

**THE EFFECT OF CULTISM ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF  
STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

**BY**

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**BENIN CITY**

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**BEING A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOG AND ANTHROPOLOGY, FACULTY OF  
SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY; IN  
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OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.) HONOURS DEGRE IN  
SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY**

**OCTOBER, 2025**

**DECLARATION**

I, **EKISAH DIVINEFAVOUR**, thereby declare that the project is entirely my own work and composition. All references made to works of other persons have been duly acknowledged.

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**EKISAH DIVINEFAVOUR**

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**DATE**

## CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned certify that this research work was carried out by Ekisah DivineFavour of the department of sociology and anthropology, faculty of social sciences, university of Benin City, and is adequate in scope and quality for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) Degree in sociology and anthropology.

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*(Head of Department)*

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to Almighty God for his mercies and love.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, I am grateful to Almighty God for making the writing of this project a successful one.

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of cultism on the academic performance of students in the University of Benin. The researcher gathered the primary data through the distribution of questionnaire. A total of 100 respondents were analyzed. The scope of the study for this work was based on the University of Benin. The result of the findings shows that students academic are highly affected by cultism. It was strongly recommended that students engagement in positive activities should be promoted as many students join cults because of peer pressure, boredom, or the search for belonging. Stronger Orientation and Awareness Programs should be introduced. Parental and Community should take an active role in monitoring and guiding their children's academic and social lives. Strict Disciplinary Measures should be enforced and The government should introduce policies that provide continuous support for the fight against cultism*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background Of The Study

Cultism has become a global menace that affects the stability and academic success of students in many higher institutions. At the University of Benin, as in several other universities, the activities of cult groups have created serious insecurity, fear, and distraction, which negatively influence students' academic performance and general wellbeing. These secret groups engage in violent and intimidating acts that make the learning environment unsafe and hinder students' ability to concentrate on their studies. This study therefore seeks to examine the extent to which cultism influences the academic outcomes of students at the University of Benin, focusing on how membership or exposure to such groups affects their grades, attendance, and overall academic progress.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a cult is a small group of individuals with beliefs or practices that others consider strange or extreme. Over time, cults in Nigerian institutions, commonly known as confraternities, have evolved into violent and criminal groups. Their presence in campuses has raised alarm as some students now willingly join these dangerous organisations. Several tragic incidents have occurred, including the killing of a final-year student at the University of Benin in 2023 and past episodes at the University of Lagos in the 1990s, where cult-related violence spread across campus. During that period, allegations

surfaced that some lecturers and staff had close ties with these groups, influencing student politics and promoting fear among non-members. Such developments have fostered an environment where students struggle academically due to intimidation and insecurity.

Education goes beyond the transfer of knowledge; it also shapes moral character and social values. Learning institutions are expected to be safe environments where students can develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Unfortunately, cultism has turned many campuses into unsafe spaces, making it difficult for learners to concentrate on their studies. Many students live in fear, and academic excellence has declined due to the disruptions caused by cult clashes and intimidation. Instead of focusing on personal growth and learning, students are often distracted by the atmosphere of violence and tension.

Cultism in Nigeria can be traced back to 1952, when seven students at the University of Ibadan formed the Pyrates Confraternity, led by Wole Soyinka. Initially, the group was established to promote anti-colonial ideas, academic excellence, and social equality. However, as time passed, other confraternities emerged, abandoning these noble objectives and engaging in violent and criminal acts such as extortion, drug trafficking, and sexual assault. By the 1980s and 1990s, cult activities had spread widely across Nigerian universities and polytechnics. Rival groups frequently engaged in deadly clashes, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of property, and academic disruption. This growing insecurity

continues to have a negative impact on students' academic concentration and performance.

The consequences of cultism are severe and far-reaching. Students who join cult groups often perform poorly due to absenteeism, lack of focus, and involvement in criminal activities. Many of them experience disciplinary actions, suspension, or expulsion. Those who are not members but live in such violent environments suffer psychological trauma, fear, and distraction, which also affect their learning. Some promising students have lost their lives or abandoned their education entirely because of cult-related violence. The growing influence of cultism in tertiary institutions calls for urgent investigation and effective intervention, as it continues to undermine the quality of education and the achievement of students in Nigerian universities.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Cultism has become a major threat to students' safety and academic achievement in Nigerian higher institutions. Despite the efforts of school authorities and law enforcement agencies to combat it, cult-related activities continue to thrive, spreading fear and disorder across campuses. The University of Benin has not been spared from this problem, as continuous reports of cult clashes and intimidation have created a hostile learning environment. The persistence of cultism poses a

serious challenge to both the academic performance of students and the integrity of the educational system.

Students who engage in cult activities often show low levels of concentration, poor attendance, and reduced motivation towards their academic work. They are easily distracted by their involvement in group activities, leading to poor grades and a decline in academic achievement. Cult violence has also resulted in physical injuries, psychological stress, and even death among students. Fear of attacks or victimisation discourages others from attending lectures and fully participating in academic life. The presence of cultism therefore undermines peace and academic focus within the university environment.

Several social and psychological factors contribute to the spread of cultism. Students from homes with weak parental supervision or those raised in communities where such behaviour is tolerated are more likely to be influenced. Lack of family guidance and exposure to injustice and lawlessness have created conditions that make students vulnerable to recruitment. At the University of Benin, cultism has generated fear and tension among students, leading to reduced academic concentration, school dropouts, and disruption of the academic calendar. These challenges highlight the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to curb cult activities in Nigerian universities.

