

CULTISM AND PEACEFUL/SAFE CAMPUSES IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: *Tertiary institutions are meant to educate, train and equip students mentally and morally to be responsible future leaders with the capacity to contribute significantly to societal growth and development; in peaceful and safe environment necessary for effective learning and research. However, many campuses of tertiary institutions in Nigeria are direct opposite of peaceful and safe ambiance largely due to violent and criminal activities of cult groups, wielding dangerous weapons and indulging in alcohol & hard drugs. Cultism certainly obviates the desired peaceful and safe campus for effective learning and research. This study therefore dwells on the interplay between cultism and peaceful/safe campus environment that is sinequanon for learning and research. The objectives and hypotheses of the study revolve on the spate of extortion/phone hijack, cultists' physical assault/maiming and cult murders on campuses as they impinge on safe learning on campuses. The population of the study is 119, comprising staff; Student Union Government Executives and campus security personnel of Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku. Frequency tables and percentages were used for data analysis while hypotheses of the study were tested with Chi Square (X²) at 0.05 significance level. It was found that desired serenity and safety of campuses are vitiated by cult activities ranging from extortion, intimidation, maiming to murder; among other vices; thereby inhibiting safe campus. It was recommended that well-armed and mobile anti-cult unit be established while orientation programme on nature and dangers of cultism be organized within the first week of resumption on campuses; among others.*

Keywords: *Cult, Cultism, Campus, Safe Campus, Tertiary Institution, Arms Proliferation, Hard Drugs.*

Introduction

Tertiary institutions exist for the purpose of learning. Their environment are called campuses. A campus ideally facilitates or should guarantee seamless learning process characterized by peace, safety and serenity. This fact accounts for why many tertiary institutions are cited in outskirts of cities/towns – to ensure serene atmosphere conducive for learning and research as academics is mental activity that requires concentration of the mind. This desired serenity of campuses has been vitiated by series of incidences which includes cultism, alcohol/hard drugs addiction and arms proliferation on campuses. These anomalies have negatively affected the needed peace and safety essential for effective learning and research on campuses in many instances. Cultism has been a serious menace in many tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This obvious threat to the ecology of tertiary

institutions can be described as an act of belonging to a secret cult in an educational institution (Stopleam.com, 2022). According to Onyekwere (2006), campus cults have become the most potent cause of insecurity in institutions of higher learning. Students have been severally extorted, assaulted, injured, maimed and even murdered on account of cult related attacks.

A striking corollary of cultism is consumption of alcohol, hard drugs and arms proliferation. Most times these subterranean groups wreak havoc with these arms under the influence of alcohol and hard drugs; thus making campuses volatile and unsafe for effective academic intercourse. This study therefore posits that cultism exacerbated by alcohol/hard drugs consumption and arms proliferation on campuses obviate peaceful and safe campus environment that is sinequanon to learning and research.

Statement of the problem

Ideally, tertiary institutions are established to harness the talent of the students to address the critical socio-economic and technological challenges and create a dynamic and strong society. This is attained through the three core activities of tertiary institutions, which are to educate, research and to engage (Wonkhe.com, 2019). Consequently, candidates/students are admitted into tertiary institutions to be refined, groomed and equipped mentally and morally to be better citizens and positively contribute to societal growth and development. Students are expected to graduate worthy in character and in learning: better citizens with the capacity to transform their immediately environment and the society at large. However, the blight of cultism and related antecedents have rather turned some students on campus a direct opposite of expectations as a good number of them degenerated into destabilizing and terror gangsters that prevent the attainment of the noble purpose of tertiary institutions. An academic environment characterized by extortion, hijack of valuable personal effects intimidation, harassment, physical assault, maiming and even murder (which are trajectories of cultism) resulting in disruption of academic activities is obviously antithetical to effective learning and research. It is therefore a source of concern to establish the correlation between cultism cum alcohol/hard drugs & arms proliferation and the safety of campuses for effective learning and research, which is the challenge before this study.

Objectives of the study

This study seeks to ascertain the relationship between cultism and its attendant alcohol/hard drugs/arms proliferation on campus and safe/peaceful learning environments on campuses, with particular reference to Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku. The specific objectives include:

1. To ascertain the relationship between extortion/phone hijack on campuses and safe/peaceful learning on campuses.
2. To establish the correlation between cultists' physical assault/maiming on campuses and safe/peaceful learning on campuses.
3. To examine the relationship between cult campus murders and safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

Research questions

The following research questions have been formulated for the purpose of this study.

