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INNOVATIONS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CULTISM IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with the innovations in the management of cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. One research question and one hypothesis were raised to guide the study. A questionnaire titled "Innovation in the Management of Cultism (IMC)" was designed by the researcher and used in collecting data from 271 respondents randomly selected from the 10 tertiary institutions in the South-South region of Nigeria. It contained 20 items. The instrument was validated by experts and tested for reliability using the test-retest method. The data collected was analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and a reliability index of 0.83 was obtained. The result of the analyzed data showed that the innovations using modern ICT technologies are more effective in the management of cultism. The traditional methods of using Coercion, Persuasion, and school disciplinary measures are significantly different in terms of their effectiveness when compared to the digitization methods. Probable recommendations like the installation of CCTV cameras, metal detectors, finger-capturing methods, adequate database, and the use of online registrations and voting in tertiary institutions, were advocated.

Keywords: Innovations, Management, Cultism, Tertiary Institutions, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

With the introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), cult activities in the various tertiary Institutions have taken a new dimension. Before now, recruitment into the various cult groups was done through persuasion or the ‘get one strategy’ which involves having personal contact with the would-be cultist. Persuading him through several methods to enable him to have a positive desire to be a member, but presently most of these crude methods have been overtaken by modern technology. The would-be-cultist can now browse through the internet; the aims and objectives of the various groups, their mode of operations which can be made public, parties or weddings done by members often referred to as ‘jolly’, notice of meetings or ‘sailings’ as well as the cult emblems and insignias. The would-be-cultist can now make a choice on which one to belong.

Before now, discussions about cult members were done in low tones and there was high suspicion but today, the colors of the various groups are no longer a secret. The yellow beret is associated with the Buccaneers, the sky blue with the Eiye confraternity, the black with the Black Axe, and so on. All these colors were only displayed on the day of the last examination in the various campuses but today they are no longer new. Songs and ‘gyration jollifications’ can be downloaded on the You-Tube and the activities of cult members are brazenly exposed on the internet to the public consumption as against the secrecy that shrouded cult activities during the ‘Dark Ages’

Oladunjoye (2016) noted that with modern technology, it is easier to join cults unlike when would-be-cultists will have to look out for signs or individuals that would help him actualized their cult membership desire. So, there are more secret cult members in our schools now than what has been in existence before now (Ololube et al., 2013). In those days, it will take a considerably long time to arrange for a meeting or ‘convergence’ and it will take a considerably long time to invite old members or ‘Mettus’ for initiations but with modern technology messages of meeting even emergency meetings can be arranged with ease. The crude method of forming a band of ‘Marshalls’ or security men to guide arenas is done with ease as information can be passed easily to members when the ‘Sea is rough’ or to avoid a ‘Shipwreck’. Modern Technology has made it very easy for cultists to operate with ease without the usual acts of gangsterism when students need to be scared out of lecture rooms at night because of meetings (Smith, 2018). Through group chat on social media, most issues are resolved and most deliberation is made with ease.

The traditional management strategy that was often adopted to curb cult activities in schools had been:

- Coercion strategy;
- Persuasion strategy;
- Public enlightenment strategy;
- School disciplinary measures.

The Coercion is primarily concerned with the brutal handling of suspected or arrested cultist. This is in line with the Mosaic law of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”. Since cultist brutalize even innocent citizens, and inflict pains and sorrow to members of the academic community, it becomes rational that one’s a cultist is arrested or suspected, he should be brutally handled, beaten or even killed. The military government promulgated a decree (Decree No. 47 of

1981) which outlaws' secret cults in institutions of learning and imposed a fine of Fifty Thousand Naira (N50, 000.00) or a five years jail term or both to any cultist found guilty. The minister of justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Chief Bola Ige (SAN) during the celebration of the international Day Against Drug Abuse and illicit traffic at the women centre in Abuja on the 27th June, 2000 stated authoritatively that any student tried and found guilty of cult offences would either be sent to the hang-man or sentence to jail (the punch, Wednesday, June 28, 2000). Odi (2010) suggested that cultists should be flogged openly to serve as a deterrent to others.

