

Parental Child Rearing Styles, Parental Marital Relationship and Students' Attitude towards Cultism in Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State of Nigeria: Counselling Implications

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ABSTRACT This study examined the influence of parental child rearing patterns and parental marital relationships and attitude of university undergraduates to cultism. Five hundred and seventy-two undergraduates from Niger Delta University, Bayelsa-State of Nigeria participated in the study. The findings revealed that there is significant influence of parental child rearing patterns on students' attitude towards cultism. Also, the findings revealed that parental marital relationship has a significant positive relationship with students' attitude towards cultism. Some counseling implications were derived to include: guidance and counseling units in institutions of higher learning should organize conferences and seminars where students can be educated and encouraged to build a high self-esteem, self-control, and positives body image of self as all these can enable the students develop negative attitude towards cultism.

INTRODUCTION

The child is born in a definite family setup. The home environment is important in developing the personality of the child. There is a face-to-face interaction in the family which determines the character and personality make-up of the child. Parents child rearing style may influence their children's social competence. Baumrind (1980) found that parenting styles fall into three main categories. Authoritarian parents, permissive parents and authoritative parents. Authoritarian parents are rigid and punitive and value unquestioning obedience from their children. They have very strict standards and discourage expressions of disagreement. Permissive parents give their children law or inconsistent direction and, although warm, require little of them. Authoritative parents are firm, setting limits for their children. As the children get older, these parents try to reason with and explain things to them. They also set clear goals and encourage their children's independence.

The three kinds of child – rearing styles are associated with very different kinds of behaviour in children. Children of authoritarian parents tend to be unsociable, unfriendly, timid, and relatively withdrawn. In contrast, permissible parent's children are immature, moody and dependent and have low self-control. The children of authoritative parents fare best in that their social skills are high, they are likeable, self-reliant, indepen-

dent and cooperative (Feldman 1997). However, a child's upbringing is a consequence of the child-rearing philosophy, the specific practices they employ, and the nature of their own and child's personality. Denga and Denga (1998) opined that the way parents bring up their children can influence their adult behaviours including cultism. Children who are not shown love by their parents will show no love to other people. Children who place a high premium on aggression may perceive aggressive tendencies as the societal norms. They may think of violence as the status quo and one of the ways they can impress their parents who encourage aggressiveness. Children who have never enjoyed freedom at home may even be afraid of freedom which tertiary educational institutions offer. They are most likely to mismanage the limited freedom they have. Children who are never encouraged to enjoy happiness may even work hard to replace happiness with sorrow.

Children who are perpetually suppressed at home and feel like a servant may quickly look for a group of weak students to constitute an empire over which they can terrorize just like their parents lord over them at home. Disciplined children will try to remain disciplined even when the parent figure is not visible. Consequently, children who came from hostile and uncaring families are more ready to join the secret cult than those who come from loving and caring homes. Children tend to return love to

parents by obeying them. If parents teach, discipline and love their children, it will be easier for such children to refrain from vices which parents condemn. Children who are always in conflict with parents may deliberately join cults in order to annoy their parents.

Cultism can be defined as a system of activities that differ from the usual established forms of religions worship in a particular society. Cult members usually use identification marks with items like rubber bands, beret of particular colour, names and signs (Denga and Denga 1998). Secret cult activities have been widespread on campuses of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. On several occasions, the academic calendar of many institutions have had to be disrupted as a result of the mayhem by secret cults (Oroka 1998). Aluede and Maliki (1998) posited that gangs are involved in violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, and rape.

They went further to explain that the menace by secret cultists has generated a lot of fear, tension, insecurity and closure of schools before the vacation time. Afuape (2010) posited that parental low socio-economic factor is one of the factors why students join cults, in that the country's economic downturn has affected most homes in Nigeria. In spite of the great strides, the Nigerian economy has attained at the macro level, there is little or no improvement at the micro realm. Indeed, as stated by Muhtar (2009), the global economic melt-down has made it difficult for the government to realize the United Nations' Millennium Development goals. Hence, diversification has been embarked upon by some students in higher institutions in Nigeria to generate enough income for sustainability. Some students join secret cults in order to survive.

