

Influence of Cultism on the School Activities of Student in Nigerian Universities: A Focus on Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki-Nigeria

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Abstract: The study examined the influence of cultism on the academic activities of students in Nigeria Universities with a focus on Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Three research questions and a descriptive survey design were adopted for the study. The study population was one thousand and thirteen final year students and with the use of purposive random sampling technique, two hundred and sixty of them were drawn. A structured questionnaire with 12 items was the instrument for data collection arranged in three clusters. The validity of the instrument was determined by given it to three experts; one in Measurement and Evaluation and the other two in Guidance and Counselling and Curriculum Studies. Furthermore, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to ascertain its reliability and it yielded a coefficient index of 0.77 and this shows that the instrument was reliable for the study. The instrument was administered with the help of course representatives during their lectures. Two hundred copies were properly filled that was used for the study. Men and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. The study findings showed that cult activities influence students' discipline, punctuality and regularity to school programmes and their general academic participation and performance. Implications of the study were drawn and recommendations made.

Key words: Influence • Cultism • School Activities • Nigerian Universities and Students

INTRODUCTION

Presently, cultism has attracted a lot of attention in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria and this has created serious academic challenges for both students and university administration. Cultism is indeed a very serious problem engulfing our youths like wild fire which makes them to fight, steal, rape, be drunk and kill among others [1]. Cult and cultism means many things to many people. Ekwunife [2] sees it as a system of religious worship especially one that is expressed in rituals (pp: 258). Again, Igba [3] sees it as an assemblage of people who share the same ideas and beliefs and involve themselves in eccentric conduct and manifestations mostly shrouded in secrecy. Igbo [4] and Igodo [5] posit that cultism is enshrined in hidden activities carried out at odd hours of the day and they often clash with accepted norms and values of everyday life. This trend led [6] to conclude that cultism is an ill-wind in the family, institutions of learning and the society at large. Summarily, cultism is a ritual practice by group of people whose membership, admission, policy and initiation formalities as well as their mode of operation are kept secret and their activities affect a lot of people.

Cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions was traceable to the formation of pirate confraternity at the University of Ibadan in 1952 by Wole Soyinka. Mgbekem [7] explains that it was started in the institution as a lobby group of students in order to secure power and recognition from the authority. The author states that the fraternity had noble ideas and objectives like: bringing to focus societal ills (Injustice), anti-government policies; maladministration and humanitarian oriented duties which include blood and material donations. Unfortunately over the years, misunderstanding, unhealthy rivalry and personality clashes crept into the system and led to its split into factions. Today, dozens of secret cults are known to operate in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and at the heart of each group is indiscipline, intolerance, insubordination, unhealthy rivalry and external desire to be in charge [8]. This is a dangerous trend in higher institutions in Nigeria and is a concern to the researchers that have led to the present study.

The attendant influence of cultism on students' overall development cannot be underestimated as their proper academic and character excellence are compromised as a result of this ugly trend. These cult groups have discarded the original noble ideals of its

founding members and they are now busy fighting for supremacy using all forms of intimidation. This they have done through transforming themselves into dreadful instruments for striking terror in the institutions and their host community. Consequently, this has generated social tension and instability not only in campuses, but in the wider society too. This has led the various state and the federal governments of Nigeria to divert their scarce resources to wage war against cultism and all other forms of terrorism in the country; this trend is worrisome.

The prevalence of cult activities in campuses is linked directly or indirectly to many secret cults in the wider society. These youths in the tertiary institution are enticed with material and non-material gains and are used as political thugs to kidnap and murder innocent people. Other students join these cults for wealth and financial assistance; while others join in order to hide their weaknesses (Inferiority complex) or to align with parental or home background [9]. The increase in the breakdown of the society's social and moral values has contributed significantly in the upsurge of the activities of secret cult groups in institutions of higher learning. So many parents are now concerned with economic issues and hardly find time to inculcate desirable social and moral values in their children. Ogunbandamere [10] posits that such children are easily enticed into membership of secret cult groups on campuses. Crises in the educational sector as a result of decay of infrastructure, poor funding and frequent strike actions by staff of the universities have contributed to the sudden increase in campus cult activities.

