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Influence of Cultism on Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study investigated influence of Cultism on Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria. Specifically, the study was guided by two objectives, and one research question was raised and answered by the study. One hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study covered the six states and Federal Capital Territory which make up North Central Nigeria. Population of the study was 6,792 administrative staff of Public Senior Secondary Schools which included Principals, Vice Principals and Dean of Studies. A sample of 378 respondents was drawn from the above population using Taro Yamane (1969) sample size determination formula. Mixed sampling technique was adapted and sampling was carried out in multi stages which included: purposive sampling, stratified proportionate random sampling and convenient sampling. A self-structured instrument titled "Cultism and Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools Questionnaire" (CAPSSSQ) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Administration and Planning, and Measurement and Evaluation in J.S.Tarka University and Benue State University Makurdi, and further tested for internal consistency through a process of reliability using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Descriptive statistics; Mean and Standard Deviation; were used to answer the research questions and Chi-square (X^2) goodness of fit was utilized to test the hypotheses. Findings of the study revealed that Cultism negative significant influence on Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria. From the findings, it was concluded that Cultism influences safety, stability and effectiveness of the learning environment and poses a challenge to effective administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria. It was therefore recommended that government should review existing policies in order to remove bottle necks in administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in the study area to enable school administrators to put in place pro-active measures in managing schools in crises situations.

Keywords: Cultism, administration of public senior secondary schools, influence

1. Background to the Study

Education is the cornerstone of the development of every sector of a nation's economy. Formal Education is the government's investment in the welfare of the citizens, which is intended to yield returns by way of development of the human capital. According to Oni (2019), Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the workforce necessary for the growth and development of a nation. Formal Education in Nigeria is presently structured into three distinct levels: Basic level, Post-Basic and Career Development (PBCD) level, and tertiary level. The senior secondary level, which is the focus of this study, comes within the Post-Basic and Career Development level (FRN, National Policy on Education (NPE) 2013). According to NPE (2013), the goals of Senior Secondary Education are: (i) Provision of opportunity to all leavers of Basic level Education for Higher Education irrespective of gender, social status, religion or ethnic background; (ii) Offer diversified curriculum to cater for differences in talents, opportunities and future role; (iii) Provision of trained manpower in applied science, technology, and commerce at sub-professional grades; (iv) Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement and achievement of excellence; (v) Foster national unity with emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.

Public senior secondary schools are educational institutions at the senior secondary level, which are established by the government at the federal or state levels. Public Senior Secondary Schools (PSSS) are typically differentiated from other schools by ownership. There are other schools with dual ownership, which is to say that they are owned by missions, communities or even individuals which are categorized as Public Senior Secondary Schools (PSSS) as a result of grants extended to such schools by the government at either federal or state levels for teachers' salaries, development and maintenance of infrastructural facilities, provision of materials for teaching and learning, and recruitment of staff.

School Administrators in Public Senior Secondary Schools (PSSS) known as principals, are appointed by ministries of Education at Federal for federal schools or state for state schools essentially to facilitate the realization of the goals of Secondary Education. Some of the functions of school administrators include the administration of teachers, coordination of students' programs, resource allocation, physical resources application, and school community relationship management. Administration is critical in all human organizations, including educational institutions. It is generally accepted as the key to success in every organization. Though there is a commonly held assumption that the quality of teachers is at the centre of institutional effectiveness, many scholarly works have placed administration at the top of organizations as it is a process that harnesses and harmonizes all available resources of the organization and ensures that they link up to achieve the goals of the organization. An institution full of talented teachers could drift without purpose where there is a lack of administration by an effective leader. In this way, a school administrator provides direction, motivation, and inspiration for the school (Dubai, 2014). The roles of administrators of Public Senior Secondary Schools could be more than imagined due to the peculiarities of such schools, beginning with the student population, which cuts across all strata of society, teachers' selection, which is not discriminated by tribe, race, religion or status, to the superintending staff of such schools and other stakeholders; Parents, Parents Teachers Association (PTA), and members of the school host community. The administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools, therefore, necessitates a safe and secure environment where all stakeholders can play their roles without rancour.

1.1. Statement of the Problems

One of the expectations of stakeholders in education is the quality of products of senior secondary schools in the country; a large number of these are expected from public senior secondary schools. This is in order that the needs of the middle cadre manpower of the country and the provision of skilled and well-developed learners for further training at the tertiary education level are met. However, the present condition in the country where some of the products from Senior Secondary Schools who claim to qualify for admission into tertiary institutions but are unable to pass either the examinations by the nation's Joint Admission and Matriculation Board or the aptitude tests to justify such qualifications or both, is a concern for all well-meaning stakeholders in the education industry. It has been observed that there is insecurity within the school and within school host communities. Incidents involving cult activities within and outside the school causing fear and anxiety among student members and non-members, such as the kidnapping of students and staff, killings, rape, destruction of school facilities, and disruptions of school planned programmes, are common occurrences in schools today. These incidents could result in low teacher productivity and poor student achievement, psychological trauma and a decline in the morale of staff and students in secondary schools in general and Public Senior Secondary Schools in particular. It is against this backdrop that the researcher sought to investigate the influence of Cultism on the administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools (PSSS) in North Central Nigeria to uncover the menace of cultism and the influence of same on administration Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria, and to proffer sustained solutions to the problem. The study focused only on Cultism, among other indices of insecurity in North Central Nigeria.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by two specific objectives:

- Investigate the influence of Cultism on the administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria.
- Make informed recommendations to mitigate the influence.

