

## **Media Popular Culture and the Influence of Western Celebrities on Nigerian Youth Culture**

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**Abstract:** This study examined popular culture and the influence of western celebrities on Nigerian youth culture. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was made up of 28,981 respondents, comprising undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. The sample size was 395. The study adopted multistage sampling technique to select study units from the study population. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Results from analyzed data showed that Nigerian youths were exposed to western celebrities; and, the lifestyle of western celebrities influenced Nigerian youths in the way they dressed and talked. Also, the study revealed the various reasons behind the influence of these western celebrities.

**Keywords** – Popular culture, Western Celebrities, Nigerian Youth, Media, Influence

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Popular culture is the accumulation of cultural products such as music, art, literature, fashion, dance, film, cyber culture, television and radio that are consumed by the majority of a society's population. The tendency for people to imitate, emulate and copy what they see in the media has made the issue of western celebrities and the culture of the country's youth a continuous debate. The youths try to sheepishly copy the lifestyle of Western celebrities as presented by the media. To dress, walk and do anything resembling western way of life is seen as a significant index of one's social standing.[1] This can be attributed to the fact that "the closer a person's attitude is to western norms and values, the greater the opportunity open to the person and the higher the person's position on the social ladder".[2]

Furthermore, celebrity lifestyle as portrayed in mainstream and alternative media such as internet and alternate media like satellite television influence the social attitudes and lifestyle of these youths. Celebrity lifestyle affects their confidence and determination to be successful in life; the way they dress, talk, and handle issues about relationship, marriage and sex. In order to ascertain the worthiness of these results, there is need to explore the influence of western celebrities on the lifestyle and culture of Nigerian youths. [3]

The evolution of popular culture can never be underestimated. Popular culture is a vital component in the history of humanity. Traditionally, popular culture was associated with poor education and the lower classes, as opposed to the "official culture" and higher education of the upper classes. The stress in the distinction from "official culture" became more pronounced towards the end of the 19th century, a usage that became established by the antebellum period. [4] From the end of World War II, following major cultural and social changes brought by mass media innovations, the meaning of popular culture began to overlap with those of mass culture, media culture, image culture, consumer culture, and culture for mass consumption. Social and cultural changes in the United States were a pioneer in this, with respect to other western countries. The abbreviated forms "pop" for popular, as in pop music, dates from the late 1950s. [5] Beginning largely in the era following World War II, communication research took off, becoming in large part an American monopoly. During this time "the mass media were commonly viewed as one of the most promising channels of modernization and especially as a potent tool for overcoming traditional attitudes. [6] From this perspective, the flow of mass media from the developed or capitalist West to the less developed world was seen as both good for its recipients and also beneficial in combating the alternative model of modernization based on socialism, planning and government control".[7] Hence, popular culture influence youths in underdeveloped countries who are exposed to western celebrities through the media.

Western celebrities are persons from the western world who are famous, especially in areas of entertainment such as films, music, writing or sport. Western celebrities are celebrated because they have prestige and they have prestige because they are thought to have power or wealth. They are often seen in magazines, television, newspapers, books and increasingly the Internet with stories and different activities which make people to celebrate them.[8] Below is an example of a famous western individual named Kim Kardashian:



**Figure 1: Kim Kardashian in racy costume**

Today, young people are exposed to an immense range of influential individuals through television popular culture, print media and the internet. The knowledge of western celebrities among youths is at a very high.[9] Western celebrities that the youth are exposed to influences their culture in different ways. Nigerian youths are exposed to one celebrity or the other and this goes a long way in influencing their attitudes and behaviours, in terms of dressing habit, character among others. It is therefore worthy to state that Nigerian youths' culture is influenced by western celebrities because of the level of exposure. [10] Western celebrities influence Nigerian youths (ladies) to be destructively thin; put harmful substances in their bodies, like tattoos. Many parents are concerned with the overall content these celebrities are putting on television, in movies, and over the Internet. Discourse in this vein is not a new phenomenon. Musicians and performers have long been considered to influence young people in negative ways. [11]

