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FEMALE CULTISM AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF ANAMBRA STATE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES: IMPICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated perceived causes and consequences of female cultism among undergraduates of public Universities in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 23,621 comprising 12639 males and 10982 females. The sample comprised of 600 undergraduate students. The sample was composed using the multistage sampling method. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of this study revealed some key causes of female cultism among undergraduate public universities in Anambra State such as fighting for perceived injustice in the institution, to acquire power to oppress their enemies and also protect themselves and their friends from being intimidated among others. The findings of the study revealed also that female students who belong to cult group cheat in examinations openly, threaten lecturers, leads to students ending up as school dropouts, increases prostitution and lesbianism, brings about teenage pregnancy, stealing, alcohol intake and untimely death among others. It was concluded that the problem of female cultism in universities in Anambra State persist due to social and economic reasons which breeds crimes and also hamper academic achievement of female universities in Anambra State. The female cultists are potential mothers. Therefore, the activities of cultists and role of mothers are not the same. Females are encouraged to desist from joining cultism in order to save their lives and that of the members of the society. It was recommended among others that government should establish tribunal to try cultist and if found guilty should be sentenced accordingly. This will be the detriment to those who have joined or to those who have the intention of joining the secret cults.

Keywords: Causes, Consequences, Female Cultism

Introduction

Education is a major tool for transforming peoples' lives in the society. Perhaps, this was basically why Offor and Offiah (2021) posited that education is a potent force that brings about change in the attitude, thought, behaviour, skills, values and interest of individuals. It is these changes in cognitive, psychomotor and affective orientation that are required for overall development. Education helps one to become a useful member of the society and participate in the ongoing changes and developments. Education is therefore vital for the economic prosperity of a nation. Education at the tertiary level are mainly youths and these youths always emulate their mates in school in whatever form of behaviour they exhibit such as taking drugs, alcoholism, truancy, stealing, disobedience, laziness, disregarding school rules and regulations and some even join dangerous gangs in form of secret cult. Consequently, the issue of cultism in tertiary institutions have become a matter of concern among government, policy makers and stakeholders in Nigeria especially female cultism

However, in the late 1980s, all-female confraternities began to be formed. Abiona (2016) and Adoga (2017) listed some of the female cult groups to include Black Berets, Woman Brassier, Daughters of Jezebel, Pink Lady, The Amazons, White Angels, Lady of Rose, Sisterhood of Darkness, Golden Daughters, The Ten Wonderful Girls, White Ladies, The Royal Queens, Daughters of the Night, Viqueens, Cosmic Queens, Daughters of Doom, The Orange Girls, The Damsels, and so on. Accordingly, the most famous of them are: White Angels, 1990, Sisterhood of Darkness, 1993, Daughters of medusa, 1994, dirty virgins, 1991, Black queen, 1989 (Udobasi, 2017). All these groups and more exist in our society today to carry out various activities which are bent on perpetuating evil in the society. These groups have various modus operandi. As they are different, so are their modes of operation. According to Adoga (2017), membership of cults in schools cut across religion, sex, tribe and socio-economic status of the students.

Female cultism is a cankerworm that hinders academic progress in tertiary institutions. Ordinarily, the term cult also known as confraternity as stated by Wilson (2014) refers to a system of religious worships especially one that is expressed in rituals. Samuelson (2014) gave the sociological definition of cultism as a small group or religious activities whose beliefs are typically secret, esoteric and individualistic. Also female cultism is defined as any form of female organization whose activities are exclusively kept away from the knowledge of male but such activities are carried out at odd hours of the day and they often clash with the accepted norms and values of everyday life. Members take a strong vow with their blood to keep secret of all the activities undertaken and to be law abiding. Members billed for initiation pass through a lot of physical and mental torture. They are usually blindfolded and queried. The initiation ground is usually a cemetery or a thick swamp or the outskirts of the campus. In absolute blindness, the initiate could be compelled to jump from a tall tree down the ground. At the peak of the task, selected group of female cultists, normally the immediate seniors, would beat the initiates mercilessly, stab them, make

incisions, dab cigarette stubs on their bodies. The initiation process may differ from cult to cult but the goal is similar. The initiation starts with mental and physical torture which are said to surpass that of the military and the prisoners of war. This explains why some initiates sometimes die in the process of initiation.