1.3. Research Question

The study posed and answered the following question:

- What is the influence of Cultism on Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria?

1.4. Hypothesis

- Cultism has no negative influence on the administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Frustration-Aggression Theory is one of the theories that can be used to explain the existence of secret Cults in secondary schools in general and in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria. Frustration-Aggression (F-A) theory proposed by Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer and Sears, 1939 stated that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour presupposed the existence of frustration and, on the contrary, that the occurrence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression. Other propositions of the Frustration-Aggression theory include the concept of additivity of aggressive forces. The theorist concluded that the strength of an aggressive reaction depended in part on the number of residual instigations from previous or simultaneous frustrations, such as minor frustration, added together to produce an aggressive response of greater strength than would be expected from the frustrating situation. In addition, Frustration-Aggression theory proposes that a particular frustration does not only instigate aggression primarily against the source of the frustration but also instigates aggression against targets that are to some degree related to the actual source of the frustration and the alternative and also that aggressive behaviours can be learnt from the environment through observing aggressive role models or experiencing reinforcement for aggressive actions.

An analysis of Frustration-Aggression Theory by Dollard et al. (1939) reveals its relevance to the study of the Influence of Cultism on the Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in the study area in various ways. In the first instance, it is the general perception that a large percentage of students joined secret Cults through peer pressure. F-A theory's basic concept that aggression presupposes the existence of frustration and contrariwise occurrence of frustration leads to some form of aggression points to the existence of frustration. This frustration among students of secondary schools in general and Public Senior Secondary Schools in particular includes poverty: a situation where some of the students lack the basic necessities of life, inequality, and injustice. These are real lacks and not perceived lacks, which could bring about frustration and result in aggressive behaviours. Sometimes, students learn behaviors through observing and choosing aggressive role models and experiencing reinforcement of aggressive action, which is one of the basic elements of the F-A theory. The theorist's position is that aggressive behavior is also learnt from the environment; it is obvious that public school students cut across the larger strata of society; as such, environmental influences on such students and, in effect, the administration of such schools is not far-fetched. Furthermore, the concept of "additivity" proposed by F-A theory stated that the strength of aggressive reaction depended in part on the number of residual instigations from previous or simultaneous frustrations such that minor frustrations add together to produce a response of greater strength than would be expected from the frustrating situation could be explained in a school setting. Instances where discipline issues and behaviors which go against school rules and regulations such as lateness, bullying, stealing, gang behaviours by students and immoral behaviours by teachers; if not well addressed; could escalate into more aggressive behaviours. F-A theory could explain some of the reasons why cultism is rather increasing in educational institutions and, in particular, in Public Senior Secondary Schools in the study area.

2.2. Conceptual Framework

This study, unlike some scholarly research, refuses to trace the historical antecedents of Cultism in Educational institutions in Nigeria. This is so because such historical links require the tracing of the historical background of education in Nigeria, which pre-dates independence and the many systems of education. However, it is well-documented that Cultism was first recorded at the University of Ibadan.

Cultism in secondary schools in Nigeria, as reported in the literature, is always linked to similar activities in tertiary institutions. Cultism is described as a formation of secret fraternities or groups referred to as "cult" and are characterized by unique traits and activities (Ogunbameru & Ogunjimi, 2014). According to Adeleke (2017), Cult groups are primarily composed of students who use violence and intimidation to establish their dominance within the academic community. The existence and prevalence of secret Cults in secondary schools in the country pose fear and anxiety among staff and students and within the school community. As mentioned earlier, there are many reasons for the existence of Secret Cults in secondary schools in the country and, in particular, in Public Senior Secondary Schools in the study area. Some of the reasons reported in the literature include peer pressure, inability to cope with difficulties, impatience, academic challenges, poverty, and greed, among others.

