

Vol. 9, No. 1, June (2026) JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND TOURISM EDUCATION ISSN: 2659-0794 (PRINT) ISSN:2659-0808(ONLINE) Content Available at: https://jeate.k-injo.com/index.php/Jete			
Family Type, Parental Educational status and Tendency for Secondary School Student's Cult Activities in Calabar Education Zone Cross River State, Nigeria.			
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Keywords		Abstract	
Family type, parental educational status, cult activities, adolescents, secondary school students.		This study investigated Family Type and Parental Educational Status as Predictors of Secondary School Students' Tendency Toward Cult Activities in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. The increasing prevalence of cult-related behaviours among adolescents has become a major concern for educators, parents, and policymakers due to its implications for school safety and students' psychosocial development. The ex-post facto (causal-comparative) research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 6,553 Senior Secondary One (SS1) students, from which a sample of 649 students was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Family Type, Parental Educational Status and Tendency for Cult Activities Questionnaire (FTPESTCAQ). The instrument's reliability coefficient was established using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .70$). Data were analyzed using independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that family type significantly influenced students' tendency toward cult activities, with students from polygamous families exhibiting higher tendencies than those from monogamous families. Additionally, parental educational status had a significant effect on students' tendency toward cult activities, with students from lower educational backgrounds showing higher susceptibility. The study concludes that family structure and parental education are 4 critical determinants of adolescents' behavioural outcomes. It is recommended among others, that parents should be encouraged to provide consistent supervision, emotional support, and open communication with their children, regardless of family structure, in order to reduce their children's tendency toward cult activities. This study investigated Family Type and Parental Educational Status as Predictors of Secondary School Students' Tendency Toward Cult Activities in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. The increasing prevalence of cult-related behaviours among adolescents has become a major concern for educators, parents, and policymakers due to its implications for school	
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DOI://doi.org/10.60787/JETE.VOL9NO1.29-37			

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Introduction

Cult-related activities have become a persistent and alarming challenge within the Nigerian education system, particularly among adolescents in secondary schools. In recent years, the proliferation of clandestine student groups, commonly referred to as cults, has extended even beyond tertiary institutions to secondary and even primary school levels (Obadan, 2015). According to Aniekpeno (2017) cult groups are typically characterized by secretive membership, oath-taking, and ritual practices, often accompanied by deviant and violent behaviours such as intimidation, assault, and social disorder. The presence of such activities within school environments poses serious threats to students' safety, academic engagement, and overall psychosocial development.

In Nigeria, particularly in the southern regions, reports of cult-related violence among secondary school students have raised significant concern among educators, parents, and policymakers. . Rivalry among cult groups has led to school disruptions, fear among students and staff, and, in extreme cases, loss of lives and property (Obadan, 2015). In such environments, meaningful teaching and learning are often compromised, as students operate under conditions of fear, insecurity, and mistrust. Obadan (2015) further noted that in schools affected by cultism, students often experience mysterious occurrences, threats, and heightened suspicion of peers, all of which undermine academic concentration and social cohesion.

Scholars have increasingly attributed adolescents' involvement in deviant behaviours, including cultism, to a complex interplay of social, psychological, and environmental in such environments, meaningful teaching and learning are often compromised, as students operate under conditions of fear, insecurity, and mistrust.

Scholars have increasingly attributed adolescents' involvement in deviant behaviours, including cultism, to a complex interplay of social, psychological, and environmental factors. Among these, the

family has been widely recognized as a primary agent of socialization with profound influence on children's behavioural outcomes. Classical psychological theories provide useful insights into this relationship. For instance, psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the role of early childhood experiences within the family in shaping personality development (Freud, 1933), while social learning theory posits that behaviours are acquired through observation and imitation of significant others, particularly parents (Bandura, 1971). Similarly, Erikson's (1965) psychosocial development theory highlights adolescence as a critical stage of identity formation influenced by social relationships, and Sullivan (1953) emphasizes interpersonal relationships as central to behavioural development. These theoretical perspectives collectively underscore the importance of family environment in shaping adolescents' behavioural tendencies.

Within the family context, specific structural and socio-educational characteristics may play a critical role in shaping adolescents' susceptibility to cult-related activities. Family type, which refers to the structural composition of the household (e.g., monogamous or polygamous), has been linked to variations in parental attention, supervision, and emotional support. Bolvin (2019) identified the following as factors responsible for delinquency like involvement in cult activities, family issues, imitation and peer pressure among other things. In polygamous family settings, the likelihood of reduced parental monitoring and increased intra-family competition may contribute to behavioural maladjustment among children, whereas monogamous family structures are often associated with greater stability and cohesion.

