

Activities of Cultist and Measures for Eradicating Cultism among Secondary School Students in Nigeria: Implication for Child Development and Counselling

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Abstract

The there is alarming rate of consequences of cultism in Nigeria and other countries and there is need for researches to be performed in this area. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to investigate the activities of cultism and possible strategies for curbing cultism among secondary school students. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a population that was estimated at 2023 teachers and 15000 senior secondary three (SS3) students from South-East States of Nigeria. A sample of 518 teachers and 200 students was generated from the population. Two questionnaires entitled “Activities of cultism questionnaire and Measures for eradicating cultism questionnaire” were used to collect data for the study. The study revealed that students’ cultists bully junior students, students cultist intimidate teachers, they rape female students, they engage in incessant fighting, they plan and execute riots in schools, and they easily break school rules. The findings showed a significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of principals and teachers on the one hand, and students on another hand on the initiatives necessary for eradicating cultism in secondary schools. It is the submission of the researchers that by employing sound initiatives identified by this study, cultism will be eradicated from the secondary schools. Such measures include among other things, provision of guidance and counseling, moral education, emphasis on character building over academic achievements, effective monitoring of students, and organization of career week every term.

Keywords: cultist, eradicating, cultism, child development, counselling.

1. Introduction

The rate of cultism among secondary school students has been on the increase. The earliest record of secret cults in Nigerian schools, according to Umeh (2001) was in 1952 in the then University College, Ibadan, when the National Association of Sea Dogs (Pirate Confraternity) was founded. This group had noble ideals and objectives at inception but changed into full blown heinous group with the passage of

time. Then, they brought to focus societal ills, cherished humanitarian services, and established relationships for future benefits. Long ago, Eneja (1988) observed that many students have cultivated the habit of laziness towards their academic pursuit and channeled their energy to cultism. They spend much time playing music, organizing and attending parties, engaging in various clandestine and occultic practices, and other forms of vices. Cultism appears to rank very high among the maladaptive behaviours among secondary school students. Agbo (2010) remarks that cultism was formerly a higher institution affair but has today gone down the line of the educational institution and beyond, that secondary school students and non-students today are members. Osakinle and Falana (2011) stated that all over the world, from the universities to the polytechnics, colleges of education and other tertiary institutions, and regrettably some secondary schools, come stories of violence, tortures, and intimidation executed by members of secret cults. The cult groups turned Nigerian institutions of learning into killing fields or theatres of war.

Osakinle and Falana (2011) describe secret cult as a group of people whose activities are carried out in exclusive locations and unusual times. The authors noted further that the activities of these cult members cause a lot of bane: destruction of private and public property, disruption of academic activities in schools, massive killing of innocent individuals, and a host of other similar problems. According to Igbo (1997), such activities to include extortion of money by threats, class disruption, fighting, improper dressing, untidiness, wearing of jewelry to school, smoking, whistling or shouting in corridors, alcohol abuse, vandalism, carving names on desks, writing names on walls, robbery, destroy lives and property, and vandalize property. They fight with sharp cutlass and iron, and inflict injuries on themselves. Occasionally, they kidnap and rape girls. Their activities are often hidden. They intimidate authorities especially teachers, to award marks to pass examinations. In addition, cult members exploit individuals and pose a threat to the society.

Prevalent in the activities of cultists among our secondary school students are smoking and drug abuse. In one Lancashire secondary school in the United Kingdom, David and Cowley (1980) noted some students were addicted to cigarette smoking, and it would be unrealistic to expect them to stay without having a cigarette the whole day in school. Thus, cultism accounts for disruptions in teaching and learning processes. Ejionueme (2004) noted that such problems have their tolls even on the society. Apart from being the causes of poor performance in examinations, they fill the state and the society with thugs and robbers. Such thugs and robbers are products of our secondary schools that spent their precious time learning and devising techniques for committing heinous crimes. Umeh (2001) noted that cultism thrive in a situation like ours where law enforcement is not effective and where order is easily broken because the custodians of these laws act as if they are above the law.