Although authorities have implemented campaigns and disciplinary measures to combat cultism, the success achieved so far has been minimal. Enforcement is often inconsistent, and preventive strategies lack proper coordination. Many students who belong to cult groups exhibit deviant behaviour, poor academic results, and frequent absenteeism. Their participation in such groups raises serious concerns about their future prospects. The present study therefore aims to determine the extent to which cultism affects the academic performance of students, focusing on attendance, learning outcomes, and overall academic success.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of cultism on the academic performance of students?
2. Does cultism contribute to academic failure among students?
3. What factors influence students to join cult groups?
4. How do cult activities affect the school environment and non-members?
5. What measures can school authorities take to eradicate cultism and create a safe learning environment?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The general aim of this research is to examine the impact of cultism on the academic performance of students at the University of Benin. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine whether cultism contributes to students' academic failure.
2. Investigate the reasons why students engage in cult activities.
3. Assess how cult activities affect the mental health of both members and non-members.
4. Examine the long-term implications of cultism on the future of students.
5. Identify ways school authorities can eliminate cultism and ensure a secure academic environment.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it seeks to highlight the negative effects of cultism on students' academic achievement and general wellbeing. The issue has become a growing concern in many higher institutions, as it leads to violence, drug abuse, fear, and academic distraction. The findings will help educational institutions recognise the need for stronger security measures, better student support systems, and effective prevention strategies. It will also raise public awareness about the dangers of cultism, encouraging families and communities to guide and monitor young people more closely. Furthermore, the research will provide valuable insights and data that can be used by policymakers to develop rules and initiatives aimed at promoting a safer and more conducive learning environment. Overall, the study aims to contribute to reducing the spread of cultism and fostering academic excellence in Nigerian universities.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the influence of cultism on students' academic lives, particularly how it affects class attendance, grades, and general academic achievement. Both male and female students will be considered in the research. The study is limited to students of the University of Benin, with specific attention given to those residing in the university's halls of residence—Halls 1, 2, 3, and 4—on the Ugbowo Campus in Benin City.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section provides an analytical overview of existing works, historical background, theoretical perspectives, and empirical studies that enhance understanding of the complex relationships within the topic under review.

#### **2.1 Overview of Cultism**

One of the major challenges confronting tertiary institutions in Nigeria today is the menace of cultism. Cult activities have become a significant source of crime and violence on campuses, negatively influencing the quality of education and the academic performance of students. Cultism refers to the existence of secret associations whose operations, beliefs, and rituals are hidden from non-members. These groups are often guided by exclusive ideologies and are known for

practices that involve secret initiation ceremonies, blood oaths, and loyalty pledges. Such rituals are aimed at creating fear, maintaining allegiance, and promoting absolute secrecy among members.

The consequences of cult activities in higher institutions are far-reaching. They include the loss of lives and property, disruption of academic programmes, and the spread of fear among students and lecturers. In many cases, cultists engage in violent clashes, intimidation, and criminal behaviour, which disrupt peace on campuses. The destructive nature of these groups has eroded moral values and contributed to the decline of discipline among youths.

The origin of campus cultism in Nigeria can be traced to the early 1950s at the University College, Ibadan (now the University of Ibadan), where a group of students established the first confraternity known as the Seadogs or Pyrates Confraternity. The founding members were motivated by noble ideals such as promoting intellectualism, combating colonial mentality, and discouraging tribalism and elitism among students. However, over time, these ideals were lost as splinter groups emerged, each adopting more radical and violent approaches. By the 1970s, confraternities had spread across other Nigerian universities, and by the 1990s, female cult groups also began to appear. What started as a harmless association has now become a serious social problem characterised by violence, intimidation, and criminality.

## 2.2 Categories of Secret Cults

Secret cults can be classified according to their guiding beliefs, practices, or organisational structures. The major types include:

**Religious Cults:** These groups are based on distorted interpretations of religious doctrines. They usually claim to possess the ultimate truth or divine revelation and are often led by charismatic individuals who demand absolute loyalty from followers.

**Political Cults:** These are groups organised around extremist political ideologies or authoritarian leaders. They promote radical political agendas, suppress opposition, and may justify the use of violence to achieve their objectives.

**Doomsday or Apocalyptic Cults:** Members of these groups hold the belief that the world will soon end, and they often prepare for perceived global destruction. Some have been known to engage in mass suicides or acts of terrorism in anticipation of the end times.

**Personality Cults:** These revolve around the worship or glorification of a single individual considered to be infallible. Members demonstrate extreme devotion, often losing personal autonomy under the psychological control of their leader.

**Commercial or Financial Cults:** Such cults exploit members for financial gain under the guise of investment, business, or self-improvement schemes. They often rely on deceptive strategies like pyramid systems and forced contributions.

**Self-Help or Psychological Cults:** These organisations claim to offer personal growth or enlightenment through intense training, workshops, or courses. However, they manipulate members emotionally and mentally, leading to dependence on the group.

**Occult or Satanic Cults:** These groups claim to practise black magic, witchcraft, or the worship of dark forces. Their operations are characterised by secrecy, ritual ceremonies, and mystical symbolism, often portrayed negatively in the media.

**Youth or Campus Cults:** Predominantly found in educational institutions, these are secret associations made up of students who engage in violent or illegal activities. They are noted for their secrecy, brutal initiation rites, and involvement in acts such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and intimidation.