In the same vein, Papalia & Oids (2018) observed that poor education standards, violence in the home and social circles, peer pressure, socio-economic factors and substance abuse are leading factors contributing to students delinquency.

Harry (2018) observed that educated parents more often see the value of inculcating right moral value, provide guidance, and create supportive environments for their children by preparing them for school. Jude (2019) asserts that children from educationally deprived houses will lack the background that is necessary for progress in reading and are likely to indulge in delinquent behaviour. Empirical studies within the Nigerian context have provided support for the relationship between family background variables and adolescents' behavioural outcomes. Similarly, Undie (2017) reported that family variables such as parental education, family structure, and family size significantly influenced students' tendency to participate in cult activities in Calabar Education Zone. In another study, Blendu (2021) found that students from less educated parental backgrounds exhibited higher tendencies toward cultism compared to those from more educated homes, although the influence of family type was reported as non-significant. These mixed findings suggest the need for further empirical clarification.

However, despite the growing body of literature on cultism and adolescent behaviour, there remains limited context-specific empirical evidence examining the combined influence of family type and parental educational status on students' tendency toward cult activities, particularly within the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. It is against this backdrop that the present study investigated the Influence of Family Type and Parental Educational Status as Predictors of Secondary School Students' Tendency toward Cult Activities in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of problem

Cult-related activities among secondary school students have become a persistent social and educational concern in Nigeria, particularly due to their association with violence, indiscipline, and disruption of academic activities. Notably, despite various interventions by government agencies, schools, religious bodies, and non-governmental organizations aimed at curbing the menace of cult-related activities, the problem appears to be escalating rather than declining. Reports of students' involvement in behaviours such as intimidation, bullying, drug abuse, and organized cult activities suggest a growing trend of behavioural maladjustment among adolescents.

In the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, the situation is particularly worrisome. Evidence from school environments indicates increasing cases of student unrest, fear among learners, and reluctance of teachers to enforce discipline due to threats associated with cult groups. This climate of insecurity undermines effective teaching and learning, and raises concerns about the long-term psychosocial development of students. Although awareness campaigns, security interventions, and moral education

programmes have been implemented, these efforts have yielded limited success, suggesting that underlying factors contributing to students' involvement in cult activities may not have been adequately addressed. Previous studies have identified family-related variables such as parental education, family structure, and socio-economic status as significant predictors of adolescent deviant behaviour. However, findings remain inconsistent, particularly regarding the influence of family type, and there is limited empirical evidence examining how family type and parental educational status jointly influence students' tendency toward cult activities within the Calabar Education Zone. This gap in knowledge necessitates a focused investigation into the role of family background factors in shaping students' behavioural tendencies. Therefore, this study sought to examine the influence Family Type and Parental Educational Status as Predictors of Secondary School Students' Tendency toward Cult Activities in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of family type and parental educational status as Predictors of Secondary School Students' Tendency toward Cult Activities in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

1. Examine the influence of family type on students' tendency toward cult activities;
2. Determine the influence of parental educational status on students' tendency toward cult activities.

Statement of hypotheses

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

H₀₁: Family type does not significantly influence secondary school students' tendency toward cult activities.

H₀₂: Parental educational status does not significantly influence secondary school students' tendency toward cult activities.

Methodology

The study adopted ex-post facto (causal-comparative) research design. The design was considered appropriate because it involves the investigation of possible cause-and-effect relationships among variables without direct manipulation. In this study, the independent variables, family type and parental educational status, had already occurred and could not be controlled or altered by the researcher. Thus, the ex-post facto design enabled the researcher to compare groups of students based on their family characteristics and examine how these variables influence their tendency toward cult activities. This approach is particularly suitable for studies involving social and behavioural variables where experimental manipulation is neither feasible nor ethical.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in the Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The zone comprises several public secondary schools distributed across different Local Education Authorities (LEAs), with diverse socio-cultural and family backgrounds among students.

