

# ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIOURS AND CULTISM IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AS PERCEIVED BY STAFF AND STUDENTS

*Dr. D. N. Umoren*

## **Abstract**

The study sought to determine the influence of administrative behaviours of University Chief Executives on cultism in Nigerian Universities as perceived by students and staff. To direct the study, five null hypotheses were postulated and tested using t-test statistics. Six hundred subjects were drawn for three Nigerian Universities as subjects and data collected using Leader's Administrative behaviour and Cultism Questionnaire (LABCQ), instrument developed by the researcher. Analysis revealed that administrative behaviours of the University Vice Chancellors such as leadership style, poor communication, and sense of insecurity among others are perceived by students and staff to contribute to the prevalence of cultism in Nigerian Universities. Based on this, some recommendations were made including the involvement of students in major decision-making bodies in university governance.

## **Introduction**

Until late 1999 when there was a presidential directive to Chief Executives of federal universities in Nigeria to ensure the eradication of cultism in their various institutions, the menace of secret cults assumed an unimaginable proportion in Nigerian Universities. This directive notwithstanding, cultism has apparently continued to thrive in Nigerian Universities despite open denouncement of secret cult membership by some Nigerian University students and lecturers. Reports of assaults, rape, maiming or brutal killing of students as a result of cult activities have become regular features in pages of newspapers in the country in recent years. Virtually all universities across the country have at one time or the other experienced the mayhem of cultism and its retrogressive consequences.

Campus cults are of various types and each has its own ideology. For instance as cults in Nigerian campuses, we have the Black Axe, Vikings, Buccaneer etc whose membership are drawn from both students and staff of the Nigerian universities. The activities of secret cults have battered the academic environment of Nigerian Universities in recent years. Members of secret cults carry about dangerous weapons such as fire arms, knives, axes terrorizing the entire university community. Sometimes, the havoc committed by cults cause abrupt suspension of examinations or closure of universities thereby disrupting the entire academic calendar.

Vice Chancellors appear helpless in the face of cult activities and sometimes invite the police to quell or counter their activities. On the other hand, some Vice Chancellors send names of suspected cult members to the police for arrest and interrogation. This has led to unresolved enmity between the police and the cultists in Nigerian Universities. Besides, some university administrators make bolder steps to expel students found to be engaged in cult activities.

This barbaric life which undermines academic culture has been widely condemned by the citizenry. Some reasons advanced for the apparent failure to completely eradicate cultism in Nigerian universities range from peer group influence, family background of students to the administrative behaviours of the chief executives of these institutions. Hence, despite the efforts made by them to checkmate cultism, they are still being held responsible for this malfeasance as they are held accountable for everything that goes on in their institutions. As noted by Ejiofor (1992), Chief Executives must be held responsible for a large measure of the success or failure of the management of the human resource, since he sets a pattern to be followed by his subordinates, consequently, he must be versed in managerial process applicable in universities.

Administrative behaviours exhibited by Vice Chancellors of Universities vary. Some adopt those behaviours that are human-oriented while others adopt task-oriented behaviours. As noted by

Tennenbaum and Schmidt 1981), Hersey and Blanchard (1977) a continuum of possible leadership styles exists ranging from totally autocratic or boss centered approach to that of subordinate freedom to decide and issue subject only to broad limitations. Owen (1976) identified five leadership styles autocratic, bureaucratic, democratic, participate and free reign styles.. Administrators may choose any of these styles of leadership to administer their various institutions provided they are sure that such will enhance institutional effectiveness.

However, studies revealed that where administrators are so autocratic subordinates tend to be alienative (Bloemer, 1982, Edem 1982, Umorc, 1996). Staff and students alienation could enhance the activities of cultism as they are individuals, craving to hear and to be heard (Banga 1979, Lambo 1986). Uyanga (1986) noted that students participation develops cordial relationship between students and the community and the university administration.

Ineffective communication has also been identified as a bane to effective university administration. Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (1992) noted that excessive and unnecessary secrecy and withholding of information merely breed rumours and suspicions, hence staff and students should not be blamed if their behaviour is conditioned by rumours flying around. Similarly, Aderounmu and Ehiametalor (1985) also see communication as not only acting as a stimuli to activities but also a control and co-ordinating mechanism which forms the decision centres in the system into synchronised patterns.

Feeling of insecurity by organizational members could cause their development of defence mechanism in the system in order to survive (Denga, 1982; Maslow, 1943). Hence, students and staff in universities could develop defensive activities like those of cults when they feel insured in the system. Similarly insufficient job allocation to organisational member and their non-pursuance of organisational goals could enhance the dissipation of their unused energies in anti-organizational activities (Edem, 1982; Nwachukwu, 1988). Today Nigerian University students are accused by the citizenry of not being sufficiently engaged academically because of some tangible reasons ranging from incessant strikes and shallow curriculum to inadequate facilities.