In Nigeria, the story is not different in most of the secondary schools. As chaplains to some of the secondary schools, the researchers have direct contact with students, teachers and principals who constantly complaint about the incessant occurring of occult practices in the Nigerian secondary schools. Some of the principals have bitter complaints on how students today engage in various forms of cultic behaviours. Such behaviours range from incessant smoking, group fighting, drinking and bullying to pouring abusive words on teachers and principals, and examination malpractices. Many secondary school students now believe in searching for short-cuts to success. And so, having relegated studies to laziness, for example, they enthrone examination malpractice as a short cut to success. Ike (1996) observed that examination malpractices have emerged as the greatest of factors that mar education in Nigeria. Examination malpractices are even being tacitly legitimized in situations where some examiners co-operate with students through some go-betweens (syndicates). The situation is most unfortunate when incessant cases of violence, kidnapping, assaults and murder are reported at examination centres. Erinsho (2004) rightly observed that our schools and colleges have lost their sacred character as formation centres and have become breeding grounds for thugs, secret cults, gangsters, rapists and prostitutes, violence, drug and alcohol abuses, poor academic records, school dropouts, sexual abuses and juvenile delinquencies of different sorts.

These behaviours worry students, parents, teachers, counsellors, school principals, educational administrators, religious leaders, communities and the entire society. The situation is worsened by the fact that strategies adopted to curb cultism are not adequately applied. However, the measures so far used include disciplinary committee (Ejionueme, 2004), parental guidance (Umeh, 2006, Idowu, 2009; Igbo, 2007), school guidance and counselling activities (Osakinle & Falana, 2011), mentorship (Welch, 1996), and expulsion of culprit (Ejionueme, 2004). According to Ogbu (2001), other measures include: peaceful methods such as the use of dialogue and communication network and moral persuasion appeals and orientation of new students; use of force, such as vigilante counter force mechanism; use of legal and extra-legal sanctions like expulsion and consequent prosecution of known cultists; use of effective security surveillance methods; society wide-reforms; and improvement in the general welfare of students. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to investigate the activities of cultism and possible strategies for curbing cultism among secondary school students in Nigeria. The questions: what are the activities of cultists often found in secondary schools?; and what measures should be adopted for effective curbing of cultism among secondary school students? were answered. In addition, the hypotheses: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of principals, teachers and students with regard to the type of activities found in secondary schools and there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of the responses of principals, teachers and students on the measures required for curbing cultism among secondary school students were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

2. Method

Design or Study:

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. According to Nworgu (1991), descriptive study is a study, in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items, considered to be a representation of the entire group. Descriptive research design is therefore considered appropriate since the researchers aimed at obtaining the opinions of principals/teachers and students on the activities of cultism and the strategies for curbing cultism among secondary school students.

Area of study:

The study was carried out in secondary schools in selected South-East States of Nigeria due to perceived cultic activities among secondary school students in the area.

Population of the Study:

The population for the study comprises of the teachers and students of the secondary schools in the South-East States of Nigeria estimated at 2023 teachers and 15000 Senior Secondary three (SS3) students.

Sample and Sampling Technique:

The sample comprised of 518 teachers and 200 students, totaling 798.

Instruments for Data Collection:

Two questionnaires entitled Activities of cultism questionnaire and Measures for eradicating cultism questionnaire were used to collect data for the study. The questionnaires were developed by the researcher and each has two sections. Section A sought for the respondent's bio-data while section B dealt with the activities of secret cults and measures for eradicating cultism respectively. Each questionnaire has 25 items in a four point scale of Strongly Agree- SA (4 points), Agree- A (3 points), Disagree - D (2 points), Strongly Disagree- SD (1 point).

The instruments were validated by experts from Measurement and Evaluation, Social Work and Guidance and Counselling disciplines. Using Cronbach Alpha, the two instruments met a very high reliability coefficient of 0.87 and 0.79 respectively. Then, the instruments were administered to the respondents by the researchers and five trained research assistants.

Method of Data Analysis:

The collected data were analyzed using Mean and Standard deviations to answer the research questions. A four-point scale was then used to determine the mean.