Population, Sample and Sampling technique

The population of the study consisted of 6,553 Senior Secondary One (SS1) students enrolled in public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone during the 2019/2020 academic session. Out of the population, a sample of 655 students was drawn for the study, representing approximately 10% of the population. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. In the first stage, using stratified sampling technique, the Calabar Education Zone was stratified into seven strata based on the existing Local Education Authorities (LEAs). In the second stage, proportionate random sampling of schools was done. From each stratum, approximately 20% of public secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling (balloting without replacement), resulting in a total of 21 schools. This ensured that all schools had an equal probability of selection while maintaining proportional representation. Lastly, in the third stage, within each selected school, simple random sampling (balloting method) was used to select approximately 10% of SS1 students. Students were asked to pick from a set of randomly prepared slips, ensuring equal chances of selection. This multi-stage approach was employed as it enhanced the representativeness of the sample and reduced sampling bias.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled: “Family Type, Parental Educational Status and Tendency for Cult Activities Questionnaire (FTPESTCAQ)”. The instrument consisted of two sections, A and B. Section A sought demographic information of respondents, including family type, age, gender, and parental educational status. Section B was a 20-item scale designed to measure students’ tendency toward cult activities. This was structured on a 4-point Likert-type scale with response options as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values of 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. Negatively worded items were reverse-coded to ensure consistency in scoring. The total score obtained by each respondent represented their level of tendency toward cult activities, with higher scores indicating higher tendency and lower scores showing lower tendency.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. Three experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation reviewed the instrument for: clarity of items, relevance to study variables, and appropriateness of language. Based on their recommendations, ambiguous and redundant items were revised or removed, leading to the final 20-item version of the instrument. This process ensured that the instrument adequately measured the constructs of interest.

Reliability of the Instrument

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, 30 copies were trial-tested on 30 respondents from two secondary schools in Ikom Education zone, who were not part of the actual study but possess similar characteristics with those in this study’s area. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to determine internal consistency. The reliability coefficient obtained (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.70$) indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency for social science research, which shows that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher, with the assistance of two trained research assistants, administered the questionnaire directly to the respondents in their respective schools. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion by the respondents to ensure a high return rate. Thus, out of the 655 copies of the instrument administered, 649 copies (99.08%) were properly completed and retrieved from the respondents for data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and analyzed using t-test and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The independent samples t-test was used to test the influence of family type on students’ tendency toward cult activities. While one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the influence of parental educational status. Fisher’s Least Significant Difference (LSD) post-hoc test was employed to determine the direction of differences where significant results were obtained. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Family type does not significantly influence secondary school students’ tendency toward cult activities.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine the influence of family type (monogamous versus polygamous) on students’ tendency toward cult activities. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1:

Independent Samples t-test of the influence of family type on students’ tendency toward cult activities

Family Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Monogamous	368	20.81	7.16	647	10.95	.000	Significant
Polygamous	281	26.98	6.11				

Note: N = Number of respondents, df=Degree of freedom

The results in Table 1 show a statistically significant difference in students' tendency toward cult activities based on family type, $t(647) = 10.95, p = .000$. Students from polygamous families ($Mean = 26.98, SD = 6.11$) recorded higher mean scores than their counterparts from monogamous families ($Mean = 20.81, SD = 7.16$). Since the p-value ($p = .000$) is less than the 0.05 level of significance at which the result was being tested, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, inference drawn is that family type significantly influences students' tendency toward cult activities, with students from polygamous homes exhibiting higher tendency toward cult activities than their counterparts from monogamous homes.

Hypothesis two

H₀₂: Parental educational status does not significantly influence secondary school students' tendency toward cult activities.

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the influence of parental educational status (primary, secondary, and tertiary) on students' tendency toward cult activities. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2:

One-Way ANOVA of the influence of parental educational status on students' tendency toward cult activities

Parents' Educational Status		N	Mean	SD
Primary		157	30.38	8.20
Secondary		271	22.19	5.37
Tertiary		221	22.52	6.28
Total		649	24.28	7.32

Source	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	7715.55	2	3857.77	92.41	.000	Significant
Within Groups	26968.28	646	41.75			
Total	34683.83	648				

The results in Table 2 indicate a statistically significant difference in students' tendency toward cult activities based on parental educational status, $F(2, 646) = 92.41, p = .000$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This is because the p-value ($p = .000$) is less than the 0.05 level of significance at which the result was being tested. As a result, the inference drawn was that parents' educational status significantly influences students' tendency toward cult activities. Furthermore, to determine the specific group differences, Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc test was conducted. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3:

Fisher's LSD Post Hoc Test for Differences in Parental Educational Status in relation to students' tendency for cult activities

(I) Parental educational qualification (Binned)	(J) Parental educational qualification (Binned)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Tertiary	Secondary	.32396	.58561	.580
	Primary	-7.86633*	.67439	.000
Secondary	Tertiary	-.32396	.58561	.580
	Primary	-8.19028*	.64803	.000
Primary	Tertiary	7.86633*	.67439	.000
	Secondary	8.19028*	.64803	.000

The post hoc results in Table 3 indicate that students whose parents have primary education differ significantly ($p < 0.05$) from those with secondary and tertiary education, exhibiting higher tendency toward cult activities. However, no significant difference was found between students whose parents have secondary and tertiary education ($p = .580$). This suggests that lower parental educational attainment is associated with higher students' tendency towards cult activities.

