

Development of Cultism in Secondary Schools in Rivers State (1999-2018): It's Implications for Educational Development

Jumbo, T. L.¹; Emeodu, E. N.²; Chukwu, R. C.³;

^{1,3}Department of Educational Foundation, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education,
Port Harcourt

²Department of Sociology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt

Abstract:

The development of cultism in secondary schools in Rivers State had severe negative implications on the educational development of students across the State. Series of measures were undertaken to curtail the proliferation of cultism among secondary school students. However, cultism has proliferated unabated like wide fire in secondary schools in Rivers State. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to examine the development of cultism in secondary schools and its implications on educational development in Rivers State. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. Data were gathered through secondary sources such as textbooks, journals, Government publications, newspapers, and student's publications such as dissertations and thesis. The secondary data collected were subjected to content analysis. The study established that illegal collection of levies by the youth, intake of hard drugs by the students, lack of basic needs such as food, shelter, negative influence from the peer group, and teachers' negative attitude towards their students led to the proliferation of cultism among students in secondary schools in Rivers State. The study also established that the proliferation of cultism has severe negative impact on educational system in Rivers State. It is disastrous to the society in general. Based on the above findings the study recommended among other things that the government should design poverty alleviation strategies for students such as bursary and scholarship awards. This will enable poverty-stricken students to take care of their immediate personal needs.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a catalyst for national development and a necessary condition for national survival. Therefore, the education of our students becomes very relevant. The education of our secondary school students is currently threatened by the virus called cultism. If this evil is not curbed; and unfortunately, a vice which is spreading in our secondary schools, it will go a long way in damaging the future of our students. It is even telling on the academic performances of some of our students (Amaele, 2010).

Education is the combination of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour that are of positive value to the society in which he lives. As a social institution, education derives its form from the values of the society where it exists (Fafunwa, 1974). Education is the appropriate acquisition of values; and is the knowledge of things that are worthwhile (Peters, 1979).

Secondary school education is the kind of education given to students who have completed primary education; given in secondary schools, and which prepares them for higher education. It is a connection between primary and higher education levels. Secondary school

education is designed for six years (i.e., Junior Secondary School 1 – Junior Secondary School 3 and Senior Secondary School 1 – Senior Secondary School 3). It is aimed at grooming teenagers and adolescence into useful young men and women (Oputa & Obiekwe, 2015). The success or failure of secondary school students, therefore, is connected to the foundation they receive which could be from the home, school environment, psychological environment, social environment, among others. This work however focuses on the home and school environment.

Cultism or cult-related activities are a phenomenon that portends evil for the secondary school system in the State. It has made our secondary schools unsafe and unhealthy for academic activities to thrive smoothly. It shows that some of our youths who had come to institutions of learning ostensibly to acquire knowledge and to improve themselves and by so doing, contribute to national development, abandon that calling and form gangs called “brotherhoods” for the purpose of inflicting violence and other unspeakable atrocities on one another. Secondary schools turned into arenas of gangsters, with a beehive of molestation of students and teachers to the point that some schools were closed down completely for weeks thereby disrupting academic activities. Parents could no longer sleep with their two eyes closed each time they sent their children and wards to school. The school system is a place to inculcate good moral values, norms, skills and etiquettes that would prepare the youths for higher studies and advancement in any chosen career of theirs. One remarkable thing that cultists use that is working in their favour is the mass ignorance of the new students who are hoodwinked and deceived to accept their membership.

Several fundamental problems emanate from cultism in our schools. These include the uncertain and unsafe academic atmosphere which pervades the school. This is the sequel to the manner of operations which is very sinister and bizarre, living behind a trail of destructions. In fact, most distressing and worrisome is the problem of several killings of students and teachers in recent times. Many lives have been terminated prematurely. In spite of government efforts to eradicate cultism in secondary schools in Rivers State, it is still growing like wildfire.

However, it should be noted that oftentimes in secondary schools in Rivers State cult activities have resulted in the wanton destruction of lives and properties including disruption of recreational activities. For example in Baptist High School, Port Harcourt on the 10th of March, 1999. A clash that involved two rival cult groups namely the Vikings and the black axe left many students injured. In another incident, in a different school along mile four road on the 20th of April 2002, a secondary school student was attacked and beaten thoroughly. He spent several months in the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital. In a secondary school in Bonny on August 12th, 2004, innocent students were attacked by a cult group while returning from school and they ended up staying in Bonny General Hospital for several months.