### **2.3 Activities of Secret Cults**

Secret cults, commonly found in Nigerian tertiary institutions, engage in numerous unlawful and antisocial activities. Their operations are shrouded in secrecy, and they often exercise strict control over members through fear, manipulation, and loyalty pledges.

One of their major activities is **violence and intimidation**. Cult groups are notorious for using threats and physical assault to enforce obedience, influence academic results, or eliminate rivals. They have been implicated in several cases of murder, gang clashes, and attacks on lecturers or students.

Another major area of involvement is **criminal behaviour**, such as robbery, drug trafficking, extortion, and the illegal possession of weapons. Cult members also participate in **initiation rituals**, which often involve psychological torture, physical abuse, or symbolic blood oaths meant to ensure secrecy and commitment.

Cult organisations also operate with a strong sense of **secrecy and hierarchy**. They have structured chains of command, symbols, and code names that conceal their identity from outsiders. Members are expected to display total loyalty and obedience to their leaders.

Moreover, cult leaders exert **control and conformity**, dictating how members should act or think, thereby suppressing individual freedom. Recruitment is often done through persuasion, promises of protection, influence, or social belonging. These recruitment tactics usually target vulnerable or ambitious students seeking recognition or power.

Ultimately, cultism represents a serious form of **social deviance**, promoting practices that contradict societal norms and values. The persistence of cult

activities in schools continues to pose a grave threat to peace, morality, and academic advancement in Nigeria's educational system.

## 2.4 Causes of Inter-cult Violence in Nigeria

Violence among rival cult groups, which is common in universities and local communities, is primarily driven by the pursuit of influence, power, and dominance. These conflicts often arise from competition for control over territories, membership, or resources, resulting in violent clashes, targeted killings, and the destruction of property. Beyond the quest for power, social and economic pressures, coupled with the need for identity and belonging, also play a role in intensifying such violence.

A major motivation behind cult involvement is the **desire for authority and influence**. Many individuals join cult groups as a way to gain control, overcome feelings of neglect, or assert themselves in environments where they feel powerless. **Rivalry and competition** between different groups further escalate conflicts, as each strives to establish superiority or dominance within institutions. **Struggles for control** over economic or political resources, particularly in certain regions like the Niger Delta, have also led to violent confrontations both within and outside campuses.

Additionally, the need for **identity and belonging** contributes to cult recruitment, especially among youths who feel disconnected from positive social structures or who lack role models. **Socio-economic hardships** such as poverty,

unemployment, and limited access to opportunities often make cultism appear as an alternative path to empowerment. **Family instability and traumatic experiences** may also push young individuals toward cult membership as a means of seeking protection or emotional escape.

Furthermore, the persistence of **weak institutional frameworks** and poor law enforcement allows cult violence to flourish unchecked. In some cases, **elite manipulation** further fuels the problem, as political or community leaders secretly support cult groups to gain control or enforce dominance. These factors collectively sustain a cycle of violence that disrupts peace, safety, and academic stability within educational environments.

## **2.5 The Effect of Cultism on the Academic Performance of Students**

The presence of cultism in higher institutions has a devastating impact on students' academic progress. Participation in cult activities diverts students' attention, time, and energy away from academic pursuits. As a result, affected students often record low grades, perform poorly in examinations, or experience delays in completing their studies. Cult members tend to skip lectures and fail to meet academic deadlines due to their involvement in secret meetings and violent encounters.

One of the most significant effects of cultism is **psychological distress**. Members often live under constant fear of attacks from rival groups, intimidation from senior members, or memories of harsh initiation experiences. Such fear and

anxiety reduce their concentration levels and ability to study effectively. In addition, **academic disengagement and dropout** are common among students involved in cultism. Many are suspended or expelled as a result of disciplinary actions or are forced to abandon their studies after violent incidents disrupt their campuses.

Frequent cult clashes also lead to **campus instability**, with fights, destruction of property, and loss of lives causing temporary closure of schools. These disruptions affect not only the cult members but also innocent students who lose valuable study time and face academic uncertainty. **Reduced focus and concentration** further affect students' ability to meet academic standards, as time spent on cult activities replaces hours that should be used for study.

Other consequences include **poor attendance**, lateness, and general disinterest in academic activities. The mental and physical exhaustion that comes with cult membership reduces motivation to achieve educational goals. In extreme cases, involvement in cultism exposes students to **legal issues**, suspension, or imprisonment. Health problems, particularly those related to drug use and substance abuse, are also common, diminishing students' capacity to perform academically. Ultimately, cultism weakens discipline, disrupts educational structures, and undermines the pursuit of academic excellence.

## **2.6 Contribution of Cultism to Academic Failure**

Cultism has become one of the greatest threats to the stability of educational institutions in Nigeria. What began as an organisation meant to foster unity and intellectual engagement among students has degenerated into violent secret societies marked by fear, intimidation, and criminality. The problem has now extended beyond tertiary institutions to secondary schools, where reports of cult fights and attacks have become increasingly frequent.

Cult-related activities directly contribute to **academic decline** by reducing student attendance, classroom participation, and overall academic engagement. Many students, distracted or frightened by cult-related events, find it difficult to focus on their studies, which results in poor performance. Prolonged conflicts between rival groups often cause school closures, preventing students from attending classes and completing academic work. In higher institutions, cultism disrupts the academic calendar and instils fear in both students and staff, thereby lowering academic productivity.

