

Full Length Research Paper

Influence of cultism on the management of secondary education in Benue State of Nigeria

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This study investigated the influence of cultism on the management of secondary education in Benue State of Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 4,887 teachers from 267 public secondary schools in Benue State. A sample of 300 teachers representing 6.14% was selected from 16 public secondary schools representing 6% across Benue State using simple random sampling technique. A four point structured 10-item rating scale questionnaire titled "Influence of Cultism on the Management of Secondary Schools Questionnaire (ICMSSQ)" was used for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer research questions and t-test statistical tool to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that cultism has significant influence on examination malpractice and loss of lives and properties in secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that Government should enact a law that any students caught intimidating invigilators or cheating in examination should be made to serve a long time in jail and that there should be rustication or expulsion of students caught in cult related activities that disturb the peace and tranquility of life on the school premises.

Key words: Cultism, management, examination malpractice, loss of lives, properties.

INTRODUCTION

The incidence of secret cult activities has become a national problem. It seems to be the most problem facing all levels of educational system in Nigeria today. There is hardly any secondary school that has not experienced the menace of cultism at one time or another. The menace and the aggressiveness of cult members and cult related violent activities in most secondary schools have caused the sudden death of teachers and students. Violence and cult activities that occur among adults in our society, students in tertiary institutions and lately students of secondary and primary schools includes; assaults on students, gang warfare, burglary extortion, destruction of college properties, killings, maiming are rampant in our society (Taiwo, 2004).

Cultism is defined as "a systematized form of organization with a religious overtone in which members are engaged in concerted hidden activities whose overall

ends and results spell doom for the members, the community and society at large" (Ekwunife, 2000). Ekwunife identifies three basic characteristics of cult organizations to include; first, initiation, whereby members are bound by solemn oath with threats of reprisals, and to keep their hidden activities. Secondly, the personal and psychological destructions experienced by initiates are palpable.

Generally speaking, the origin of the phenomenon of cultism in secondary schools is traceable to the formation of the Pyrate Confraternity at the University of Ibadan in 1952 by Wole Soyinka and members of his group. According to Akpabio (2003), cultism started at the University of Ibadan mainly as a lobby group of the students in order to score even with the university authorities. Besides, one of the objectives of the groups was to inspire patriotic sentiments and to check the neo-



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colonialist mentality spreading among the nation's educated class due to western education (Nwadike, 2003). At that time, violence was said to have not manifested in their conduct. Nevertheless, this initially peaceful group later snowballed into an esoteric gang whose members were highly steeped in ritualism and voodooism (Akpabio, 2003). From there, with its inherently contagious effects, the phenomena of cultism have virtually spread to almost all the educational institutions in the country particularly in secondary schools.

According to Amaele (2013), the renewal of cult activities has been one of the greatest social ills facing the present generation. Cultism has become a way of life, especially among the young people, many of whom do not realize or appreciate the true nature and implications of what they are engaged in. Amaele further laments that cultism is as a social crime, has become a common practice in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. This inhuman practice has led to the loss of lives of students and teachers, destruction of school properties, resources, values and school harmony. It has become a serious threat to the entire Nigerian nation and its education system.

School management is the process of deciding what to do in school and getting it done through effective use of available resources (Cotton, 2003). Jones (1995) defines school management as the day to day planning, organizing, resourcing, directing and controlling the outputs of the school to enable it reach its desired goals and mission. However, in the quest to achieve this goal, cult activities have become militating factors to the achievement of the school goals and objectives of secondary education.

Ossai (2001) states that secondary education in Nigeria today is under siege and almost ruined by secret cults. They cheat at examinations openly and threaten teachers. Student cultists are usually well armed with daggers, axes and knives.

Adewale (2003) observes that there are about forty five secret cults in Nigerian institutions of learning today and are all equipped with an elaborate hierarchy, insignia and distinct attire. Adewale further observes that some of the most notable of these secret cults include black axe, Eiye confraternity, Vikings, Amzons, Buccaneer, Matia and Dragons. The female students in secondary schools are not left out as they have their own groups among which are temple of Eden, Frigates, Barracudas, Daughters of Jezebel among others. Enoch (2003) maintains that secondary schools have become breeding grounds for cultists, guerrilla warfare, and anti-social behaviours by students.

