

Rationale for Students' Involvement in Cultism as Expressed by Undergraduates of Tertiary Institutions in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State

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Abstract

Cultism has attained a frightening status in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This study therefore investigated the rationale for students' involvement in cultism as expressed by undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State. The study also sought to find out if variables such as gender and type of residence would affect the respondents' expressions. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A three-stage sampling procedure was adopted to select 480 respondents for the study. A Researcher-designed instrument titled 'Rationale for Students' Involvement in Cultism Questionnaire (RSICQ), was used to collect information from the participants. The validity of the instrument was established through vetting of the questionnaire by three Experts while the reliability was ascertained using split-half reliability method and a reliability coefficient of 0.66 was gotten which confirmed that the instrument was reliable for use. The t-test statistical method was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Result revealed that undergraduates expressed that the rationale for students' involvement in cultism are peer group influence, societal moral

decadence, low self-esteem, economic situation of the students among others. Based on the findings, it was recommended that counsellors should organize orientation programmes so as for students to say 'NO' to cultism. Parents should be extra vigilant in monitoring the behaviours of their children; this could help undergraduates from involving in cultism. Tertiary institutions should adopt strict disciplinary measures to curb undergraduates from involving in cultism in schools.

Keywords: Rationale, Cultism, Tertiary Institutions, Ilorin Metropolis

Introduction

Nigerian tertiary educational institutions are established with the aim of giving any student who enrolls a sound and qualitative education, to be able to function effectively and adequately in any environment in which he/she may find him/herself; so as to become productive and attain self actualization (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). Based on these, the National Policy on Education (NPE) formulated in 1977 and reviewed in 2013 has its policy as: (a) the acquisition, development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and society; (b) the development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment.

It is worrisome that one of the most important and embarrassing problems facing tertiary institutions in Nigeria presently is the menace and aggressiveness of cult members and cult related activities that crept in to the university environment. Never before has the potential for destruction of lives and properties on campuses escalated so fast and horribly as now (Ajibade, 2013). There is no single Nigerian institution of higher learning that has not experienced the menace of cultism for some time now. According to Maliki (2009), till September 2003, 5,000 students and lecturers have died on Nigerian campuses as a result of cult related violent clashes. The recent destructive cult activity on campuses is over whelming, irritating and distasteful. Lives of promising young adults have been ended by the bloody hands of murderous gangs on campuses.

The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Sociology (1996) gives the sociological definition of cult as a small group or religious activities whose beliefs are typically secrete, esoteric and individualistic.

Lexican Webster's Dictionary (1999) defines secret cult as a group of people who share a common cause and whose mode of meetings and agenda are unknown to the public and where initiation into rank and file is usually done in secret. Ogunbameru (2004) defined secret cult as any form of organization whose activities are kept away from the knowledge of others and such activities are carried out at odd hours of the day and they often go against the accepted norms and values of everyday life. As defined by Ajayi, Haastrup and Osalusi, (2010), cultism can be seen as a ritual practice by a group of people whose membership, admission, policy and initiation formalities as well as their mode of operations are done in secret and kept secret with their activities having negative effects on both members and non-members alike. Since the 1990s, the operations of secret cults have become so sorrowful and worrisome, marked by the murder arson, armed robbery and rape and lack of discipline (Oluwatobi & Babatunde, 2010).

Cultism is a social ill that has placed a deep sorrow on its victims whereby innocent students suffer humiliations and molestations from cultist (Maliki, 2009). Periodically, the cruel and callous activities of cult groups in universities and polytechnics are reported. Apart from mayhem unleashed by cult groups, students have had cause to protest several policies formulated by the authorities of the various higher institutions through mob actions which often result into violence marked by destruction of school properties and loss of students' life. All these violent occurrences caused by students together with the industrial actions of workers' unions (ASUU, ASUP, SSANU, NASU etc) have led to frequent closure or disruption of academic calendar in the various tertiary institutions in the country.

The Nigerian government and security operatives have shown relentless efforts or devised several ways at nipping this menace at bud, but overall, all efforts have proved abortive. Through the media, individuals and groups have expressed their concern over the problem caused by the various cult crises. State and Federal authorities have made use of varied measures of tackling this menace by prosecuting and imprisoning cultists, rustication from tertiary institutions and publishing their names in national dailies among others (Ajayi & Ayodele, 2002).

Metropolis, Kwara State. The result of the study showed that the rationale for students' involvement in cultism are peer group influence, societal moral decadence, low self-esteem, economic situation of the student, parental influence, need for protection, superiority complex among others. Result also showed that there was no significant difference in the rationale for student's involvement in cultism as expressed by undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Ilorin Metropolis on the bases of gender and type of residence.

Conclusion

It was concluded that undergraduates expressed that the rationale for students' involvement in cultism are peer group influence, societal moral decadence, low self-esteem, economic situation of the students among others. There was no significant difference in the rationale for student's involvement in cultism as expressed by undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Ilorin Metropolis on the bases of gender and type of residence.

Recommendations

Counsellors should organize sensitization programmes for students from time to time in order to keep students abreast of never involving in cultism. Counsellors should help students direct their energy into profitable activities by organizing well monitored and rewarded groups such as Scholars' group, Outstanding Students'. This might assist students in joining such groups and saying NO to cultism.

School authorities should adopt strict security measures to curb students from involving in any secret group. Strict rules should be established and enforced through security officers. Anyone who violates the rules should be brought to book. Serious punishment should be 'dished out' to students caught as members of cult groups so as to serve as deterrent to other members of the group and warning for those students who are not members.

Parents should be extra vigilant in monitoring the behaviours of their children; they should visit their children in school from time to time. This could help undergraduates from involving in cultism. Religious leaders

should help in campaigning against students' involvement in cultism by organizing talks and seminars in churches and mosques often for youths.

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