

THE USE OF PUBLIC ENLIGHTENMENT CAMPAIGN STRATEGY AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY MEASURES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CULTISM IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the perceptions of staff and students on the use of school disciplinary measures and public awareness campaign strategy in the management of cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study is guided by two hypotheses tested using the t-test statistics. An instrument containing 10 items properly validated was used in gathering data from 740 staff and 740 students randomly selected from higher institutions in following States – Edo, Anambra, Ondo, Kwara and Kano State. The analysis of data shows that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of staff and students in the use of public awareness campaign strategy such as public lectures, symposium, seminars, workshop, posters, handbills and the involvement of print and electronic media in the management of cultism. There was a remarkable difference in the perceptions of staff and students in the use of school disciplinary measures, such as expulsion, rustication, withdrawal etc in the management of cultism. Based on these findings useful recommendations were made.

In combating the menace of cultism, the role of the school cannot be underestimated. Smith (2009) held that if a child is frustrated by failure in the school work, he is more likely to misbehave than the successful child. Repressive rules of Institutions and lack of proper institutional climate cause a lot of indiscipline problem in schools. It must be stressed that the classroom climate set by the teacher influences the interpersonal relations of pupils.

Aghenta (2009) noted that one of the earliest ways of getting everybody involved in school activities is to let information flow up and down the channels of communication. The staff and students should be correctly and properly informed of the affairs of the school. Everybody in the system must be directly or indirectly involved as failure in this way may lead to gross immoral conduct and discipline problems.

Since cultism has found its root in most tertiary institutions, the school administrators on their part are also fighting hard to curb or minimize their activities. The National Policy on Education (2004) made it crystal clear that the quality of instruction at all levels has to be oriented towards inculcating the following values: respect for the worth and dignity of the individual, faith in man's ability to make rational decision, moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations, shared responsibility for the common good of the society. It becomes clear therefore that Nigerians believe that all sound and meaningful education should be rooted and grounded in moral uprightness and sound spiritual values.

The school often strategise several measures to deal with issues of cultism ranging from warning to rustication. Despite these disciplinary measures, cultism still thrive in virtually all tertiary

institutions in Nigeria. The public awareness campaign strategy often tries to make public through various media the evil of cultism. The strength and weakness of this public awareness campaign strategy is still to be felt by the people as expected.

On admission to any tertiary institution, students with positive desire for cultism often look out for any slight opportunity which they can be recruited into any cult. Some are often forced into joining especially children from affluent homes while others join either as a result of social or academic problem. It must be stressed that some other students are often afraid of anything that has to do with cultism. Through the public enlightenment campaign strategy, new intakes are often conscientised to hate or shun secret cult through the orientation programmes which could feature testimonies of ex-cultists, drama stretches, leaflets and other magazines exposing the activities of cultists.

Several universities and other tertiary institutions do adopt these strategies. Disciplinary committees are often set up by various administrations and orientation programme are also often organized in most tertiary institutions. This paper therefore intends to look at the perceptions of the staff and students concerning these two strategies in order to ascertain if the methods are well accepted by staff and students.

Statement of Problem

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria have become 'war zones' as a result of the activities of the various secret cults. There are reported cases of sporadic shooting especially at night, rapping, maiming and stealing by these cult members. The residents in these institutions live in constant fear of been attacked hence, issues concerning cult activities are discussed in low tones as members are shrouded in obscurity and their activities are nocturnal.

The school administrators may not simply fold their arms and watch these cultist take over the administration of the school and even dictate the pace of peace. So, disciplinary measures are carried out and public awareness campaign strategy are also employed. Do the staff and students have the same perceptions on these two strategies?

Purpose of Study

The main aim of this study is to identify the perceptions of staff and students concerning the use of the school disciplinary measures and public Awareness Campaign Strategies in the management of cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study sought to;

- i. Examine the perceptions of staff and students of the use of the School Disciplinary measures in the management of cultism in Nigeria tertiary institutions
- ii. Ascertain the perceptions of staff and students in the use of Public Awareness Campaign Strategy in the Management of cultism in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions.

