Principal Component Analysis on Factors that Leads Students into Cultism

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Abstract: Cultism in Nigerian higher education institutions has evolved into a pervasive menace, posing significant threats to education, safety, and the development of young minds. This study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature by empirically identifying the principal factors motivating students to join campus cults at selected tertiary institutions within Nigeria. Utilizing a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 400 students across five institutions in Plateau State. Factor analysis revealed five major drivers of cultism: (1) Lack of support systems and disempowerment, (2) The pursuit of power, status, and revenge, (3) Academic frustration, (4) Negative peer influence, and (5) Deceptive cult recruitment practices. These findings offer vital insights into the multifaceted motivations for cultism within the institutional context and provide a foundation for evidence-based interventions. To combat cultism effectively, tailored measures such as counselling programs for students lacking family support, campaigns against negative peer pressure, academic structure improvements, and transparency about the dangers of cults during orientation are recommended. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of cultism within Nigerian tertiary institutions, enabling the development of context-specific strategies to enhance the quality, integrity, and progress of higher education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Principal, Component, Cultism, Factors, Students

Background of the Study

Cultism remains one of the biggest menaces facing higher education in Nigeria today. Campus cults or confraternities have proliferated since the 1970s, with estimates of over 40 active groups (Otutubikey, 2022). These secretive and often violent groups are now present across universities, tertiary schools, and colleges of education nationwide. Their activities have been linked to organized crime, deadly clashes, rape, intimidation, threats, and widespread insecurity (Ezeonu, 2014; Omafuaire & Oriola, 2021).

Several factors have been found to motivate Nigerian students to join these campus cults. A desire for protection is one major reason, with cults promising safety from harm or intimidation (Mediayanose, 2016; Paulley, 2014). The illusion of getting economic and financial benefits like extortion money is another draw (Oyegoke, 2003). Seeking power, authority, and status has also emerged as a leading incentive (Fageyinbo, 2004). Academic frustration and the false promise of excellent results by cheating are further motivations (Wokocha & Okuguni, 1999). Additionally, factors like broken homes, poor parental guidance, drug abuse, peer pressure, and vengeance have been linked to students embracing campus cults (Anya, 2002; Nnamani & Ahmed, 2017).

The consequences of cultism in Nigerian tertiary education are dire. Estimates suggest cult activities have caused thousands of deaths and injuries among students, lecturers, and others (Okwu, 2006; Otutubikey, 2022). Cult violence frequently disrupts academic calendars and university operations (Adawo et al., 2010). Fear of attacks has led to withdrawals. Property destruction from cult clashes is rife. Significantly, campus cults negatively impact the quality of education and integrity of academic programs (Oyegoke, 2003).

Addressing the scourge requires an evidence-based approach considering factors specific to the institutional context. However, there is limited research on the drivers of cultism within Nigerian tertiary schools. This study will bridge this gap by identifying the principal factors leading students into cultism at some selected tertiary institutions within Nigeria.

Cultism has remained a chronic threat within Nigerian tertiary institutions, undermining the education, safety, and development of youths. Nigerian tertiary institutions have suffered from cultism-related violence, casualties, disruptions, and other repercussions. However, research has not empirically established the factors driving students to join the cults. The drivers could differ based on the institutional and regional context. This study seeks to uncover the key factors leading students into cultism at the tertiary institution level through robust quantitative analysis.

The study was aimed at identifying the principal factors motivating students to join campus cults at Nigerian tertiary institutions. The specific objectives are:

i.   To determine the factors promoting cultism among students of Nigerian tertiary institutions
ii.   To ascertain the most significant factors leading students to cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions
iii.   To rank the identified factors based on their relative importance in driving cultism within Nigerian tertiary institutions

This study will generate crucial insights into the drivers of cultism within Nigerian tertiary institutions. The findings will aid management and authorities of the institutions to better understand the dynamics fuelling cultism. This can inform evidence-based interventions, like awareness campaigns, counselling programs, and policy reforms, targeted at the specific factors to help deter cultism. With curbed cultism, Nigerian tertiary institutions will benefit from reduced violence, safer campuses, uninterrupted learning, restored reputation, and better outcomes for students.