Mbayuar (2011) observes that cult activities in secondary schools and other levels of education today leads to increased examination malpractice, loss of lives of teachers and students, destruction of school properties, closure of schools, breach of peace and order on school premises, increased cost of education, induced

brain drain and drop-out from schools and recurrent insecurity in many secondary schools.

Orukpe (1998) maintains that cultism contaminates the school environment and jeopardizes the educational process. Orukpe further states that the activities of cultists, cause great harm to educational programmes. Thus, school properties are destroyed thereby resulting to unnecessary expenses on the management. In some instances, either teachers or students lose their lives resulting to serious tension and fear in the school. In addition, there is breach of peace and orderliness in such schools. Students no longer respect school authorities again. In addition, schools are shut down till further notice. Mbayuav (2011) opines that this results in effective management of secondary schools. This situation is applicable to secondary schools in Benue State.

It is against this background that the researcher deemed it necessary to investigate the effect of cultism on the management of secondary schools in Benue State with particular focus on examination malpractice, loss of lives and property.

Statement of the problem

The issue of cultism has become a global problem that is bordering everybody in the society today. Personal observations by the researcher revealed that secondary schools in Benue State are under threat of cultism. Most of the students in these schools belong to one group of cult or another. Their activities seem to cause a lot of harm to the effective management of secondary schools in terms of killing of innocent students and teachers, destruction of school properties, intimidating the school authorities and cheating in examinations. This ugly situation has created so much worry among stakeholders of secondary schools in the study area. This is because they have expressed concerns over the activities of cult groups in the schools which have resulted to closure of schools for some times thereby distracting academic calendar. They also contend that the image of the secondary school is being tarnished and there is also insecurity in the schools.

The relevant stakeholders also complained that in most instances, student cultists who do not have the time to study, go into staff offices to intimidate them so that they can pass their examinations whether they wrote the examinations or not. Schools also complained that they incur heavy costs for purchasing new school facilities that were destroyed by various cult activities. There is so much fear among students and teachers as order is not maintained. Students also feel very uncomfortable to stay in schools and many teachers complain that they cannot freely deliver their lessons. This situation could adversely affect the effective management of secondary schools in the study area. It is against this background that the

researcher has a felt need to investigate the likely effects of cultism on the management of secondary schools in zone A Senatorial District of Benue State.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of cultism on the management of secondary schools in Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to address the following objectives:

1. Determine the influence of cultism on examination malpractice in secondary schools in zone A Senatorial District of Benue State.
2. Establish the influence of cultism on the loss of lives and properties in secondary schools.
3. Make recommendations on...

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does cultism influence examination malpractice in secondary schools in Zone A Senatorial District of Benue State.
2. To what extent does cultism influence the loss of lives and properties in secondary schools?
3. What recommendations can be made to reduce the negative effects of cultism?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses have been formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Cultism has no significant influence on examination malpractice in secondary schools in Zone "A" Senatorial District of Benue State.

H₀₂: Cultism has no significant influence on the loss of lives and properties of secondary schools.

Significance of the study

The findings of this study will be of benefit to all educational stakeholders particularly school administrators, teachers, government, parents and students as they will see the need to put heads together and stop this ugly situation that has perpetrated the society and our educational system for some times.

The findings of this study will help to provide information to school administrators and teachers on cultism and violence so that they will be able to come up with informed policies to address the issue of cultism in their schools to minimize cases of examination malpractice and loss of lives and school properties.

The findings will bring out the ills of cultism and its effects on the students, the school authorities, the learning process and the communities, thus creating awareness in the minds of all stakeholders in education and galvanizing them for positive action to end the menace and create awareness for change of students' attitude behaviour.

The findings of this study will also provide information to government so as to improve existing laws, rules and regulations regarding students who engage in cultism and violence in secondary schools and other levels of education.

Literature Review

The review of related literature is carried out under the following sub-headings.

Concept of cultism

The term *cult* is a Latin word which refers to worship, religion and faith. A cult is a group of people who are adherents of a certain type of worship. In the contemporary context, it is generally referred to as a fraternal relationship between a group of people who are out to achieve set objectives for members, even though these objectives go against the interest and norms of the larger society (Ikedayisi, 1998). Onyechere (1998) defines cults as a group of people who share and propagate peculiar beliefs only to members.

Okwu in Denga (1991) defines cultism as a system of religious beliefs and practices or ideology. Also, Orukpe (1998) notes that "cults are a group of people who share and propagate peculiar secret beliefs divulged only to members". Nwoke (2006) defines a secret cult as an organization whose activities are kept away from the knowledge of others. These activities are essentially covert, disguised and are usually carried out behind closed doors.