Nigeria as a country has her culture which is unique in its own right. This culture may not be absolutely the same among all countries. A lot of cultures exist but there are features that differentiate Nigerians from other people of the world. The issue here is that any person with passion for the Nigerian culture would believe that, the very material, spiritual and aesthetic fabric of Nigerian youths had been destroyed by western celebrities.[12] Nigeria which is made up of rich and diverse cultural values is beginning to lose most of its cultural ideals through the adoption of the lifestyle of western celebrities showcased through the mass media. Youths have abandoned local attires such as the 'Adire' and 'Ankara' for alien attires because of the influence western celebrities have on them. It is common to see young people walking across the streets half nude, putting on micro-mini skirts, handless top, trousers and other outfits that are not part of Nigeria's cultural identity.[13] Africans and indeed Nigerians have their traditional attires but how many youths proudly abide by the culture and wear such traditional attires today? In fact, it is mandatory in some organizations that you wear a suit except on Fridays that you are allowed to wear native attire, just because of the influence of westerners. The question that must be answered is, whether wearing of suit is part of Nigeria's culture for the youths? Must everything western be copied? Can't the rich cultural and traditional outfit of Nigeria be promoted to enable local industries to boom? [14] It is therefore relevant to explore popular culture and the influence of western celebrities on Nigerian youth culture.

## II. PROBLEM

“Nigeria culture, following its contact with the lifestyles of western celebrities constantly portrayed by the media, appears to have caved in” and continues to do so as years go by.[15]The tendency for people to imitate, emulate and copy what they see (in the media) is a major cause of this situation, especially as seen in the emerging culture of the country’s youth. The youths try to sheepishly copy the lifestyle of western celebrities as presented by the media. To dress, walk and do anything resembling western way of life is seen as a significant index of one’s social standing. “The closer a person’s attitude is to western norms and values, the greater the opportunity open to the person and the higher the person’s position on the social ladder.”[16]. Unfortunately, the addiction to this borrowed lifestyle leaves the individual without an identified culture and this eliminates him/her from the society. The sad side of the exposure to foreign media on the culture of a society is that the glorification of western lifestyle of celebrities goes side by side with condemnation of the local culture. This creates a situation where Nigerian youths are becoming more British or American than the Americans or British themselves and this invariable, creates marginal individuals to the extent that they are neither here nor there.[17] The above assertions motivated the these questions: why are Nigerian youths exposed to western celebrities? Why does it seem like the lifestyles of western celebrities affect the norms and beliefs of Nigerian youths? Are the reasons for this influence? Thus, there was the need for this study to:

1. find out the extent to which Nigerian youths are exposed to/ or knowledgeable of western celebrities;
2. ascertain the influence, the lifestyles of western celebrities have on the culture of Nigerian youths; and,
3. find out the reason for the influence of western celebrities on the culture of Nigerian youths

## III. METHOD

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The survey questions sought to find out the extent to which Nigeria youths were exposed to/or knowledgeable of western celebrities; the influence, the lifestyle of western celebrities have on the culture of Nigerian youths and the reasons for the influence of western celebrities on the culture of the Nigerian youths.

The study was carried out at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. The Population of the study consisted of all 28,981 registered undergraduate students of this institution. Table below shows the distribution of this population:

**Table 1: Population Distribution**

S/N	Faculty	Population
	Agriculture	1738
	Arts	2639
	Basic Medical Sciences	1031
	Biosciences	3460
	Education	3562
	Engineering	3157
	Environmental Sciences	1868
	Health Science and Technology	2342
	Law	1059
	Management Sciences	2396
	Medicine	508
	Pharmaceutical Sciences	679
	Physical Sciences	2227
	Social Sciences	2315
	<b>Total</b>	<b>28,981</b>

A sample of 395 was drawn from the population of 28,981 using Taro Yamene’s formula  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Based on the computations using Taro Yamene’s formula for computing size, a sample of 400 was adjudged appropriate for this study. The multi-state sampling was used to select 400 respondents from the study population of 28,981.