The study also aimed to add to the wider knowledge of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Its findings could guide research in other tertiary schools with similar contextual issues. Additionally, it contributes more empirical evidence to complement past studies focused on universities. Overall, the research helps advance scholarship around combating the menace of campus cults. This has positive implications as addressing cultism remains crucial for improving the quality, integrity, and progress of tertiary education in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Evolution of Campus Cults in Nigeria

The history of campus confraternities or cults traces back to the 1950s emergence of the Pyrates Confraternity at the University College, Ibadan (Brazil & Okenezie, 2017). This pioneering group aimed at social justice and opposing oppression. However, splinter groups emerged in the 1970s, like the Buccaneers and Black Axe, marking the entry of violent campus cults (Denga, 1991). Cultism rapidly spread across university campuses in the 1980s and 1990s (Okwu, 2006). Estimates suggest there are now around 40 active campus cults in Nigerian higher institutions drawn from an ever-expanding pool of youths (Ezeonu, 2014).

Reasons for Joining Cults

Diverse complex factors drive Nigerian students into the folds of campus cults. A leading motivation is the desire for protection (Mediayanose, 2016; Paulley, 2014). Cultists intimidate and lure vulnerable students by promising absolute safety as members. Economic benefits are another major draw (Oyegoke, 2003). Cultists dupe new recruits into believing they can easily get rich through illegal means like extortion. Seeking power and commanding respect also pushes youths to cultism (Fageyinbo, 2004). Furthermore, the false hope of excelling academically by cheating attracts struggling students (Wokocha & Okuguni, 1999).

Additionally, broken homes and lack of parental guidance are risk factors for cultism (Anya, 2002). Drug abuse also ensnares students into dependent membership (Okwu, 2006). Negative peer pressure significantly enables cult recruitment on Nigerian campuses (Ufuoma, 2007). Frustration from marginalization also pushes students to cults (Okwu, 2006). Revenge for perceived oppression is another driver (Ibn-Godji, 2008). Poorly maintained facilities create idleness and opportunities for cultism to thrive (Paulley, 2014). Clampdown on student unionism also pushes students into cults (Fageyinbo, 2004).

Impact of Campus Cults

The proliferation of confraternities has had far-reaching consequences on education in Nigeria. Cult violence has led to thousands of deaths and injuries among students, lecturers, security officials, and bystanders (Okwu, 2006; Otutubikey, 2022). Cult activities severely disrupt academic calendars and damage property (Adawo et al., 2010). Many students have withdrawn from school due to fear of cult attacks. Campus cults also engage in crimes like rape, intimidation, and extortion that create environments of fear and insecurity (Ezeonu, 2014). These groups facilitate exam malpractice and undermine educational standards in Nigerian institutions (Oyegoke, 2003). Overall, campus cults negatively impact the teaching, learning, progress, and development of youths in tertiary institutions.

Combating Campus Cults

Tackling cultism requires understanding motivations, which differ based on contextual factors within each institution (Omafuaire & Oriola, 2021). Stakeholders recommend countering specific local drivers through counselling, public campaigns, strong student welfare programs, banning cults, enforcement of harsh sanctions for members, and activating student unionism (Anya, 2002; Ezeonu, 2014; Nwanguma, 2014; Okwu, 2006). However, most initiatives have recorded limited success as cult activities remain prevalent. This underscores the need for continuous research into factors driving cultism within individual tertiary institutions.

Gaps in Literature

While studies have been conducted on motivations for cultism in Nigerian universities, few studies have focused specifically on the empirical context. The drivers could vary across different institutions. However, there is limited research on factors influencing students to join cult groups within Nigerian tertiary schools. This study will help bridge this empirical gap by examining the specific factors promoting cultism at Nigerian tertiary institutions. The findings will enrich the understanding of campus cultism within Nigerian tertiary schools to inform contextual interventions.

METHODOLOGY

This session outlines the research methodology adopted for the study on factors leading students into cultism. It covers the research design, population, sample size, sampling technique, data collection instrument, and the principal component analysis procedure.

Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. This involves collecting numerical data at a specific point in time to determine patterns and trends regarding the factors that motivate students to join cults (Creswell, 2014). The cross-sectional quantitative approach allows for statistical analysis of responses to examine the prevalence and relationships between the variables.

