



Determinants and Consequences of Cultism amongst the Undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

Doris Chidera Ernest¹ and Obinna Chukwudalu Okeke¹

¹Department of Sociology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

Corresponding Author's Email: ooe.okeke@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

This study investigated determinants and consequences of cultism amongst students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study objectives looked at prevalence, determinants, consequences, and ways to eradicate cultism among students. Four theories were examined namely differential association theory, opportunist theory, strain theory and social control theory. The study adopted two theories as the theoretical framework namely differential association theory and the opportunist theory. Mixed methods research design was used. The target population was 24,706 regular students aged 16 years and above schooling in NAU Awka. The study sampled 202 respondents. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used. The quantitative data collected were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentages and frequency counts while the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic method of data analysis. Two hypotheses were tested using Chi-square (X^2) test statistic. Findings indicated that there is moderate prevalence of cultism in NAU Awka. Data analysed showed that major determinants of cultism include peer pressure, revenge, poor parenting, drug abuse and poverty. The study confirmed that students who engage in cultism are likely to experience poor academic performance, loss of lives and valuables, disruption of academic activities, and closure of small-scale businesses within the school premises. Based on these findings, it was recommended amongst others that the management of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka should create adequate awareness on the dangers of cultism on the lives of undergraduates. Also, government and non-governmental agencies should step up their campaigns against cultism because of its destructive tendencies in our universities and the general society.

Keywords: armed robbery, crime, cultism, undergraduates, and youths.

Introduction

Cultism can be referred to as any small group whose beliefs are typically secret, esoteric, and individualistic. Globally, cultism is a common social phenomenon, whose context and perception vary across regions of the world. In Europe for example, the laws on religion,

freedom of conscience and the right of association are applicable to cult groups and citizens are expected to comply. The situation is different in developing countries (Nche, 2019; Boga, 2020; Crick, Nelson, Morale & Casas, 2021). The secret cult phenomenon is not new in Africa.

In developing countries such as Sub-Saharan Africa, cult activities have become a thing of sorrow to so many families (Barnes, 2019). In countries like South Africa, Mali, Sudan and Uganda many residents no longer sleep at night while others sleep with only one eye closed because of the activities of cult groups. Many youths have been sent to their early graves because of cultism. It is instructive to note that the inception and origin of cultism was not introduced to harm anybody; it started as a noble idea, to protect and maintain peace. But today, cultism has become a thing of concern often associated with bloodshed and crimes in Nigerian campuses (Agbiboa, Adiboye & Duru, 2020). There are good reasons to believe that there is a link between Pyrates confraternity and cultism in Nigerian universities.

In Nigeria, the origin of cultism has been traced to the Pyrates' confraternity formed by Nigerian Nobel Laureate Professor Wole Soyinka at the University of Ibadan college campus (Okpechi, 2020). The confraternities that existed on college campuses in the 1950s served as unifying front to advocate for students' needs and concerns as well as espousing African pride and solidarity. The establishment of more universities led to the proliferation of confraternities and the eventual struggle for supremacy (Okpechi, 2020). Owonikoko (2021) identified these cult groups to include: Pyrate Confraternity, Buccaneers, Black Axe, Vikings, Aro Mates, Supreme Eiyeye, Black Eye, Black Beret, Black Bra, Daughters of Jezebel among others. Cult groups are criminal gangs in Nigeria that are proscribed by law and often engage in criminal activities. The activities of cult groups are serious problems confronting many university communities in Nigeria because of their constant struggle for supremacy. Agbiboa, Adiboye and Duru (2020) observed that the battle for power that ensued among the various confraternities was fuelled in part by external political influences, money and availability of small arms among various cult groups in the universities.