Hypotheses

The study sought to test the following hypothesis:

- i. There is no significant difference between staff and students perceptions of the use of the public awareness campaign strategy in the management of cultism in higher institutions
- ii. There is no significant difference between staff and students perceptions of the school disciplinary measures adopted to curb cultism.

Literature Review

Public Awareness Campaign Strategy

The public awareness campaign strategy cannot be underestimated as one of the important strategies in the management of cultism in tertiary institutions.

Soyinka (1981) believed that the present scourge of cultism must be blamed on the larger society because of the brutish decadence, acquisitive tendency and power lust. So, to eradicate cultism, the larger society must be properly educated and oriented. The attention must not be on the students alone.

Based on this, the Joint Consultative Committee (JSS) and the National Council on Education (NCE) directed the National Educational Research Development Council, (NERDC) during the December 1995 meeting to look into ways of curbing cultism in schools. A pilot-test was carried out using secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory and nation wide field work which commenced in the first quarter of 1997.

A national workshop on the eradication of campus cults was held in Jos from 11th to 18th December, 1996 jointly organized by the Federal Ministry of Education, National Development Council and Examination Ethics and projects. The University of Lagos in collaboration with Fredrich Ehest Foundations organized a three day seminar on the rising incidence of indiscipline and violent crimes in higher educational institutions.

Public enlightenment can be created through seminars, workshops, symposium, posters, handbills, jingles public lectures etc. Osaigbovo (2000) thanked the press for their completeness of exposition of secret cult activities in Nigeria. The print and electronic media have become an “eye-opener” of secret cult activities and have created public awareness.

Criminologists claim that the society creates the crime while the criminal merely commits it. To avoid crime in the society, Onghba (1998) advocated for a special enlightenment programme aimed at educating the public on the evils associated with crime.

Adamolekun (2003) an advocate of the public enlightenment campaign strategy suggested that the University administration must as a matter of urgency, incorporate public enlightenment into the various ceremonies organized by tertiary institutions. Probably this informed the Vice Chancellor of the Delta State University, Abraka to declare in his fourth convocation ceremony speech on the 29th April, 2000 that “The Darkness of the Evil years are over”.

When issues of cultism are publicly discussed, it goes a long way to demystify its existence and it also creates avenue to tackle the ugly trend. Bamidele (2004) believed that the first victory over secret cults is when issues concerning cultism are discussed openly without fear or favour. This method may even encourage those who joined the cults out of ignorance to be better informed and they may give useful information which can help in the management of cultism.

Through public lectures and seminars, Idogun (1999) agreed that the issue of cultism will be eradicated. He however suggested that such lectures must not lose sight of student involvement. At the University of Lagos, there was a drama presentation organized by students “The Dean of Decision” written by Fabiyi a former student Union President. The drama created much impact on the eradication of cultism in that institution. Film shows, drama sketches are also recommended as medium through which most students can be conscientised to shun cultism.

School Disciplinary Measures

The school disciplinary measures include rustication, expulsion, withdrawal, etc. However, the school disciplinary measures have faced a lot of criticism.

Enebeli (2000) believed that in order to properly address the management of cultism, it is no longer enough to set up enquires and commissions on student riots resulting from cult activities with recommendations that only collect dust in files and cabinets in various offices.

Very importantly, an area in which the school administrators should not compromise is the issue of expulsion. That is to say any secret cult member caught should be summarily expelled but experience has shown that purported students expelled Sooner or later found their ways back to the system.