Implementing the Coercion strategy had led to serious violence in most cases. Some students of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, University of Technology, Minna, and Federal Polytechnic Oko were arrested by the Nigeria police while initiating new cult members. This led to a bloody conflict and some of the policemen lost their lives (National Concord, August 20, 1998, p. 3). Osemeikhain (2008) stated that using violence to curb cult activities cannot yield the desired result in this present ICT world. It should be noted that the various tertiary institutions had an upsurge of violent cult activities during the military rule. The militarizations of the civil society promoted cultism. Nigeria was ruled with draconian military decrees and students were bombarded with daily news of cold blood murders, corruption by public officers, wrongful detention, and official killings of innocent citizens through the instrumentality of repressive and draconian decrees such as the deleterious Decree 2 of 1984. Decree 47 (student Union Activities; Control and Regulation decrees, 1989) to repress and malign students and students' unionism. The military at that time was out to forcefully stamp out cultism yet that era witnessed the highest killings in the various tertiary institutions in Nigeria (Echoes, 2004). As part of the effect of the old method of combating cultism using the coercion strategy, there was an unforgettable drama in Ekpoma; Edo state Nigeria where cultists from the present Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma were rounded up by members of the vigilante group of Ekpoma community in 1997 during initiation and it was rumored that another counter-cult group gave out the information and this led to a fatal cult clash in the market at Eguare Popularly known as the "Eguare market battle" and many innocent citizens and market women lost their lives.

Although, biblically, the rod is noted to be a corrective weapon it has not yielded much fruit in combating cultism in tertiary institutions. Fear and terror often grip innocent citizens when cultist when cultists are violently attacked as no one can predict their next line of action as members are even shrouded in obscurity (Ololube, 2012). The persuasion strategy involves the use of dialogue. Unlike the coercion strategy, the question of brutal handling is completely ruled out. The historical development of this strategy can be traced to the matching order given to all vice-chancellors in Nigeria's Tertiary Institutions by the Federal Government in 2000 to stamp cultism in their various campuses. This led to the formation of anti-cultist crusade groups on various campuses. Religious leaders were also involved. This method primarily involved encouraging them to renounce membership. Ekoko (2009) designed a three-phase persuasion strategy:

- The appeasement phase;
- Containment phase;
- Enforcement phase.

The appeasement phase is concerned with confession and renunciation whether voluntary or induced with the school ready to forgive such students. The containment phase is getting all the vital information from the renounced cultist using the principles of counseling and psychology.

The enforcement phase is making sure that all information received at the containment is properly utilized such that cultism will be reduced or eradicated on campus.

The school disciplinary measure is another strategy often used in managing cultism on campus. By the edict establishing tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the school is governed by committees which include the disciplinary committee saddled with the responsibility to recommend to the authority disciplinary measures on students or staff found guilty of various offences which contravenes the rules and regulations of the school. The school disciplinary measures include such penal measures as rustication, expulsion, withdrawal, etc. Enebeli (2000) suggested that school authorities must not hesitate to expel cultists tried and found guilty.

It should be noted, however, that all cult has administrative structures, and their actions are guided by the codes of the group. All cult groups have old members and probably some are now highly placed even in school. They are referred to as the 'Mettus'. They act as 'god-fathers' to the 'young sailors' or 'Baby birds. These godfathers must protect the interest of these 'cubs. Many University administrators have lost their lives in this regard which is failure to protect members at times of trouble. So, such members in the disciplinary committee will pose a justice problem.

One major problem that stands between the institutional authorities and the secret cult is identification. Since membership is not restricted to students alone, most prominent members of the institution may also be on the 'board'. So, the school disciplinary committee may not be the last hope for the common student or staff. Since cultism has gone digital, there are several modern innovative techniques to check the activities of cultists in tertiary institutions. The cyberspace of the campus must be monitored through the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) whose cameras must be channeled to the flash points on campus. Every campus has what is known as 'convergent points', or 'empires. It is rumored that Ekosodi the University of Benin, still remains an 'empire', Delta State University Abraka; the business centre road remains an empire for several years, Niger Delta University; the 'Beans-up' is a 'convergent arena' and so on. These flash points could be monitored using digital devices to capture images and voice thereby keeping the University abreast of any impending danger.