1. Does extortion/phone hijack on campuses affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses?
2. Is there relationship between cultists' physical assault/maiming on campuses and safe/peaceful learning on campuses?
3. Does cult campus murders affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses?

Research hypotheses

The hypotheses that guide this study are stated thus:

H01: Extortion/phone hijack on campuses do not affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

H02: There is no relationship between cultists' physical assault/maiming on campuses and safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

H03: Cult campus murders do not affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

Review of related literature

This section is on conceptual clarifications and exploration of related literature and studies in the subject matter available to the researcher.

Conceptual Clarifications

Cult: Etymologically, the word 'cult' is derived from the Latin word 'cultus' which denotatively means to worship. Oyeniyi (2021) sees cult as a social group with its religious, spiritual, philosophical and belief identity; having common interest in particular personality, object or goal and whose meetings are carried out clandestinely at odd hours and isolated locations; usually in the bush and darkness. A cult therefore is a bonded social group whose membership and modus operandi are secretive and actions and activities characterized by collectivism.

Cultism: Cultism as a term originated from the word 'occukre', a Latin word that literally means something hidden, concealed, mysterious (Mediayanose, 2016). Erughe (2015) holds that cultism is the devotion and dedication to activities and practices of a cult. In the view of Oyeniyi (2021) it is an anti-social or deviant group of people who have unusual religious beliefs and whose activities contravenes the norms or social rules of an institution that is meant to provide education for such individual. Cultism therefore is ritual practice by confraternity whose activities and membership are concealed from non-members who are regarded as 'jews'.

Campus: Etymologically, a campus is an institution of higher learning and its ecology. It includes the geographical area occupied by a tertiary institution as well as the structures and facilities therein; which are deliberately designed to enhance learning and research.

Safe Campus: The idea of Safe Campus is attributed to University of Washington's violence-prevention and response Program designed to support students, staff, faculty and community members in preventing violence; and providing guidance and safety plans

tailored to campus social partners (www.washington.edu, 2022). Safe Campus therefore is the environmental setting of tertiary institution that facilitates effective learning and research devoid of harassments, extortion, physical assault, hijack of valuable personal effects, threats, attacks, maiming, murder or any form of organized violence. It is the ambience of tertiary institution where students, irrespective of background, have feeling of safety and are enabled to focus and excel on their academic activities.

Empirical review

It is a tacit fact that cultism, especially in campuses of Nigerian tertiary institutions are colossally and systemically destructive. Hence there has been campaign on curbing the menace as well as its destructive dimensions. Effort is made here to highlight studies salient to this work. Oyeniyi (2021) carried out a study entitled “Cultism in Nigeria: Causes, Effects and Solutions. The author traced the history of cultism in Nigeria to the “Magnificent Seven” who formed the Pyrates Confraternity in 1953 led by Wole Soyinka. The writer held that peer pressure, threats from lecturers/students, oppression by institutions’ authorities, desire for fame and managements’ poor judgement of the menace as the causes of this vice. He further highlighted the effects of cultism as loss of lives and properties among other dangers as well as effective school security and severe punishment for cultists among solutions to cultism.

Onwuemeodo and Nwosu (2015) conducted a study on “Cultism in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions and its Effects on National Development” where the theories, characteristics and history of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions were addressed. The authors highlighted why students engage in cultism which include to gain respect and recognition; among other reasons. On effects of cultism in National Development of Nigeria, they posited that cult activities have taken many lives and properties especially the youth as well as affected the Nigerian educational system by disrupting academic calendar through clashes that results in shutting down of campuses. The writers concluded with measures to control cultism on campuses which include that schools’ security agents should be well equipped with modern security gadgets such as metal crime detectors and massive campaign against the menace by government and religious sectors.

Mediayanose (2016) wrote on “Cultism and Education in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: Policy Implications”, which covered origin of cultism in Nigeria, its impact on learning and causes. The authors posited that cult related violence have affected learning in Nigerian tertiary institutions considering rampart closing down of campuses, destruction of lives and properties as well as making campuses to be under siege with many students held hostage psychologically. These they opined have resulted in general fall in the standard of education in Nigeria.

A major shortcoming of the studies above is their lack of empiricism, which this study intends to address.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is the Innovative Defiance theory propounded by Robert K. Merton in 1938. The tenet of the theory is the creative use of illegitimate means to advance an important legitimate end; revolves around breaking rules

to achieve normative objectives - e.g. stealing to become rich (Britannica.com). It dwells on acceptance of society's goals but deviating from established means of attainment by veering into socially unapproved or unacceptable means to obtain normative goals (Wikipedia.org). To Merton, those who innovate pursue goals they cannot reach through legitimate means by instead using criminal or deviant means (Openstax.org).