Again, at Government Girls Secondary School Finima in Bonny, two female students were raped as they were about to be initiated into a cult group. This happened on June 16th, 2005. At Government secondary school Isiokpo in Ikwerre Local Government Area on May 20th, 2007, some students were attacked by a cult group for no just cause. The students were beaten and their valuable items taken away from them. Consequently, these horrible cult activities have contributed to a large extent to the disruption of academic activities and in the incessant closure of some schools affected by these cult activities. Cultism has become a

matter of serious concern not only to parents and teachers but also to the government.

However, in spite of measures put in place by the various arms of government, school administrators and opinion leaders to combating cultism, the phenomenon seems to be gaining more popularity and prominence in our secondary schools. It is against this background that this researcher has decided to investigate the implication of cultism on secondary school education in

Research Questions

- How can one trace the development of Cultism in Secondary Schools in Rivers State?
- What are the influences of Cultism on Secondary School Student's Academic Performance in Rivers State?
- Ways cultism can be curtailed in Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

II. Methodology

The historical and descriptive research designs were adopted for the study. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. This work covers senior secondary schools in Rivers State both private and public schools. Each of the local government areas has at least five or more senior secondary schools with so many private senior secondary schools. The public secondary schools in Rivers State are about two hundred and seventy-four (274) with over one thousand (1000) private senior secondary schools, this constitutes the study population. Being a qualitative study, the content analysis was used for data analysis.

III. Literature review

History of Cultism in Nigerian Schools

It can be traced "to 1952 when the seadogs confraternity (pyrates) was formed at the University of Ibadan by the likes of Professor Wole Soyinka, Pius Olegbe, AIG Imonkhuede, Olumniwo-wo Awe, Nat Oyelola and Ralf Opara to fight injustice in the Society. The group employed a positive mechanism for purposeful social service delivery in the forms of monetary and blood donations to health institutions and assistance of the indigent students, (Adiele, 2010). In fact, members' identities were well known to members of the University Community, who dismissed them as a harmless body of eccentric non-conformists, day-dreamers, enthusiastic agnostics or even eccentric atheists.

The original intention of the Pirates was to ensure that orderliness and justice prevail in our society. It was not a blood-thirsty organization at all. Udeorah (2006) asserts that the uncontrolled explosion in secondary schools cult's activities could be traced to 1972 when the Buccaneers suddenly emerged. From then on, anybody who was disciplined or dismissed from exiting groups simply joined another one or even formed one himself. These were driven by bitterness and a vision of rivalry against the originator of the pioneer group. For the first time, revenge and infantile regression became the driving force for these later-day cults.

Cultism is derived from the word 'cult'. Hornby (2000) defines a cult as a small group of people who have extreme religious beliefs and who are not part of any established religion. It could as well be seen as a fashionable belief, idea, or attitude that influences people's lives. Akani (1996) defines a cult as a group of people who cherish and believe in certain ideals and ethical conduct which is known and affected only by the members. Again, according to Okoh

(2004), the secret cult is a social group, a collection of students who relate with one another as a distinctive integrated whole. Members of the group participate in this relationship in performing functions that are complimentary and see themselves as tied together by some common bond.

Interestingly, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, section 318 (1), defines secret cult as - any society, association, group or body of persons (whether registered or not) that uses secret signs, oaths, rites, or symbols and which is formed to promote a cause, the purpose of which is to foster the interest of its members and to aid one another under any circumstances without due regard to merit, fair play or justice, to the detriment of the legitimate interest of those who are not members.

Again, the secret cult and similar activities (prohibition) law, No. 6 of Rivers State 2004 highlights a secret cult as any organization, association, group or body of persons whose membership, meetings and other activities are kept secret and which promotes, causes or engages in acts of violence, intimidation or harm in whatever manner, against the public or any member of the public. Adiele (2010) further noted that cult or secret cult could be expressed 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.

As a matter of fact, cultism or cult-related activities in secondary schools in Rivers State, within the period this study is focusing on (1999-2018) is absolutely unprecedented. The explanations given by a few cited scholars above on their definitions of cultism played out conspicuously.

Today, cultism in secondary schools, unfortunately, apply violence as a conveyor belt for their frustrations, ranging from academic failure, quarrels over girlfriends, the quest for lucrative jobs and even sharing of things. In this negative and blind adventure, alcohol and other mind-bending and twisting drugs serve as stimulants to action. Their guiding philosophy centres on rivalry, prejudice and mythology.