According to Oguntuase (1999), secret cults are groups of people whose activities are carried out in exclusive locations and unusual time without being exposed to uninitiated. According to Free Encyclopedia (2006), the literal and traditional meaning of the word 'cult' is derived from a Latin word '*Cultus*' meaning 'care' or 'Adoration'. To the sociologists, the term is used to describe a loosely knit organization not characterized by tolerance and open mindedness in matter of belief and practice (Thomas, 2002). In the media and everyday conversation, the word suggests a spurious, secretive, sinister and harmful group (Albatross, 2006).

Concept of school management

Management is very crucial and significant in every

organization like the school. This is because human and material resources and other resources demands proper handling and co-ordination so as to achieve set objective. According to Idoko (2005), management is a vital link in the existence of any organization like the school or industry, because it is that organ that is set up which oversees, directs, supervises and controls the realization of the goals of any organization. Resser in Adepaju (1998) opines that management is the utilization of physical and human resources through cooperative efforts and it is the utilization of physical and human resources through cooperative efforts and it is accomplished by performing the function of planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling.

Cotton (2003) sees school management as the process of deciding what to do in school and getting it done through effective use of available resources. According to Herr (2005), school management is a practical activity involving the determination of aims, allocation of resources efficiently, the maintenance of discipline, making schedules and the evaluation of effectiveness in the school system all involving action. Dugguh (2004) defines school management as the process whereby the school administrators of a school organizes people and other school resources in a way to achieving the set aim and objectives of the schools.

Influence of cultism on examination malpractice in secondary schools

Cultism perpetrates examination malpractices in schools today. This happens before, during or after examinations. The cult groups either threaten teachers to reveal examination questions to them before examinations or force teachers to doctor their grades in their favour (Mbayuav, 2011). Anger and Tyav (2006) states that during examinations, some cult members intimidate examination administrators so that they can cheat and pass their examinations.

According to Yakubu (2000), cultism exacerbates the problem of examination malpractice in institutions of learning as teachers may not have the courage to perform their duties effectively. Such cultist among the students takes full advantage of the invigilators by intimidating them so as to have a free will to cheat in the examinations. Similarly, Thomas (2002) observes that students' cultist are never worried on issues of examination. They hardly attend classes, do assignment or engage in study group among their mates. They always have it at the back of their mind that on the examination day, they will intimidate the invigilators to allow them cheat. He further lamented that some of these students cultists have correct question papers before examinations while others do not even seat for the examination hence they can at anytime confront the teachers to pass them such papers.

In a similar vein, Osagie (2004) observes that most of the students do not attend classes, do not copy notes, but spend most of their time attending parties, union or cult activities and finally resort to unlawful act of indulging in examination malpractice to pass by all means. Ogbonnaya (2009) opines that cultism discourages hard work in the students who are members of these cults groups. He further stated that a student needs not to go to class as long as he or she is a cult member and can intimidate invigilators at any time and cheat in examination. The so-called cultist are also used to settle personal scores on many occasions, we have students versus student, teachers versus teachers, students versus teachers threat in order to have a good score without hard work.

Influence of cultism on the lives and properties of secondary schools

The gravity of the impact of consequences of intra and inter cult clashes on school environments have resulted in physical harm on individual students and teachers, disruption of the learning process, destruction of school properties and even death of teachers and students. Opaluwah (2009) notes that cult clashed led to an outburst of violence on school environment which left many students wounded, maimed or killed.

According to Mbayuav (2011), students cultist often kill, maim or injure themselves and other innocent non-members during cult reappraisals and offences. He further stated that valuable school properties worth millions have been gutted down by cult-induced fires. Even the lives of teachers and students have at time been, endangered by rampaging cultists. All this culminates into destabilization of academic programmes.

Kehinde (2003) states that cultism leads to loss of school property through arson, theft or physical destruction. Similarly, Mgbekem (2004) observes that a lot of lives and properties are destroyed through cult violence. Jamiu (2008) notes that young students who are supposed to be leaders in future have fallen victims of trigger-happy cultists. Mgbekem (2004) laments that nights are no longer safe in school hostels because of frequent cult disturbances and insecurity.