It is unknown the extent students and staff differ in their perception of the administrative behaviours of the Vice Chancellors as being instrumental to the prevalence of cultism in Nigerian Universities. It is against this background that this study was conducted.

To guide the study, the following null hypotheses were postulated

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of staff and students on the leadership style of Vice Chancellors as contributing to the prevalence of cultism in Nigeria Universities.
2. Staff and students do not differ significantly in their perception of ineffective communication as contributing to cultism in Nigerian universities.
3. Staff and students do not differ significantly in this perception of students' alienation from university management as contributing to campus cults in Nigerian universities.
4. Staff and students do not differ significantly in their perception of sense of insecurity as contributing to the prevalence of cultism in Nigerian universities.
5. Staff and students do not differ significantly in the perception of inadequate academic engagement of students as contributing to the prevalence of cultism in Nigerian universities.

## Methodology *Population*

### *And Sample*

The population for the study consisted of all senior academic and administrative staff as well as students not below three hundred level in three federal universities - University of Uyo, Calabar and Port Harcourt during 1997/98 session. Since the population was already stratified in terms of geographical location, the researcher used simple random sampling procedure to select two hundred respondents (100 each of staff and students) from each university. Consequently, a total of six hundred subjects were used. This category of respondents were utilized for the study because of the researchers assumption that they were very conversant with the administrative behaviours of their chief executive and the menace of cultism in their universities and could as well give a fair appraisal of them.

### *Instrument*

Leader's Administrative Behaviour and Cultism Questionnaire (LABCG) was developed and used by the researcher for data collection, the instrument consisted of two parts, A and B. while Part A

was on personal data of respondents. Part B with 30 items measured various administrative behaviours of University Chief Lxecutives as they enhance the prevalence of cultism in Nigerian universities. Each item, had a response option of strongly Agreed (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D). Strongly disagree (SD) with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively attached to each. After due validation, the instrument was pilot tested for reliability using 50 subjects not involved in the study in the University of Uyo. The test-retest reliability of the instrument was calculated using correlation analysis. A reliability coefficient of 0.91 was obtained which ascertained the instruments high reliability. The researcher visited the affected institutions personally and administered the questionnaire on the respondents. Completed instruments were picked later on an agreed date. On the whole, the exercise lasted for about three months, and all the questionnaire were returned.

**Results**

To test Hypothesis one, the data obtained from the 600 respondents were analysed with a t- test of independent means. The results are as presented in Table I, below.

Table 1: t-test for the difference between staff and students in their perception of the contribution of leadership style of Chief Executives to the prevalence of cultism in campuses.

Groups	N	x	SD	df	t-cal	t -critical	Remark
Staff	300	68.2	2.3	598	107	1.96	Not Significant
Students	300	67.9	4.5		1.07		

P<.05

The result revealed that there was no significant difference between staff and students in their perception of the contribution of Vice Chancellors leadership style to the prevalence of cultism in universities. The mean values of the two groups suggest that both students and staff have almost the same rating of the contribution of the leadership style of the Chief Executives to the prevalence of cultism in Universities.

In testing Hypothesis Two, data were analysed using t-test for independent means. Results are as presented in table 2, below.

Table 2: t-test analysis of the difference between staff and students in the perception of poor communication as a contributor to the prevalence of cultism in campuses

Groups	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	(-critical	Remark
Staff	300	70.3	3.4	598	1.69	1.96	Not Significant
Students	300	69.8	4.2				

P<.05

The Null hypothesis was retained as the calculated t value (1.69) was less than the critical t value (1.96) at df - 598, P < .05 confidence level. The mean values of the two groups suggest that both students and staff do not differ significantly in their perception of poor communication in university administration as contributing to the prevalence of cultism in campuses.

Data obtained for Hypothesis Three were analysed using t-test for independent means. Results are as in Table 3, below.

table 3: t-test analysis of the difference between staff and students in their perception of students alienation from university management as a contributor to the prevalence of c-ultism in campuses.

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	Remark
Staff	300	65.8	3.1	598	1.43	1.96	Not Significant
Students	300	66.1	2.2				

P<.05

file results indicated that students and staff do not differ significantly in their perception of students' alienation from university management as enhancing the prevalence of cultism in campuses. Hence, the null hypothesis was upheld as the calculated t value (1.43) was less than the critical t value (1.96) at 05 confidence level and 598 degree of freedom.

for Hypothesis four, data obtained were analysed with the t-test for independent means. Results are as presented in table 4. below.

table 4: t-test for the difference between staff and students in their perception of the sense of insecurity as a contributor to the prevalence of cultism in campuses

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	Remark
Staff	300	60.8	5.1	598	1.69	1.96	Not Significant
Students	300	60.4	4.9				

P<.05

The mean values for the two groups and the analysis revealed that both staff and students do not differ significantly in their perception of the feeling of insecurity in campus as a factor contributing to the prevalence of cultism in universities. The null hypothesis was therefore retained.