Nwakoby (2020) opined that this constant struggle for supremacy and the attendant violence that later characterized these confraternities has drawn the attention of university

administrators and the police. Onyiaorah (2021) observed that cult groups could engage in clashes, reprisal attacks and criminal activities such as harassment, rape, burglary, robbery, vandalism, etc in and around university campuses. The activities of cult groups on campuses sometimes disrupt school academic calendar and create an environment that is not conducive to learning. This made the federal government to promulgate Decree 47 of 1989, banning all cult activities on campus. As a result, the expulsion of students suspected of cult involvement into the society marked a new dimension in cult related activities, where students from poor income households often succumb to pressure to join cultism. Thus, school administrators in their efforts to curtail the activities of cult groups resulted in the suspension and outright expulsion of those students suspected to be involved in cult clashes (Aborisade, 2020).

According to Ogwuda (2021), cultism has been a source of concern in Nigeria, but even though no society is free of crime and criminals, Ogidefa (2022) noted that the prevalence of cultism among undergraduates seems to have grown beyond police control. This is because the efforts of the police have not been effective in eradicating cultism on the campuses and in the larger society. With more numbers of undergraduates willing to identify with one cult group or the other and the prevalence of cultism in Nigerian universities, the question that borders every mind is whether police officers are performing their roles as expected of them? Some Nigerians are of the opinion that the Nigeria police are not doing enough to stop cultism in and around Nigerian universities.

Crime such as cultism is a phenomenon that is bedevilling various countries across the globe in varying degrees and affects educational attainment of students (Anijah, 2019). Any nation striving towards development must reduce the frequency of crime to the barest minimum (Anijah, 2019). In recent years in Nigeria, there has been an upsurge in the frequency of youth involvement in cultism. This has led to palpable fear among the populace as security of lives and properties can no longer be guaranteed (Obiekwe, 2019). Cultism has impacted negatively on the economic, social, and political life of Nigerians. The youth population of the country represents the driving force for development. However, for the youths to become useful resources, they must be gainfully employed. The youths are also the most volatile when their energies are misdirected or channelled into wrong

endeavours such as cultism. Available data showed that cultism is very widespread in Nigeria and contributes to various trends and patterns of crimes in our universities.

Onyiaorah (2021) noted that there is high prevalence of cultism among Nigerian students and this situation forces many of them to engage in other enabling crimes such as armed robbery and kidnapping to survive in school. Uzochukwu (2022) argued that hopelessness significantly influences students' involvement in cultism. Nearly all of those paraded by the law enforcement agencies before the mass media in Nigeria as members of cult groups are jobless youths. Similarly, most persons used in reprisal attacks by cult leaders are students from poor families. Awoke (2021) posited that the worst thing that could ever happen to any nation is to see educated citizens who are supposed to serve as engine room of growth and development involving in crimes such as kidnapping networks, cybercrimes, ritual killings and cultism. While many students are increasingly involved in violent crimes such as political thuggery, hired assassins, highway robbery and car snatching, it is instructive to observe that cultism, reprisal attacks and other fetish practices are worse in magnitude and scope than other crimes. This is because they have greater consequences on the socio-economic processes and perception of the country in the comity of nations.

Therefore, it is imperative to carry out an empirical study to identify the various factors that promote the existence and prevalence of cultism among students. This will help to generate data for proper public and policy response to the problem, and also to make adequate plans against its continuous existence on campuses. It is against these backdrops that this study seeks to undertake a comprehensive examination of the determinants and consequences of cultism amongst students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study.

1. What are the determinants of cultism among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
2. What are the consequences of cultism among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Literature Review

Determinants of Cultism among Undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University

Abiodun (2019) carried out a study to identify determinants of cultism among undergraduates of Lagos State University in Epe and Ikeja campuses. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey method. Questionnaires and In-Depth-Interview (IDI) Guides were used. Using a total of 330 respondents comprising male and female undergraduates aged between 18–30 years. Majority identified emotional instability and peer group pressure as main determinants of cultism. This implies that emotional instability can make students to seek relief from friends who might turn out to be cult members. Others indicated that university students who face emotional challenges like depression often find solace in cultism. This is because of the sense of belonging among cult members. Similarly, it was observed that through interaction with friends cultists get involved with drugs, gambling, alcohol, partying and sexual adventures thereby finding a sense of peace and happiness within the group and the environment.