The most popular female cultism is, crueler in its methods. Violence was manifested from the first steps of newcomers in female cultism. In order to pass the initiation, it was necessary to be tortured. Odili (2015) posited that cultists were beaten with sticks. It was a cruel test of endurance. Those who passed tests had to drink alcohol mixed with blood. This oath was evidence of adherence to the cult. As a result, many people were maimed and died seeking illusory fanatical goals. However, there is a real terror of female cultism in Nigerian universities in recent time, as each cult sought to prove its supremacy and significance. Not infrequent were the incidents of murders due to revenge, intimidation of the lecturers and students. The basic activities undertaken by the female cult group as significantly different from that of the male are: sexual atrocities with same sex, agent of set-up, prostitution syndicate, alcoholism/smoking/drug abuse and harassment of non-members. This implies the activities of female cults appears to be more dangerous than their male counterparts

In recent times, female cult activities have continued to thrive in Nigerian universities due to the enormous impression of the seeming invisibility of cult and their members. Chichebe (2019) reported that in some public universities, female cultists from different fraternities violently clash even in broad day light and manta themselves down with dangerous weapons such as guns and daggers, nocturnal initiation ceremonies in which initiates are animalized and some of them die in the process of making blood covenants and performing other occult rituals. Cult wars, especially among male cultists, are usually instigated by female cultists. This is supported by Okengwu (2002), who opined that most of the cult wars on our campuses are caused by the girls and many of these girls are cult members. The cult wars put the society in the state of insecurity. Sometimes female cultist clash with each other and members of the society may find it difficult to carry out their normal businesses with gunshots and killings here and there. The recent cult clashes in Awka and its environs have put the members of the society in the state of constant fear; those residing in Awka were forced to restrict their movements or might even relocate to a more peaceful zone. In the society today, there have been cases of ritual killings which involved missing parts of the body of the victim. Adoga (2017) agreed that female cult groups take part in blood and ritual murder and some set up their fellow girls for ritual and the sale of human parts; also, they abduct innocent children for spiritual protection and power. Sometimes female cultists are used by politicians to achieve their selfish desire during election periods. Politicians use female cultists to monitor what is going on in polling units and sometimes they hijack ballot boxes when it is unfavourable to the politicians who sent them through gun shots. Most of the female cultists fail to attend classes and also fail to carry out their

academic activities because of their engagements with their cult activities. Most of them may confront lecturers to award them marks which they do no merit. Also, most of them do not graduate from the university because of more engagements in cult activities.

Despite the fact that all manners of evil have become the prevalent pattern of female cultism, some female students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria still find it fashionable to engage in it for different reasons. Consequently, some reasons why some female students join cultism includes: search for social responsibility, search for satisfaction of one's aspirations and needs, search for security and search for social identity. Similarly, Okeke (2019) reported that some female undergraduates in Nigeria join cult groups in order to perform certain services for the members. For instance, some female students may engage in female cultism in order to fight for perceived injustice in their schools against their members. Some university students also engage in female cultism in order to satisfy their desire, aspirations and needs. Example of this is that a female student may belong to a cult group which part of her objective is to ensure the success of her members in academic examinations. Many university students especially the female ones join secret cult in order to protect themselves while some female students join to secure their boyfriends and there are also female students who join cult group for popularity. They want to make name and to be regarded as powerful people. To those students, belonging to a cult group is a way of achieving prestige and greatness. They believe that they could influence decisions in school (Akubuilo, 2014). There are others who join because they want to create avenues to exhibit and diffuse frustrations from the family, schools and society. There are female students who join cult group for reason of financial assistance why others join just to hide their weaknesses (inferiority complex). Some are forced to join while others feel that the objectives of the cults are laudable and worthwhile. Other reasons while female students engage in female cultism might be influenced by parental and home background, some parents who are members of secret cults do not see anything wrong in their children's involvement in cultism either male or female.

