

Family Size and Undergraduates' Attitude towards Cultism: Implication for Counselling

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ABSTRACT Parents have divine and social responsibilities to bring up and train the child to be an acceptable, responsible, promising and successful human being. This paper sought to investigate the influence of family size and undergraduates' attitudes towards cultism. The population of undergraduates were 5,002. The sample of the study was 605 undergraduates randomly selected from eleven faculties of the Niger Delta University. The result revealed that family size significantly influence students attitude towards cultism. Counselling implications were suggested.

INTRODUCTION

Cults are groups that often exploit members psychologically and/or financially, typically by making members comply with leadership's demands through certain types of psychological manipulation, popularly called mind control, and through the inculcation of deep-seated anxious dependency on the group and its leaders. The word Cultism may be referred to as the formation of a group of initiates or adherent round the figure of a god, a saint or even a living being. It may involve the practice of a particular doctrine within the body of religious belief.

The activities of Secret Cult on Nigeria university campuses has taken a horrible and worrisome dimension with many criminal activities including murder, arson, armed robbery and rape frequently linked to their members. To that extent therefore, many of the purported Cultists are actually gangsters or members of crime syndicates hiding under the umbrella of certain Secret Cults or societies. The core concept in cultism is a followership dependent upon someone or something outside itself to assist it in coping with a threatening external environment. The more inadequate and inferior the follower feels himself to be, the more magical and mystical the omnipotence projected onto the leader. However, it is a mistake to focus on the leader as object of veneration. The leader is usually merely a resourceful individual perceptive enough to recognize the varied types of helplessness in those about him who offers to take away those feelings. That his offer is frequently overstated and illusory is beside the point. The point is that the followers

willingly take the bait-hook, line and sinker. This will not be so with children whose self-concept and self-esteem have been built to be positive from their homes by their parents; these set of children can be found in the small family size home. The family size in which an individual is brought-up can influence positively and negatively the behaviour of that individual into becoming a cultist.

Growing up in a household with two parents is an advantage during adolescence, at least in terms of avoiding risky behaviours. The child is born in a definite family set-up. The home environment is important in developing the behaviour of the child. There is a face-to-face interaction in the family which determines the behaviour and personality make up of the child. There are some types of homes and family sizes which contribute to anti-social behaviour in children. A family with too many children may not adequately monitor the behaviour patterns of their children.

The general family morale is one of the major dimensions of family life and child behaviour pattern. A low morale home which is usually found in large family size does not present a good model for the child for imitation. Observations revealed that children from small family size homes where good morale pattern dominate were better adjusted, more independent and more satisfactorily related to their parents than were those poorly adjusted in their social environment. It is pertinent to state that good family morale is productive of desirable behaviours which are not present in poor family morale. The practices of the family during the early years of the child,

especially parental neglect, indifference, restriction, and absence of joyful and playful interaction are major factors that can influence the attitude of students either positively or negatively towards cultism. The child who is loved and restricted excessively, that is, given some form of choice is most likely to adjust successfully to society while the child who is unloved and restricted severely has the poorest prognosis.

It is against this background that this paper sought to investigate the influence of family size and undergraduates attitudes towards cultism. To guide this study, this hypothesis was raised. Family size does not significantly influence students' attitude towards cultism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Family Size and Attitude of Undergraduates' Towards Cultism

A family with too many children may not adequately monitor the behavioural pattern of the children. Some of them could become aggressive, unfriendly, bullies and join bad gangs without parents noticing such traits in the children. Family size studies have revealed that the size of the family exerts influence on children and adolescents' behaviour, tendencies and attitudes. Hurlock (1972) observed that large family size reduces parental care given to the children in the family. Also, in a large family, particularly when the children are not well spaced in age, sufficient time and attention cannot be given to the children by their parents. The above situation most often results in unguided development which in turn leads to positive or negative attitude towards life events including gangsterism and cultism.

Isangedighi (2007) posited that children born into large families experience all manner of changes and expectations. They get ordered from different people, and make efforts at adjustment. They experience changes in status, roles and responsibilities requiring adaptation. Various advantages are inherent in growing up in a large family. Among these are group spirit, co-operation and communal existence. This ensures that individual needs can easily be met through shared responsibility. The child gets attention whether or not the biological parents are around. With adults or older children always around, and supervising what the child does, he further opined that large family aids the cultivation of life of discipline. This is because, hardly any behaviour passes unnoticed.