Furthermore, many cult members engage in **examination malpractice, absenteeism, and irregular attendance**, which worsen their academic performance. Peer influence and economic hardship are major factors encouraging students to join these groups, leading them further away from their educational goals. The negative effects also extend to innocent students who are exposed to violence or forced to flee during cult clashes. Such incidents cause trauma, discourage learning, and destroy the academic atmosphere.

The reasons for this pattern of failure are clear. Cult activities consume time that should be dedicated to learning, while the fear and stress associated with violence affect mental health and concentration. Disciplinary actions, including suspension, expulsion, or imprisonment, often mark the end of many cult members' educational journeys.

To address this challenge, schools must strengthen **guidance and counselling programmes** to provide students with emotional support and moral direction. Teachers and parents should collaborate to monitor student behaviour and encourage positive peer influence. The government should also address underlying socio-economic issues such as poverty and unemployment that push youths toward cultism.

In summary, cultism remains a major cause of academic underachievement in Nigeria. It disrupts the learning environment, fuels violence, and diminishes students' motivation to succeed. Through comprehensive counselling, awareness campaigns, and strict institutional policies, educational institutions can help restore order, promote discipline, and support students in achieving their academic objectives.

## **2.7 Reasons Why Most Student Join Cult**

Most individuals who become involved in secret cults are within their teenage and early adult years, typically between 15 and 22. Their decision to join may arise

from personal choice or external pressure. Cult members often use various tactics such as persuasion, manipulation, talent scouting, or threats to recruit new members. Several factors motivate students to join these groups. One of the most common reasons is the promise of protection. Many young people are deceived into believing that membership guarantees safety and power. They are led to think that no one can harm them because of the supposed strength and influence of the cult. In their quest for safety from rival groups or bullying from peers, some students find cultism appealing. Others are convinced that being part of a cult commands respect and enhances their social status, helping them overcome shyness or fear.

Students with feelings of inferiority are particularly vulnerable to recruitment. Those from troubled or impoverished backgrounds often see cult groups as spaces where they can gain acceptance without being judged by their financial or social status. Unfortunately, they fail to realise that divisions also exist within such organisations. Some believe that joining cults can shield them from being looked down upon by wealthier or more confident students.

For others, the motivation is financial. Young people from low-income families are frequently promised wealth and opportunities once they become members. Recruiters convince them that cultism is a shortcut to economic independence, allowing them to live comfortably without parental support. In reality, cultists

often depend on illegal and unethical means of generating income such as extortion, theft, or robbery. Some students, overwhelmed by frustration in their academic, financial, or personal lives, resort to substance abuse and later turn to cultism in search of relief or empowerment.

A different group of students is drawn to cult membership because of their desire for romantic attention. They believe that being a cultist will make them attractive to female students or enable them to use force to gain such attention. Peer pressure is another major factor that pushes young people toward cult involvement. Some students join simply to gain acceptance among friends who are already members or to avoid being seen as timid. Unfortunately, many fail to understand that following the crowd often leads to negative consequences. The adolescent period is especially sensitive, as social relationships become more influential than parental guidance. In this phase, peer approval becomes a strong motivating force, and many students succumb to joining cults to feel socially included.

Revenge is another reason why some young people turn to cultism. Those harbouring resentment or a desire to retaliate against others may see cult membership as a means of executing vengeance. Whether the perceived offender is a peer, authority figure, or family acquaintance, these students believe that joining a cult will empower them to strike back or gain control over their situations.

### **Efforts of School Authorities in Combating Cultism**

Cultism remains a serious threat to peace, safety, and academic excellence in Nigerian educational institutions. School administrators play a vital role in curbing this menace by maintaining discipline, promoting awareness, and rehabilitating affected students. Their efforts focus on prevention, control, and reintegration of students who have been influenced by cult-related activities.

One of the main strategies adopted by schools is organising enlightenment programmes that promote transformation and awareness. Through campaigns and workshops, students are educated on the dangers of cultism, substance abuse, and negative peer pressure. These initiatives help students identify manipulative tactics used by cultists and understand the consequences of involvement. Additionally, schools have adopted strict disciplinary measures such as suspension, expulsion, or referral to law enforcement agencies for offenders. In some states, education authorities have issued firm directives warning that any student caught engaging in cult activities faces expulsion or prosecution. Such measures serve as deterrents, discouraging others from joining similar groups.

Counselling and mentorship also play an essential role in prevention and rehabilitation. During orientation programmes, new students receive guidance on the dangers of cultism and the importance of positive decision-making. Professional counsellors are also assigned to help those already influenced by cult groups to reform and reintegrate. These interventions aim to promote emotional

stability and personal growth, reducing the likelihood of relapse into deviant behaviour.

Schools have also introduced extracurricular activities and clubs as preventive measures. By engaging students in sports, debates, music, cultural groups, and volunteer work, institutions provide positive alternatives to idleness and negative influences. These programmes allow students to channel their energy productively, develop social skills, and build teamwork, which reduces susceptibility to cult recruitment.

Furthermore, collaboration with external stakeholders has proven valuable. Partnerships between schools, parents, community leaders, and security agencies have strengthened the campaign against cultism. Alumni associations and non-governmental organisations often sponsor anti-cult campaigns, while local law enforcement helps monitor and dismantle cult-related operations around campuses. This multi-stakeholder approach ensures that efforts to eradicate cultism extend beyond the school gates.