In a mixed method research design aimed at identifying the causes of cultism in Zaria, Kaduna State, Muyiwa (2020) investigated the various factors responsible for high rate of cultism among university students. The study focused exclusively on students of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU). Exactly, 240 copies of questionnaire were distributed with a response rate. Results showed that most respondents indicated that loneliness pushed them to join cultism. Just like depression finds solace in adventure, lonely students find succour in company of friends. Friends have great influence over each other. Unfortunately, many students are victims of such circumstances where they find themselves innocently identifying with cult groups. The interview sessions confirmed that students join cult groups in search of protection. It was found that another factor influencing cultism is the quest for social identity. Some students want to belong to a class superior to their peers and as such are easily attracted to cult groups. In an attempt to become typical “big boys” or “big girls” on campus they join cult groups that offer them that psychological fulfilment.

Similarly, another study was conducted by Edozie (2020) to examine distinct factors responsible for the proliferation of cultism among students in Warri, Delta State. The study adopted cluster method and systematic sampling technique, using a sample size of 200

respondents aged 18 years and above, it was found that peer group pressure accounts for the major reason why youths engage in cultism, whereas other determinants include poverty, protection and wanting to belong. The study concluded that parents must shoulder the responsibility of catering for their children in order to stop them from seeking alternative financial sources to survive and stay afloat while in school.

In a related development, Adokwe (2020) conducted a study in Lafia, Nassarawa State to identify causes of cultism in Nigerian higher institutions. The study adopted a parallel cross-sectional survey method, using a sample size of 255 respondents; majority of the respondents indicated that major causes of cultism among college students include peer group influence, societal decadence, poor education standards, and militarization of the Nigerian polity. The study discovered that other determinants of cultism include power and authority to oppress others, to have a say in a gathering whether in school or outside the university community, fame, ignorance, and youthful exuberance.

Consequences of Cultism among Undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University

Aborisade (2020) conducted a study with the aim of investigating the consequences of cultism in Nigerian universities. The study used structured questionnaire and multistage sampling techniques to sample 385 undergraduates of Abia State University Uturu. The results show that one of the major consequences of undergraduates' involvement in cultism is poor academic performance and lack of interest in school activities. More findings indicated that undergraduates who engage in cultism are likely to manifest a number of negative attributes such as involvement in criminal activities, armed robbery, truancy, examination malpractice, poor reading culture, carryovers and school dropout.

Another study was conducted by Okpechi (2020) to find out the consequences of cultism among university students in Enugu metropolis. The researcher relied on semi-questionnaires and KII (Key Informant Interview) and purposive sampling method to gather data from a total of 600 respondents, out of which majority identified high rate of criminal activities as one of the consequences of cultism among university students in Enugu metropolis. The remaining respondents said that cultism leads to loss of human lives and generalized fear of insecurity in Enugu metropolis. The qualitative findings revealed that other consequences associated with cultism include loss of valuables, closure of

businesses in the area, disruption of academic activities on campuses and unsafe university environment. It can also lead to cult clashes, reprisal attacks and outburst of violence on the campus which often leaves many students wounded, maimed or killed as the case may be.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted two theories as the theoretical framework namely differential association theory and the opportunist theory. First, differential association theory was adopted because it identifies the causes of cultism among undergraduate students. It argues that revenge, peer pressure, youthful exuberances and frequent association with friends who are cultists are common grounds for cultism. Obviously, differential association provides better explanation for students' involvement in cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The theory added that poor parenting and lack of supervision of children increases the tendency and prevalence of cultism among undergraduates. It follows that with frequent association with criminal gangs aggrieved students tend to engage in cultism to register their grievances.