Population and Sample

The target population comprises students from some selected tertiary institutions within Plateau State. A sample size of 400 students was selected for the study. This is guided by the student population size based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for an acceptable sample for a given population. The adequacy is also reinforced by the factor analysis procedure which requires a minimum of 300 cases (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Stratified random sampling was used to select respondents across the five selected tertiary schools. This ensures the representation of students across each of the institutions selected.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from students. The instrument had three sections:
Section A: Demographic information
Section B: Factors motivating students to join cults
Section C: Consequences of cultism

The questionnaire utilized a 5-point Likert scale for respondents to rate their level of agreement with statement items.

Principal Component Analysis

Completed questionnaires were edited, coded, and entered into SPSS for analysis. Demographic data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on Section B items to extract principal factors leading students into cultism. Tests including KMO, Bartlett's, communalities, scree plot, and rotated component matrix were used to assess the appropriateness, dimensions, and loadings. Extracted components revealed the underlying key factors motivating cultism.

PCA is a multivariate statistical technique that aims to reduce dimensionality while preserving data structure. It identifies linear combinations of the original variables, known as principal components, which capture the maximum variance within the data. PCA yields components that maximize variance calculated iteratively.

Criteria used to determine which components to retain included explained variance percentage, eigenvalues exceeding average, and scree plot analysis. Variables were associated with a principal component based on the largest coefficient in the component matrix using a selection criterion of 0.7.

RESULTS

Factor Analysis

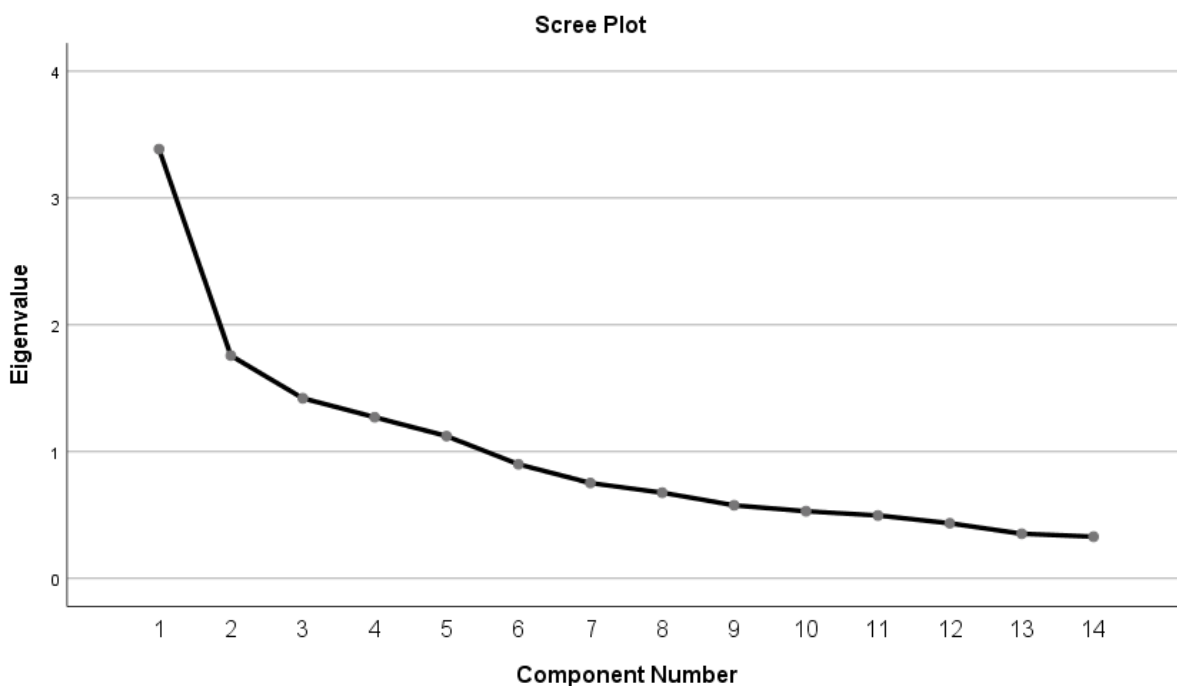| KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.705
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	931.192
	df	91
	Sig.	0.000

This table shows the results of the KMO and Bartlett's test, which assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is 0.705. This value between 0.7-0.8 is considered good, indicating the sample is adequate for factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity is statistically significant ($p<0.05$) indicating sufficient correlations between variables for factor analysis. The large chi-square value of 931.192 with 91 degrees of freedom further supports factor analysis suitability. Overall, the KMO and Bartlett's test confirm that factor analysis is appropriate for this data set.