Causes for Thriving of Cultism in Nigerians Schools

The causes of cultism in our schools, according to Aroyehun (2000), are not only sociological and psychological in nature but are also rooted in the socio-economic problems being faced in society. Aroyehun's findings show that students join secret cults due to the following reasons:

- **Family influence:** Exposure of students to secret cults from home; lack of proper upbringing, separation of parents; lack of commitments on the part of parents, hence the replacement of parental authority and love with that charismatic cult leaders, over pamperedness i.e. lack of proper discipline; the spiritual foundation of children not properly laid.
- **Need for protection:** To protect themselves from unnecessary harassment from other students and lecturers-many lack the security from home as parents run after butter and bread all over the place so that their children make up for it in the cults.
- Influences and persuasion of notable members of the society who serve as patrons and advisers to the group.

- Influence of Home Video and television programmes in which many want to model their lives after what they watch on the screen of the Television. Many of the videotapes portray cultists as heroes rather than people to be shunned.
- **Economic problem:** Economically, Nigeria is very rich in human and mineral resources, yet masses especially the youths suffer economic and social deprivations. Out of poverty, many find it difficult to pay fees; buy handouts, textbooks etc. They see cults as a way out. They easily fall back to the buoyant financial assistance given to them by cult members and godfathers.
- **Government's failure to meet the needs and aspirations of students and school authorities:** There is the problem of inadequate hostel accommodation, inadequate funding, exorbitant school fees, and incessant closure of schools as a result of not meeting the demands of teachers (not minding the fact that idle hands are devils workshop Students are not sure of good jobs on completion of their academic programmes or even gain admission for further studies.
- **Use of cultists by politicians:** The use of cultists as thugs by politicians encourages cultism. In secondary schools in Rivers, State politicians circumvent the effectiveness of efforts being made towards curbing cultism, through their direct and indirect affiliation with these cults. Several cult groups have government officials as their patrons and patronesses who finance them for their personal use. During campaigns and elections, they use these young boys who are mostly in secondary schools as their boys to carry out their intentions such as snatching of ballot boxes, destruction of election materials, the assassination of their political opponents, intimidation of electoral officers. This external support gives the cult members a high miracle to perpetuate their evil being confident that they have backbones and godfathers that can always use their highly placed influence to get them out of any detention or court case.

IV. Frustrations/Aggression Theory

Frustration and aggression theory was propounded by Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer and Sears in 1939. Again, it was modified in 1969 by Berkowitz who proposed that if we experience frustration, this leads to aggression. The aggression is a cathartic release of the build-up of frustration. Dollard (1969) explains that if the individual is prevented from achieving a goal by some external factor, then this will lead to frustration which will always lead to aggression. The aggression cannot always be directed at the source of aggression, which may be abstract such as lack of money, or too power, as the risk of punishment is too high. The essential preoccupation of this theory is that violence becomes a defense mechanism strategy when it becomes apparent that the means of satisfying pressing human needs are being denied. This could take the form of bio-social and economic denials. The occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration; likewise, the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression.

From this conceptualization, it is not difficult to find a link among the social phenomena of crime, cultism and crises in Rivers State Secondary Schools, particularly from 1999 to 2018 shows that the society is pervaded with frustrating events and frustrating circumstances, one in which it could be said that frustration is endemic. From the 1980s onward, oppression and injustice have been a reoccurring decimal in our social, economic and political frameworks. Poverty has spread like wildfire, and frustration of the basic needs and aspirations of the vast

majority of citizens including children; and youths have been a cardinal feature of our decadent society.

However, it would be interesting to note that, one regular feature noticeable among propagators of cultism, crime, crises and other vices in our secondary schools is the manifestation of hostile and destructive tendencies and urges in criminals, secret cult members and their so-called ring leaders who have seriously engaged in violent and mischievous crises in the schools. It could be observed that this personality trait, championed by large-scale hostility and destructiveness can be linked to the early experiences of frustration. All these were derived from the society in which they live. Again worthy of mention are events or situations which usually result in crises in our schools. These include rivalries between members on the ownership of a girlfriend, this also involves other cult groups, unnecessary exhibition of frustrative tendencies, denial of necessary basic human needs and struggle for supremacy among rival cult groups in the secondary schools.

V. Discussion of findings

Tracing the Development of Cultism in Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Cultism has assumed an unusual trend. In fact, the unabated incidence and unrelenting activities of secret cults in secondary schools in Rivers State have unleashed incalculable havoc in the lives and psyche of secondary school students. From 1999 to 2018 over fifty-six (56) secret cults existed in the two hundred and seventy-six (276) secondary schools in Rivers State (Source: Senior secondary schools Board, Port-Harcourt).