In relation to this study, this theory is apt. A tacit fact is that students that engage in cult activities on campus primarily have the goal of obtaining relevant credentials from the tertiary institutions but chose to tow the wrong path of violence, suppression, intimidation and torture among other vices rather than engaging themselves in rigorous and rewarding academic exercise to attain good academic excellence. Their belief is that the end justifies the means.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted in this study. Primary and secondary sources of data were used to generate data. The population is 119; comprising of lecturers, senior staff security personnel and principal officers of Student Union Government, of Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku, which were all studied due to its manageability. A structured questionnaire (objectives, research questions and hypotheses of the study centred) and entitled Impact of Cultism on Safe Campus Essential for Effective Learning and Research Questionnaire (ICSCELRQ) was designed and used by the researcher as instrument for data collection of the study. Professionals in Mathematics and Statistics, Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Management and Test ascertained the validity of the instrument through face and content validity procedure, while the reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha and the reliability coefficient of 0.79 was derived. The distribution and collection of the instrument was directly handled by the researcher. A total of 107 questionnaires out of 119 were retrieved. The research questions of the study were analyzed and presented in tables with percentage frequencies. The hypotheses of the study were tested using Chi Square (X²) statistical tool at 0.05 significance level. The decision was made on the basis of the hypotheses. If Chi square (X²) calculated value is less than Chi square (X²) table value, accept the null hypothesis. However, if the Chi Square (X²) calculated value is greater than the table value, reject the null hypothesis (H₀) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H₁).

Chi Square (X²) formula is stated thus:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(f_o - f_e)^2}{f_e}$$

where: X² = Chi Square
f_o = Observed frequency
f_e = Expected frequency
Σ = Summation

Measures

The menace of campus cultism obviating safe campus for learning and research in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions was operationalized with three groups of sub-constructs: extortion/hijack of valuable personal effects; cultists' physical assault/maiming; and cult

campus murders which were further operationalized with three variables each. The responses were measured along a modified Likert four-point scale of Strongly Agreed (S.A.), Agreed (A.), Disagreed (D.) and Strongly Disagreed (S.D.).

Table 1: Responses of Respondents on Impact of Cultism (extortion/hijack of valuable personal effects) on Safe Campus Essential for Effective Learning and Research

S/N	ITEM	S.A.	A.	D.	S.D.	TOTAL
1	Cultists' extortion or money confiscation on campus and safe campus	37 (35%)	47 (44%)	16 (15%)	7 (6%)	107 (100%)
2	Cultists' hijack/confiscation of phone on campus and safe campus	42 (39%)	38 (36%)	17 (16%)	10 (9%)	107 (100%)
3	Cultists' hijack/confiscation of laptops on campus and safe campus	46 (43%)	41 (38%)	13 (12%)	7 (7%)	107 (100%)
Mean		42 (39%)	42 (39%)	15 (14%)	8 (8%)	107 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 1 above reflects the responses of the respondents as contained in the questionnaires administered for the purpose of the study, which directly relates to the First Hypothesis of the study; Cultism (extortion/hijack of valuable personal effects) on Campus and Safe Campus. The mean analysis indicates that 78% (S.A. – 39% & A. – 39%) which constitutes majority of the respondents stated that extortion/ hijack of valuable personal effects activities of cultists on campus impinges on safe campus for effective learning and research, while 28% (D. -14% & S.D.. – 8%) held contrary view.

Table 2: Responses of Respondents on Impact of Cultism (physical assault/maiming) on Safe Campus Essential for Effective Learning and Research

S/N	ITEM	S.A.	A.	D.	S.D.	TOTAL
1	Cultists' torture on campus and safe campus	39 (36%)	45 (42%)	15 (14%)	8 (8%)	107 (100%)
2	Cultists' rape/molestation on campus and safe campus	40 (37%)	40 (37%)	18 (17%)	9 (9%)	107 (100%)
3	Cultists' maiming on campus and safe campus	57 (54%)	39 (35%)	9 (9%)	2 (2%)	107 (100%)
Mean		46 (42%)	41 (38%)	14 (13%)	6 (7%)	107 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 2 above shows the responses of the respondents as contained in the questionnaires, which directly relates to the Second Hypothesis of the study; Cultism (physical assault/maiming) on Campus and Safe Campus). The mean analysis indicates that 80% (S.A. – 42% & A. – 38%) which constitutes majority of the respondents stated that physical assault/maiming and such related violent activities of cultists on campus inhibit peaceful and safe campus for effective learning and research, while 20% (D. - 13% & S.D. – 7%) held contrary opinion.