Cult activities in Ebonyi State University is so intense that it involves killing, maiming, raping of fellow students and disruption of the general academic calendar. The peace on the campuses of the university is adversely affected whenever there is cult invasion as it leads to suspension of academic activities to avoid loss of lives and properties [11]. Again, students and lecturers are always afraid to conduct lectures and examinations because of the prevailing trend. Many students are always afraid to come out for their examination preparations like to pray and to discuss in groups especially in the evenings and even to attend lectures punctually and regularly. Furthermore, lecturers are at times threatened and intimidated by these cult groups to succumb to their demands. As a result of this frequent cult disturbances, some parents now opt for off campus accommodation for their children far off from the campuses and this causes absenteeism or lateness to lectures and examinations. Most of these students' academic performances are jeopardized as they cannot relax and put in their best. As a result of this ugly trend,

some of the students have to look for unaccepted ways to cover up their academic lapses like sorting for marks using their bodies or money: This leads to character dent and lowering of education standard in the institution. Little wonder most university graduates in Nigeria cannot defend the certificates they are carrying.

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are seriously infected with cult activities that have disrupted the educational standard. The attendant influence of cultism on the academic activities of students in Ebonyi State University is so strong that both intra and inter-cult clashes negatively affect the whole educational development of the youths. The effects include: rustication or explosion of students involved; disrupting of peace and orderliness in the institutions; outbreak of violence and insecurity among others. In the university, the management have put in place measures to eliminate cultism in the campus but appear not to have produced the desired results. These negative vices of cult activities if left unchecked by parents; government and school authorities may spread its ugly tentacles to many areas of the society and may jeopardize the education sector in particular. To examine the true picture of the negative influence of cult activities on the educational development of students in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki becomes necessary.

Statement of the Problem: There is no gainsaying that the negative influence of cultism on the general educational development of our youths in tertiary institutions is alarming. Ebonyi State University is sharing in the tales of woes resulting from these activities as effective teaching, learning and general administration of the institution have been disrupted severally. The echo of pronouncements during convocation ceremonies in universities that says "These ones have been found worthy in character and learning" is doubtful in our institutions because of the influence of cultism. This is because the serene learning and character building activities are disrupted from time to time leaving a fire brigade approach that hardly makes the desired impact. These observed trends has burdened the researchers to undertake this study that thus ask. What are the negative influence of cult activities on the educational development of Ebonyi State University students?

Significance of the Study: The study will be of great benefit to all Nigerian citizens in one way or the other. The beneficiaries include: educational institutions, undergraduate students; government of Nigeria lecturers and parents.

- For the educational institutions, the findings will help them to x-ray the causes and sustaining drives of cultism and be able to take bold steps through legislations to curb it.
- Students in the university through the findings of the study would be able to keep off from any appearance of evil and adjust their character and learning in conformity to acceptable societal pattern. This is because they are awarded their degree certificates at the end of their programme when they have been found worthy in character and learning.
- The Nigerian government and the society as a whole will understand through the findings of the study that cultism is an evil that does no one good. As a result, measures would be put in place to monitor and thrash out all forms of cultism to ensure peace and security in governance and the country as a whole.
- In the case of the lecturers in universities in Nigeria, the study findings will help them take necessary steps in monitoring the students under their care, for proper knowledge and character acquisition. As they are also at the receiving end, they need to put in their best in order to build confidence in the students and be fair in dealing with them in order not to evoke their violent reactions.
- Finally, the parents through the findings of the study will devote time to nurture and monitor their children/wards at all times. This is to ensure that they do not depart from the acceptable norms of the society and be studious in their academic endeavours to achieve laurels.

Purpose of the Study: The main purpose of the study was to ascertain the influence of cultism on the educational development of students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Specifically, the study x-rayed the negative influence of cult activities on EBSU students'

- Disciplinary behaviours
- Punctuality and regularity to lectures and other school activities
- Performance in their examinations.