In summary, school authorities contribute significantly to the fight against cultism through awareness creation, enforcement of discipline, counselling, extracurricular engagement, and stakeholder collaboration. Although challenges such as poor policy implementation and societal influence still exist, consistent commitment

from school administrators, parents, and government agencies remains essential in building a safer academic environment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Social Identity Theory provides a suitable framework for understanding the link between cultism and students' academic performance. The theory explains that people define themselves partly by the social groups they belong to, and that this group identification shapes their attitudes and behaviours. When individuals strongly associate with a group, they begin to internalise its norms, values, and beliefs, often aligning their actions with the expectations of that group.

Cultism, therefore, can be understood as a product of the human need for belonging and social identity. Students facing insecurity, peer pressure, or uncertainty about their social position may find cult groups appealing because they offer a sense of unity, protection, and prestige. Once a person becomes part of such a group, the cult's values begin to shape their mindset and behaviour, often overshadowing their academic goals. Their loyalty and sense of belonging to the group take precedence over educational responsibilities.

This theory also helps explain why students involved in cultism tend to perform poorly in school. As their allegiance to the group deepens, they prioritise activities such as meetings, rituals, or revenge missions over studies. These engagements consume their time and energy, leaving little room for academic work.

Furthermore, conflicts between rival cults often create insecurity on campuses, disrupting learning activities and instilling fear among students. Academic concentration, attendance, and participation are all affected as a result.

Social Identity Theory also incorporates the idea of identity fusion, which occurs when an individual's personal identity becomes inseparable from their group identity. When this happens, members develop emotional bonds so strong that they are willing to sacrifice personal interests, such as education or wellbeing, for the sake of the group. This explains why some students remain in cults despite facing expulsion, punishment, or public disgrace. Their loyalty becomes a psychological attachment that is difficult to break.

Ultimately, the theory suggests that the poor academic outcomes linked to cultism are not random but rather predictable results of identity-driven behaviour. Membership in such groups diverts focus, increases stress from inter-group rivalry, and fosters priorities that conflict with academic success. To address this, interventions must go beyond punishment; schools should create environments that satisfy students' need for belonging through positive social structures such as clubs, academic groups, and sports associations. By redirecting identity formation toward constructive outlets, schools can reduce cult influence and promote educational success.

In conclusion, Social Identity Theory offers a clear lens for understanding how group affiliation shapes student behaviour and academic outcomes. It reveals that involvement in cult groups damages academic performance by shifting focus from personal growth to group loyalty. Therefore, combating cultism requires identity-based interventions that replace negative affiliations with positive, purpose-driven group participation.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

This chapter describes the overall approach and procedures adopted for the investigation. It provides a clear explanation of the research design, the population and sample size, sampling techniques, data collection tools, and methods of data analysis. Each section outlines the specific processes involved in gathering and analysing data for the study.

### **3.1 Research Design**

A research design serves as a structured plan or framework that guides how a study is conducted. It defines the strategies, tools, and resources employed in gathering and interpreting data to answer the research questions. This study adopts an expository research design, as it aims to examine the influence of cultism on the academic performance of students at the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State. The research will employ quantitative methods for both data collection and analysis to ensure objectivity and accuracy of results.

### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The population of a study represents the total group of individuals, objects, or events that the researcher intends to investigate. For this research, the population comprises students residing in the University of Benin hostels, specifically Halls 1, 2, 3, and 4. Approximately 6,700 students are accommodated in these hostels, and they form the target population from which the study's participants will be drawn.

### **3.3 Sample Size**

The sample size refers to the specific number of participants selected from the population to represent the larger group in the study. Due to the large number of students residing in the University of Benin hostels, it is not feasible to include all of them in the research. Therefore, a representative sample of 100 students will be selected from the total population of 6,700 students. The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$$

where

n=sample size

N=population size

e= margin or error (0.10 for 10%)

calculation:

$$n = 6700 / (1 + 6700 \times 0.10^2)$$

$$n = 6700 / 1 + 6700 \times 0.01$$

$$n = 6700 / 68$$

n=98.5

n=100

Which is approximately 100

### **3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

Sampling technique refers to the process used to select participants from a larger population for a research study. In this research, a random sampling method will be adopted to ensure that every member of the target population has an equal and known chance of being chosen. Through this approach, students will be randomly selected from the hostels to provide information and share their perspectives on how cultism affects academic performance within the University of Benin.

### **3.5 Instrument for Data Collection**

The primary tool for data collection in this study is the questionnaire. A structured questionnaire will be designed to obtain relevant quantitative data from the selected students. The questionnaire will be used to collect responses regarding their views and experiences related to cultism and its possible effects on academic achievement. This method is suitable because it allows for the efficient collection of data from a large number of respondents within a short period.

### **3.6 Method of Data Collection**

The data collection process determines the validity and reliability of research findings. For this study, data will be gathered through a face-to-face administration of questionnaires. The researcher, with the assistance of a few colleagues, will distribute the questionnaires directly to the respondents within one week. Each participant will take approximately six minutes to complete the questionnaire. This one-time administration approach ensures efficiency and reduces the risk of non-responses.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

Data analysis involves interpreting collected information to identify trends, patterns, and relationships. The study will use descriptive statistical methods to analyse the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires. The responses will be presented in tables and analysed using frequencies and percentages to summarise the findings effectively. This approach will provide a clear understanding of the impact of cultism on students' academic performance at the University of Benin.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The study examined ‘the effect of cultism on the Academic performance of students to the University of Benin. The researcher’s attention was focused mainly on the objectives of the study as stated in chapter one. Data analyzed were presented in tables and analyzed using percentages.