Factor Analysis

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
A need for protection from a fellow rival or in the institution	1.000	0.595
For the financial or economic benefit	1.000	0.566
Ability to exert authority or show supremacy	1.000	0.626
Due to broken homes	1.000	0.568
Exposure to drug abuse	1.000	0.444
Lack of proper guidance or direction from families	1.000	0.563
Deceitful pledges from inducting cult	1.000	0.639
Feelings of frustration and abandonment	1.000	0.781
The promise of academic excellence or uplift	1.000	0.742
Influence of peer-group	1.000	0.685
A need to exert vengeance on oppressors in the institution	1.000	0.715
Deplorable or poorly maintained school facilities	1.000	0.637
Reduced authority or acting power of the union of the institution	1.000	0.741
Lack of Parental influence or guidance	1.000	0.651

This table shows the communalities before and after extraction. Communality represents the proportion of variance explained by the extracted factors. Initially, all communalities are 1.0 as no factors have been extracted. After extracting 5 factors, communalities range from 0.444 to 0.781. This indicates the extracted 5 factors explain 44.4% to 78.1% of the variance in the original variables. Higher communalities near 1 show the extracted factors better explain the variable. Variables like abandonment, academic promise, and union power have high communalities over 0.7, meaning the factors account for a substantial amount of their variance. Lower communalities like drug abuse indicate those variables are less well explained and are dropped from the analysis. Overall, the communalities are sufficiently high, confirming the extracted factors capture significant shared variance.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.386	24.185	24.185	3.386	24.185	24.185
2	1.757	12.547	36.732	1.757	12.547	36.732
3	1.420	10.145	46.876	1.420	10.145	46.876
4	1.271	9.080	55.956	1.271	9.080	55.956
5	1.122	8.014	63.971	1.122	8.014	63.971
6	.900	6.427	70.397			
7	.752	5.370	75.767			
8	.676	4.827	80.594			
9	.576	4.115	84.710			
10	.529	3.781	88.491			
11	.496	3.540	92.032			
12	.435	3.107	95.139			
13	.352	2.514	97.653			
14	.329	2.347	100.000			

Scree Plot

This table shows the eigenvalue and variance accounted for by each factor. The initial solution extracted 5 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, which is the Kaiser criterion. The 5 factors collectively explain 63.971% of the total variance. Factor 1 explains the most variance (24.185%) and has the highest eigenvalue of 3.386. The second factor accounts for a 12.547% variance. Subsequent factors explain diminishing variance. The scree plot visually confirms an elbow at the 5th factor, reiterating 5 major underlying factors. Overall, 5 factors optimally capture the data structure.

Component Matrix

Component Matrix					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of Parental influence or guidance	.683	.290	-.172	-.254	-.138
For the financial or economic benefit	.620	-.380	-.062	.174	-.080
Reduced authority or acting power of the union of the institution	.580	.416	-.416	-.251	-.113
Due to broken homes	.552	-.407	-.309	.051	.083
A need for protection from a fellow rival or in the institution	.531	-.483	.160	.226	-.091
Deplorable or poorly maintained school facilities	.524	.463	-.330	-.113	.057
Ability to exert authority or show supremacy	.523	-.503	-.191	.225	-.120
Lack of proper guidance or direction from families	.483	-.231	.086	-.429	.376
Feelings of frustration and abandonment	.501	.107	.619	-.261	-.256
The promise of academic excellence or uplift	.454	.228	.617	.055	-.352
Influence of peer-group	.266	.330	.186	.652	.238
A need to exert vengeance on oppressors in the institution	.404	.446	-.036	.504	.276
Deceitful pledges from inducting cult	.242	-.065	.369	-.247	.730

This table shows the factor loadings of variables on each extracted factor after varimax rotation.

