authoritative	.000	.000	.	.000
	Permissive	.000	.000	.000	.
N	Proneness to Cultism	600	600	600	600
	Authoritarian	600	600	600	600
	Authoritative	600	600	600	600
	Permissive	600	600	600	600

From the result of the above table 2, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.888; 0.846; 0.866$) between parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) and students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State is independently strong and positive. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.789; 0.716; 0.75$) independently indicates that 78.9%; 71.6%; 75% of increased students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State can be influenced by parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive).

Research Question Three: To what extent do parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) independently relate to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State?

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis on the extent parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) independently relate to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.893 _a	.798	.797	2.33456	.798	784.034	3	596	.000

Table 3 revealed that the multiple regression coefficient R was calculated to be 0.893 while the multiple regression squared value was computed to be 0.798. This shows that students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State is jointly and highly related to parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive). Judging by the coefficient of determination, it shows that 79.8% of change in students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State can be predicted by parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive), while 20.2% was accounted by other variables not considered in this study.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Peer pressure does not relate significantly to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Table 4: t-test associated with simple Regression on how peer pressure relates to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.501	.612		4.086	.000
	Peer Pressure	.935	.020	.882	45.738	.000

Table 4 revealed that peer pressure is related to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State by 0.882. The t-test value 45.738 associated with linear regression was statistically significant at 0.000 when subjected to 0.05 alpha level of significance. By implication, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the researcher concludes that peer pressure relates significantly to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two: Parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) do not independently relate significantly to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Table 5: t-test associated with multiple Regression on how Parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) independently relate to students’ proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.903	.593		3.212	.001
	Authoritarian	.594	.064	.568	9.243	.000
	Authoritative	.122	.053	.117	2.307	.021
	Permissive	.233	.060	.225	3.893	.000

Table 5 revealed that parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) are independently related to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State. The t-test values 9.243, 2.307, and 3.893 independently associated with linear regression were statistically significant at 0.021 when subjected to 0.05 alpha level of significance. By implication, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the researcher concludes that parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) independently relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Three: Parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) do not jointly relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Table 6: ANOVA associated with multiple Regression on how parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) jointly relate to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12819.332	3	4273.111	784.034	.000 ^b
	Residual	3248.293	596	5.450		
	Total	16067.625	599			

On table 6, the Analysis of variance associated with multiple Regression on how parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) are jointly related to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State yielded a mean square of 4273.111 (Regression). This produced an F-value of 784.034 which has a significance value at 0.000(2-tailed). Since the significance value is less than 0.05 alpha value used for the test, a significant joint relationship exists. The researcher rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) jointly relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study are summarized as follows:

1. 77.8% change in students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State can be predicted by peer pressure, while 22.2% was accounted for by other variables not considered in this study.

2. 78.9%; 71.6%; 75% of increased students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State can be influenced independently by parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive).
3. 79.8% change in students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State can be predicted by parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) jointly, while 20.2% was accounted by other variables not considered in this study.
4. Peer pressure relates significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.
5. Parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) independently relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.
6. Parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) jointly relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Peer Pressure and Students' Proneness to Cultism

The finding of the study revealed that peer pressure relates significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between peer pressure and students' proneness to cultism was rejected in favour of the alternative that peer pressure relates significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State. The findings of the present study are in agreement with an earlier study by Tome et al (2012) who found that peer influence directly impacts students' risk behaviors hence making them susceptible to cultism. Oyeoku and Azikiwe (2013) found out that peer pressure significantly relates to students' proneness to cultism and added that students who willingly embrace cultism are usually influenced or pressured by other students to join them either by displaying extravagant lives that others desire or by out-rightly forcing them to become members of a cult. Kellie (2013) also found out that peer pressure relates significantly to students' proneness to cultism.

The reason the finding of the present study stands correct is based on the fact that peer pressure in school is frequently subtle. It requires a person to change certain norms and behavioural patterns and accept those of his or her peers in school. When the person fails to conform to the group's norms, he or she faces social rejection or eviction from the group. Thus this stressed that students who often associate with friends who are cultists are also vulnerable or prone to cultism.

Parenting Styles and Students' Proneness to Cultism

The finding of the study showed that parenting styles (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive) jointly and independently relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State. The finding of the present study agrees with that of Fakhar (2014) who found that students' proneness to cultism is significantly related to parenting styles. He further stressed that permissive parenting style is closely related to students' proneness to cultism as it promotes indiscipline in children and further results in indulgence in cultism. Silsby (2012) also found out that parenting styles relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism, and added that parents should be mindful of the type of parenting style they adopt in rearing their children.

The reason the finding of the present study stands correct is based on the fact that where parenting style is too carefree, the tendency for children to behave unruly and engage in cult activities is likely high. But where a family adopts a strict parenting style, the children's behaviour will be properly regulated and their susceptibility or proneness to cultism will be minimal.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was gathered that proneness to cultism is a major problem among students in universities in Rivers State. This study has shown that peer pressure and parenting styles relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism in universities in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommended the following;

1. Since parenting styles relate significantly to students' proneness to cultism, parents, and caregivers must be mindful of the type of parenting style that they adopt in raising their children. This could have a positive or negative influence on their children's behaviour both in new and unfamiliar situations.
2. Parents and caregivers should endeavour to check and moderate the activities of their children from time to time, as this will help in reducing some mischievous behaviours that are carried on by students both at home and in school.
3. Since peer pressure relates significantly to students' proneness to cultism, there is a need for effective counselling to be made available for all students to equip students with practical social adaptation skills. This includes resisting cultism and other mischievous behaviours that are prevalent in and around the university campus.

4. Students should mind the company they keep and choose their friends wisely. Having a cultist as a friend is enough to attract the wrath of rival cultists. Students should be careful and choosy about the social gatherings they attend on or around the campus.
5. Universities should enforce strict disciplinary measures prohibiting any form of cultism among students.

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