It should be noted that one of the major problems which stand between institutional authorities and secret cults is identification. It is not an easy task to identify members of secret cult, it is only members who can easily identify other members. Since membership is not restricted to students alone most, prominent members of the institution may also belong to various cults. So, a situation where a cult member is brought face to face to be tried by his 'God father' who may be a member of the school disciplinary committee, it becomes clear where the pendulum of justice will swing because members have sworn to defend themselves at all times, and in all places or they will invoke the relevant sections of "Blud 4 Blud" (Blood for Blood) Alora Awumen (dogs don't eat dog) or Eke justice (justice without pity in the jungle" This has led to the death of several University administrators. Members of staff who were cult members during their student days or still involve themselves with cult activities have signed the blood covenant of protecting student members "Baby Lions".

Ige (2004) posited that school disciplinary measures have not been very effective because most rusticated students often constitute a nuisance to the entire institution as such rusticated students may not even vacate the college premises instead, they enjoy the full protection from their other cult members.

However, there are other disciplinary measures adopted by various institutions like forfeiture of license by restaurant or bars found selling alcohol within the school campus, ejection from hall of residence within the campus and in serious cases, the school administrators often resort to seeking the support of the law enforcement agencies to help in restoring peace and tranquility in the academic community. Effiong (2005) stated that the management of cultism must not be allowed to rest on the shoulders of the school administrators alone because it may not yield the desired fruit. Withdrawal, expulsion, rustication etc have been the major weapon of the school administrators right from time but the incidence of cultism keeps soaring high. The school cannot continue to rear such delicate students as they need to be shown the way out, hence Onah (2005) asserted that expulsion, withdrawal and rustication will continue to be effected in nearly all institutions of learning as long as cult members are detected and arraigned before a disciplinary panel.

Methodology

The study is a survey research intended to find out the perceptions of staff and students concerning the use of public enlightenment campaign strategy and school disciplinary measures in the management of cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some 740 staff and 740 students were randomly selected using the simple random sampling technique from higher institutions in Edo,

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Anambra, Ondo, Kwara and Kano states. An instrument which is a questionnaire titled Cult Management Strategy (CMS) was designed by the researcher. Section A sought information on the personal data of the respondents while section B contains 20 items carefully formulated in line with the two hypotheses designed for the study. The questionnaire was validated by experts in school administration and sociology in Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa state. 20 respondents who were not originally included in the sample size were used for the test-retest method in order to test for the reliability of the instrument. The data collected were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient statistics and it was established at 0.85 which shows that the instrument is reliable. The questionnaire were administered by the researcher as well as other research assistants and a 100% rate of return was established as the questionnaire were collected on the spot.

The data were analysed using the t-test statistics.

Result

HO₁ – There is no significant difference between staff and student perception of the use of the public awareness campaign strategy in the management of cultism in higher institutions.

Items 1 – 5 in the questionnaire (CMS) designed for the study elicited information from the respondents on their perception on public lecturers, seminars, open symposia, posters, mass media etc.

The data were analysed using the t – test

Table 1
Staff and Students Perceptions of the Use of the Public Awareness Campaign Strategy as a Cult Management Strategy.

Group	N	\bar{x}	S	df	t-value	t-critical
Staff	740	12.70	11.76	1479	-0.31	1.96
Students	740	12.09	11.84			

**Significant at 0.05*

The n₁ and n₂ are the total sample size which is made up of 740 staff and 740

students randomly selected for the study. The mean score $\left[\bar{X} = \frac{\sum^n}{N} \right]$ based on the

response to items 1 – 5 in the graded questionnaire are 12.70 for staff and 12.09 for students. The standard deviation (S) as computed are 11.76 and 11.84 respectively; while the degree of freedom (df = N – 1) is 1,479. The calculated t – value therefore is -0.31.

Table 1 above indicates that the calculated value is –0.31 while the critical t-value is 1.96. It holds therefore that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value, so the hypothesis is retained.

HO₂ – there is no significant difference between staff and students in their perceptions of the school disciplinary measures adopted to curb cultism.

Items 5 – 10 elicited information on the effectiveness of expulsion, rustication, withdrawal, ejection form hall of residence, control of movement, etc in managing cultism. The response were analysed using the t-test.