Factor loadings represent the correlation between the variable and the factor. Higher loadings near 1 indicate stronger associations. Based on the loadings, Factor 1 represents a lack of support systems with high loads on parental guidance, facilities, homes, union power etc. Factor 2 denotes power/status/revenge motives. Factor 3 captures academic frustration. Factor 4 is negative peer influence and Factor 5 is deceptive recruitment. The pattern of loadings reveals the underlying dimensions reflecting different motivations for cultism. This allows meaningful interpretation of the extracted factors.

Discussion

Hence, the major factors leading students into cultism based on the analysis are (in order of impact): 1) Lack of support systems and disempowerment 2) Drive for power, status, and revenge 3) Academic frustration 4) Negative peer influence 5) Deceptive cult recruitment practices.

The factor analysis provided critical insights into the multifaceted motivations for cultism grounded in the data. The findings will inform evidence-based interventions tailored to address the key factors specific to this institutional context.

The extracted factors from this study are largely consistent with findings from previous research on motivations for cultism among Nigerian students.

The factor denoting lack of support systems and disempowerment aligns with studies showing broken homes, poor parental guidance, and clampdowns on student unions can drive cultism (Anya, 2002; Fageyinbo, 2004; Paulley, 2014). The desire for security when lacking protection mirrors studies evidencing that students join cults seeking protection from intimidation or attacks (Mediayanose, 2016; Paulley, 2014).

The factor representing the pursuit of power, benefits, and revenge agrees with studies highlighting students join cults to gain status, money, and retaliation (Fageyinbo, 2004; Oyegoke, 2003; Ibn-Godji, 2008). Academic frustration leading to cultism corroborates other studies showing struggling students turn to cults out of frustration or seeking success through cheating (Wokocha & Okuguni, 1999; Oyegoke, 2003). Negative peer influence as a factor aligns with research findings peer pressure significantly enables cult recruitment in Nigerian tertiary institutions (Ufuoma, 2007; Ibeh, 2005). Deceptive recruitment reflects studies revealing new cult members are deceived into joining through false promises about benefits and ideals (Onodarho, 1999; Oyegoke, 2003). However, unlike some studies emphasizing drug abuse as a factor (Okwu, 2006), this was not extracted as a major factor in this analysis. This highlights the importance of contextual insights even within the broader phenomenon.

Overall, the extracted factors largely validate conclusions from prior studies on the complex reasons Nigerian students join campus cults. But the analysis also provides fresh empirically grounded, locally relevant insights to guide tailored interventions to combat cultism in this institutional setting.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify the key factors leading students into cultism at selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria. A survey was conducted with 400 students from 5 institutions in Plateau State. Factor analysis extracted 5 major factors driving students to join campus cults.

The leading factor denoting lack of support systems highlights the role of broken homes, poor parental guidance, disempowered student unions, and inadequate facilities in motivating cultism. The desire for power, status, and retaliation emerged as the second strongest factor. Academic frustration and false promises also drive students to cults. Negative peer pressure was another major factor, indicating peer influence enables cult recruitment. Additionally, deceptive recruitment practices play a role in initiating students into cults through pretence and false information.

The findings provide critical empirical insights into the predominant cultism motivations grounded in the institutional context. This can inform evidence-based interventions targeted at addressing the key factors specific to these tertiary institutions. Recommended measures include counselling and support programs for students lacking family support, campaigns on eschewing negative peer pressure, improving academic structures to reduce frustration, empowering student unions, proper facility maintenance, and transparency about cult dangers during orientation.

The study makes vital contributions toward scholarship on cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It generated fresh region-specific evidence to complement existing studies focused on universities. The findings advance understanding of cultism drivers, which is crucial for developing holistic solutions tailored to institutional contexts. This has implications for improving the quality, integrity, and progress of tertiary education in Nigeria. Further studies can build on these insights by exploring the effectiveness of context-specific interventions in reducing cultism. Overall, the research serves as an important step toward promoting safer and more empowering environments in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

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