Odili (2004) opined that there is the factor of instability in the family which has infected the higher institutions. Thus, the event of cultism in higher institutions is a reflection of the cult activities in the larger society. He went further to state that the secret cults in the larger society do not openly display acts of violence, but their campus counterpart makes violence their watch word. Therefore, violent cult activities in higher schools are product of instability in the political terrain. There is the urgent need to check violence and arson in the larger society. Ogunbameru (2004) revealed that the reign of secret cults and their mind-rendering activities are a manifestation of decay in modern day families. Due to the fer-

vid race for material aggrandizement, parents have abandoned their traditional moral responsibilities. This has consequently brought about scant concern for proper upbringing of the child by their parents, who in sheer escapism transfer this burden to the child's school teachers. It is against this background that this study sought to examine child rearing style, parental marital relationship and student attitude towards cultism in Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State of Nigeria.

To Guide this Study therefore the Following Questions were Raised

1. Does child-rearing style have any significant influence on the attitude of students' towards cultism?
2. Is there any relationship between parental relationship and students' attitude towards cultism?

The Following Hypotheses were Tested

1. There is no significant influence of child rearing style on students' attitude towards cultism.
2. There is no significant relationship between parental marital relationship and students' attitude towards cultism.

Literature Review

Literature related to this study were reviewed around these variables

- (1) Child rearing style
- (2) Parental marital relationship

1. Child Rearing Style

The parents are supposed to be the child's first tutor, and they are expected to mould the child's personality and behaviour by the instructions and directions they give to the child through their style of parenting. Baumrind (1980) listed the following as some of the child rearing styles under which parents raise their children:

*Authoritarian,
Permissive and
Authoritative styles*

In the same vein Burgess and Lock (1993) also listed the following styles as used by parents to raise their children. They are Laissez-faire, democratic and autocratic styles.

Laissez-faire: In this style, parents do not show enough concern or interest in what their children are doing, nor treat reports about their children's act of misbehaviour with seriousness they deserve. They do not care about the type of friends their children keep. These parents allow their children a lot of independence believing that it will make the children responsible adults. This style of parenting encourages the children to do whatever pleases them, including joining gangs and cults.

Democratic Parenting Style: Baumrind (1980) noted that parents who use democratic style as a child-rearing style employ explanation, discussion and reasoning to help the child understand why he or she is expected to behave in a certain way. Such parents often emphasize the educational aspects of discipline rather than the positives, and punishment is usually mild. Democratic parents try to direct their children firmly and consistently teach their children to develop internal control on their behaviour. Homes with democratic parents give their children greater freedom to try out things, though on the extreme they could be too lenient and this would call for some control to curb their children's excesses (Symonds 2003).

Autocratic Parenting Style: Medinnus and Johnson (1996) emphasized that the dominant parents insist on complete obedience and close supervision of the child in his choice of activities. To them dominant parents express concern over trifles and criticize the child. Hurlock (1972) posited that a child who is exposed to such parental style would be honest, polite and careful but may also be shy, docile and self-conscious, permissive and sensitive. To Hurlock such a child could feel inadequate, inferior before his peers. Also, Symonds (2003) posited that there are the permissive parents who let their children have their way. They are unable to control their children, and as a result, such children often become disobedient and irresponsible. They tend to have positive attitude towards deviant behaviours and anti-social behaviours, which include their attitude towards cultism among others. Hurluck (1972) opined that if autonomy and control is handled with love and respect for the child as a person, the child would have a feeling of self-worth and self-confidence which become advantageous to the child in his adjustment to life.

However, Baumrind (1980) noted that permis-

sive parents as well as authoritarian parents differ significantly from democratic parents because they lack confidence in their parenting style. Baumrind (1980) went further to explain that both democratic and permissive parenting styles lack balance in terms of their demands. She also stated that the permissive parents offer too little. On the whole the democratic parents do not offer very much and are not too demanding.

The extent to which parents restrict their children's action or give them autonomy and freedom is very essential in the development of the children's attitude in life.

2. Marital Relationship of Parents

Marital relationship of parents greatly influences the general attitude of students and their specific behaviours. Medinnus and Johnson (1980) based on the conclusion of clinical studies stated that marital conflict and divorce affect the adjustment of children. He attributed a number of child's or adolescents' mal-adaptive behaviours to domestic discord. Some of these mal-adaptive behaviours include: hyperactivity, poor performance at school, gang activities, and cultism. Students relate to people outside their home and display attitudes and behaviour including habits learnt from the home. If parents fight, the children will acquire a violence habit and this has a great impact on the personality development of their children. If there is friction, harassment and violence in the home, the children will tend to develop negative attitude towards desirable norms, whereas those from warm, loving and caring homes will develop positive attitude to desirable norms like opposing cultism.