In testing Hypothesis Five, data was analysed using t-test for independent means. Results are as presented in the Table 5.

Table 5: t-test for the difference between staff and students in their perception of the inadequate academic engagement as a contributor to the prevalence of cultism in campuses.

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-critical	Remark
Staff	300	56.7	8.1	598	3.39	1.96	Not Significant
Students	300	58.6	6.2				

P<.05

The results revealed that students and staff differ significantly in their perception of inadequate academic engagement of students as contributing to the prevalence of cultism in Nigerian universities . The mean of staff rating of the adequacy of academic programmes was smaller than students' mean rating.

### Discussion Of Findings

The result of analysis of Hypothesis One indicated that both staff and students do not differ significantly in their perception of leadership style of the university Chief Executive as contributing to the prevalence of cultism on campuses. Some university administrators prefer rubber stamp participation in university governance, hence they single-handedly take decisions, modify Council and Senate decisions, and also those decision taken by various committees that determine the tone of the system. Some of these executive decisions undermine the proper functioning of some facets of the university system.

Consequently students and staff may gang up together to frustrate the

administration. Tin's could be done in several ways including cultism. This finding lends credence to that of Mangrum (1981), Uyanga (1986) and Marlin (1970) who from their studies found that when subordinates participate in decision-making a right climate for productivity is bound to be created and there is mutual trust and interdependency among members of the colleges.

The finding in respect of Hypothesis Two indicated that no significant difference in staff and students perception of poor communication by chief executive of university as contributing to the prevalence of cultism on campuses. Effective communication in any organization is a determinant of the success of that organization. Sometimes some decisions taken in the university are not properly communicated to staff and students in terms of why the decisions were taken the benefits to be derived from them etc. Such keep both students and staff in speculative mode and they turn to believe in the grapevine. This may result in a tremendous catastrophe in the system as people starved of adequate information can resort to any action that will satisfy their feelings and emotions (Denga 1982, Edem 1982, Ozigi 1978).

Findings from Hypothesis Three show that student alienation from management of the university could enhance the prevalence of cultism. This could be attributed to the fact that alienation may cause students and staff to be suspicious of the university administration and perceive any action taken by the administration not to be in their best interests. Hence, they would do all things possible to frustrate such decisions. Alienation encourages organizational members to focus their attention on other activities, which may be inimical to organizational growth and productivity.

Also the feeling of insecurity in campuses is perceived by students and staff to contribute to the prevalence of cultism on campus. Sometimes, the university is factionalised along the lines of tribe, status, beliefs, etc and each faction sees the other as a threat to its existence. Besides, people have perceived enemies whom they constantly witch-hunt. This creates an unhealthy environment, in which one group is always determined to checkmate the other for the sake of survival. This may result in the consolidation of activities of secret cults on campuses. University Chief Executives are not left out here as some have been directly accused of cult membership, and use this instrument to silence their perceived enemies and to fortify themselves in office.

From the result of analysis of Hypothesis Five, students and staff differed significantly in their perception of inadequate academic activities contributing to cultism on campuses. The significant difference in perception could be due to the fact that while staff considers the current educational standard in universities as falling, students on the other hand claim otherwise. Inadequacy in academic engagement of students in Nigerian universities could be due to inadequate facilities, funding, and brain drain which has caused incessant strikes in the university system in Nigeria, thereby resulting in loss of academic interest among staff and students. Such disinterest engender such nefarious activities like secret cultism among staff and students.

### **Conclusion And Recommendation**

This study has revealed that administrative behaviours of university Chief Executives contribute to the prevalence of cultism in Nigerian universities as perceived by staff and students particularly in areas of poor leadership style, communication, staff and students' alienation, and feeling of insecurity. This should not be allowed to continue threatening the functionality of the university system in Nigeria as these institutions are meant to produce qualitative manpower for leadership in political, economic and other spheres of national life.

On the basis of the above following recommendation have been made: -

- (i) Participatory management should be encouraged to thrive in university administration rather than rubber stamp participation. Students and staff should be consulted before major decisions are taken particularly on matters affecting.
- (ii) Students should be brought into the mainstream of university administration like being represented in Council.
- (iii) Students unionism should be strengthen and encouraged by the university administration. This could create a forum where students express their views considering vital matters on campus.

- (iv) The effective communication should be maintained between the super ordinate and the ordinate in order to ensure that everyone is carried along in the daily governance of the university.
- (v) Government should ensure adequate funding of universities and the provision of equipment and facilities to universities as well as giving appropriate remuneration and incentives to academic staff in order to stem brain drain.

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