A few cases were cited to buttress this point. In January 1999, the students of Okrika Grammar School, Okrika (popularly known as OGS), launched a violent demonstration in an attempt to take the Principal's life. It was gathered from the grape wine source that a few weeks ago the Principal expelled the ring leader of an emerging cult group in the school, who took some students into the forest for initiation. One of the boys on reaching home his parents were not comfortable, seeing his body bearing marks which inflicted injury on him and demanded to know who was responsible. Out of many persuasions, the student told this parent the truth. The matter was promptly reported to the school Principal. After a thorough investigation, the ring leader of the cult group was expelled from the school. In a swift reaction, other members of the cult group who were not pleased with the Principal's action used another issue on the ground in the school as a cover-up to vent their anger on the Principal, hence the violent demonstration.

In a related development, in March 1999, the Principal of Buabom Community Secondary School, Kono in Khana Local Government Area who went to visit his wife- academic staff of Birabi Memorial Grammar School Bori also in Khana Local Government Area, was beaten up by the rioting students. The reason being that he arrested some cult boys who came to operate during his school's annual athletics Inter-House Sports Competition.

Again, 1996 was the turn of Government Girls Secondary school, Bane. Their reason for carrying out a violent demonstration in the school varied from the illegal collection of levies by the school authorities, refusal of the Principal to grants students desires –especially for cult activities to thrive, lack of potable water, poor funding, bullying of junior students, to refusal of the senior students to participate in manual labour.

In 2005, the students of Akpor Grammar School, Ozuoba held the principal and a staff

hostage during their rampage. The ring leaders of the cult group in the school were responsible for this. However, it should be noted that, in the study of factors associated with students violence in secondary schools in Rivers State, Oduor and Kajiwa (2006) established that the presence of the usage of drugs by the students, lack of relevant facilities such as food and water, students negative attitude towards their schools, those who did not perform well in school internal and external examinations, those who felt that their teachers did not understand their behaviour, those who received peer group influence and often resort to violence to express their dissatisfaction are all casual factors of violence in schools which were midwife by cultists.

Another notable point is students who have a negative attitude towards their principal in terms of leadership styles, ineffective communication patterns, rigid school rules and regulations become violent in other to express their dissatisfaction. Students also resorted to violence to react against the transfer of teachers who are possibly patrons of cultic groups in the school, (Kiplagat & Amadi, 2014).

Most cultic groups in secondary schools use every available opportunity to express themselves. The inability of the governing authorities to yield to the demands of the students which most of the time were patriotic resulted in violent demonstrations that could be avoided (Editorial-Time International May 2nd 2001). Within the period of this study, Rivers State witnessed a spate of student (cultists) protests leading to the loss of lives. Affected schools were closed down temporarily. At this time, Rivers State Secondary schools became fertile grounds for students' frequent rampage. In order to quell the uprising, the government had to set up committees to investigate the matter and to report back to it within a stipulated time frame. During the unrest of Federal Government Girls College, Abuloma students, the principal and some academic staff were held hostage for over twelve (12) hours and were seriously humiliated and dehumanized. Several structures were damaged. The school gate was shut against all staff.

Regrettably, the trend of frequent unrest demonstrations and tension associated with cultism in secondary schools in Rivers State got to a stage where stakeholders in education seeing the incessant disruption of school academic calendar by students' cultists caused great harm to the development of education in the State. They started demanding accountability for the huge investment in education. Some students completely dissociated themselves from the acts. While cultic students hiding under the guise of the student's activists were found right in the forefront of the demonstration and even involved in the planning stage (Ajaji, 1993).

The student cult activists saw the school authorities as a group of evil sorts who have no business at all in making policies that did not allow them to exercise themselves of their own volition (Sampson & Corn, 2015). They tend to see every action of the school administration as a calculated attempt to stifle their freedom and to deny them access to any important decision-making roles. They felt that the school administration did not trust, recognize or respect them but looked upon them as highly irresponsible youths who were easily manipulated by outside influence.

However, it should be noted that many of these cult students' activists seem to be acting in conformity with their parent's values who were cultists. Consequently, they expressed these values in power by being less compromising and in an energetic way than they think their parents did. Lawlessness was very rampant in secondary schools where students were head

bound to take the laws into their hands. This was evidenced in a study that investigated teachers' perception of adolescent violence in secondary schools in Rivers State, Obikeze (2009) found that such forms of violence as the destruction of school buildings, property, fighting, kicking, bullying, pushing, breaking and destruction of other students lockers and taken away their personal belongings, cultism of very high magnitude, riots, beating, teachers flogging the junior students by senior ones, recruiting and initiating them into the various cults groups became rampant and prevalent in the secondary school system in the state.