Nonetheless, the prevalence of female cultism in universities in Nigeria could be a cankerworm militating against the success of the goals of university education in Nigeria. Ossai (2019) postulated that university education system in Nigeria is under siege, bombardment and almost ruined by secret cult particularly in public universities. Female cultists are more wrecked than male cultist. When they take a lead of any of the activities, so many deaths would be recorded. In many public universities in Nigeria, majority of the students, lecturers and their families live in perpetual fear. Female cultism has destroyed so many lives, wasted so many families, and aborted so many futures and make Nigerian tertiary institutions unstable for academic activities. Cult activities involve blood shedding and waste of human lives; it has reached an alarming proportion in many universities in Nigeria (Adeleye, 2019). Sometimes, they cheat in examinations openly and even

threaten lecturers. It also leads to students ending up as school dropouts, teenage pregnancy, alcohol intake, drug abuse, stealing and all kinds of unwanted misdemeanor.

The issue of female cultism seems pathetic in public universities in Anambra State where it has become a common phenomenon to hear or witness incidence of female students' involvement in female cultism, and this could lead to some female students' ending up as school dropout and prostitutes and all kinds of unwanted misdemeanor. All these social problems are created by activities of female cultists in tertiary institutions in the Anambra State and beyond.

In Anambra state where we may have tertiary institutions, it has become a common phenomenon to read, hear and witness incidences of female students' involvement in reprisal attacks against other cults and this had led to death of students, intimidation of non-members, some end up as school dropouts, alcohol intake and drug abuse, and taking of cigarettes becomes business of the day and all kinds of unwanted misdemeanor. The situation has become worrisome because of the way it hampers the socio-economic development and progress of university leavers and even the State in general. More so, if this problem is not addressed, graduates of the institution particularly those that indulged in cult activities will hardly fit into paid or self-employment because they have trained themselves not be law abiding. It will also make the students not be equipped with proper knowledge and relevant skills for economic and technological advancement. This means that the level of unemployment and poverty will continue to rise in the society at large. The family which is the bedrock or cornerstone of the society is affected badly. Marriage to such female cultists will breed divorce and separation which will affect the society.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What are the causes of female cultism among undergraduates of Anambra State Universities?
2. What are the consequences of female cultism among undergraduates of Anambra State Universities?

Research Method

The descriptive survey design was adopted in the study. The population of the study consisted of all 400 level undergraduates of 2019/2020 academic session in the fourteen faculties in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This level of students were chosen because of high death rate among final year female cultists in the university. The total is 23,621 comprising 12639 males and 10982 females. The sample of the study was 600 undergraduates. In composing the sample, Simple random sampling technique was used to select two universities which include Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and Paul's University, Awka. Two faculties were sampled in each of the universities using simple random sampling technique, in each of faculties, three departments were also sampled using simple random sampling. In each of the departments 100 students were sampled amounting to 600 undergraduates. A structured questionnaire developed by the

researcher was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: A and B. Part A of the questionnaire specified information on personal characteristics of the respondents while part B contained 36 items with regards to the research questions. The response option of the research questions in the questionnaire was Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The questionnaire was validated by three experts, two in the area of sociology of education and the other in measurement and evaluation, all in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, trial testing method was used on 50 undergraduates of Enugu State University of Science and Technology outside the study area. The reliability was calculated using Cronbach Alpha for each of the subsections. At the end of the analysis, the scores obtained were 0.81and 0.80 respectively. The results showed high reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers with the help of 14 research assistants, who were paired for each of the eight faculties. Administration of the questionnaire was done during the second semester of 2019/2020 academic session. All copies of the questionnaire distributed were collected back because of on the spot delivery method and collection technique applied. Mean rating was use to analysis the data. The four point response mode used, informed the use of mean 2.50 as the cut-off point for decision. The decision rule was that mean scores of items of 2.50 and above were regarded as positives while mean scores below 2.50 were regarded as negative.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What are the causes of female cultism among undergraduates?