Research Questions: The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

- In what way has cult activities negatively influenced EBSU students disciplinary behaviours?
- How has cult activities in EBSU negatively influenced students' punctuality and regularity to lectures
- How has cult activities negatively influenced students' performance in examinations in EBSU?

Review of Related Literature on Cultism in Nigerian

Higher Institutions: Literature related to the study on cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria was reviewed thus: conceptual framework, theoretical framework and review of empirical works.

Conceptual Framework

Nature and Origin of Cultism in Nigerian Institutions of

Higher Learning: Cultism in Nigerian society has become a serious problem and many attempts have been made to provide a lasting solution: This is because the trend has become more serious and a threat to normal academic work and its attendant poor performance of students in the country's institutions of learning [12]. Ajayi *et al.* [13] and Kpae [14] explain that cultism is enshrined in hidden activities carried out at odd hours of the day and they often clash with acceptable norms and values of everyday life. Again, Ogonbameru [15] sees it as system of religious worship, especially one that is expressed in rituals. Cultism then can be seen as a ritual practice by group of people whose membership, admission, policy and initiation formalities, as well as their mode of operation are kept secret and their activities affect a lot of people [16]. Cultism can be traced to the Seadog Confraternity a.k.a Pirates funded by Wole Soyinka and six other associates of his in University of Ibadan in [3]. Remark that it was a non-violent group that tried to correct in peaceful ways, some notable ills within the universities and environ. According to Igodo [5] it was started in the institution as a lobby group of students in order to secure power and recognition from the authority. The author state that the fraternity had noble ideas and objectives like: bringing to focus, societal ills (Injustice), anti-government policies; maladministration and humanitarian oriented duties which include blood and material donations. Unfortunately over the years from the eighties, misunderstanding, unhealthy rivalry and personality clash, crept into the system and led to its split into volatile factions. Ekwunife [2] state that today, dozens of secret cults are known to operate in Nigerian tertiary institutions working contrary to the noble ideals of its founders. This trend is worrisome as the entire society of Nigeria is ravaged by their activities, heightening the security challenges of the country. This has led to the compromise of academic activities in institutions in Nigeria as poor academic performance now becomes the order of the day; hence the need for this study and to proffer a way forward.

Causes of Cult Activities and their Attendant Effects

Generally: The prevalence of cult activities in campuses in Nigeria is linked directly or indirectly to many secret

cults in the wider society. These youths in tertiary institutions are enticed with material and non-material gains and are used as political and ethnic thugs to kidnap and murder innocent opposers to their evil deeds. Hornby [6] reiterates that some other students join these cult groups for wealth acquisition or for financial assistance and some of them join in order to hide their weaknesses (Inferiority complex) or just to belong to the class. Mgbekem [7] from their own point of view state that major causes of cultism are influence of peer group, parental background societal decadence, erosion of educational standards, militarization of the Nigerian polity, quest for power and protection among others. The increase in the breakdown of the society's social and moral values has contributed significantly in the upsurge of the activities of secret cult groups in Nigeria. Njoku [8] laments that so many Nigerian parents are now concerned with economic and financial gains that they hardly find time to inculcate desirable social and moral values in their children. He concludes that such children are easily enticed into membership of secret cult groups on campuses in Nigeria.

Furthermore, crises in the Nigerian educational sector as a result of decay of infrastructure, poor funding and frequent strike actions by staff of the universities have contributed to the sudden increase in campus cult activities. The resultant effects of cultism in the society include loss of lives and properties, disruption of academic activities and unsafe university environment. Lending his voice, Ogunbandamere [10] states that cult members are linked to criminal homicide and unlawful behaviours like armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, arson and illegal arms possession and business. According to Njoku [8] frequent outbreak of cult disturbances generate feelings of fear and social insecurity in the society. These cult groups have discarded the original noble ideals of its founding members as they are now busy fighting for supremacy using all forms of intimidation, using dreadful instruments to strike terror within the campuses and their host communities; this trend is worrisome.