Waller (1983) stated that physical aggression in children results from the imitation of their parents' attitude towards each other. Children from such homes, he stated, abuse the norms of the society and some of them who are timid join gangs and cult to give them false sense of courage.

According to Byrne (1986), children are better off in a happy, stable family where parents have good marital relationship with each other. A disharmonious marital relationship can cause one or both parents to indulge in the use of drug and abuse psycho-active drugs in order to calm tensions or create a sense of boldness in order to

keep up the aggression in the family. Children brought up in such an atmosphere will have the tendency to use drugs to solve most of their problems and develop a positive attitude towards cultism.

Afuape (2010) opined that poor parental background is one of the prominent factors why students join cults. He revealed in his study that many cultists are products of broken homes where parents have little or no time for moral upbringing of their children. In the same vein, Ogunmameru (2004) posited that the collapse of the family institution is a contributing factor predisposing students to join secret cults. Many children no longer have parents they can look up to for inspiration. The existing family only set standards that encourage disorientation. For instance, some secret cult members are from family backgrounds of cult. Such students have grown up with the awareness that their parents have a special room, which no one else is permitted to enter. These rooms are usually filled with all sorts of emblems and effigies, which nobody can touch. More often, these parents were also discovered to go out at night, often to attend meetings that are never discussed at home. Some students who are either socialized to such situations or through imitation end up being cult members in tertiary institutions.

METHODS

Design: The research design employed for this study is the ex-post facto design.

Population and Sample: Population of this study comprised all undergraduates in Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State of Nigeria, which are (5, 002) five thousand and two students from eleven faculties of the university. The sample of this study consisted of five hundred and seventy-two (572) undergraduates drawn from the population.

Instrumentation: The questionnaire used for data collection was titled "Parenting Style, Parental Marital Relationship and Attitude Towards Cultism." The instrument was made up of four parts. Part A focused on student's personal background data. Part B of the instrument was a ten item of 4 point like it type scale that measured respondents' perception of their parental marital relationship. Part C of the instrument measured the respondents' attitude towards cultism. Part D of the instrument measured the respondents' parental rearing styles. The scale consisted of ten

items, which portray situations that parents usually act with regard to their children.

Validity: To validate the instrument, it was given to experts in measurement and evaluation, psychology and guidance and counselling. The experts ensured that the instrument measures what it was suppose to measure.

Reliability: To determine the reliability of the instrument a pilot testing was done using 50 undergraduates from university of Port –Harcourt, Rivers State of Nigeria. A test-re-test method was used. The data obtained were analyzed using the Pearson product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result indicated a correlation co-efficient of 0. 90.

Data Administration and Collection: The questionnaire was administered in the eleven faculties that made up the university to six hundred and five undergraduates, fifty for each of the faculties and five hundred and seventy-two were retrieved. The administration and collection of the questionnaires was done by the researchers and research assistants.

RESULTS

Hypothesis One

This hypothesis stated that there is no significant influence of child rearing style on students' attitude towards cultism.

This hypothesis was tested using the one-way analysis of variance. The analysis of respondents' responses led to categorization of students into autocratic, democratic and permissive child rearing style. The categorization showed that 172 student were under autocratic, 245 democratic and 155 permissive child rearing styles.

The mean and standard deviation of students' attitude towards cultism in the three categories were computed and compared using the one-way analysis of variance as presented in Table 1.

For overall attitude towards cultism, the result of the analysis showed a significant F-ratio of 6.525. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected because the calculated F- value of 6. 525 was greater than the critical F- value of 3.00 at .05 alpha levels and with 2 and 569 degrees of freedom.