Table 3: Responses of Respondents on Impact of Cultism (murder) on Safe Campus Essential for Effective Learning and Research

S/N	ITEM	S.A.	A.	D.	S.D.	TOTAL
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1	Killing resulting from cult rivalry on campus and safe campus	50 (47%)	48 (45%)	6 (6%)	3 (2%)	107 (100%)
2	Cultists' murder of innocent students on campus and safe campus	51 (48%)	40 (37%)	11 (10%)	5 (5%)	107 (100%)
3	Cultists' murder of staff (lecturers, security staff, etc.) on campus and safe campus	42 (39%)	45 (43%)	11 (10%)	9 (8%)	107 (100%)
Mean		48 (45%)	44 (41%)	9 (9%)	6 (5%)	107 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 3 presented above indicate the responses of the respondents as contained in the questionnaires, which directly relates to the Third Hypothesis of the study; Cultism (murder) on Campus and Safe Campus). The mean analysis shows that 86% (S.A. – 45% & A. – 41%) which constitutes majority of the respondents stated that spilling of blood by cultists on campus obviate peaceful and safe campus for effective learning and research, while 14% (D. - 9% & S.D.. – 5%) disagreed.

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated for this study are hereby tested accordingly:

Hypothesis 1

H01: Extortion/hijack of valuable personal effects on campuses do not affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

H11: Extortion/hijack of valuable personal effects on campuses affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

Table 4: Chi Square Calculations: Cultism (Extortion/hijack of valuable personal effects) on Campus and Safe Campus

Responses	Obs. freq. (fo)	Exp. freq. (fe)	(fo-fe)	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
S.A./A.	84	53.5	30.5	930.25	34.8
D./S.D.	23	53.5	-30.5	930.25	34.8
Total	107	107		1,860	69.6

Source: Survey Data, 2022.

$$fe = \frac{\sum fo}{N} = \frac{107}{2} = 53.5$$

$$X^2 \text{ Calculated Value: } = 69.6$$

$$N = 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$\text{Significance level} = 0.05$$

$$X^2 \text{ Critical/Table Value} = 3.841$$

Since the Calculated Value (69.6) is greater than the Critical/Table Value (3.841), we reject Ho and accept H1: Extortion/ hijack of valuable personal effects on campuses affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

Hypothesis 2

H02: There is no relationship between cultists' physical assault/maiming on campuses and safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

H12: There is relationship between cultists' physical assault/maiming on campuses and safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

Table 5: Chi Square Calculations: Cultists' physical assault/maiming on Campus and Safe Campus

Responses	Obs. freq. (fo)	Exp. freq. (fe)	(fo-fe)	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
S.A./A.	87	53.5	33.5	1,122.25	20.97
D./S.D.	20	53.5	-33.5	1,024	20.97
Total	107	107		2,048	41.95

Source: Survey Data, 2022.

$$fe = \sum \frac{fo}{N} = \frac{107}{2} = 53.5$$

$$X^2 \text{ Calculated Value: } = 41.95$$

$$N = 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$\text{Significance level} = 0.05$$

$$X^2 \text{ Critical/Table Value} = 3.841$$

Since the Calculated Value (41.95) is greater than the Critical/Table Value (3.841), we reject H_0 and accept H_1 : There is relationship between cultists' physical assault/maiming on campuses and safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

Hypothesis 3

H03: Cult campus murders do not affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

H13: Cult campus murders affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

Table 6: Chi Square Calculations: Cult campus murders and Safe Campus

Responses	Obs. freq. (fo)	Exp. freq. (fe)	(fo-fe)	(fo-fe) ²	(fo-fe) ² /fe
S.A./A.	92	53.5	38.5	1,482.25	27.84
D./S.D.	15	53.5	-38.5	1,482.25	27.84
Total	107	107		2,964.5	55.68

Source: Survey Data, 2022.

$$fe = \sum \frac{fo}{N} = \frac{107}{2} = 53.5$$

$$X^2 \text{ Calculated Value: } = 55.68$$

$$N = 2 - 1 = 1$$

$$\text{Significance level} = 0.05$$

$$X^2 \text{ Critical/Table Value} = 3.841$$

Since the Calculated Value (55.68) is greater than the Critical/Table Value (3.841), we reject H_0 and accept H_1 : Cult campus murders affect safe/peaceful learning on campuses.