Negative Influence of Cultism on the Campuses and Impact on Students' Academic Activities: Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are seriously infected with cult activities that have disrupted the educational system in terms of standard and consistency. The negative influence of cultism jeopardizes academic activities and this affects both proper character and learning development of the nation's youths. The effects on students include: rustication or expulsion from the

institutions; disruption of peace and orderliness; outbreak of violence and insecurity among others. The attendant negative influence of cultism on students overall development cannot be underestimated because, their proper character and academic excellence are compromised. Students and lecturers in the institutions are always afraid to come out and carry out their duties in the campus. When there is cult invasion, academic activities are suspended to avoid loss of lives and properties [9]. Again, students are always tensed up when examination is by the corner because, cult activities is heightened as they try to intimidate fellow students and lecturers to succumb to their academic demands by force. These students hardly prepare for lectures and examinations properly, leading to punctuality and regularity problems which adversely affect their academic performance and achievement.

As a result of this frequent cult disturbances, some parents now opt for off-campus accommodations for their children/wards far off from the campuses and this increases the tendencies of absenteeism, not being regular to lectures and the risk of plying on the roads to and from lectures. Most of these students' academic performances are jeopardized as they cannot relax and put in their best. Some of them have now resorted to unacceptable means to cover up their lapses created because of these disturbances, like sorting for marks and examination malpractices. These have led to character deformation and poor graduate turn-outs from Nigerian universities. This calls for urgent attention and action for concerned authorities in Nigeria for sustainable higher education.

Theoretical Framework: This paper is anchored on the deprivation theory of Walter [12] which points to a group that acts when they feel they are deprived of their rights by their parents, institutions or society in general. The discontent arising from some deprivations has been used to explain radical politics, the rise of social movements, industrial disputes and other crimes [11]. This theory relates to the present study because most of these cultists confess that they are lured into these groups in order to retaliate for certain denials from the cultmembers, lecturers and the university authorities and the society at large. They show their grievances uses the wrong method-cult activities.

Review of Empirical Works on Cultism: The study considered some research works related to this study on cultism and its negative influence on students' academic development Ogonbameru [15] conducted a study on

cultism in our contemporary society using Abia State of Nigeria as a case study. Structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. Reviewed relevant literature was done. Five senatorial zones of the state were involved in the study. The data collected were analyzed using Chi-square statistics tool. The study findings revealed that cultism has done more harm than good in our society and that students' academic activities are negatively affected.

Again, Ajayi *et al.* [13] carried out a study on cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions: The way out. The paper was descriptively done using Ex-post-facto design. The study explored the origin, possible causes and consequences of cultism. Their findings revealed that the major causes are influence of peer group parental background and societal decadence among others. Also the studying findings discovered that loss of lives and properties, disruption of academic activities and unsafe university environment were the resultant effects of cultism.

Ogidefa [9] conducted a study on personality dimension to cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions: A sociological perspective. The study adopted a descriptive survey approach and interview methods for data collection. Two research questions guided the study and the findings revealed among others that individual personality is produced by both inherited traits and tendencies; that this personality formation can also be influenced by the environment and the culture of the individual in question among other influences. He concluded that the sum total of the enlisted influences exert pressure on an individual personality formation that may influence participation in cult activities.

Summary of Reviewed Literature: The reviewed work look at the concept and nature of cultism. Cultism is enshrined in hidden activities carried out at odd times and a times are at variance with acceptable societal norms. The origin was traced as peaceful fraternity established by Wole Soyinka and associates in University of Ibadan to ensure peace and equity in administration. Unfortunately, the group has metamorphosed to deadly cults with a lot of factions and always at log ahead with each other. The trend has resulted to violent clashes within and outside the university environment leading to maiming, destruction of lives and properties among others. This unfortunate development has heightened the security challenges in the country.