Influence of Cultism on Secondary School Student's Academic Performance in Rivers State.

Disruption of Academic Calendar: In Secondary Schools in Rivers State where cult activities were very rampant and violent in nature, such schools were temporarily shut down. This invariably led to the disruption of the school academic calendar and other schools activities. This scenario did not augur well for educational development based on its negative implications. According to Aghotor (2000) whenever schools are closed down it affects everybody including the cultist and the non-cultist. This led to the poor academic performance of all the students.

Loss of Lives: Pitiably incidence of several loss of lives where students cultist and non-cultist were been injured and sometimes killed. It should be noted that cases where students were burnt alive and rival cult students also burnt to death abound. For instance, towards the end of 2003, members of the Choba community close to Akpor Grammar School woke up to behold a horrible scene of limitless dimension.

Four students of Akpor Grammar School Ozuoba (in the school uniform), possibly in their late teens were killed and beheaded. His severed head hung at the school gate while his headless body had a lot of inscriptions and a bottle of wine placed beside it. Again, in Bori 2010 at Birabi Memorial Grammar School, it was reported that suspected members of one of these deadly cult groups buried five (5) male students suspected to be a member of a rival cult group alive. Again, in Community Secondary School Abalamabie, Bonny, in 2015 there were several causes of loss of lives of students of the school as a result of cult group clashes. Innocent students were injured and some others maimed for life. As a living witness, in the year 2000 this researcher beheld with his eyes during one of their inter and intra cult disagreement and fracas, a teacher who was on duty while trying to quell the uprising in Bonny National Grammar School, Bonny was stabbed to death instantly. The school closed down abruptly as several students and teachers fled home.

As a result of the pandemonium which the incident generated, several students were injured as they were trying to force themselves home through the school gate. This affected academic activities for nearly two weeks before normalcy returned. Similar cases also occurred in other secondary schools across the state. These cult activities no doubt led to decline in learning and disruption of academic and other activities in the school. Ishekhure (2005), observed that, this behaviour and attitude of cultists caused great problems in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4.1: Shows victims as a result of cult activities in secondary schools in Rivers State.

S/n	Name of school (s)	Number of victims	Year of incident
1	Buabom Community Secondary, School, Kono	1 school head and 4 Students seriously injured.	1999
2	Government Girls Secondary School, Bane	4 teachers and 10 students injured.	1999
3	Okrika Grammar School, Okrika	10 students injured.	1999
4	Federal Government Girls College, Abuloma, Port Harcourt	6 Academic staff were beaten and wounded	2001
5	Akpor Grammar School, Ozuoba	4 persons	2003
6	Bonny National Grammar School, Bonny	1 teacher and many students were injured badly	2004
7	Birabi Memorial Grammar School, Bori	5 persons	2010
8	Community Secondary School Abalamabie, Bonny	7 students	2015

Source: Jumbo (2020)

From the above table 4.1, one can see very vividly the several loss of lives as a result of cult activities in Secondary Schools in Rivers State. Persons spoken to from our primary sources contended that the various lives lost as a result of these cult-related activities have impacted negatively on the educational development of the state. The several lives lost would have been of immense benefit to the educational advancement of the state to a very large extent. These findings relate to the views expressed by Aghotor (2000), that when these incidents occur, the academic calendar of schools was affected and schools closed down temporarily. This no doubt hinders academic activities from thriving smoothly.

Table 4.2: Shows destruction of infrastructural and learning facilities in secondary schools in Rivers State.

S/N	Name of school (s)	Number of items/ buildings affected	Year of occurrence
1	Buabom Community Secondary, School, Kono	Assembly Hall and 2 classroom blocks	1999
2	Government Girls Secondary School, Bane	Physics laboratory and 3 classroom blocks.	1999
3	Okrika Grammar School, Okrika	2 classroom blocks and security post	1999
4	Bonny National Grammar School, Bonny	School Gate and Assembly hall	2000
5	Federal Government Girls College, Abuloma, Port Harcourt	School staff room and Principals official car	2001
6	Akpor Grammar School, Ozuoba	2 classroom blocks and a school gate	2003
7	Birabi Memorial Grammar School, Bori	5 classroom blocks and the school security post	2010

8	Community Secondary School Abalamabie, Bonny	Destroyed ICT building and carted away 20 computer sets.	2013
9	Community Secondary School Burukiri, Bonny	Classroom windows and doors staff chairs and tables, looting of science laboratory and sports equipment	2015
10	Community Secondary School Abalamabie, Bonny	Assembly hall destroyed and carted away 15 chairs and 20 computer sets.	2017

Source: Eneh (2015) cited in Jumbo (2020)

From the above table 4.2, the extent of destruction of school buildings such as assembly halls, classroom blocks, chairs, tables and other learning materials were all destroyed without remedy. These findings corroborate the views of Iyobhebhe (1999) and Ishekhure (2005) when they noted that cult clashes lead to the destruction of school properties. This thereby makes the teaching and learning process very difficult. Consequently, a student who was interested in education were therefore discouraged for fear of cult activities. This is in line with views already expressed in chapter two of this study.