Discussion of findings

Firstly, the findings of this study revealed that family type significantly influences secondary school students' tendency toward cult activities, with students from polygamous family settings exhibiting higher susceptibility compared to their counterparts from monogamous homes. This suggests that family structural dynamics play a critical role in shaping adolescents' behavioural outcomes. This finding may be explained within the framework of socialization processes in the family. In many polygamous family settings, the distribution of parental attention and resources may be uneven, often resulting in reduced supervision, emotional neglect, or intra-family competition. Such conditions may create psychosocial vulnerabilities among adolescents, making them more likely to seek acceptance, identity, and protection outside the family unit, sometimes through involvement in deviant peer groups such as cults.

The finding is consistent with the assumptions of social learning theory, which posits that behaviour is learned through interaction with significant others and the surrounding environment (Bandura, 1971). When family environments are characterized by instability or weak supervision, adolescents may model behaviours observed in deviant peer groups. Similarly, Erikson's (1965) psychosocial development theory highlights adolescence as a stage of identity formation, during which individuals may resort to risky group affiliations when stable support systems are lacking. Empirically, this finding also aligns with that of Ekong (2013), who reported that adolescents from polygamous families were significantly more involved in delinquent behaviours such as truancy and drug abuse than those from monogamous homes. The convergence of these findings reinforces the argument that family structure is a significant determinant of behavioural adjustment among adolescents.

Secondly, the study found that parental educational status significantly influences students' tendency toward cult activities, with students from lower educational backgrounds demonstrating higher susceptibility compared to those whose parents have higher educational attainment. This highlights the importance of parental cognitive and socio-cultural resources in shaping adolescents' behaviour. One possible explanation for this finding is that parents with higher levels of education are more likely to possess greater awareness of developmental needs, employ effective communication strategies, and provide appropriate supervision and guidance. In contrast, lower parental educational attainment may limit parents' capacity to monitor and regulate their children's behaviour effectively, thereby increasing the likelihood of exposure to deviant influences.

This finding is supported by social learning theory (Bandura, 1971), which emphasizes the role of parental modelling and reinforcement in behaviour acquisition. Educated parents are more likely to model socially acceptable behaviours and discourage deviance. In addition, the finding aligns with, Papalia & Oids (2018) who observed that poor education standards, violence in the home and social circles, peer pressure are more likely to occur as a result of modeling and socio-economic factors and substance abuse are leading factors contributing to students delinquency.

Empirically, the result corroborates the findings of Blendu (2021), who reported that students from less educated parental backgrounds exhibited higher tendencies toward cultism compared to those from more educated homes.

Jude (2019) asserts that children from educationally deprived houses will lack the background that is necessary for progress in reading and are likely to indulge in delinquent behaviour like cultism. However, the finding also contrasts with some aspects of previous research, particularly regarding the complex role of socio-economic factors, suggesting that the relationship between parental background and adolescent behaviour may be multifaceted. This highlights the need for further research to explore additional mediating variables such as peer influence and school environment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that both family type and parental educational status have significant influence on students' tendency towards cult activities. Students from polygamous family settings exhibit a higher tendency toward cult activities compared to those from monogamous homes. Students whose parents have lower levels of educational attainment demonstrates greater tendency towards cult activities than those from more educated family backgrounds. Therefore, the variations in family type and parental educational status contribute significantly to tendency towards cult activities among secondary school students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should be encouraged to provide consistent supervision, emotional support, and open communication with their children, regardless of family structure, in order to reduce adolescents' vulnerability to negative peer influence.
2. Government and educational agencies should organize regular sensitization programmes aimed at educating parents on effective child-rearing practices, adolescent development, and the dangers associated with cult activities.
3. School counsellors and educational psychologists should design and implement targeted intervention programmes that focus on value re-orientation, peer resistance skills, and awareness of the consequences of cult involvement.
4. School authorities should strengthen monitoring systems within schools and enforce policies that discourage cult-related activities while promoting safe and inclusive learning environments.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from relevant school authorities in the Calabar Education Zone. Informed consent was secured from the participants, and they were assured that their responses would be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for research purposes. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

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