Cultism, however, has far-reaching consequences not only on the school where Cult activities are carried out but on the educational system and the development of the country at large. Cult members, on the one hand, increase membership in their group through gifts, harassment, and sometimes using force to recruit other students. Cult leaders coercively impose their will on student members, compelling them to skip classes for cult-related activities or other illicit engagements, which leads to a decline in their academic achievements and grades over time (Oluwasegun, 2019). He stated further that students who are members of a Cult group are fond of absenting themselves from school as they prioritize Cult-related activities over their academic responsibilities, such as tests and practical or extracurricular and non-curricular activities, which could lead to challenges of discipline. The emphasis of this study on a particular level of education (Senior Secondary School) is with regards to many incidents, some not reported by media, of some schools where students exiting class throw wild parties on the day they are scheduled to write their last paper in West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) or in similar examinations conducted by National Examinations Council (NECO). In his views, Obiora (2018) maintained that there are severe consequences, physically and psychologically, with regard to cult-related hazing rituals, which is a component of the Cult initiation process in schools. He explained further that the procedures of hazing rituals included physical abuse, humiliation, and maltreatment, which sometimes resulted in physical harm, posed risks to lives and could be challenging to Public Senior Secondary School administrators, especially where there are no nearby competent health providers, functional vehicles or provisions of financial means to cope with such emergencies. In addition, it is commonplace, as it is observed and reported in many scholarly works, that students involved in Cult activities often abuse substances like marijuana and cocaine and increase dosages of some prescribed medications, which sometimes lead to addiction, physical and health complications and mental health disorders. In this regard, Nwankwo (2019) stated that drug/substance abuse could impair cognitive function, cause memory loss, and cause demotivation, which may interfere with a student's ability to concentrate on studies and achieve highly academically. Abuse of drugs/substances by Cult members could pose serious administrative challenges to educational institutions as the substances often fuel aggressive and disruptive behaviours, which often result in crises, violence and disruption of school-planned activities (Nwankwo, 2019). Another infraction of Cultism in Public Senior Secondary School administration in the country is the financial strain put on members. According to Okafor (2019), student Cult leaders often make huge financial demands on members who, sometimes, resort to stealing or even gang robbery to cope with such demands. This could erode the teaching of morals and values, which are the basic objectives of Senior Secondary School Education in the country, while Ogunleye (2020) maintained that Cultism creates factions in the student body as one Cult group brings up another rival group, which often times engage in crises with each other; which in turn affects the overall well-being of the entire school community. He also stated that such lack of cohesion within a school community is

sometimes observed among teachers who, for one flimsy reason or another, compromise their stand, defend Cult members or are complacent about behaviours of student Cult members, or sometimes are members themselves.

In conclusion, from the above scholarly reports on Cult activities in Public Senior Secondary Schools in the study area, it is obvious that administrators of such schools could face the challenge of a low student population as it may be difficult to have a new intake of students and even retention of old ones. Administrators could be demoralized as everybody desires to succeed and grow. Following the above disruptive influence of Cultism and the huge investment of government in education in general and Senior Secondary Education in particular against the backdrop of the present security situation in the country, Cultism could possibly pose a challenge to the administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in the study area.

2.3. Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools (PSSS)

Administration is not management as is often conceived by many scholars, though both concepts are similar in practice as they pertain to the fields of education and other social fields. Administration as a general concept is the cornerstone of every organization and plays a vital role in coordinating public and private entities to attain their pre-determined objectives. Mintzberg (2017) describes administration as a process of individuals and groups in an organization. The same views are expressed by Enaohwo and Efrekeya, cited in Odeh (2014), that administration is a process by which goals are achieved through collective and cooperative efforts in a suitable environment. Educational administration is the application of basic principles of administration in the day-to-day operations of an educational institution, bearing in mind the goals of education at the particular level, government policies, and implementation strategies, as well as available resources. The position of educational administrators in Nigeria's senior secondary education system is, however, that of the head of the school, who performs administrative, not managerial, functions (Tyokyaa, 2016). The administration of public senior secondary schools involves the basic principles of administration, as represented by the acronym "PODSCORB," which stands for Planning, Organizing, Directing, Staffing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting.

Planning is a process of deciding in advance methods and procedures which an individual, group or organization intends to follow to accomplish its outlined objectives (Oboegbulem, 2011). It is, in fact, a systematic process of establishing the broad sketch of the work involved and the procedures necessary to implement them. The process whereby the administrator further groups the work to be done into smaller units and assigns people to the various units with relevant materials and authority is organization. In a school setting, the principal, as the head of the school, assigns duties to academic and non-academic staff according to qualification and competence. Staffing is a process of recruiting and selecting the right candidates for the work, facilitating them, and giving orientation and training in a favorable work environment. The principle of Directing enables the principal as the school administrator to make informed decisions and delegate structured instructions and orders for the execution of the same while he coordinates by interlinking the various components of the work and making regular updates to superintending officers and subordinates alike. The administrative principle of budgeting in any organization, including schools, has to do with activities under auditing, fiscal planning, and control (Bua, 2020). The above general administrative principles, which are applicable in educational institutions at various levels, point to the process of administration as indivisible, though there are independent parts which are interdependent. In other words, where all the parts of Administration, as explained earlier using the acronym "PODSCORB", are in place aided by supervision, monitoring and evaluation, administration is said to take place. This is to say that administration is a systematic, goal-oriented and dynamic process. It is in this light that this researcher assumes that school administration should be carried out in a serene, conducive and safe environment.