Table 1: Mean rating of respondents on causes of female cultism among undergraduate students

S/N	Questionnaire items	$\bar{X}$	Remarks
1.	I engaged in female cultism to fight for perceived injustice in the institution.	2.56	Agreed
2.	I joined cultism in order to acquire power to oppress my enemies.	2.80	Agreed
3.	I joined secret cult in order to protect myself from being intimidated	2.50	Agreed
4.	1 joined to protect my friends	2.70	Agreed
5.	I joined female cultism for popularity.	2.56	Agreed
6.	I joined cultism to create avenues to diffuse frustrations from my family, schools and society.	2.60	Agreed
7.	I joined female cultism for financial assistance	2.82	Agreed
8.	I joined female cultism in order to hide my weaknesses	2.60	Agreed
9.	I joined female cultism because my friends forced me to do so	2.50	Agreed
10.	I joined female cultism because my parents belonged to the cult group.	2.80	Agreed
11.	I joined female cultism because I am a lesbian and will find beautiful girls amongst the group	2.79	Agreed
12.	I joined female cultism because of quest for materialism	2.51	Agreed

13.	I joined female cultism because of influence of mass media over my life	2.88	Agreed
14.	I joined female cultism because of peer group influence	2.97	Agreed
15.	I joined female cultism because I lacked morals	2.84	Agreed
16.	I joined female cultism because I came from a broken home	2.63	Agreed
	total	**40.46**	
	Cluster x	**2.53**	**Agreed**

In table 1, all the items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16) obtained mean score 2.50 and above indicating agreed. On the whole the mean of means was rated 2.53 it implies that all the above items in table 1 are causes of female cultism among undergraduates universities in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What are the consequences of female cultism among undergraduate students?

Table 2: Mean rating of respondents on consequences of female cultism among undergraduate students

S/N	Questionnaire	X	Remarks
17.	Female cultism aborts the future of undergraduates	2.86	Agreed
18.	Female cultism makes the institutions of learning unconducive.	3.01	Agreed
19.	Female cultism breeds torture, rape, kidnap, rob and maim among students within and around the school environment.	2.60	Agreed
20.	Female students who belong to cult group cheat in examinations openly	2.88	Agreed
21.	Female students who belong to cult group even threaten lecturers.	3.00	Agreed
22.	It also leads to students ending up as school dropouts	2.90	Agreed
23.	they become threats to their fellow students	2.79	Agreed
24.	they fall victims of exam malpractice	2.88	Agreed
25.	It is a gate way to prostitution and lesbianism	3.12	Agreed
26.	It brings about teenage pregnancy	2.94	Agreed
27.	it leads to stealing	2.87	Agreed
28.	It leads female students to substance and alcohol intake,	3.22	Agreed
29.	It leads to untimely death	2.95	Agreed
30.	It leads to untold hardship	2.89	Agreed
31.	it disrupts school academic programme	2.57	Agreed
32.	it brings about insecurity in the area	3.65	Agreed
33.	The family of the cultist is threatened especially when the cultist is at large	2.54	Agreed
34.	The cultists liberty is mortgaged	2.77	Agreed
	Total	**52.23**	
	cluster x	**2.90**	**Agreed**

In Table 2, items (17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 34) were rated agreed by the respondents. On the whole the grand mean score was rated 2.90, this implies that all the items in table 2 are consequences of female cultism among university undergraduates in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed some key causes of female cultism among undergraduate in Anambra State Universities such as fighting for perceived injustice in the institution, to acquire power to oppress their enemies and also protect themselves and their friends from being intimidated. This was why Obodo (2015) posited that many female students joined female cultism to protect themselves from threat in school. Findings further revealed that female students join cultism for popularity, to create avenues to diffuse frustrations from the family, school and society, for financial assistance, to hide their weaknesses and some of them joined secret cult because their friends forced them to do so. Similarly Nwankwo (2017) noted that frustration from the family, financial problems as well as inferiority complex causes female cultism among undergraduates in Anambra State universities. More so, some female students joined cultism because they were lesbians, quest for materialism, influence of mass media, peer group influence, lack of morals and broken home. To support this finding, Uwadileke (2018) stated that many female undergraduate who are from broken homes joined secret cult as a result of frustration particularly in the aspect of finance. Adoga (2017) argues that cultism in tertiary institutions is traceable to general frustration and the feeling of deprivation, hopelessness, injustice, and so on brought about by factors beyond the control of an individual such as instability in the system, Also, Nwachukwu, Agbor and Oboada (2013) attribute the causes of female cultism to inadequate moral upbringing on the side of the parents; the mass media which expose the young to all kinds of negative behaviours; motivation from peer group and inadequate learning facilities which make some students unable to cope with academics. Odudele (2014) also advanced some causes of cultism in higher institutions as follows: for the cult members to boost their ego and obtain power to oppress their fellow students and members of the campus community; students from broken homes who lack home training.