The review also looked at the Deprivation Theory of Gurr (1990) as the anchor for the study. The theory believes that a group acts when they feel they are

deprived of their rights by their parents, institutions or the society in general. Their discontentment is shown through violent reactions leading to youth restiveness. Finally, the paper reviewed some research works on cult related activities like studies on cult in our contemporary society, cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions and personality dimensions to cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The researchers traced the origin, nature, causes and effects in the areas of study. No research work has been done in the geographical entity called Ebonyi State University in Nigeria in relation to cultism and its influence on the academic performance of students in the institution; hence the need for this study in order to fill this gap.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Design/ Area of the Study: A survey research design was used for the study as it sought the opinions of students on the negative influence of cult activities on their educational development in universities in Nigeria. Specifically, the area of the study is Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki-Nigeria. The choice of the university is based on recorded incidences of cult activities that have affected the stability of the institutional academic activities.

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique: The population used for the study was one thousand and thirteen (1,013) final year students of 2014/2015 academic session from the Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The reason for selecting the Faculty was that it was located in a community housing the hostels for most students in the university and cult activities always start from there and spread to the other campuses of the university. Simple Random Sampling Technique and Purposive Sampling were used to select five departments out of seven departments of the Faculty. With the use of random numbers, two hundred and sixty (260) final year students were selected for the study.

Instrumentation: A structured questionnaire with 12 items was the instrument for data collection that had three clusters measuring the research variables. The instrument was properly validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki to determine its adequacy for the study. Again, its reliability was established using test retest method. Twenty copies of the instrument were administered to third year students of the faculty in the university. Two weeks after, the instrument was re-administered to the same set of

students and the result obtained was subjected to correlation test using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Procedure and it yielded a coefficient of 0.71, which was accepted as a reliable index.

Data Collection and Analysis: With the help of course representatives of the involved departments, 260 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents; 200 copies were properly filled that was used for the study. Frequency counts, mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions.

Ethical Considerations: The study on cultism and its negative influence on university students is a sensitive issue. As such, due considerations on mode of research was considered through private chats and interviews with concerned administrators, lecturers and students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria. Participants at all levels in the university were assured of their confidentiality and that the information supplied is only for the research work. Research ethics were duly followed as it is in the university research guidelines. Students voluntarily participated in one way or the other.

RESULTS

Research questions 1: How has cult activities negatively influenced students’ disciplinary behaviours in EBSU?

Table 1 presents the views of the students on the negative influence of cult activities on their disciplinary behaviours from items 1-4. Item 1 on erratic behaviour was not accepted by the students with a mean score of 2.20; items 2-4 on breaking of schools laws, lack of proper

concentration and abnormal activities respectively scored above the determinant mean of 2.50 and with a grand mean of 2.82, the students affirm that cult activities affect their disciplinary behaviours in school.

Research Question 2: How has cultism in EBSU negatively influenced students’ punctuality and regularity to school activities?

Table 2 are the responses of the students on the negative influence of cultism on their attendance to school activities. Items 5-8 recorded favourable means above the criterion mean of 2.50 based on lateness to lectures; truancy; non-chalant attitude towards school activities and missing out contact period with lecturers for further guidance respectively. The grand mean of 2.76 confirms that the enlisted factors are as a result of cultism in EBSU?

Research Question 3: In what ways has cultism in EBSU negatively influenced students’ academic activities and performance?

Finally, table 3 is the analysis of research question 3, on the negative impacts of cultism on students’ academic activities and performances. Interestingly, all the items from 9 to 12 measured above the determinant mean of 2.50, affirming that the above are the negative influences of cult activities on students’ academic activities and performance. With a grand mean of 3.21, the students affirm that cultism in EBSU impacts negatively on their proper study habits, makes them not to prepare well for examinations and leads to examination malpractice in order to cover up and subsequent high level of failures and carryover of courses.