#### **4.2 Analysis of the Respondents Bio-Data**

One hundred questionnaires were distributed to students in the University of Benin and all the questionnaires administered were returned back to the researcher which represents a 100% of response.

**Table 1: Analysis of the Respondents**

<b>Shared questionnaires</b>	<b>No of respondent</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
Returned	100	100
Unreturned	0	0

Total	100	100
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Table 1 shows the Socio demographic factors of the respondents such as the gender, age, level, and halls of the population that were sampled were measured by asking respondents to correctly tick their response in respect to the bio-data

**Table 2: Gender of Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE%</b>
MALE	36	36
FEMALE	64	64
TOTAL	100	100

Table 2 shows that 36 of the respondents were male which represents 44% of the sampled population and 64 female represented which is 64% of the sampled population.

**Table 3: AGE of the RESPONDENTS**

<b>AGE</b>	<b>NO. OF RESPONDENTS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE%</b>
15-19	35	35
20-24	44	44
25 YEARS-ABOVE	21	21
TOTAL	100	100

Table 3 shows that 35 of the respondents representing 35% were between the age of 15-19 and 44 respondents representing 44% were between age 20-24 years of age while 21 representing 21% were between the age of 25 years above.

**Table 4: Halls of Respondents**

<b>Halls</b>	<b>NO. OF RESPONSE</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Hall 1	25	25
Hall 2	25	25

Hall 3	25	25
Hall 4	25	25
Total	100	100

Table 4 shows that 25 of the respondents representing 25% were residents of hall 1, 25 were residents of hall 2 representing 25%, another 25 of the respondents representing 25% were of hall 3 and the remaining 25 which is 25% also were residents of hall 4.

### 4.3 Data Analysis

**Table 5: Have You Heard of Cultism in Your School**

	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
YES	99	99
NO	1	1
TOTAL	100	100

Table 5 shows that 99% of the respondents have heard about cultism while 1% has not. This is to show that majority of youths who are students of the University of Benin have heard of cultism. This means that majority of the students of the University of Benin are aware of are familiar with the term cultism.

**Table 6: If Yes How Did You Hear About It**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
FRIENDS	64	35
MEDIA	26	14
SCHOOL AUTHORITIES	49	27
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE	44	24

Table 6 shows that about 35%, which is 64 of the respondents heard of cultism through their friends. 14% representing 26 respondents heard about it from the media another 27% which represents 49 of respondents heard about cultism from the school authorities while 44 responses representing 24% encountered cultism directly through personal experiences. This means that majority of people got to know about cultism from their friends/peers. School authorities and media are also

mediums by which student has come to know about cultism while most people have had direct experiences.

**Table 7: Do You Believe Cultism Exists In Your Institution**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	89	89
NO	11	11
TOTAL	100	100

Table 7 shows that about 89%, of the respondents believe that cultism exist in the University of Benin while 11 percent of the respondents do not. A high percent of students believe that cultism exist in the university Benin which implies that cultism is real. The minority might not know or are not familiar with cult related activities in the school.

**Table 8: Have You Been Invited To Join A Cult Group**

	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Yes	37	37
No	63	63
Total	100	100

Table 8 shows that about 37%, of the respondents have been invited to join a cult group while 63% have not. This means that cult groups always trying to get new members, which makes students open negative influences or harm mostly students who have low self-esteem or are looking for where they can belong.

**Table 9: Do You Know Someone Personally Who Is A Cult Member**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	69	69
No	31	31
Total	100	100

Table 9 shows that about 69%, of the respondent knows people who are cult members personally while 31 percent of the respondents do not. It shows that cult members are everywhere and can even be identified by some people.

**Table 10: What Are The Common Reasons Students Join Cult Groups**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Peer pressure	79	25
Protection	76	24
Influence/power	78	24
Academic support	43	14
Family background	40	13

This shows that the reason why some students join cult are 25% peer pressure, 24% protection, 24 influence/power 14 % academic support and 13% family background. This means that most students are influenced mostly by peer pressure and maybe also by their need for power, and protection according to the percentage. Academic support and family background also influences a little.

**Table 11: Do You Think Cultism Affects Students' Academic Performance**

	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Yes	82	82
No	18	18
Total	100	100

Table 11 shows that about 82%, of the respondents believe that cultism affects students' academic performance while 18 percent of the respondent thinks otherwise. This means most students know the negative effect of cultism on education of students.

**Table 12: In your opinion, how does cultism affect academic performance**

Poor class attendance	55	18
Lack of concentration	47	15
Drop in grades	66	22
Suspension/expulsion from school	87	29
Constant fear or insecurity	50	16

Table 12 shows that the respondents gave their opinion on how cultism affect academic performance, 18% chose poor attendance, lack of concentration was ticked by 15%, drop in grades by 22%, suspension/expulsion by 29% and fear/insecurity by 16%. This means that decline the academics of students insecurity play a role in limiting student success but suspension/expulsion from school can also be the consequences.

**Table 13: Have You Observed A Decline In The Performance Of Students Associated With Cult Groups**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	75	75
No	25	25
Total	100	100

Table 13 shows that about 75% have observed a decline in the performance of students associated with cult groups while 20% have not. This means that students notice the bad effect of cultism on their peers. This means cult related activities can affect the academic performance of students.