Destruction of Infrastructural and Learning Facilities: It is very regrettably to note that, there were severe cases of destruction of school properties during cult-related clashes. Schools buildings were destroyed, chairs, books and tables were not exempted. These incidences were very alarming. In some cases, they looted sports equipment and science materials. They raised money to sustain themselves through the disposal of these materials at give-away prices or at paltry sums. Cult members were always prone to destroying valuable school properties in the secondary schools, (Echekwube, 2005).

Insecurity in the Learning Environment: Unnecessary tension and insecurity pervaded the school environments to both the cultist and other students alike. Several student's lives were cut short and others at stake as the rampant presence of cult activities sent feelings of fear and dread within and outside the school environment. Cult members used taggers, knives, matches as well as ax and pored acid freely on their targeted preys whom they have earmarked for elimination. There were several cases of unrest, riots demonstrations and disruption of academic programmes by cultists. They also engaged in sexual harassment of female students and robbery activities. They employed threats and intimidations to force non-members into cult membership. They were highhanded, violated school rules and regulations with no sense of guilt and fear (Elechi & Ogbondah,2005). These no doubt created an insecure atmosphere which did not encourage learning activities to thrive, smoothly.

None observance of school rules and regulations: In the schools, rules and regulations were not obeyed, teachers were afraid to confront certain categories of students in the school. Students were bullied, female students were sexually harassed and raped, inciting confusion in the school environment etc, became the order of the day. The dreams of several promising students to pursue their secondary school education were cut short as lives and learning materials, school buildings, chairs, books, etc, were been destroyed. Thereby, making the teaching and learning process almost impossible. Similarly, even students who wanted to improve themselves through learning became afraid to go to schools because of the nefarious

activities of the so-called cultists.

Indiscipline in Secondary Schools: It is an obvious fact that any child who is not ready to obey cannot learn properly. Cultism contributed immensely to indiscipline recorded in secondary schools in the state within the period under review. This affected their academic performance. It should be noted that cultist never obeys orders. For instance, a section of the school rules and regulations forbids students from fighting each other, making noise in class, coming late to school, being disrespectful to teachers, etc. All these are the handiwork of cultists. Ishekhure, (2005) noted that the negative behaviour and attitude of the students' cultists often caused problems in secondary schools in Rivers State. Therefore, indiscipline in secondary schools affected academic performance negatively.

Poor Academic Performance: Cultists also experiences poor academic performance in secondary schools, (Ezeorah, 2000). This is in view of the fact that they often engage in nocturnal meetings for their initiation processes. Adewale, (2005), stated that their secret initiation activities which is usually very rigorous and time-consuming. For instance, the male student is made to go through different forms and styles of torture accompanied by severe flogging. They are most times beaten with very big hardwoods and sticks with machetes to test their endurance capacity. On the other hand, the female intending student members are properly raped by several cultists under the influence of drugs. Besides, they are made to drink alcoholic substances mixed with raw eggs and blood as a form of oat taking to pledge their allegiance to the group at all times. It is compulsory for all members to be present in all their meetings.

However, hard work is thrown overboard and replaced with laziness and mediocrity. These are approaches used by cultists to achieve their educational goals. They often skip classes and have no time to read their books, do their home works and class assignments including participating in both internal and external examinations. This invariably explains why many students' cultist ends up spending more years than expected in secondary schools. This is a negative implication for educational development in the state. This answered research question three.

Ways Cultism can be curtailed in Secondary Schools in Rivers State?

Cultism can be curtailed in secondary schools in Rivers State through the following ways:-

The adequate campaign should be mounted on the negative effects of cultism: Secondary school students should be properly educated on the negative effects of cultism. If students are regularly informed of the effects of cultism they are less likely to participate in it and not even want to indulge themselves in it (Ogbondah, 2005).