In a reviewed study titled "Impact of Security Challenges on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in North Central Nigeria", Okpanachi (2023). The study focused on the role played by school location, how buildings and fences contribute to school insecurity, the role of parents in curbing insecurity and the effect of insecurity on the academic attainment of students. The study found that insecurity in schools interferes with the attainment of high academic attainment and that parents, teachers, and the school community play a critical role in ensuring security and high academic achievement by students.

3. Methodology

This study employed a survey research design and collected data via a researcher-structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Cultism on Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria" (ICAPSSS) from a sample size of 378 school administrative teams made up of Principals, Vice Principals and Dean of Studies; drawn from a population of 6,792 public school administrators. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted, and mixed sampling, including Purposive sampling, stratified random sampling and convenience sampling techniques, was utilized. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer research questions, while the Chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. (See result of findings).

3.1. Research Question

- What is the influence of Cultism on the administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria?

To answer this research question, the Mean and Standard Deviation of responses numbered 1-7 were computed and presented in the table below.

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Cultism negatively affects the implementation of school programs in Public Senior Secondary Schools.	378	3.08	.82	Agree
2	Cultism has a negative influence on the organizing function of the Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools.	378	2.94	1.01	Agree
3	Cultism negatively influences students' academic achievement in Public Senior Secondary Schools.	378	3.01	.78	Agree
4	Cultism has a negative effect on infrastructural facilities in Public Senior Secondary Schools.	378	2.99	.74	Agree
5	Cultism negatively affects relationships between student members and non-members thus putting a strain on effective Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools.	378	3.02	.93	Agree
6	Cultism affects the morale of students in Public Senior Secondary Schools.	378	3.15	.87	Agree
7	Cultism influences the discipline of students in the administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools.	378	3.11	.98	Agree
	Cluster Mean		3.04		

Table 1: Frequency Counts, Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses to Questionnaire Items Numbered 1-7 on the Influence of Cultism on the Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria

Results presented in the table above showed that the Mean scores of items 1 to 7 were above the Mean benchmark of 2.50, which implied that the respondents agreed on all the items. The result also showed a cluster Mean of 3.04, which was above the Mean benchmark of 2.50. This is an indication that Cultism negatively influences the administration of Public Senior Secondary schools in the study area. The Standard Deviation, as shown in the table, ranges from 0.74 to 1.01, which implies that the respondents were homogeneous in their responses. In addition, item 6 on the instrument, which has the highest Mean score of 3.15, higher than the cluster Mean and item 7, which also had a high Mean score of 3.11, were focused on the influence of Cultism on the morale of learners and discipline. This indicated that learning is about learners and effective administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools, in particular, takes cognizance of the personality of the learners as popularly perceived that when a learner's morale is low, he/she can easily be swayed into secret Cult and other criminal groups.

3.2. Null Hypothesis

Cultism has no significant influence on the Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North central Nigeria.

	Observed N	Expected N	DF	Asymp. Sig	Chi-Square	Sig. value	Remark
SD	30	94.5	3	0.00	128.180 ^a	0.05	S, Reject H ₀₁
D	54	94.5					
A	127	94.5					
SA	167	94.5					
Total	378						

*Table 2: Chi-square Goodness-of-fit on the Influence of Cultism on Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria
DF= degree of Freedom, S= significant*

The result presented in the above table showed that the Asymp. A sig value of 0.00 is less than the set significant value of 0.05, which indicates that the test of the hypothesis was significant and, by implication, that cultism has a significant negative influence on the Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

4. Summary of Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that Cultism has a negative influence on Administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria in that it disrupts the implementation of school-planned programs and organizational functions, contributes to low academic achievement, leads to the destruction of infrastructural facilities in the school and strains relationships between student members and non-members. Cultism was also found to lower the morale of members of the school community, including school administrators. The findings agree with Okpanachi (2023), who emphasized the importance of cooperation between parents, teachers, and the community to mitigate the influence of Cultism on the administration of Public Senior Secondary Schools in North Central Nigeria.

5. Recommendations

- School administrators should ensure that non-curricular school activities, which are less risky, are regularly included in school programmes to foster unity and break unnecessary barriers that inhibit tolerance and unity.
- The government should re-think approaches to the siting of public schools in challenging circumstances that the country is currently experiencing.
- Education policy-makers should consider discussions on policy amendments that would be built on democratic principles and enable public senior secondary school administrators to be proactive in making decisions in emergency situations. This would ensure the sustainability of education and the attainment of secondary education goals, which is the bane of effective administration.

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