The First stage, involved the selection of faculties from the university. Among the 14 faculties; Faculty of Agriculture, Engineering, Law, Art, Environmental Sciences, Social Sciences, Management sciences, Education, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Health Science and Technology, Basic Medical Sciences, Medicine and Biosciences. The faculties of Engineering, Law, Arts, Environmental Sciences, Social Sciences, Management sciences, were randomly selected.

The second stage involved the selection of departments. For the faculty of Engineering, there are 10 departments; Agric and Bio-Resources, Chemical, Civil, Electrical/Electronic and Computer, Industrial and Production, Mechanical, Metallurgical and Materials, Polymer and Textile Engineering. The department of

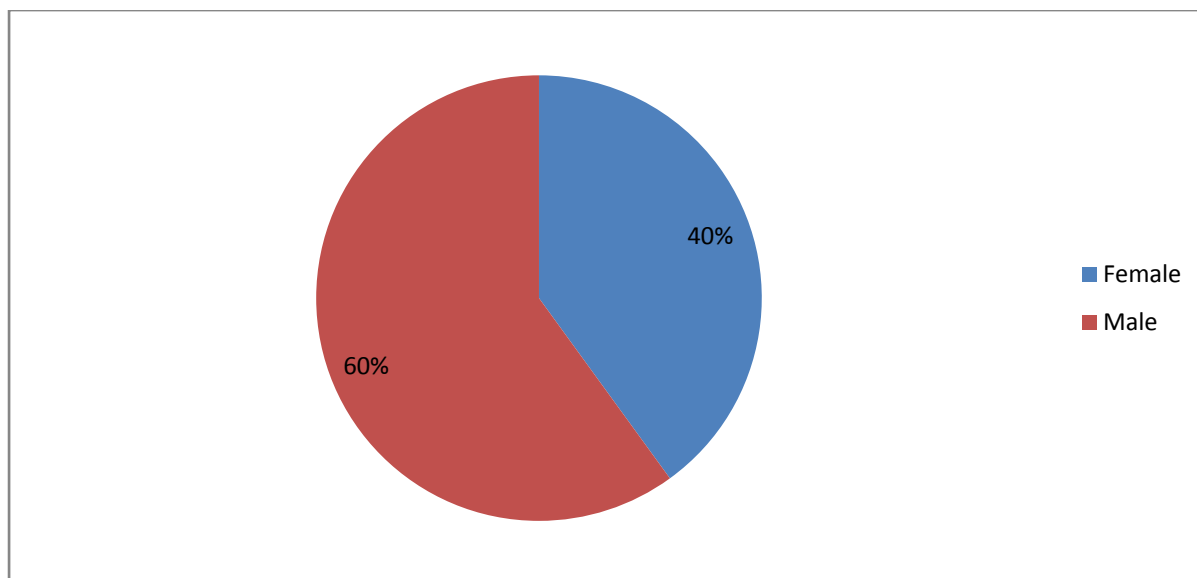
Chemical and Petroleum Engineering were randomly selected. The faculty of Law was selected randomly. For the faculty of Social Sciences, which comprises 5 departments, the department of Mass Communication and Political Science were randomly selected. The department of Accountancy and Public Administration were randomly selected from faculty of Management Sciences which has eight departments. For the faculty of Arts which comprises ten departments, the department of English and the department of Philosophy were randomly selected. For the Faculty of Environmental Sciences which is made up of eight departments, the departments of Architecture and estate Management were randomly selected. In the department of Chemical Engineering, 200 and 400 levels were randomly selected while 300 and 400 levels were randomly selected from Petroleum Engineering. The faculty of Law, 500 and 100 levels were randomly selected. In the department of English Language 200 and 300 levels were randomly selected while 100 and 400 were randomly selected from Philosophy department. In the department of Architecture levels 100 and 200 were randomly selected while 300 and 400 levels were selected at random from Estate management department.