Table 2
Staff and Students Perceptions of the Use of the Various School Disciplinary Measures Adopted to Combat Cultism.

Group	N	\bar{x}	S	df	t-value	t-critical
Staff	740	11.73	10.56	1479	10.42	1.96
Students	740	6.83	7.14			

* Significant at 0.05

The (N) which is the sample size is made up of 740 staff and 740 students randomly

selected. The mean score $\left[\bar{X} = \frac{\sum^n}{N} \right]$ for the two groups are 11.75 and 6.83

respectively; while the standard Deviation (S) is 10.56 for staff and 7.14 for students. The degree of freedom $df = (N - 1)$ is 1479 while the calculated t-value is 10.42.

Table 2 above indicates that the calculated t-value is 10.42 while the critical t-value is 1.96 which means that the calculated t-value is greater than the critical value. So the null hypothesis is rejected. The implication is that there is a significant difference between staff and students in their perceptions of the use of the school disciplinary measures in combating cultism.

Discussion

The public awareness campaign involves the use public lectures, seminars, open symposiums, display of posters, and the involvement of the print and electronic media in checking the menace of cultism. The staff and students sampled from the various higher institutions are of the opinion that using the public awareness campaign strategy highlighting the evils of cultism, would go a long way in making students have a negative desire for cultism. Onah (2004) opined that the public campaign strategy must not be restricted to the four walls of the school alone and Suleiman (2005) suggested that the media practitioners should design good jingles on the evils of cultism and broadcast from time to time.

The traditional method of curbing cultism had been the use of the school disciplinary measures. Suspected cultists are made to face the school disciplinary committee among whom could be patrons or members of secret cults. The committee having tried the case, may recommend such penalties as expulsion, rustication, withdrawal of studentship, ejection from hall of residence or the committee may decide to hand over the suspected cultist to the law enforcement agency.

The analysis of hypothesis two shows clearly that staff and students differ in their views concerning the various school disciplinary measures. Students do not believe in the idea of rustication, expulsion or ejection from hall of residence as appropriate measures. Most rusticated students still live freely on campus. For fear or negligence of duty most staff cannot openly confront such students. For record purposes, staffs are very strict on the strategy even when it does not yield proper result. The students on the other hand believe that it is a wasted effort to summon cultist to a panel whose composition may not be totally void of sympathizers. Most expelled students seek

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admission to other higher institutions and recruit fresh brigade of cultists thereby, making the problem have a multiplying effect. When a cultist is ejected from a hall of residence on campus, he seeks accommodation off campus and makes the place a haven for cult activities. Such places are often referred to as “Empires”. Obah (2006) agreed that the school disciplinary measures may not be adequate to address issue of campus cults.

Findings

The findings of this study include;

1. There is no significant difference between the perceptions of staff and students on the use of public enlightenment campaign strategies in the management of cultism in tertiary institutions.
2. There is a significant difference between the perceptions of staff and students in the use of school disciplinary measures in the management of cultism in tertiary institutions

Recommendations

1. The use of print and electronic media should be encouraged to develop programmes and jingles that would make students have negative desire for cultism.
2. Posters and handbills should be distributed to both students, staff and parents showing the negative influence of cultism
3. Public lecturers, open symposia and workshops should be encouraged using ex-cultists to give first hand information
4. The school disciplinary committee must be carefully composed excluding staff that are suspected to have sympathy for cultism
5. The college security services must be carefully trained to detect suspicious movement and cult activities
6. At the point of admission, students should be given proper orientation on the evil of cultism.
7. All “empires” should be properly monitored by security agents
8. The personal data of all students should be properly filled and cross checked from time to time
9. Rustication and expulsion should be used sparingly
10. University administrators must employ the right strategy such as expulsion, rustication, ejection from hall of residence or possible prosecution depending on the nature of the cult activity.

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