Effective security in secondary schools in Rivers State: The government in collaborations with school principals should ensure that they provide effective security measures and outfits in school compounds and it's the environment to protect students adequately from unnecessary harassment and intimidation from other students. When this happens students will not feel the need to seek protection elsewhere by forming or joining cult groups (Eneh, 2016).

Good Parenting in Children Upbringing: Parents should be enjoined to put in great efforts in bringing up their children uprightly to ensure that they do not imbibe bad, behaviours and characters which encourage violence. Children should be taught the values of good moral

conduct always. Oladele (1999), stated that cultists bring a lot of shame, embarrassment and pain to their families. Parents are being tagged as bad or irresponsible parents or parents of armed robbers. Cultism has also made many parents lose their children to untimely death.

Parents Teachers Association (PTA) should encourage academic exploits in secondary schools: Corporate bodies, opinion leaders, community leaders and parents teachers associations should rise to their responsibilities. They should team up in providing a conducive learning environment for students as well as supporting activities that encourage learning; such as providing instructional materials cash donations, sports materials etc. This no doubt will make students focus more on their education and thereby less distracted to trivialities such as cultism (Oghene, 2005).

The Roles of the Ruling Class: To stem the tide of cultism in our secondary schools in Rivers State, the political ruling class needs to mop up the courage and political willpower to reverse the trend. This could be done through as (Elechi & Ogbandah 2006) posits by the government incorporating into the laws and regulations establishing the secondary school system. The power of the school authorities to discipline students who are found to be cult members, will to a large extent help to eliminate the conditions that breed cultism (Eneh, 2015).

Provision of guidance counselors in Secondary Schools: Secondary Schools should be provided with trained guidance counselors to help students who have self-concept problems resuscitate themselves properly (Eneh, 2015).

Creation of enabling Environment: Schools should create an enabling environment with some key officers put in place to take care of students who may want to renounce their membership of secret cults and offer them the necessary protection and other forms of assistance.

Formation of Vigilante Groups: Students should form vigilante groups that will give cultists no breathing space in secondary schools.

Culprits should not be exempted: Children of highly placed persons in the society who are cultists should be punished accordingly. There should be no sacred cows for both staff and students.

Federal and state governments should amend existing law(s) that have loopholes, which make it difficult to prosecute cult members. Also, they should promulgate new laws that will punish cultists, and ensure they are implemented. Also, put in place surveillance activities by security forces in secondary schools to warn/scare cult members on regular basis, and set up a special task force of the police force and a special intelligence unit to identify cult members in the secondary schools in Rivers State.

VI. Conclusion

Conclusively, the incidence of cultism is a universal problem. Certainly, it will be very difficult to expect the secondary school system alone to solve the problem of cultism, without integrating or involving the entire State and the wider Nigerian society. The study revealed that poverty to a certain extent is one of the factors which propelled students to join secret cults in secondary schools in Rivers State. The study established that illegal collection of levies by the youth, intake of hard drugs by the students, lack of basic needs such as food, shelter and water, and negative influence from the peer group led to the proliferation of

cultism among students in secondary schools in Rivers State.

The study also revealed that teachers' negative attitude towards their students, also led to the proliferation of cultism in secondary schools in Rivers State. This revelation conforms with the Frustration/ Aggression Theory propounded by Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, and Sears in 1933, which view societal violence such as cultist activities as an expression of frustration and anger towards the aggressor. Therefore, the drive for cultism among students in secondary schools in Rivers State is seen as a result of frustration due to unjust punishment bequeathed on the students by their teachers. It has an indelible negative impact on the students' educational development. Cultism in Rivers State led to the destruction of Infrastructural and learning facilities, loss of lives, disruption of the academic calendar, insecurity in the learning environment, indiscipline in Secondary Schools, and Poor Academic Performance. It is disastrous to society in general.

Recommendations

- Teachers both in the primary and secondary schools are expected to consolidate and improve upon this foundation by helping the children under their tutelage to visualize who they are at a more global level, with special reference to what distinguishes them from the lower animals which is rationality.
- Again parents should try as much as possible to evaluate their children daily on return from school to ascertain whether they are participating fully in the learning process which ought to transform the child, really takes place at school. They could as well do this by assessing their performance using their class works, home works/assignments, termly results, practical skills and their behaviour they are changing in a positive direction. Parents are also enjoined to ascertain, the kind of friends their children keep at home and in school.
- Provision of enabling academic environment for learning: To make cultism unattractive and an unnecessary option for students, there should be improved learning facilities in schools, the government in collaboration with Parents Teachers Associations (PTA) and Philanthropic organizations should flood the secondary schools with games/sports equipment, where necessary as well as other lacking infrastructural facilities. All these will make the secondary school system healthy for academic and other extra-curricular activities for secondary schools to thrive.
- **Students should avoid keeping bad Company:** Students should on a serious note avoid keeping bad company. They should mind the company they keep and choose their friends wisely. Keeping a cultist as a friend is enough to attract the anger of another rival cultist.
- **Poverty Alleviation Strategies:** The government should design poverty alleviation strategies for indigent students such as bursary and scholarship awards. This will enable poverty-stricken students to take care of their essential needs and personal effects. This no doubt will prevent them from being lured into cultism as a result of their inability to meet up with their several necessities.
- **Placement of Security Personnel in Secondary Schools in Rivers State:** Government should boost the existing civilian security outfits in secondary schools with other uniform security personnel. So that they can be easily contacted when the need arises. Besides,

