

Moral Panic

Communications & Media

Concern out of all proportion to the threat that provoked it.

The five markers, and what to check.

Markers

Concern about a group's behaviour

Hostility toward a named folk devil

Consensus that the threat is real

Disproportion to measured harm

Volatility: it erupts and subsides

Check before applying

Is the harm actually overstated?

Compare coverage volume to incidence data

Who benefits from the alarm?

Some panics concern genuine harms

Educational reference. Calling something a moral panic is a claim about proportion, and it needs the same evidence as the alarm it disputes.