A pre-coded 16-item questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The survey questions addressed variables directly related to the research questions. The questionnaire had four segments; the first consist of four questions that sought to determine the demographic variable of the respondents. The second segment had four questions that sought to determine the extent at which Nigerian youths are exposed to western celebrities. The third segment comprised four questions that sought to ascertain the influence the lifestyle of western celebrities had on the culture of the Nigerian youths. Finally, the fourth segment comprised of four question items that sought to find out the reason for this influence of western celebrities on the culture of Nigerian youths.

#### IV. FINDINGS

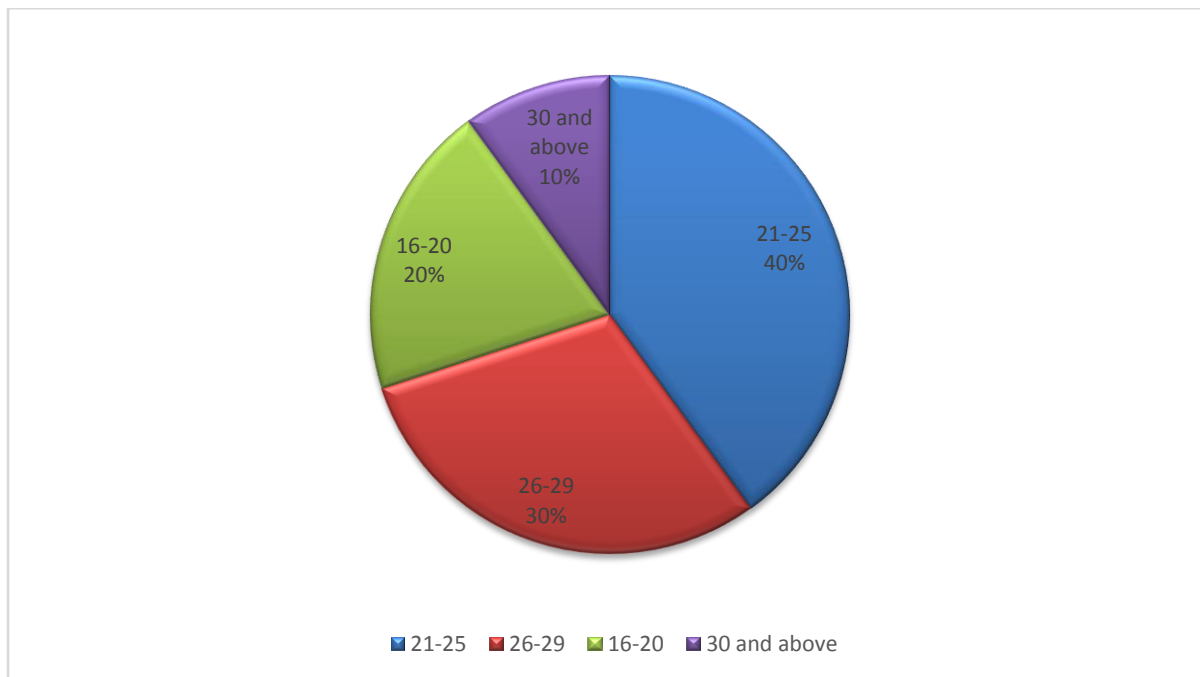
A total of 395 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. No copy of the questionnaire was lost in the course of administration because the research was present to retrieve the questionnaire as soon as they were completed.