their presence will ward off the incidence of inter and intra-cult clashes which negatively affect students while learning, due to the tension and insecurity it breeds.

- **Trial and Prosecution of secret cult cases with dispatch:** Trial and persecution of secret cult cases should be treated with dispatch. The normal judicial process should not be followed at all. A high-powered special tribunal should be established in the twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas in the State, where all cult-related cases should be tried. A minimum of five (5) years jail term without the option of a fine is hereby advocated.

REFERENCES

1. Amaele, S. (2010). *Moral and religious values in Nigerian education: Issues, problems, and prospects*. Harey Publication.
2. Akani, S.O. (1996). *Economy of secret cults in Nigerian universities Port Harcourt: Christian Publications, Port Harcourt*.
3. Agbotor, A.N.O. (2000). *Effects of cult activities on educational, social & economic development in Nigeria*. Institute of Education, Benin City: University of Benin Press.
4. Ajayi, K. (1993). *The relationship between student's socio-economic background and unrest in Nigerian Universities*. Journal of education in developing areas. October published by the Faculty of Education University of Port Harcourt.
5. Adewale, O. S. (2005). Violence in the Citadel: the menace of secret cults in the Nigerian Universities. *Nordic Journal of African Sociology*.
6. Berkowitz, L. (1969). *Roots of aggression: A re-examination of the frustration-aggression hypothesis*. Atherton Press.
7. Dollard, J.; Miller, N. E.; Doob, L. W.; Mowrer, O. H. & Sears, R. R. (1939). *Frustration and aggression*. Yale University Press.
8. Elechi G.E. & Ogbondah L., (2005). *Sociological Foundation of Education*. Sabcos Stationary Store.
9. Eneh, O. C., (2015) *Cultism in the Nigerian Educational Institution*.
10. Ezeorah, S. (2000). *Cultism & its consequences* in C.U. Njoku & O. Obasi ed. *Fighting campus ills*, Owerri press.
11. Fanfunwa, A.B. (1974). *History of Education in Nigeria*. George Alien and Unwin Ltd.
12. Hornby, A. S. (2000). *Oxford advanced learners' English Dictionary*. Oxford University Press.
13. Iyobhebhe, S.A. (1999) *Cultism & Drug Abuse in Nigeria Educational Institution*. Institute of Education University of Benin Press..
14. Nwaonusuru, T.O. (1994). Motivating factors & health, implications of cultism in secondary schools paper presented at the workshop on secret cults in secondary schools.
15. Oputa, C.C. & Obiekwe, I.N. (2015). *Nigerian Education Sector in the last 100 years: Issues of Development and Challenges*. In S. O. Oluwuo, N.J. Okoli, S.D. Osaat, & C.M.

- Uche (Eds). *100years of Education in Nigeria: Issues on Policies, Reforms, and Administration*. Book of Reading 1.
16. Ogbondah, L. (2005) *Cultism in our institutions* in G.E. Elechi & L. Ogbonadah (*Sociological Foundation of Education*). Sabcos Stationary Store.
 17. Oladele, J.O. (1999) *Fundamentals of guidance & Counseling*. John Lad Publishers Limited
 18. Ogene; J.O, (2005) *Management of secret cult on Nigeria Campuses*. University of Benin, Press.
 19. Odour, A. & Kajilwa, G., (2016) *Six reasons believed to be fuelling the school fires*. University of Port Harcourt, Uniport Press.
 20. Olukoye, S. (2016). *Cult gansters: The new terror*, Newswatch Publication.
 21. Peters, R.S. (1979). *The concept of education*. Roulledge & Kegen Paul Ltd.
 22. Udeorah, S. (2006). *Cultism: death trap on our campuses-The Way Out*: University of Port Harcourt, Press