On the other hand, Isangedighi (2007) also noted that growing up in a large family also has some disadvantages for the growing child. In that, while the large family inculcates in the person group spirit, it may serve to put the development of the individual at risk. Closely related to this is the spirit of competition and personal achievement which are usually compromised to give cooperation expression. Children experience less intimate relationships with parents, as there are other adults and elderly family members who wield authority over the way people in the family behave. The larger family and the more each child interacts with every other person, the more his or her association with biological parents minimizes. In the same vein, Rosen (2004) posited that the absence of intense parent-child interaction, the degree of value and attitude internalization is considerably reduced.

Also, Peretomode (1994) posited that a large family is negatively related to the child's behavioural tendencies. To him, an only child gets a great deal of parental attention and he or she is spared sibling rivalry. He further stated that there is some evidence that the first born child appears to mature in behaviour, speech and attitude faster than later born children from the same parents. This, he stated, was due to the same amount of time that was devoted to guiding and morally instructing the child.

Giddens (2002) posited that family size has a corresponding influence on children and adolescents attitudes, which may be positive or negative, towards events and objects or activity. To him, as the family size increases, the level of personal attention to the children by the parents declines. This may cause the children to depend on and emulate peers and other adults around whose attitude may be anti-social.

Isangedighi (2007) revealed that larger the family sizes, the more disadvantageous it is for the children; and the smaller they are, the better the individual's wholesome development. Small family size has the advantage of providing greater opportunity for appropriate level of intense and sustainable parent-child interaction. Children in smaller families have higher levels of activities than those in large families. This is because, in small size families, investment of time, energy and material resources are directed at a limited number of people. This in itself makes for intensive rather than extensive parenthood. The implication is that, children in small families have

greater opportunity to develop qualitatively socially and psychologically. Small size families produce children who have more positive self-concept, and better self-confidence. It is also more potent in making children to be more future oriented, more energetic and more active generally and less dependent on groups.

METHODS

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the influence of family size and attitude of undergraduates towards cultism. The research design adopted was Ex-post Facto design.

Population: The study comprised of all undergraduates of Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State with a population of five thousand and two (5,002).

Sample: The sample of this study consisted of six hundred and five (605) undergraduates from the total population. The stratified random sampling technique was used in sample selection. All the eleven (11) faculties in the university were identified and some departments were randomly selected, fifty-five (55) undergraduates were randomly selected from the different faculties and departments.

Instrumentation: The questionnaire used for data collection was titled Family Size and Students Attitude Towards Cultism (FSSATC). The instrument was made up of two sections. Section A of the instrument focused on students personal data while Section B elicited response on students' attitudes towards cultism.

Validity: To validate the instrument, the instrument was given to four professors in Guidance and Counselling, Sociology, Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. These experts certified that the instrument measures what it was intended to measure.

Reliability: To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot testing was carried out using 50 undergraduates from university of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. A test-re-test method was adopted, the instrument was first administered to the students and 10 days later the instrument was re-administered to the same individuals. The data collected were subjected to analysis using the Pearson Product Co-relation Co-efficient of 0.90 indicating that the instrument is okay for use.

Data Collection: The researcher with the assistance of research assistance administered the questionnaire to respondents and all were re-

trieved representing 100 per cent of total sample without any attrition.

Data Analysis: The hypothesis stated that family size does not significantly influence undergraduates' attitude towards cultism. The statistical analysis used was one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

The hypothesis states that family size does not significantly influence undergraduates' attitude towards cultism. To test this hypothesis, One-way Analysis of Variance was used. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: One – way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of influence of family size on undergraduates' attitude towards cultism

Towards children				
Family size		N	X	SD
Small		62	14.61	3.65
Average		207	13.62	3.57
Large		346	14.62	3.56
Total		605	14.42	3.62
Source of variation	Sum of squares	DF	Means of squares	F
Between group	89.928	2	44.964	
Within group	7409.373	603	13.022	3.45
Total	7499.301	605		

The result revealed that F-Value of 3.45 is higher than the critical value of 3.00 at .05 level of significance given 2 and 603 degrees of freedom. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected. One can conclude, therefore, that there is a significant influence of family size on undergraduates' attitude towards cultism.