Table 1: Mean responses on how cult activities negatively influence students’ disciplinary behaviours. n = 200

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{x}	SD	DEC
	Impact of cultism on students’ discipline; students:			
1	Behave erratically because of their suspicious environment	2.20	0.80	Disagree
2	Easily break school laws with flimsy excuses of fear of cult activities.	3.20	0.62	Agree
3	Lack proper concentration for academic work.	2.80	0.98	Agree
4	Engage in all forms of un-becoming activities to shield themselves from cult activities	3.10	0.72	Agree
	Grand mean	2.82		

Table 2: Negative influence of cultism on students’ attendance to activities in EBSU N=200

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{x}	SD	DEC
	Influence of cultism on students’ programme attendance; students:			
5	Are late to lectures as a result of fear of cult clashes	2.90	0.76	Agree
6	Play high truancy with flimsy excuses of fear of cult attacks.	4.00	0.80	Agree
7	Develop nonchalant attitude to school activities because of uncertainty due to cult activities	2.50	0.74	Agree
8	Miss their contact periods with their lecturers because of fear of cult activities.	2.65	0.89	Agree
	Grand mean	2.76		

Table 3: Influence of cultism on students' academic activities and performance

S/N	Negative influence of cultism on students' academic activities and performance	\bar{x}	SD	DEC
9	No proper study habits as a result of cult activities disturbances.	3.20	0.90	Agree
10	Lack of proper preparation for continuous assessment and examinations.	3.30	0.80	Agree
11	Engagement in examination malpractice to cover up lapses.	3.10	0.89	Agree
12	High level of failure in examinations and carryover of courses.	3.25	0.60	Agree
	Grand mean	3.21		

Summary of the Findings: The findings of the study show that:

- Cultism in Ebonyi State University Abakaliki negatively impacts on students' discipline which include odd behaviour, lack of concentration and fear of uncertainty within the walls of the university.
- As a result of cult activities, students' punctuality and regularity to school activities are compromised like: lateness to lectures, non challant attitude to school activities among others.
- Cult activities have made students not to develop proper study habits; lack of proper preparation for examinations; engagement in examination malpractice to cover up and high rate of failures and carryover of courses.

DISCUSSION

The present study is examining the negative influences of cultism on the academic activities of students in Nigerian universities with a focuses on Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The areas of influence are on their discipline, punctuality and regularity to school programmes, their: academic activities and performance. Table one shows the responses of the students on how cult activities impacts on their discipline negatively. They agreed in items 2-4 and in item 1 of Table 1 on erratic behaviour, the students disagreed to it and that simply means that the students believe that they can coordinate their behavioural tendencies not minding the cult activities. This findings agree with the view of Igba [3] who stated that at the heart of cult activities are indiscipline, intolerance and intimidation and all forms of indiscipline: Mgbekem [7] affirmed that students' misbehaviour a times can be traced from their home upbringing and will now be heightened by cultism in their campuses. Some of the students are lured into joining the cult groups to avoid further intimidation. Again, Walter [12]. lamented that cultism is an ill wind in the family, institutions and the society at large. Ogunbandamere [10] reiterated that cult activities in our institutions is a serious wild fire engulfing the Nigerian youths, leading to their

lack of concentration in their studies, breaking of societal laws and abnormal behaviours.

Research Question 2 was answered in Table 2 from items 5-8 on the influence of cultism on students' punctuality and regularity to school programmes. All the items measured above the determinant mean of 2.50 on areas of lateness to lectures, playing of truancy; non challant attitudes to school programmes and missing contact periods with their lecturers. A grand mean of 2.76 confirms the negative influence of cultism on students' punctuality and regularity to school programmes. Conforming these findings, Igodo [5] and Hornby [6] posit that cult activities affect the peace on the campus, so the tendency is for staff and students to avoid coming out in order to save their heads. The authors pointed out that the activities lead to the disruption of the school calendar. The trends affect the students' punctuality and regularity to school programmes. According to Akpabio [1] frequent outbreak of cult disturbances generate feelings of fear and social insecurity among students and lecturers. As a result, there is irregular attendance to programmes and students miss their contact time for lectures and supervisions among others. This results to student's non challant attitudes and truancy that affect their character and learning.