Discussion of findings

This study revealed that extortion, hijack of valuable personal effects (phone, lap tops, wrist watches, etc.) by cultists on campus negatively affect safe campus for learning

and research (Tables 1 & 4). Obviously these cult groups lay siege on campuses extorting/confiscating money and other valuables from their victims either to settle scores with the victim or at random to create fear and insecurity on campus in reaction to schools managements' or SUG positions on issues or policies not acceptable to them. Apart from extortion of rivals and innocent students, these groups extort student body associations including SUG and their executives, which they call 'settlement'. It was also found that cultists' physical assault/maiming on campuses obviate safe/peaceful learning on campuses (Tables 2 & 5). Cult groups are known for beating up their prey or victims. Members of rival cults, non-member students and even lecturers have variously been physically assaulted with high degree of injury inflicted on them; some losing their lib. Erughe (2015) observed that these cultists have severally attacked lecturers publicly and disgracefully for not acceding to their inordinate request for award of unmerited grades.

Further, this study revealed that cult campus activities are recipes for murders that send shivers to the spines of stakeholders (students, staff and immediate community) thus preventing safe/peaceful learning on campuses. Many people have met their untimely death resulting from violent cult clashes and shootings. Mediayanose (2016) asserts that the activities of cult groups have also led to the killing of innocent students and staff in various tertiary institutions. Olukoya (1994) in Mediayanose (2016) captured the scenario when he noted that campus cult activities have been escalating and unchecked and cultists have become heartless and callous that students and teachers no longer feel safe to pursue learning under an ideal happy and healthy environment.

It is trite to state that cultism has infested tertiary institutions' campuses in Nigeria and has significantly inhibited the serenity desired in campuses for effective learning and research deriving from the violent activities of cultists.

Conclusion

Cultism in Nigerian campuses has become endemic and characterized by violent clashes, attacks, terror, assault, maiming, shootings, blood-letting and death. This scenario smacks of a system under siege devoid of freedom, peace, tranquility and security which are the hallmarks of any learning environment which ideally should be serene, peaceful and safe to enable effective learning and research. This study revealed that campus cultism; considering its antecedences of extortions, assault/maiming and murders, is an anathema in the ecology of any institution of higher learning. Consequently, it is concluded that cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions is a blight threatening to erode the very essence of tertiary education which basically are teaching/learning and research through which right attitudes and values are inculcated into the students cum society.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are deemed necessary.

- Management of tertiary institutions should rejig their security system through engagement of able-bodied men and women that are provided with sophisticated weapons that surpasses those of the cultists. This will deter cultists from operating freely and with reign of terror on campuses.

- Anti-Cult Unit with the onus of intelligence gathering and fortified with modern security gadgets, arms and mobility should be considered as a measure to curb the menace.
- Campus Taskforce Committee comprising of credible staff, students and security units should be constituted with visible presence in all nooks and crannies of the campus to report and forestall cult attacks.
- Students should be banned from driving/riding automobiles into the campuses and all students should be searched at the gate to prevent importation of alcohol, hard drugs and dangerous weapons/arms into the campus as they are the instruments of destruction used by cultists.
- Dean of Student Affairs of tertiary institutions should be carefully appointment by Management to ensure that only those without cult membership or affiliations emerges. Where reverse is the case there would be conflict of interest and show of supremacy among rival cult groups.
- Dean of Student Affairs should maintain a clandestine intelligence gathering team (made up of carefully selected students, staff and members of host community) with the neutrality and capacity to obtain necessary information on cult activities that might cause violence on campus and nip them in the bud.
- Management should equally purge itself of cultism because where a management staff is a member of a cult group, such group claims to be in control and suppress others, thereby generating violent clashes.
- Proper screening of students vying for positions in Student Union Government elections by the DSS and Police is central to controlling the spate of cult violence on campus. Where the SUG President is a member of a cult, this will embolden his/her cult group with the impression that they are in control thereby generating cult rivalry and violence.
- Orientation of new students where the nature and dangers of cultism is elaborately discussed) should be done within the first week of resumption. This will reduce the deepening of cultism on campus as many of the ‘freshers’ would be adequately guided because some of them joins cults based on ignorance.
- On the whole, it is imperative to state that campus cultism cannot be stamped out totally but managed to stem the spate of attacks and violence especially were institutions lack vibrant and equipped security unit. Also is the fact that it is an extension of what operates in the larger society (Abdu-Raheem, 2020). Institutions should develop a viable means of managing cultism through strategic decisions and actions.

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