The respondents' demographic variables were measured using questionnaire items 1-4. Data generated from the responses were presented in the pie-charts below;



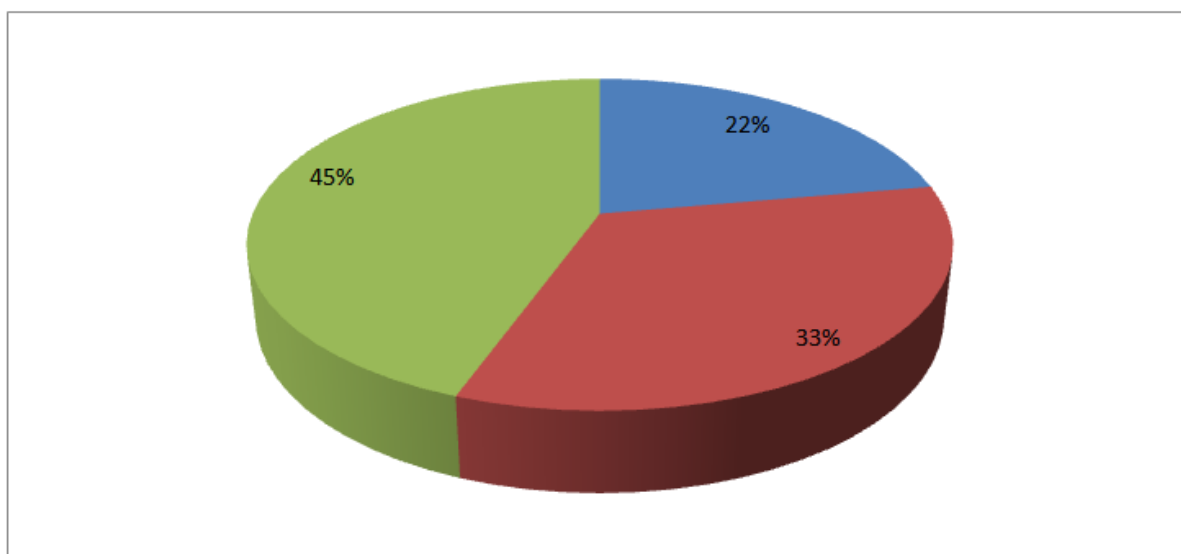
**Figure 2:** Respondents Sex

Fig 2 shows a higher number of male more than the female respondents out of the 395 respondents. 60% were male and 40% were female. The above result shows that male respondents (60%) participated in answering the questions more than the female respondents (40%). This also further shows that the male respondents are keen in knowing about popular culture and the influence of western celebrities on Nigerian youth's culture.



**Figure 3:** Age of respondents

As shown in Fig 3, above, the respondents within the age bracket 21-25 were predominant at 40% more than any other age bracket. They were closely followed by the 26-29 age bracket at 30% while those at 16-20 and 30 and above made 20% and 10% respectively. This shows that a higher percentage of respondents were within the age bracket 21-25.



**Figure 4:** Class level of respondents

Fig 4 shows that 27% of the respondents are 400 level students while 200 and 300 level students made up 33% respectively, then 100 level students made up 22%.

### **Nigerian Youths' Exposure to Western Celebrities**

In the segment, the primary goal was to determine whether respondents are exposed to western celebrities. The questions on this were measured using items 5-9 in the questionnaire (see appendix). The data generated are presented below.

**Table 2: Nigerian youths' Exposure to Western Celebrities**

Variables	Do you know about western celebrities	Are you a fan of any western celebrities	Do you follow any western celebrity on social media	Do you watch any western celebrity show on television
Yes	100%	78%	63%	89%
No	-	22%	37%	11%
Total	100% (N=395)	100% (N=395)	100% (N=395)	100% (N=395)

The analysis in Table 2 shows that about 100% of the respondents were aware of western celebrities; 78% of the respondents were fans to western celebrities, while 22% of the respondents were not; 63% of the respondents follow the activities of western celebrities on social media while 37% of them do not. Also, 89% of the respondents watched western celebrities' show on television while 11% of the respondents did not. This implies that majority of the respondents were exposed to western celebrities.

**Table 3: Nigerians Youths Level of Exposure to Western Celebrities**

Variables	To what extent are you exposed western celebrities
High Extent	43%
Low Extent	41%
I don't know	16%
Total	100% (N=395)

Table 3 shows that 43 % make were exposed to western celebrities to a high extent; 41% to a low extent while 16% of the respondents claimed they did not know the extent to which they were exposed to western celebrities.