3. Results

Research Question One: What are the activities of cultists often found in secondary schools? The data for answering the above research question are presented on Table 1 below.

Table 1: Mean ratings of teachers, and students on activities of cultists in secondary schools

S/N	Items	Teachers			Students		
		X	SD	DEC	X	SD	DEC
1.	Students cultists bully junior students	3.56	0.74	SA	3.76	0.64	SA
2.	Student cultists intimidate teachers	3.48	0.67	SA	3.64	0.76	SA
3.	Student cultists rape female students	3.64	0.66	SA	3.00	0.72	SA
4.	Students cultists engage in incessant fighting	3.78	0.48	SA	3.12	0.70	SA
5.	They plan and execute riots in schools	3.06	0.99	SA	3.78	0.51	SA
6.	They easily break school rules	3.01	0.84	SA	3.44	0.66	SA
7.	They smoke within and outside the school	3.58	0.97	SA	3.58	0.86	SA
8.	Student cultists form gangs in schools	3.72	0.48	SA	3.14	0.71	SA
9.	Student cultists are stubborn and disobedient	3.68	0.70	SA	3.00	0.69	SA
10.	They engage in examination malpractices	3.06	0.81	SA	3.42	0.54	SA
11.	They are often absent from school	3.64	0.55	SA	3.68	0.66	SA
12.	They distort school academic programmes	3.06	0.74	SA	3.01	0.74	SA
13.	Student cultists often emerge as robbers	3.74	0.64	SA	3.02	0.78	SA
Cluster mean		3.46	0.71	SA	3.35	0.69	SA

The data presented on Table 1 show the mean ratings and standard deviations of teachers and students with regard to activities of student cultists in secondary schools. It is observed that both teachers and students strongly agreed to all the items. Thus, the respondents were of the opinion that students cultists bully junior students, intimidate teachers, rape female students, engage in incessant fighting, plan and execute riots in schools, easily break school rules, smoke within and outside school premises, form gangs in school, and are stubborn and disobedient. In addition, they engage in examination malpractices and absenteeism.

Table 2: Mean ratings of teachers, and students on initiatives that should be adopted to curb cultism in secondary schools

S/N	Items	Teachers			Students		
		X	SD	DEC	X	SD	DEC
1	Provision of guidance and counseling in schools	3.52	0.64	SA	3.04	0.69	SA
2	Provision of moral education as a compulsory subject in schools	3.51	0.65	SA	3.01	0.81	SA
3	Formation of disciplinary committees and anti-cult groups in schools	3.50	0.67	SA	3.86	0.41	SA
4	Formation of discussion and role-making groups for sensitization	3.01	0.76	SA	3.45	0.63	SA
5	Using behavioural methods like constant work, assignment and home work	3.48	0.61	SA	2.50	0.96	SA

6	Principals and teachers being role models	3.42	0.56	SA	3.60	0.63	SA
7	Emphasis on character building rather than on academic achievement	3.55	0.62	SA	2.51	1.00	A
8	Effective monitoring of students	3.59	0.69	SA	3.51	0.64	SA
9	Organisation of career week every term	3.61	0.62	SA	3.48	0.65	SA
	Cluster mean	3.46	0.64	SA	3.28	0.71	SA

Table 2 shows the mean ratings and standard deviations of teachers and students on initiatives to be adopted to curb cultism in secondary schools. Based on the mean ratings teachers and students are of the opinion that some of the measures that could be initiated to curb cultism include: provision of Guidance and counseling in schools; provision for moral education as a compulsory subject; formation of disciplinary committees and anti-cult groups for sensitization; use of behavioural method like constant work, assignments and home works; principals and teachings being good models to students; emphasis on character building rather than on academic achievements; effective monitoring of students and organization of career week every term.

Hypothesis One:

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of teachers, and students with regard to the activities of student-cultists in secondary schools.