Cultism leads to outbreak of violence on school learning environment and its attendant, destruction of lives and properties. Peace on school campus initiative (an organization formed to help control cultism on campuses) revealed that as at September 2003, 5000 students and lecturers have died on campuses as a result of cult-related violent clashes (New Age, September 23, 2003). Ogbonnaya (2009) states that cults and secret societies unleash great terror and disquietude on the school premises thereby negating the realization of the noble goals of research, teaching, learning and peaceful coexistence for which the institutions were

Table 1. Mean ratings and standard deviations of the influence of cultism on examination malpractice in secondary schools in Benue State.

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	X	STD	Decision
1	Cultism exacerbates the problem of examination malpractice in secondary schools	186	101	9	4	3.56	0.62	Accepted
2	Student cultists hardly go for classes because they fond of intimidating invigilators during examinations and cheating to pass	93	146	50	11	3.07	0.79	Accepted
3	Student cultists are never worried on the issue of examination hence there is a sure way of cheating and passing.	121	113	48	18	3.12	0.89	Accepted
4	Student cultists always have original question papers before examinations.	163	109	12	16	3.40	0.80	Accepted
5	Examination invigilators often let lose examination because of student cultists	111	89	79	21	2.97	0.96	Accepted
Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation						3.22	0.81	Accepted

oriented to foster. He further lamented that for as long as cultism and secret societies continue to reign ingloriously in our educational institutions, the students, and education system will continue to lose their students, teachers and other personnel either through cult murder or high turnover rate.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study comprised 4,887 teachers from 267 public secondary schools in Benue State. A sample of 300 teachers representing 6.14% was selected from 16 public secondary schools representing 6% across Benue State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample size because the population was homogeneous. A 10-item structured questionnaire developed by the researchers titled “Influence of Cultism on the Management of Secondary Schools Questionnaire (ICMSSQ)” was used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by experts in Tests and Measurement from the Faculty of Education, Benue State University, Makurdi. The questionnaire was trial tested using 20 teachers that were not part of the sampled population. The data collected was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha correlation co-efficient which yielded 0.73. The coefficient indicated high internal consistency which proved that the instrument was reliable to be used for field work. The data collected was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation to answer research questions. A mean cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision making. Any mean

score of 2.50 and above was accepted as been significant while any mean score below 2.50 was rejected as not significant. The research hypotheses were tested using t-test statistical tool at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question One: To what extent does cultism influence examination malpractice in secondary schools in Benue State?

The data that provide answer to the research question one are presented in Table 1. Data on Table 1 showed that the mean rating for items 1-5 were 3.56, 3.07, 3.12, 3.40 and 2.97 respectively with their corresponding standard deviations of 0.62, 0.79, 0.89, 0.80 and 0.96. All the mean ratings are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means that the respondents had agreed that cultism exacerbates the problem of examination malpractice in secondary schools. Student cultists hardly go for classes because they are fond of intimidating invigilators during examinations and cheating to pass. They also agreed that students’ cultists are never worried on issue of examination hence there is a sure way of cheating and passing. More so, student cultists always have original question papers before examinations and that examination invigilators often let lose examination because of student cultists. The cluster mean of 3.22 with the standard deviation of 0.81 were also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that cultism influence examination malpractice in secondary schools in Benue State.

Table 2. Mean ratings and standard deviations of the influence of cultism on the loss of lives and properties of secondary schools.

Item No	Item Description	SA	A	D	SD	X	STD	Decision
6	The intra and inter cult clashes in school environment result in physical harm on students and teachers.	108	138	39	15	3.13	0.82	Accepted
7	Students' cultists often kill, maim or injure themselves and other innocent non-members during cult reappraisals and offences.	201	72	17	10	3.55	0.75	Accepted
8	Nights are no longer safe for students in school hostels because of frequent cult disturbances	156	117	19	8	3.40	0.73	Accepted
9	Valuable school properties worth millions are sometimes destroyed through cult-violence.	149	98	33	20	3.25	0.90	Accepted
10	School facilities are never in good conditions because of frequent cult clashes leading to destruction of physical properties	162	91	29	18	3.32	0.88	Accepted
Cluster Mean/Standard Deviation						3.33	0.82	Accepted

Table 3. t-test analysis of the influence cultism on examination malpractice in secondary schools in Benue State.

Opinion	N	St. error	Df (n-2)	Level of sig	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
No Influence	67	0.050	298	0.05	63.03	1.96	H ₀
Influence	233						Rejected

Values in parentheses are percentages; {t = 63.03; df = 298; p = 0.05 > 0.00}.