On the other hand, the opportunist theory was chosen as the theoretical framework because it holds the view that when certain conditions are created in society people are predisposed to behave in very unpredictable ways. As such, in order to survive in the school environment students, make use of any opportunity that comes their way. This is understandable because cultism provides students with a chance to achieve their basic individual goals in a world full of unequal social and economic opportunities. Many students are drawn into cultism because of opportunities such as material gains, class, friendship, safety, and academic success. The above perspectives are insightful and made differential association and opportunist theories most relevant and suitable for the topic under study.

Study Hypotheses

1. Students who experience peer pressure are likely to engage in cultism more than those who do not experience peer pressure in Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

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2. Students who engage in cultism are more likely to record poor academic performance than their counterparts who do not engage in cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

Method

The study adopted a mixed methods research design. This involves the use of both the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection; it helps the researcher to generalize the findings to life situations, thereby increasing the external validity of the study.

This study was carried out in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, located at Awka South LGA of Anambra State, Southeastern Nigeria.

The study was limited in scope to investigating determinants and consequences of cultism among students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study participants were regular undergraduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Getting responses from both male and female students enabled the researcher to achieve gender equity and a balanced view of the study findings.

A sample size of 202 respondents was adopted for the quantitative component of this study. Taro Yamane's statistical formula (1967:581) was used to determine the sample size.

The formula was given thus, $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Where:

n = sample size, N = population of the study, 1 = constant, e = level of precision

Thus, using BODMAS as a guide;

$$n = \frac{24,706 \times 0.0049}{1 + 121.0594}$$

$$n = \frac{24,706}{1 + 121.0594}$$

$$n = \frac{24,706}{122.0594}$$

$$n = 202.4$$

The multi-stage sampling method incorporated the cluster and simple random sampling technique which have high rates of reliability and saves energy. It also helped the researcher to achieve efficiency and representativeness. The first step was to identify the number of Faculties in NAU, Awka. Nnamdi Azikiwe University has a total of fourteen Faculties but only ten of these Faculties were located in Awka main campus namely; Faculty of Agriculture, Arts, Bio Sciences, Education, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Law, Management Sciences, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences. Hence, these Faculties were clustered into III namely: (Cluster I comprising Faculty of Agriculture, Law and Bio Sciences), (Cluster II comprised Faculty of Engineering, Physical Sciences and Management Sciences) while (Cluster III consisted of Faculty of Arts, Environmental Sciences, Social Sciences and Education). With the use of simple random sampling technique, the third cluster was randomly picked, and it comprised four Faculties located in Awka main campus: Faculty of Arts, Environmental Sciences, Social Sciences and Education.

The next stage was to identify Departments in these four Faculties. Thereafter through the use of simple random sampling technique, one Department was selected from each of the four Faculties, namely, the Department of Music, Estate Management, Sociology/Anthropology and English Education respectively. The next stage was to identify the levels of study. Using simple random sampling technique 400 level, 300 level, 200 level and 100 level students were selected. Furthermore, the systematic sampling technique was employed to select students in the sampling frame i.e., a list containing names of all the 400 level, 300 level, 200 level and 100 level students to fill the questionnaires. The same procedure was repeated in all the four Departments (i.e. Music, Estate Management, Sociology/Anthropology and English Education) until 202 respondents were selected for this study. In other words, 202 copies of questionnaires were administered on 202 regular students aged 16 years and above. Regular students were chosen for this study because they were always in school, more familiar with the phenomenon under study and it quickened the completion of this study in a short time.

Using the non-probability sampling technique known as purposive method, 2 lecturers from the Department of Music and English Education and 2 regular students were

interviewed using in-depth interview guides. These participants were chosen because they were believed to be familiar with the subject of this investigation.

The researcher made use of quantitative and qualitative method of data collection, comprising the questionnaire schedule and In-Depth Interview (IDI) guide.