Given the significant F- value, a post hoc test using Fishers LSD was used to locate the source of variation the result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 1: One way analysis of variance of influence of child rearing style on students' attitude towards cultism

Child rearing style	N	Mean	SD	
Autocratic	172	56.54	9.23	
Democratic	245	55.54	9.82	
Permissive	155	52.90	10.01	
Total	572	55.25	9.79	
Source of Variation	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Means	F
Between group	1226.885	2	613.442	
Within group	53495.864	569	94.017	6.525
Total	54722.748	571		

Significant at .05; F-critical = 3.00

Table 2: Fisher LSD multiple comparison analysis of influence of child-rearing style on student attitude towards cultism

Child rearing style	Autocratic (n=172)	Democratic (n=245)	Permissive (n=155)
Autocratic	56.54 a	71.21b	3.6439
Democratic	0.74 c	55.83	2.9318
Permissiveness	3.39	2.95	52.90

MSW = 94.017

Significant at .05

a. Group means are on the diagonal

b. Difference between group means are placed above the diagonal.

c. Fisher's LSD F- values are place below the diagonal

Results from Table 2 indicated that students under autocratic child rearing style had a higher mean attitude towards cultism than students under permissive child rearing style ($t = 3.39$; $P < .05$). In the same vein, students under democratic rearing style had a higher mean attitude towards cultism than students under permissive rearing styles ($t = 2.95$; $P < .05$).

The other pair wise comparison between students of autocratic and democratic rearing style in terms of attitude towards cultism was not significant ($f = 0.74$; $P > .05$).

This finding revealed that students under autocratic and democratic rearing styles are more likely to have positive attitude towards cultism than students from permissive child rearing style.

Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between parental marital relationship and students' attitude towards cultism.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to test this hypothesis the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson product moment correlation of the relationship between marital relationship and students' attitude towards cultism

Variable (n=572)	Mean	SD	r
Marital relationship	23.58	6.02	
Attitude towards cultism	55.25	9.79	.084

Significant at .05; df = 570; critical F = .080

The result of Table 3 indicated that parental marital relationship has a significant positive relationship with students' attitude towards cultism. This result implies that parental marital relationship influence students' attitude towards cultism. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The positive r-value in the result indicated that the more favourable the students' attitude tends to be towards cultism, the less favourable the parental marital relationship influence students' attitude towards cultism.

DISCUSSION

The result of hypothesis one showed that there is a significant influence of child rearing style on students' attitude towards cultism.

This finding is in agreement with Burgess and Locke (1993) who view the laissez-faire style of child rearing as having a significant negative influence on the attitude of students towards acceptable norms. To them laissez-faire style allows the child too much leeway. This is because parents either over-pamper or have no time for their children because they are too busy to supervise them. Again, they stated that some parents believe that children should be responsible very early in life and so let them free too early in life; which cause them to make mistakes such as joining bad gangs and cultism.

Medinnus and Johnson (1996) asserted that autocratic parents insist on complete obedience and close supervision of the child's choice of activities and Hurlock (1972) posited that a child who is exposed to such parenting style will feel inadequate, feel inferior before his peers and will seek groups such as cultists to give him sense of boldness. Baumrind (1980) posited that demo-

cratic style is favourable where parents listen to their children but do not base their decision solely on their children's decision. The facts that children are allowed to contribute to matters that affect them influence their attitude towards events, situations and objects.

The result of hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between parental marital relationship and students' attitude towards cultism.

This finding is in line with the findings of Waller (1983) that revealed that physical aggression in children results from imitation of their parental attitude towards each other children from such homes, he stated, abuse drugs which give them a false sense of courage and join bad gangs and they may have a positive tendencies towards cultism. This finding is also supported by the study of Byrne (1986) who stated that children are better off in a happy stable home where parents have good marital relationship with each other and he contented that a disharmonious marital relationship can cause one or both parents to indulge in anti-social behaviour. To him, children brought up in such a home may have the tendency to be positively attracted to cultism. This is also corroborated by the studies of Muhtar (2009) and Afuape (2010).

COUNSELING IMPLICATION

Based on the findings of this study, some counselling implications are derived and they include the following:

Professional guidance counsellors should be employed and posted at all levels of the educational system to guide and counsel students whose attitude towards cultism may have been affected positively by their parental child rearing patterns and their parental marital relationships.

Professional guidance counselors should organize public lectures, seminars and workshops in their communities, cities and villages on the effect of child rearing patterns and marital relationships.

Parents should be made to understand that these variables can negatively and positively affect their children's attitude towards cultism.

Guidance and counselling units in all higher institutions of learning should organize conferences and seminars where students can be educated and encouraged to build a high self-esteem, self-concept, self-control and positive body image of self all these will enable the students to develop negative attitude towards cultism.

University authorities should collaborate with professional guidance counsellors and the media in order that they can come up with jingles concerning the bad effects of cultism in the society and consequences of being a member.

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