Research Question Two: To what extent does cultism influence the loss of lives and properties in secondary schools?

The data that provide answer to the research question two are presented in Table 2. From the analysis of data on Table 2, the mean ratings for items 6-10 were 3.13, 3.55, 3.40, 3.25 and 3.32 respectively with their corresponding standard deviation of 0.82, 0.75, 0.73, 0.90 and 0.88. All the mean ratings are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This means that the respondents had agreed that the intra and inter cult clashes in school environments result in physical harm on students and teachers. Students' cultists often kill, maim or injure themselves and other innocent non-members during cult reappraisals and offences. Also that, nights are no longer safe for students in school hostels because of frequent cult disturbances. More so, valuable school properties worth millions are sometimes destroyed through cult violence and that school facilities are never in good conditions because of frequent cult clashes leading to destruction of physical properties. The cluster

mean of 3.33 with the standard deviations of 0.82 were also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. This implies that cultism influence the loss of lives and properties in secondary schools.

Testing Research Hypotheses

In testing all the hypotheses of this study, the t-test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 probability level of significance.

Hypotheses one: Cultism has no significant influence on examination malpractice in secondary schools in Benue State

The results on Table 3 showed that t-cal is 63.03 while the t-table is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The t-test results indicate that there is a statistically significant influence of cultism on examination malpractice in secondary schools in Benue State. Consequently, the

Table 4. t-test analysis of the influence of cultism on the loss of lives and properties of secondary schools

Opinion	N	St. error	Df (n-2)	Level of sig	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
No Influence	35	0.049	298	0.05	67.13	1.96	H ₀
Influence	265						Rejected

Values in parentheses are percentages; {t = 67.13; df = 298; p = 0.05>0.00}.

hypothesis (H₀) suggesting no statistically significant influence of cultism on examination malpractice in secondary schools was therefore rejected. This is a clear indication that cultism has significant influence on examination malpractice in secondary schools in Benue State.

Hypotheses Two: Cultism has no significant influence on the loss of lives and properties of secondary schools

The result of Table 4 shows that t-cal is 67.13 while the t-table is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. The t-test results indicate that there is a statistically significant influence of cultism on the loss of lives and properties of secondary schools. Consequently, the hypothesis (H₀) suggesting no statistically significant influence of cultism on the loss of lives and properties of secondary schools was therefore rejected. This is a clear indication that cultism has significant influence on the loss of lives and properties of secondary schools.

DISCUSSION

The first finding of this study revealed that cultism has significant influence on examination malpractice. This finding is also confirmed from the results of analysis of research question one in which the cluster mean of 3.22 and standard deviation of 0.81 were found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. The finding is in consonance with the opinions of Yakubu (2000) who states that cultism exacerbates the problem of examination malpractice in institutions of learning as teachers may not have the courage to perform their duties effectively. Such cultist among the students takes full advantage of the invigilators by intimidating them so as to have a free will to cheat in the examinations. Similar in support to the finding, Thomas (2002) observes that students' cultist are never worried on issues of examination. They hardly attend classes, do assignment or engage in study group among their mates. They always have it at the back of their mind that on the examination day, they will intimidate the invigilators to allow them cheat. He further laments that some of these students cultists have correct question papers before examinations while others do not even seat for the examination hence they can at anytime

confront the teachers to pass them such papers.

The second finding of this study revealed cultism has significant influence on the loss of lives and properties of secondary schools. This finding is also in line with the results of analysis of research question two in which the cluster mean of 3.33 and standard deviation of 0.82 were found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50. The finding is also in agreement with the views of Mbayuav (2011) who states that students cultist often kill, maimed or injure themselves and other innocent non-members during cult reappraisals and offences. He further stated that valuable school properties worth millions have been gutted down by cult-induced fires. Even the lives of teachers and students have at time been, endangered by rampaging cultists. All this culminates into destabilization of academic programmes. Also in line with the finding, Kehinde (2003) states that cultism leads to loss of school property through arson, theft or physical destruction.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that cultism has significant influence on examination malpractice and loss of lives and properties in secondary schools in Benue State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

- (1) Government should enact a law that any students caught intimidating invigilators or cheating in examination should be made to serve a long time in jail.
- (2) There should be rustication or expulsion of students caught in cult related activities that disturb the peace and tranquility of life on the school premises.
- (3) Recommendations for further research on this subject.

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