Given the significant F-Value, a multiple comparison analysis using Fishers' Least Square Difference (LSD) was done to determine where the differences lie. The result of the analysis revealed that students from small families were significantly higher mean than students from average family size in their attitude towards cultism ($t=2.50$; $p<.05$). Similarly, students from large families also have a higher mean attitude towards cultism than students from average family size ($t=2.25$; $p<.05$). This finding revealed that students from small and large families have positive attitude towards cultism. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Fisher's LSD multiple comparison analysis of influence of family size on undergraduates' attitude towards cultism

Family size	Small (n=62)	Average (n=207)	Large (n=346)
Small	14.61a	1.0030b	0.0106
Average	2.50c	13.62	-0.9924
Large	0.03	2.25	14.62

MSW 13.02

a. Group means are on the diagonal

b. Differences between group means are placed above the diagonal

c. Fisher's LSD t- values are placed below the diagonal

DISCUSSION

The result of this hypothesis showed that there is a significant influence of family size on attitude of undergraduates' towards cultism. Fishers' Least Square Difference (LSD) indicated that students from large and small families have positive attitude towards cultism than students from average families. This study is supported by a study by Giddens (2002) that posited that family size has a corresponding influence on children's and adolescents' attitude, which may be positive or negative, towards events, objects or activity. To him, as family size increases, the level of personal attention to the children by parents decreases. This he stated may cause children to get attached to peers and other adults around whose attitude may be anti-social and which the children may in turn adopt.

This study is also supported by the study by Hurlock (1972) that revealed that large family size reduces parental care given to the children in the family after the first born child. Also, in a large family, when children are not well-spaced in age, sufficient time and attention could not be given to the children by their parents. This results in unguided development which in turn leads to positive or negative attitude towards life events including gangsterism and cultism. This is not surprising in that majority of undergraduates come from large polygamous families where children are largely left on their own to behave the way they like without strict supervision from parents. Also, those from small families are left alone to do what they like to do. This is largely because parents, particularly from the Niger Delta region, practice the permissive parenting style; a situation whereby children are left alone to do and behave the way they like.

The result of this study does not support the studies by Peretomode (1994) and Isangedighi's

(2007) assertion that children in small families have greater opportunity to develop qualitatively socially and psychologically. Small size families are more potent than large size families in producing children who have more positive self-concept and better self- confidence. It is also more potent in making children to be more future oriented, more energetic and more active generally and less dependent on group.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

Cultism is an anti- social behaviour in our society, a situation whereby parents can't give their children moral instructions; a situation in which government on her part cannot enforce the laws to protect its citizenry and a condition where university authorities who cannot protect its own is alarming. Thus, all and sundry needs to be counselled to develop negative attitude towards cultism.

In the first place, parents need to be counselled to produce the number of children they can cater for adequately. Parents should be sensitised to the high cost of living and education so they can appreciate what it takes to care for a child and how many they can cope with. Also, parents need to be counselled on the need for good interaction and communication with their children at home and not leaving them under care givers. Parents should be made to understand that they need to study their children to understand them. Such knowledge will make them understand the demands they can make of their children. The counselling strategies to be used for parents can be done through group and individual counselling. In the process, information counselling can be employed. Value orientation can be employed to re- orient parents about the values they should inculcate in their children for positive attitude towards life events.

Government needs to be sensitised to the activities of cultist on our campuses, through television and radio jingles, seminars and workshops on cultism and cult activities. Counsellors should sensitise government to be alive to her responsibilities, by encouraging government to enforce laws to prosecute cultists.

University authorities should be encouraged by counsellors to organize orientation for new students about cultism and cult activities on campus. University authorities should also be encour-

aged by counsellors to hand over cultists on campus to the law enforcement agents not only just expelling them from the campuses.

Counsellors should organize workshops, seminars, public lectures and conferences on campuses about cultism. This will go a long in curbing the menace of cultists on our campuses.

CONCLUSION

The goal of preventive measure is to develop skills, attitudes and other competencies in the individuals so that anti- social behaviour such as cultism may be properly checked. Trying to check cultism on campuses is very complex and requires the cooperation of the home, the school

and the society. Parents can help the children develop good habits, sound value systems and attitudes because the children remain in their company in childhood when permanent impression can be created in the minds of the children.

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