The researcher adopted face-to-face administration of the questionnaire. The researcher with the help of two research assistants who were trained for three consecutive days administered the questionnaires to the respondents; that was because self administration enabled the researcher to get first hand and accurate information from the respondents especially where clarifications were needed.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used to process the data that were generated through the questionnaire. Thematic method of data analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data from the In-Depth Interviews.

Data Analyses and Presentation

In this study, a total of two hundred and two (202) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents. Hence, only 200 returned copies of the questionnaires were used for data analysis in this chapter. The qualitative data obtained through the interview responses of selected students in the study area, were analysed and used to support the quantitative data.

Table 1 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	86	43.0
Female	114	57.0
Total	200	100.0
Age		
16 – 21	156	78.0
22 – 27	34	17.0
28 and above	10	5.0
Total	200	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	187	93.5
Married	10	5.0

Divorced	-	-
Widowed	1	0.5
Separated	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0
Religious Affiliation		
Christianity	196	98.0
African Traditional Religion	3	1.5
Islam	-	-
Agnostics/Atheist	1	0.5
Total	200	100.0
Faculty		
Arts	50	25.0
Environmental Sciences	45	22.5
Social Sciences	51	25.5
Education	54	27.0
Total	200	100.0
Department		
Music	50	25.0
Estate Management	45	22.5
Sociology/Anthropology	51	25.5
English Education	54	27.0
Total	200	100.0
Level of Study		
100 level	43	21.5
200 level	48	24.0
300 level	53	26.5
400 level	56	28.0
Total	200	100.0
Place of Residence		
School hostel	55	27.5
Off-campus (alone)	100	50.0
Off-campus (with parents)	45	22.5
Total	200	100.0
Current CGPA		
Below 1.5	10	5.0
1.5 – 2.5	44	22.0
2.5 – 3.5	96	48.0
3.5 – 4.5	29	14.5
4.5 and above	21	10.5
Total	200	100.0
Estimated Annual Family Income		
Less than ₦360,000	27	13.5
₦361,000 - ₦720,000	83	41.5
₦721,000 - ₦1,080,000	25	12.5

₦1,081,000 - ₦1,440,000	20	10.0
₦1,441,000 - ₦1,800,000	11	5.5
₦1,801,000 - ₦2,160,000	19	9.5
₦2,161,000 and above	15	7.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Data analysis in table 1 shows that 86 (43.0%) of the respondents are males, just as 114 (57.0%) of the respondents are females. This means that majority of the respondents that took part in this study are females. With regards to age of the respondents, table 2 indicates that 156 (78.0%) of the respondents are within the ages of 16–21 years while 10 (5.0%) of the respondents are within the ages of 28 years and above. This implies that majority of the respondents in this study are adolescents. Marital status of the respondents indicates that 187 (93.5%) of the respondents are single whereas only 1 (0.5%) of the respondents are widowed. This simply means that majority of the study respondents that are unmarried as at the time of conducting this study.

With regards to religious affiliation of the respondents, table 2 shows that 196 (98.0%) of the respondents are Christians while 2.0% are Islamic followers. This implies that majority of the students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka are Christians. In terms of faculty of the respondents, 54 (27.0%) of the respondents are from faculties of Education whereas 45 (22.5%) of the respondents are faculty of Environmental Sciences. In a related development, 54 (27.0%) of the respondents confirmed that they are from the department English Education while 45 (22.5%) of the respondents are students from the department of Estate Management. In the same vein, results show that more number 56 (28.0%) of the respondents are from 400 levels while 43 (21.5%) of the respondents are 100 level students.

More so, table 2 shows that 96 (48.0%) of the respondents have academic CGPA of 2.5–3.5 while only 10 (5.0%) of the respondents indicated that their CGPA is below 1.5. This implies that a good number of the respondents are average students. A look at the annual income status of the respondents' families revealed that 83 (41.5%) of the respondents indicated between N361,000–N720,000 while 15 (7.5%) of the respondents supposed that

their families fall within the income range of N2,161,000 and above every year. This implies that a significant majority of the respondents are from low income (poor) families.