**Influence of western celebrity's lifestyle on the culture of the Nigeria Youths**

This was made to determine the influence the lifestyle of western celebrities has on Nigerian youth culture. To do this effectively, items 10-14 in the questionnaire were used. The data generated are as presented below:

**Table 4: Influence of western celebrity's lifestyle on the culture of the Nigeria Youths**

Variables	Do you admire the lifestyle western celebrities	Do western celebrities influence your dressing code	Do you like how western celebrities talk	Do western celebrities inspire you to be great
Yes	90%	68%	83%	66%
No	10%	32%	17%	34%
Total	100% (N=395)	100% (N=395)	100% (N=395)	100% (N=395)

The analysis in Table 4 shows that about 90% of the respondents admire the lifestyle of western celebrities while 10% do not, 68% of the respondents agree that western celebrities influence their dressing code, while 32% of the respondents disagree, 83% of the respondents like how western celebrities talk while 17% of the respondents do not. Also 66% of the respondents are inspired by western celebrities while 34% of the respondents adduce that they are not inspired by western celebrities. This implies that majority of the respondents are influenced by the lifestyle of western celebrities.

**Reasons for the Influence of western celebrity's lifestyle on the culture of the Nigeria Youths**

This was made to determine the reasons for the influence the lifestyle of western celebrities has on Nigerian youth culture. To do this effectively, items 14-16 in the questionnaire were used. The data generated are as presented below:

**Table 5: Reasons for the Influence of western celebrity's lifestyle on the culture of the Nigeria Youths**

Variables	Western Celebrities Are More Civilized And Exposed Than African	All media channels carry the news of western celebrities at all times	Many western celebrities are wealthy
Yes	88%	78%	68%
No	12%	22%	32%
Total	100% (N=395)	100% (N=395)	100% (N=395)

The analysis in Table 5 show that about 88% of the respondents agree that western celebrities are more civilized and exposed than Africans while 12% do not, 78% of the respondents agree that all media channels carry the news of western celebrities at all time while 22% of the respondents disagree. Also 68% of the respondents agree that many western celebrities are wealthy while 32% of the respondents do not. This implies that different reasons are behind the influence of western celebrity's lifestyle on Nigerian youth culture.

### **Analysis of Research Questions**

The first research question of this study ascertained the extent to which Nigerian youths were exposed to western celebrities. Findings in Table 2 revealed that 100% of the respondents had knowledge of western celebrities. However, 43% of them were exposed to the activities of western celebrities to a high extent. This led to the conclusion that greater numbers of Nigerian youths are exposed to western celebrities to a high extent.

The second research question determined the influence the lifestyle of western celebrities had on Nigerian youth culture. Findings in Table 4 revealed that over 90% of the respondents were influenced by the lifestyle of western celebrities by way of dressing as well as the way they talked. This implies that the lifestyle of western celebrities affected the lifestyle of Nigerian youths.

The third research question determined the reasons for the influence of western celebrities on the culture of Nigerian youths. Findings in Table 5 revealed that over 88% of the respondents identified civilization and exposure as the reasons for the influence of western celebrity's lifestyle on Nigerian Youth culture. Other respondents identified wealth of western celebrities and media roles in carrying the news of western celebrities at all time as the reasons.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Data obtained from the 395 respondents in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, show that 100% of the respondents were exposed to western celebrities. Also, 90% of the respondents' identified that the lifestyle of western celebrities influence Nigerian youth culture in the aspect of dressing and the way they talked. In addition, the respondents agreed on that the wealth of western celebrities and media portrayal were the reasons for the influence these western celebrities had on Nigerian youth culture. This led to the conclusion that Nigerian youths were not only exposed to western celebrities, but their way of life was also influenced by these western celebrities in the modeling of their culture.

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