Most cult related activities are at its peak during registration and clearance by new students. This period is popularly called the 'October Rush' a period when new students are compelled to join or 'come on board'. The older students or recruiters take advantages of new student's ignorance by assisting them to run around the campus to assist them in the registration process during which they systematically preach the gospel of cultism to them. Smith (2018) suggested that the best way to reduce the evil influence of the new-intakes is to introduce online registration. A situation where a student can register even for courses in the comfort of his room.

Cult activities are often at their peak during student union elections but when elections are done online using mobile phones; it will save cost and time. Above all cult members can no longer muster much support for a member contesting nor scare students away from voting vd. Online voting experiment in Niger Delta University 2017.

Introducing digital monitoring devices and online registration platforms as innovations in the management of cultism is at variance with the traditional method of using coercion, persuasion, and school disciplinary measures. The traditional methods become essential or useful only when a cultist is suspected or detected (Odi 2010) but the modern method often makes it

unsafe for cultists to operate. Through Facebook accounts and Twitter handles it is easy to identify cultists as parties and important functions 'Jollifications' are usually uploaded. Online and through this most cultists can be identified. In the traditional management strategy, cultists can at best be suspected and it is easy to deny involvement. Through digitalization, the thumbprints of students are captured in a data bank and this can be effective verification of criminal activities. The paper attempts to identify the various innovations that could be adopted to manage cultism in the various tertiary institutions in Nigeria, compared to the traditional methods.

Statement of the Problem

Cultism has remained a security challenge to all school administrators as there are reports of killing, shooting, stealing, maiming, rape, and other bestial activities of cultists in the various tertiary institutions in Nigeria. School administrators have adopted several strategies to curb this menace but all seems not to be working as there are still daily reports of cult activities on the various campuses. Now that ICT has been introduced, the activities of secret cults have taken another dimension. This is the need to consider the innovation in managing cultism, as compared to the methods.

Purpose of the Study

The study is aimed at finding out if:

- The ICT based control mechanism is more effective in the management of cultism in tertiary institutions.
- The traditional manual method of managing cultism is more effective than the modern ICT based mechanisms.

Research Question

The study is guided by one research question:

- Is the ICT-based control mechanism very effective in the modern management of cultism in tertiary institutions?

Hypothesis

The study is further guided by one hypothesis:

- There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of the ICT-based mechanisms and manual traditional methods of managing cultism in tertiary institutions.

METHODS

A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study is all the tertiary institutions in the south-south geopolitical zone in Nigeria. 10 tertiary institutions were selected

for the study which includes 4 universities, 2 colleges of education, and 1 college of Arts and Sciences. 271 management staff of the tertiary institutions were randomly selected for the study. A questionnaire containing 20 items titled ‘Innovations in the Management of Cultism’ (IMC) was designed for the study by the researcher. It was validated by experts in test and measurement of the Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island. It was tested for reliability using the test-re-test method and the data collected was collated and analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient and the reliability index was established at 0.83, which shows that the instrument can measure what it intended to measure. The instrument was personally administered by the research assistants and collected on the spot hence the 100% rate of return. The data collected was analyzed using the mean. The decision mean rule is 2.50; above the score is accepted while below is rejected.

RESULT

Based on the analysis of the data collected the following result was obtained.

Research Question 1: Is the ICT-based control mechanism very effective in the modern management of cultism in tertiary institutions?

This research question was answered with items 1-10 in the questionnaire.

Table 1: Effectiveness of ICT Mechanism in the Management of Cultism

S/N	Items	Level of Effectiveness	Result
1.	Use of closed circuit cameras	3.14	Effective
2.	Use of mobile phones	3.02	Effective
3.	Use of monitoring digital cameras	3.11	Effective
4.	Cyber check	2.32	Not Effective
5.	Finger print capture	2.91	Effective
6.	Data base for personal information	2.82	Effective
7.	Linking personal phone numbers to school data base	3.04	Effective
8.	Online voting	3.21	Effective
9.	Online course registration	2.93	Effective
10.	Metal scanning and weapon detectors	3.04	Effective