Research Question 1: What are the determinants of cultism among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka? Questionnaire items 14, 15 and 16 were used to answer research question 1. Findings are presented in tables 6, 7 and 8 respectively.

Table 2: Respondents' views on whether they have ever experienced peer pressure as students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	188	94.0
No	12	6.0
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that 188 (94.0%) of the respondents have experienced peer pressure as students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka while 6.0% of the respondents have never experienced peer pressure as students of NAU, Awka. This implies that majority of the respondents confirmed that they are frequently being exposed to negative peer pressure to engage in juvenile delinquencies such as cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Table 3: Respondents' views on whether they have associated with cult members in the past

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes, I have in the past	125	62.5
No, I have never	58	29.0
I can't remember	17	8.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that 125 (62.5%) of the respondents have either joined or associated with cult members before, while 17 (8.5%) of the respondents said they cannot remember. This implies that majority of the respondents have identified with one cult group or the other prior to this study in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. One of the interviewees stated:

Yes, before now I was a member of Eiyee and have engaged in one or two criminal activities to survive but all that belongs to the past now. Again, I can tell you that more students than out of school youths now engage in criminal activities such as armed robbery, pick pocketing, kidnapping etc, and whenever they get arrested they are quick to blame it on the devil, friends and hardship (Male, Single, 22 years, 400 Level, Department of Music, NAU, Awka).

Table 4: Respondents' views on determinants of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Peer pressure	55	27.5
Revenge	20	10.0
Poor parenting	5	2.5
Drug abuse	17	8.5
Poverty	40	20.0
All of the above	63	31.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

With regards to the determinants of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, table 8 shows that 63 (31.5%) of the respondents indicated all of the above while 5 (2.5%) of the respondents identified poor parenting. This implies that all the various factors enumerated in table 4 can push students to engage in cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This aligns with the qualitative data. One of the interviews stated:

There is no doubt that pressure from friends can lure students into engaging in campus cultism. Family status is also another contributory factor. Therefore, it is important that youths and more importantly undergraduates begin to see themselves in a positive light and then work hard towards achieving success. Let me also add that campus cultism today is caused by deception, desire to revenge, peer pressure and improper socialization (Male, Single, 22 years, 400 Level, Department of Music, NAU, Awka).

Again, one of the interviewees posited:

The truth is that the economy is bad with many families fighting for survival. With the current economic reality in Nigeria, many families no longer eat three times in a day. This implies that hunger is biting hard in many homes as we speak. Though that is not enough reason to push students to join cultism but I think that it is one of the major reasons why there is high prevalence of cultism in Nigerian universities. Don't forget that cult members normally help and support one another (Female, Married, 24 years, 400 Level, Department of Music, NAU, Awka).

Another participant had this to say:

Drug use, broken home, divorce, poor socialization, and bad company are some of the factors that encourage students to identify with cult groups. Rising levels of illicit drug use among youths appear to have had a major impact on cultism and criminal activities. It may interest you to know that drug dependency amplifies income-generating crimes of both gender (i.e. male and female), but affects students the more because of its effect on their academic performance (Female, Married, 51 years, Lecturer, Department of English Education, NAU, Awka).

Another participant stated:

Yes, obviously I have experienced so much pressure from my friends to join them in their evil trade but I refused. I can tell you as a young man that youths face temptations and social pressures every time. It is even on record that guys who came from poor families are likely to engage in cultism more than those from rich families. People say that money is the root of all evils but I think lack of money is rather the root of student involvement in cultism (Male, Married, 49 years, Lecturer, Department of Music, NAU, Awka).

Research Question 2: What are the consequences of cultism among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka? Questionnaire items 17, 18 and 19 were formulated to answer research question 3. Findings are presented in tables 9, 10 and 11 respectively.