**Table 14: Do You Think Cultism Has Any Benefit To Students**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	18	18
No	82	82
Total	100	100

Table 14 shows that 18% of students believe that cultism can be benefiting while 82 percent do not. This means that although most students now see the harm in cultism, there are some minorities that still need orientation.

**Table 15: What Role Do You Think Parents/Guardians Can Play In Curbing Cultism**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Proper guidance and counseling	89	47
Monitoring peer groups	56	30
Moral upbringing	43	23

Table 15 shows that parents and guardians should play a role of proper guidance and counseling which is 47%, monitoring peer groups which is 30%, and moral upbringing which is 23%. This means that most of the respondents believe that parents should always play the role of mentoring and counseling their children and closely monitor the kind of friends their children mingle with.

**Table 16: What Measures Should School Take To Discourage Cultism**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Disciplinary Actions	74	34
Awareness Programs/Seminars	39	18
Guidance And Counseling Services	57	26
Promoting Positive Students Groups/Groups	48	22

Table 16 shows that the respondent believe that schools should take disciplinary actions which is 34%, guidance and counseling which is 26%, promotion of positive student groups which is 22%, and awareness programs/seminars 18%. This means disciplinary action which carries the most percentage might prove more effective.

**Table 17: How Can Government And Community Contribute To The Fight Against Cultism**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Enforce laws against cult activities	60	33
Community sensitization programs	43	24
Provide safe recreational facilities for youth	78	43

Table 17 shows that about 33% believe that enforcing laws against cult activities can help government and community contribute to the fight against cultism while 24% suggest community sensitization programs would help and 43% of the respondent thinks that providing safe recreational facilities would be of help also.

**Table 18: Would You Support Campaigns Or Programs Aimed At Eradicating Cultism In Schools**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	100	100
No	0	0

Total	100	100
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Table 18 shows that 100% of the respondent support campaigns or programs aimed at eradicating cultism in school. This means students are willing or ready to participate in campaigns or programs that are aimed at eradicating cultism in the University of Benin.

#### **4.4 findings**

The research examined the influence of cultism on students' academic performance, its underlying causes, and the possible approaches to curb or eliminate such activities in the University of Benin. The findings were analysed as follows:

The results revealed that nearly all participants (99%) were aware of the existence of cultism within their school environment, indicating that such activities are widely known among students and not concealed. About 35% of the respondents mentioned that they first learned about cultism through friends, 27% heard about it from school authorities, 24% had personal encounters with cult members, and 14% were informed through the media. This suggests that peer influence serves as the main channel of information, though institutional communication and personal experiences also play key roles in spreading awareness about cultism on campus.

The study further indicated that 89% of respondents strongly believe cultism is present in the University of Benin. This finding confirms the existence of cult-related operations within the institution. Additionally, 37% reported being invited to join a cult group, and 69% admitted knowing individuals who belong to such

groups. These figures point to the fact that cultists are actively recruiting new members and that their presence among the student body is widespread.

When asked why students engage in cult activities, 25% of respondents attributed it to peer pressure, while 24% cited protection and the desire for influence or power as key motivators. About 14% believed academic assistance drives involvement, and 13% associated it with family background. These responses show that social influence, personal ambition, and home environment are major contributing factors to the spread of cultism among students.

Findings also showed that 82% of participants believe cultism negatively impacts academic achievement. Furthermore, 75% observed a decline in the performance of students linked to cult activities. About 29% identified suspension or expulsion as the main consequence, 22% pointed to falling grades, 16% noted fear and insecurity, while 15% mentioned poor attendance and lack of focus. These outcomes indicate that participation in cult activities can severely disrupt learning and reduce students' academic productivity.

When asked about the potential benefits of cultism, 82% of respondents stated that it offers no positive value, describing it as harmful, whereas 18% felt it could provide some advantages. This implies that a small portion of students still hold favourable opinions about cultism, which reflects a worrying perception that requires attention.

A significant number of respondents highlighted the role of parents and guardians in controlling or stopping cultism. About 47% recommended proper guidance and counselling, 30% emphasised close monitoring of peer associations, and 23% mentioned strong moral upbringing. These results indicate that effective parental supervision and consistent mentoring can serve as protective measures against cult involvement among young people.

In terms of solutions within the school environment, students proposed disciplinary measures (34%), counselling services (26%), encouraging positive student groups (22%), and awareness campaigns or seminars (18%). These recommendations suggest that both preventive and corrective measures—combining strict enforcement with supportive interventions—are necessary to reduce cult-related behaviour.

At the broader community level, respondents identified the importance of government and societal involvement. They suggested creating safe recreational spaces for young people (43%), enforcing anti-cult laws (33%), and conducting public sensitisation programmes (24%). These views emphasise that cultism is not merely an institutional issue but a social concern that demands collective action from all stakeholders.

Finally, every respondent (100%) expressed support for awareness campaigns and initiatives aimed at eliminating cultism in schools. This shared commitment

demonstrates a strong readiness among students to participate in efforts directed toward eradicating the menace from educational institutions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

This research focused on how cultism affects the academic performance of students at the University of Benin. The first chapter introduced the concept of cultism, its historical emergence in Nigeria, and the specific objectives that guided the investigation into how such activities influence students' academic outcomes. Chapter two reviewed existing literature related to the topic, examining previous studies and discussions on the effects of cultism within educational settings. Chapter three described the research design, scope of coverage, population size, sampling techniques, and methods employed in collecting and analysing data.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

Cultism has become one of the greatest challenges facing many Nigerian students today. What initially started as a social or intellectual movement has evolved into a destructive system that threatens the essence of education. Rather than concentrating on their studies and building productive futures, numerous students are caught in cycles of violence, intimidation, and fear. This situation not only harms those directly involved but also disrupts the peace of innocent students who simply wish to study in a safe environment. Recurrent conflicts, academic interruptions, and insecurity have reduced learning opportunities and led to a decline in academic performance.