As part of the innovations, a greater percentage of the respondents agreed that apart from cyber checks which may not be too effective in the management of cultism using ICT mechanisms, most other ICT mechanisms have a high mean score of 3.14, 3.02, 3.11 all above the decision rule of 2.50 which shows that the following ICT mechanisms are effective in the management of cultism in the tertiary institutions. They include the use of closed circuit cameras (CCTV), use of mobile phones, use of digital cameras, fingers capture of all students, generating a digital database for storing the personal data of all admitted students, linking students phone numbers to the school database, encouraging online voting during elections, online course registration, and the provision of metal scanning equipment on campus.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of the ICT based mechanisms and manual traditional methods of managing cultism in tertiary institutions.

Table 2: Level of Effectiveness of ICT based mechanisms and manual traditional methods in managing cultism

Variables	N	Mean	SD.	t-cal.	t-crit.	Remark
ICT based mechanisms	135	16.21	8.40	2.11	1.96	Significant
Manual traditional methods	136	14.30	6.43			

Significant of 0.05 level.

The calculated t-value of 2.11 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 which holds that there is a significant difference between the effectiveness of the ICT-based mechanism and the manual traditional methods of managing cultism in tertiary institutions.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The ICT-based mechanism is effective in managing cultism as the world has become a global village. The use of CCTV and mobile phones are considered very effective as new technologies in handling cultism. The CCTV will monitor activities while the mobile phones can send quick messages, record and take pictures of suspected activities of cult members, and report to the necessary authorities (Smith, 2018). The use of digital cameras and capturing of finger prints at the point of clearance is an effective tool for probable investigation. Raising data for students and introducing online registration, and online voting will drastically reduce unnecessary contact with old students who may capitalize on the ignorance of the new students and lure them into cult groups. These are innovations that have proven to be effective in the management of cultism.

The old, manual, and traditional method involves monitoring the students and suspected cultists are reported to the school authority for trial as in most cases brutally handled by other students whose identity may also be questionable. There is a remarkable difference in the effectiveness of the ICT-based mechanism and the traditional method. The ICT will enable the suspected cultist to be caught in such a way that they old find it difficult to deny involvement but the method involves open confrontation which could lead to a bigger conflict.

According to Odi (2010), the ICT-based technologies often prevent students from involving themselves in cult activities but the traditional method is necessary only when the action has taken place. The ICT-based mechanisms are the innovations that conform with the reality of the time. The use of coercion strategy can only be adopted when a cultist is suspected or arrested. The persuasion method can only be adopted when there is that positive feeling that cultists are likely to be in a particular group. Since members are shrouded in obscurity, the identity of even those involved in the persuasion strategy may be doubtful. The school disciplinary measures is only adopted when a cultist has run out of the school regulations, but the ICT-based methods attempt to prevent cultists from engaging in any act because when they are caught it will be difficult to deny. It saves time and energy.

CONCLUSION

Cultism has become a serious problem for all school administrators. Several methods have been adopted to manage cultism in schools. Using the traditional manual method based on the history and activities of cultists; the coercion strategy deals with the use of force, persuasion is concerned with conscientising students to abhor cultism and school disciplinary measures involve rustication, expulsion, and suspension.

However, in the digital age, innovations must be adopted to manage cultism and this has to do with digitization. Introducing online registration, voting, application of CCTV cameras, metal detectors, fingerprint capture, and several other computer-based mechanisms are the innovations that could be adopted in the management of cultism in schools. With the result of the findings, most school management agrees that the innovation actions are effective in managing cultism.

Recommendations

It is recommended therefore that:

- Schools should install closed-circuit cameras to monitor the entire activities of students on campus, especially at flashpoints.
- Metal detectors should be planted at the main entrance of all tertiary institution and hostels.
- Special orientation should be given to students on how to capture suspected cultist using the mobile phones.
- Online course registration should be encouraged to avoid too much contact with old students who may lure new ignorant ones into cultism.
- Online voting should be introduced into all campuses to check the conflict that may always arise from manual voting.
- The data capturing machine must be used to capture all personal details of students.
- Security men should be trained on how to adopt and adapt to the use of technology in checking crime on campus.

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