Table 5: Respondents' views on whether they are familiar with the consequences of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Yes	162	81.0
No	13	6.5
I don't know	25	12.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 shows that 162 (81.0%) of the respondents are familiar with the consequences of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. In a related development, 6.5% of the respondents are not familiar with the consequences of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This indicates that majority of the respondents are familiar with knowledgeable about the dangers of student's involvement in cultism.

Table 6: Respondents' views on consequences of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Loss of innocent and promising lives	50	25.0
Loss of valuables	37	18.5
Disruption of academic activities	74	37.0
Poor academic performance	26	13.0
Closure of small scale businesses in the affected area	13	6.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Table 6 shows that 74 (37.0%) of the respondents identified disruption of academic activities as one of the major consequences of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Also, 13 (6.5%) of the respondents said that cultism can lead to closure of small scale businesses in the affected area. The implication being that campus cultism has the potential

to disrupt academic activities in the university. However, the qualitative data disagreed with this finding. One of the interviewees stated:

Personally, I would say that the major consequences of cultism among students are poor academic performance, loss of moral values, loss of valuables and human lives. It may interest you to know that the practice of vengeance and violence which cultists promote through their actions negate the moral values of life. As a result, members who have good values from home upbringing tend to lose them because of the negative influence of cultism (Male, Married, 49 years, Lecturer, Department of Music, NAU, Awka).

Another participant stated:

Cultism is bad and does more harm than good to the individuals involved. It promotes negative values such as having no regard for the sanctity of human life, orderliness and peace. Most criminal activities common among youths are influenced by cultism. This point is easy to understand because of the constant abuse of drug among cultists. Under the influence of drug and alcohol, young people lose their morality and conscience, thereby committing all manner of atrocities or crimes including burglary, armed robbery, murder, arson etc (Female, Married, 51 years, Lecturer, Department of English Education, NAU, Awka).

Table 7: Respondents' views on entities that will suffer the most because of cultism

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Business owners	25	12.5
Undergraduates	78	39.0
Parents	36	18.0
School calendar	41	20.5
Banks located inside school	20	10.0
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

In terms of the people, organizations or entities that will suffer because of campus cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 78 (39.0%) of the respondents stated that

undergraduates will suffer severely. Similarly, 20 (10.0%) indicated that banks located inside school will be affected too. This implies that majority of the respondents maintained that undergraduates would suffer the most because academic activities will be shutdown and this can overtime, affect the quality of graduates being produced in Nigerian schools.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Students who experience peer pressure are likely to engage in cultism more than those who do not experience peer pressure in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Hypothesis one was tested through the cross-tabulation of relevant study variables (i.e., questionnaire items 14 and 15). Data in table 3 formed the basis for testing hypothesis 1.

Table 8: Relationship between peer pressure and association with cult members in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

		<i>Have you ever associated or rapport with cult members before?</i>			Total
		Yes, I have in the past	No, I have never	I can't remember	
Have you ever experienced peer pressure as a student of Nnamdi Azikiwe University?	Yes	118	55	15	188
	No	7	3	2	12
	Total	125	58	17	200

$$x^2 = 18.670, df = 2, p = .000$$

Table 8 shows that a statistical relationship ($x^2 = 18.670$; $df = 2$; $N = 200$; $p = .000$) was found between peer pressure and engagement in cultism in Nigerian universities at $P = .000$. As a result, the alternative hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected. The conclusion is that students who experience peer pressure are likely to engage in cultism more than those who do not experience peer pressure in Nnamdi Azikiwe University,

Awka. In other words, peer pressure influences association or rapport with cult members in NAU.

Hypothesis Two: Students who engage in cultism are more likely to record poor academic performance than their counterparts who do not engage in cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University. Hypothesis two was tested through the cross-tabulation of relevant study variables (i.e., questionnaire items 9 and 15). Data in table 16 formed the basis for testing hypothesis 2.