The consequences of cultism extend beyond academic results—it influences students’ attitudes and mental outlook. When an institution becomes a place of fear rather than learning, motivation and self-confidence among students diminish. Some begin to seek unethical shortcuts to success, such as cheating in examinations, while others abandon their education entirely. In extreme cases, lives are lost through expulsions, imprisonment, or violent confrontations. Cultism therefore destroys young potential and deprives the nation of capable minds needed for sustainable development.

Addressing this menace requires a united approach. Parents, teachers, administrators, and law enforcement agencies must collaborate to guide students, maintain discipline, and create a secure learning environment. Proper counselling and mentorship should be provided to help students resist negative influences and focus on constructive goals. When schools promote strong moral values and positive engagement, learners are more likely to excel both academically and socially.

Ultimately, the fight against cultism is not just about ending violence; it is about restoring the true meaning of education. By protecting students from such destructive practices, society preserves their right to learn, dream, and build a better future. Institutions of learning should once again be places where knowledge thrives, aspirations grow, and hope is renewed.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Cultism remains an underexplored issue in many higher institutions, despite its evident impact. The following steps are recommended to address and prevent its spread:

- **Encourage Student Participation in Positive Activities:**

Many students join cults due to peer influence, lack of purpose, or the need for social acceptance. Schools should create more opportunities for involvement in sports, academic clubs, cultural events, and leadership programs to promote a sense of belonging through positive engagement.

- **Implement Effective Orientation and Awareness Campaigns:**

New students should be adequately educated on the dangers of cultism during orientation programs. Continuous seminars, workshops, and awareness drives should be organized to emphasize the negative effects of cult activities on academic performance, personal development, and future prospects.

- **Provide Counselling and Emotional Support Services:**

Some students are drawn into cultism due to emotional struggles, poor self-worth, or lack of direction. Strengthening university counselling centres can provide psychological and career support, helping at-risk individuals make better life decisions and avoid destructive influences.

- **Strengthen Parental and Community Involvement:**  
Parents and guardians should actively monitor their children’s academic and social lives. Local communities should collaborate with educational institutions to discourage cult-related behaviour around campuses. Such partnerships can help establish a culture that collectively condemns cultism.
- **Apply Consistent Disciplinary and Rehabilitative Measures:**  
The persistence of cultism is often linked to weak enforcement of sanctions. Schools must implement strict but fair disciplinary policies to address cult-related offences. However, alongside punishment, rehabilitation and reintegration programs should be introduced to help repentant students rebuild their lives.
- **Promote Government and Policy Intervention:**  
The government should play an active role by enacting and enforcing laws that deter cult-related violence. Special task forces and awareness campaigns should be supported with funding and policy backing to ensure the complete eradication of cultism from tertiary institutions.

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

As a student of sociology and anthropology at the University of Benin, faculty of social sciences, I am conducting a research on the topic “**the effect of cultism on the Academic performance of students in the University of Benin**”. Your responses will provide valuable insights on the effect of cultism on the academic performance of students in the University of Benin. Please answer the questions honestly, and to the best of your ability. Your participation and cooperation are sincerely appreciated.

**Instruction:** This questionnaire is purely for academic purposes. Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Please tick ( ✓ ) where appropriate or write your answer briefly.

### Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age:

15–19  20–24  25 and above

2. Gender:

Male  Female  Prefer not to say

3. Level of Study:

100  200  300  400  500  Postgraduate

4. Halls: Hall 1  Hall 2  Hall3  Hall4

### Section B: Awareness of Cultism

5. Have you heard of cultism in your school?

Yes  No

6. If yes, how did you hear about it?

Friends  media  school authorities  personal experience

7. Do you believe cultism exists in your institution?

Yes  No

### Section C: Involvement in Cultism

8. Have you ever been invited to join a cult group?

Yes  No

9. Do you know someone personally who is a cult member?

Yes  No

**10.** What are the common reasons students join cult groups? (You may tick more than one)

- Peer pressure
- Protection
- Influence/Power
- Academic support
- Family background

#### **Section D: Effects of Cultism on Academic Performance**

**11.** Do you think cultism affects students' academic performance?

Yes  No

**12.** In your opinion, how does cultism affect academic performance?

- Poor class attendance
- Lack of concentration
- Drop in grades
- Suspension/expulsion from school
- Constant fear or insecurity

**13.** Have you observed a decline in the performance of students associated with cult groups?

Yes  No

#### **Section E: Perception and Recommendations**

**14.** Do you think cultism has any benefits to students?

Yes  No

**15.** What role do you think parents/guardians can play in curbing cultism?

- Proper guidance and counseling
- Monitoring peer groups
- Moral upbringing

**16.** What measures should schools take to discourage cultism?

- Disciplinary actions
- Awareness programs/seminars
- Guidance and counseling services
- Promoting positive student groups/clubs

**17.** How can government and community contribute to the fight against cultism?

- Enforce laws against cult activities
- Community sensitization programs
- Provide safe recreational facilities for youths

**18.** Would you support campaigns or programs aimed at eradicating cultism in schools?

- Yes
  
- No

Thank you for your time and honest responses.