Finally, research question 3 items are presented in Table 3 (Items 9-12) based on the influence of cultism on students' academic programmes and performance. Again, all the items, recorded a mean above the determinant mean of 2.50 based on no proper study habits; lack of preparation for assessments; engagement in examination malpractice and high level of failures and carryover of courses. With a grand mean of 3.21, EBSU students concurr that cult activities affect their academic activities and performance. The findings in Table 3 in line with the observation of Hornby [6] when he stated that cultism leads to instability and affects students' concentration and progressive works in schools. Ogonbameru [15] emphasized that the insecure nature of the campus during cult activities makes students to stay off from their school programmes that now affects their performance. Igodo [4] explained that these trends lead

to high failure rates, abnormal behaviour of students' malpractice and that most students end up spending more than the required number of years for graduation. Academic activities are suspended during cult activities and lives and properties are destroyed. This has led to fire brigade approach to cover up course contents in EBSU. Cultism have disrupted proper character building and excellent learning in Nigerian universities and serious attention is needed to curb this menace in order to sanitize university education in Nigeria to enhance education for sustainable development.

Educational Implications of the Study: Based on the findings of the study the following implications are drawn:

- Cultism in Nigerian universities have disrupted the peace of the institution leading to students exhibition of in-disciplinary acts like breaking of school laws, non-concentration in their studies and exhibition of unruly behaviours and activities in the campuses.
- The study findings point out that due to cultism in EBSU campuses, students play truancy, are late to school activities, exhibit non challant attitude to study attendances and miss out contact hours with their lecturers.
- Finally, the study findings in Table 3 implies that due to cultism, there is no proper study habits by students; they do not have enough time to prepare for their various assessments; indulge in examination malpractice and records high number of failures and drop out from school. These implications need urgent attention of the individuals and government of Nigeria at various levels if we are to reposition university education for sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the negative influence of cultism on the academic activities of students in Nigerian universities with special references to Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The study findings revealed that cult activities in EBSU have affected academic programmes in the campuses. Students' discipline is lowered and this leads to the exhibition of questionable characters. Again, the findings show that students are late to school activities and play truancy in self-defence of cult actions. Finally, the study findings revealed that academic activities and performances of students are affected as a result of cult activities. This has affected their proper study habits and preparation of school assessments. As a result, they have indulged in examination malpractices

to cover up the lapses and this has landed some of them into terrible situations like: out right failures in examinations; carryover of courses and outright suspension or expulsion from the University. Concerned individuals and governments need to brace up in order to curb this menace in higher education system of Nigeria.

Recommendations: Based on the findings of the study and the implications drawn, the following recommendations are made to curb cultism in Nigerian Universities as a whole and EBSU in particular.

- Government through enlightenment campaign should educate members of the society and students at all levels of education in Nigeria on the consequences and evil nature of cult activities.
- War Against Indiscipline (W.A.I) should be reintroduced into Nigerian institutions to reduce all forms of indiscipline and anyone caught in any of the acts should be made to face the wrath of the law.
- Ebonyi State University authority should map out standard ways of scrutinizing and admitting students into the school system. This will make it easy to know the students down to the grass roots and fish out anyone involved in suspicious activities on time.
- Again, EBSU authorities should mount serious security watch in the campuses between 8 am and 4 pm. to ensure peace during work and study activities in the institution.
- Finally, religious leaders in the country should help the university authorities to preach character building and spiritual sanity in students in order to grow and excel in their all-round development. This can effectively be done by their coming to the universities from time to time to counsel and pray for the students' wellbeing.

Suggestions for Further Studies: Due to the limited scope of this study and its importance to societal peace, further research should be carried out in the following areas:

- Parental background of students and their inclination to cult activities in Nigeria.
- Factors enhancing students' interest in cult activities in Nigeria.
- Evaluation of causes and sustenance of cultism in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

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