A z-test analysis was carried out with the cluster mean scores and standard deviations obtained from items 1 to 13 of the instrument. The summary of the z- test analysis is presented on Table 2 below:

Table 3: Summary of z-test for hypothesis one

Subjects	N	X	SD	DF	LS	z-cal	z- table	Decision
Principals & Teachers	415	3.46	0.71	600	0.05	1.62	1.96	Accepted
Students	187	3.35	0.69					

Table 3 above presents the Z-test analysis of the means difference in the response opinions of teachers and students on activities of student cultists in secondary schools.

It is observable from the table that the calculated z- value is 1.62 at 600 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated z- value of 1.62 is less than the critical table value of 1.96, the hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no significant difference between the opinion of teachers and students on activities of student cultists in secondary schools.

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers, and students on initiatives required for curbing of cultism in secondary schools.

A z-test analysis was carried out with the cluster mean scores and standard deviations obtained from items 37 to 45 of the instrument. The summary of the z-test analysis is presented on table 8 below.

Table 4: Summary of z-test for Hypothesis Four

Subjects	N	X	SD	DF	LS	z-cal	z-table	Decision
Teachers	415	3.46	0.64	600	0.05	2.96	1.96	Rejected
Students	187	3.28	0.71					

Table 4 above shows the z-test analysis of the mean difference in the response opinions of principals and teachers, and students on measures that would be adopted to curb cultism in secondary

schools. It is observable from the table that the calculated z-value is 2.96 at 600 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated z-value is greater than the critical table value, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is significant difference between the opinions of principals and teachers, and students on measures to be adopted to curb cultism in secondary schools.

4. Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that students cultists bully junior students, students cultist intimidate teachers, they rape female students, they engage in incessant fighting, they plan and execute riots in schools, and they easily break school rules. In addition, they smoke within and outside school premises, form gangs in school, have stubborn and disobedient character, engage in examination malpractices, often absent from school, distort school academic programme, and that often emerge as robbers. The findings are in line with the view of Osakinle and Falana (2011) who stated that the activities of cult members cause a lot of bane: destruction of private and public property, disruption of academic activities in schools, massive killing of innocent individuals and a host of other similar problems. Similarly the results of the study agreed with the opinion of Wright (1995) who stated that the devilish activities in schools manifest in frequent disruptions in academic work and incessant closure of schools.

Another finding of the current study is that some of the measurers that could be initiated to curb cultism include: provision of guidance and counseling in schools; provision for moral education as a compulsory subject; formation of disciplinary committees and anti-cult groups for sensitization; use of behavioural method like constant work, assignments and home works; principals and teachers being good models to students; emphasis on character building rather than on academic achievements; effective monitoring of students and organization of career week every term. The findings are in line with the view of Osakinle and Falana (2011) that the introduction of guidance and counseling services is paramount in handling cultism in secondary schools. This is because the school counsellor showcases the repercussions of cultism, organizes orientation programmes, works in close relationship with students' affairs, and counsels parents and guardians. This is line with the position of Umeh (2006) who stated that parents are moral authorities to their wards and should retrace their steps to moral and ethical standards, for the society to experience some long term benefits. Also, the findings support the view of Welch (1996) that formal mentoring could prove very helpful in curbing secondary school cultism. His position is that only experienced persons should be involved in the developmental stage of secondary school students.

5. Conclusion/Implication for Child Development and Counselling

The major goal of education should be to make a child grow up to be morally sound. Therefore, to bring about this desired goal, all those charged with the responsibility of training students should perceive cultism as a common enemy that should be jointly eradicated. This implies that adequate facilities, appropriate instructional materials, and a conducive environment are imperative in achieving educational goals in schools. Furthermore, care should be taken in recruiting school teachers and counsellors so that only those certified cult-free should be entrusted with the sacred duty of raising school children.

The findings however imply that if childhood development programme is not effective in the Nigerian schools, the rate of cultism will be increasing till it is beyond control. Likewise, if guidance and counselling programme is not effective in all the schools in Nigeria, the rate of students cultists will be increasing. Therefore, it is expedient that childhood development programme and guidance/counselling programme be made effective in all schools so as to curb cultism in the country.

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