Table 9: Relationship between association with cult members and academic performance in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

		<i>Which of these describes your current CGPA?</i>					Total
		Below 1.5	1.5 – 2.5	2.5 – 3.5	3.5 – 4.5	4.5 and above	
Have you ever associated or rapport with cult members before?	Yes, I have in the past	7	34	51	19	14	125
	No, I have never	2	5	39	7	5	58
	I can't remember	1	5	6	3	2	17
	Total	10	44	96	29	21	200

$$\chi^2 = 21.335, df = 8, p = .000$$

Table 9 shows that a statistical relationship ($\chi^2 = 21.335$; $df = 8$; $N = 200$; $P = .000$) was found between cultism and poor academic performance among students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka at $p = .000$. As a result, the alternate hypothesis is accepted while the null hypothesis is rejected. The conclusion is that students who engage in cultism are more likely to perform poorly in academics than their counterparts who do not engage in cultism. It follows therefore that undergraduates who engage in cultism are likely to record low CGPA more than their counterparts who do not in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Discussion of Findings

The findings showed that major determinants of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka include peer pressure, revenge, poor parenting, drug abuse and poverty. This aligns with another study carried out by Abiodun (2019) to identify determinants of cultism among undergraduates of Lagos State University in Epe and Ikeja campuses. The study reported that major determinants of cultism include emotional instability, peer group pressure, drug use and abuse, revenge, and poor parenting.

The second research question revealed that these consequences include loss of innocent and promising lives, loss of valuables, disruption of academic activities, poor academic performance, and closure of small-scale businesses in NAU, Awka. It was equally found that innocent students are more likely to suffer the most during cult wars and reprisal attacks. This aligns with previous study by Aborisade (2020) which found that consequences of students' involvement in cultism are low CGPA, disruption of school activities, loss of lives, valuables and shutdown of business activities.

Two hypotheses were tested in this study. The first hypothesis shows that students who experience peer pressure are likely to engage in cultism more than those who are not exposed to peer pressure in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The second hypothesis confirms that there is a significant relationship between involvement in cultism and likelihood of performing poorly in academics. Findings of this study also agreed with the theoretical framework for this study (i.e. differential association theory by Sutherland) which argues that revenge, peer pressure, ignorance, poor parenting, drug abuse, poverty amongst others push many undergraduates to engage in campus cultism. Findings further showed that there is moderate prevalence of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Also, it was found that the major determinants of cultism in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka include peer pressure, revenge, poor parenting, drug abuse and poverty. Consequences of cultism among students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University include loss of innocent and promising lives, loss of valuables, disruption of academic activities, poor academic performance, and closure of small-scale businesses in the affected area.

Conclusion

Cultism is an anti-social behaviour that affects the youths and the society, but greater effect is on the students who are involved in these acts. One pathetic consequence of cultism is the premature loss of innocent lives. The government through its law enforcement agencies are on a constant fight against cultism and other criminal activities such as armed robbery, fraud, murder etc carried out by cult members. The outcome of such operations often results in exchange of fire, arrest, detention, imprisonment and death. Many youths who indulge in cultism have lost their lives either in the course of a shootout confrontation or through inter-cult clashes. In many tertiary institutions in Nigeria, final year students are the target during their degree examinations. These attacks do not only create loss of potential human resources to society but represent a huge loss of economic resources on the parents and sponsors. This present research agrees that in order to put an end to the activities of cult groups in Nigerian universities, the government, parents, police, schools and communities must join hands and come up with workable strategies towards putting an end to the high prevalence of cultism in the society. Some of these workable strategies are presented in the next subsection.

Recommendations

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

1. The management of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka should create adequate awareness on the dangers of cultism on the lives of undergraduates.
2. Parents should desist from misleading their children by associating with secret cult members in the neighbourhood.
3. Government and non-governmental agencies should step up their campaigns against cultism and its destructive tendencies in the general society.
4. University management should expel undergraduates identified and proven to be cult members because of their potential bad influence on other students in NAU, Awka.

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