Secondly, female cultism has negative consequences among female undergraduates in Anambra State universities, female cultism aborts the future of female undergraduates, makes the institutions of learning unconducive, breeds torture, rape, kidnap, rob and maim among students within and around the school environment. In that regard, Okoye (2016) posited that female cultism affect the academic progress of undergraduate students because it hampers effective teaching and learning and also encourage examination malpractice.

The findings of the study revealed also that female students who belong to cult group cheat in examinations openly, threaten lecturers, leads to students ending up as school dropouts, increases prostitution and lesbianism, brings about teenage pregnancy, stealing, alcohol intake and untimely death. To this vein Wilson (2012), who stated that one of the basic consequences of female cultism is that it influences school dropout. Finally, it was discovered that female cultism leads to untold hardship, disrupts school academic programme, brings about insecurity in the area and the cultists liberty is mortgaged. This report is in agreement with Oyemwinmina and Aibieyi (2015) who

stated that the consequences of female cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions to include life of insecurity; threat to family; mortgage of liberty; disrupted academic programme; threat to cultist academics and threat of law enforcement agencies. It could be inferred from the above consequences that cultism can affect the individual involved in cult activities and the society at large.

Conclusion

The study explores causes and consequences of female cultism among undergraduates in universities in Anambra State. Female cultism is a social vice. It is clear that there is no moral justification for any female to join cult. It is a whirl wind which blows nobody good in the society. The consequences of female cultism outweigh whatever benefit they derive from joining those cult groups. A society that has been characterized by social vices, especially vices that disrupt economic and academic activities, cannot thrive. It was concluded that the problem of female cultism in universities in Anambra State persist due to social and economic reasons which breeds crimes and also hamper academic achievement of female universities in Anambra State. The female cultists are potential mothers. Therefore, the activities of cultists and role of mothers are divorced. Females are encouraged to desist from joining cultism in order to save their lives, families and that of the members of the society.

Implications for Societal Development

The study has a lot of implications on the female students, school management, society and government. The clash of power between female cults disrupts academic activities. This means teaching will not be very effective and learning will be deterred. Also, some of the female students die untimely because of involvement in secret cult activities. They do not live to graduate from school. Also, female students who are trained to be potential wives, mothers and role models have lost their sense of responsibilities completely which will affect societal growth and development. The family will run the risk of losing its functions. The family which is the bed rock of the society is at the verge of collapsing because female cultists who are mothers lack morals required of them for running responsible and peaceful home The society will lose its value system because female cult wars puts the society in the state of insecurity. Members of the society will find it difficult to carry out their normal businesses with gunshots and killings here and there. Without adequate security to help cushion the effect of female cultism, there will be insecurity of lives and properties and will degenerate to lawlessness which is a cankerworm to the society that deepen in the society.

Recommendations

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

1. Parents should help the society in socializing their children the right way, since the family is the basic unit of socialization. They should teach them the basic tenets of the society, the norms, values and culture of the society. Once these children are caught young, the problem is half solved.

2. Government should establish tribunal to try cultist and if found guilty should be

sentenced accordingly. This will be at the detriment to those who have joined or to those who have the intention of joining the secret cults.

3. Government should reduce the high cost of education in Nigeria so that everyone can afford it.

5. The university authorities should also help in shaping the lives of the students as the students are certified on the grounds of character and learning upon graduation. The university communities should give no room for any bad behavior from the students. They should develop strict rules against cultism and other deviant behaviours and follow them up. The university communities should also endeavour to have guidance counsellors who would always direct the students the right way.

6. Religious institutions should have strong youth forum in other to give youths opportunity to vent out their issues.

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