

**YOUTH CULTURE, COUNTER CULTURE AND CONTRACULTURE : A STUDY OF
YOUTH WITHIN UNIVERSITY OF BENIN ENVIRONMENT, EDO STATE, NIGERIA .**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **STEPHEN PROMISE MMESOMA** with

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty, the author and finisher of my faith, whose unfailing grace, wisdom, and strength have sustained me throughout this academic journey. I also dedicate this work to my wonderful family for their love, prayers, sacrifices, and unwavering support which have been my greatest motivation.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolving landscape of youth culture within the University of Benin environment, with particular attention to the rise of counterculture and contraculture among young people. Employing a quantitative research approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 380 students at the University of Benin, Ugbowo Campus. The research examines how youths express their identities through fashion, language, music, digital media, and political engagement, and how these expressions often challenge or reject mainstream cultural norms.

The university environment serves as a key space where young people interact, share ideas, question norms, and foster the emergence of new forms of cultural expression. Youths adopt or resist certain cultural practices based on social influences, dissatisfaction, and institutional pressures. The study reveals that youth identity is vibrant and multifaceted, shaped by global influences, digital media, societal expectations, and institutional contexts. While youth culture provides a platform for creativity and self-definition, the emergence of countercultural and contracultural behaviours often reflects a deeper sense of dissatisfaction with prevailing social norms and societal values.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Youth culture stands as one of the most dynamic and transformative forces in contemporary society, it shapes how young people perceive themselves and the world around them. It reflects the evolving identities, aspirations, and values of young people and embodies their unique beliefs, practices, and modes of expression. From fashion and music to digital behavior, language, and political attitudes, youth culture continuously reshapes the social landscape that young individuals seek, belong to and purpose, and identifies with (Clifton, 2024).

Closely related to this is the idea of counterculture, which represents an organized challenge or rejection of dominant societal norms and traditions. Countercultural behaviours emphasizes freedom, creativity, experimentation, and resistance to established authority and consumerist ideals (Fiveable, 2024). According to Roszak (1969), counterculture seeks not only to critique the existing order but to redefine counterculture pursue, reforms, and social renewal. In an attempt, Cutler (2006) distinguishes between subculture and counterculture, explaining that while subcultures modify mainstream norms to create alternatives, countercultures attempt to replace them entirely.

Contraculture, however, goes even further it completely rejects the prevailing social order, often calling for radical or revolutionary transformation.

The United Nations Youth Charter defines a youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24, while the Nigerian National Youth Policy (2019) sees youth as an individual with the age range of 15–35 years. This period is characterized by self-discovery, experimentation, and identity formation as individuals navigate competing influences from peers, media, and social institutions (Shakunthala, 2017). A youth, therefore is not just a person with passive recipients of cultural norms but one who actively participates in shaping and redefining them.

In the Nigerian context, youth culture and countercultural expressions have evolved significantly. The rise of creative subcultures such as the Alté movement, led by DRB, a musical group in Lagos which blends Afrobeat with other genres like hip-hop . The movement demonstrates young people's desire to redefine Nigerian music, fashion, and art on their own terms. Similarly, fan communities like the Marlians, associated with the Nigerian artiste Naira Marley, have become symbols of defiance against conventional moral codes and societal expectations. On a political level, movements such as #EndSARS epitomize youth-driven countercultural resistance, born from deep frustration of police brutality, poor governance, and social inequality (Ajibade, 2021). Within the Nigerian social system, where University of Benin subsist student youth-life. The university campus serves as a melting pot of cultural ideas, expressions, and movements that mirror a broader transformations in Nigerian youth culture. Individually students express their identities through dress, music, social activism, and online communities, all of which reveal the tensions between conformity and rebellion.

These evolving patterns of youth expression raise critical questions: Are Nigerian youths especially within university environments—using culture as a tool for social transformation, or are they drifting toward cultural disconnection and moral decline? The answer to this question holds significant implications for the nation’s future. This study therefore seeks to explore youth culture, counterculture, and contraculture among students of the University of Benin, examining their development, expressions, and implications for moral, social, and national progress.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Youths are an essential part of society’s development and advancement. They play a foundational role in shaping future progress (United Nations, 2007). Youth represent a generation with immense potential for innovation, leadership, and national transformation. Nevertheless, inspite of this promise, many young Nigerians continue to face persistent challenges that range from unemployment, political exclusion, police harassment, and moral disorientation (Taman, 2024; Abraham, 2020). These conditions have provokes a widespread frustration and alienation, which has prompted several youths to seek alternative systems of identity and sense of belonging through countercultural and contracultural movements.

While a significant portion of young people harness constructive socioeconomic platforms for advocacy, creativity, and civic engagement, some turn to negative expressions such as cybercrime, cultism, drug abuse, and radical activism. These divergent behaviours point to a growing disconnect among young and the failing of institutional structures youthful population. Despite numerous government efforts in youth empowerment, education reform, and entrepreneurship support, the root causes of these challenges still lingers.

Within the university environment particularly at the University of Benin these challenges are observable in students’ expressions of culture, fashion, social media behaviour, and activism.

The disparage culture mix and moral decline typifies a vivid example. Youth within the University reflects a testing ground for the cultural evolution taking place within the society. Consequently, there is a need to understand how youth within the University grows and how they interact to shape and form attitudes, and behaviours by examining the dynamics within University of Benin and also uncovering cultural forces that influences youth moral orientation and social identity, and their broader implications for Nigeria's development and future stability..

1.3 Research Questions

1. How has youth culture evolved among Nigerian students, particularly in the University of Benin?
2. What are the institutional factors that contribute to counterculture among youth in the university of Benin ?
3. What are the implications of youth counterculture for moral values and national development within the larger society?

1.4 Objectives Of The Study

The main objectives of this study is of youth culture, counterculture, and contraculture in the University of Benin, and to assess their impact on the wide youth-life in nation's social and moral development.

Specific objectives:

1. To ascertain the development and expressions of youth culture and counterculture among students in the University of Benin.
2. To examine the socio-economic and institutional factors influencing contraculture behavior among Nigerian youth.
3. To find the implications of youth countercultural movements for Nigeria's moral and national development.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

1. Counter culture does not exist among Nigerian students in the University of Benin .
2. Institutional inefficiency do not significantly influence the development of counterculture among students in the university of Benin
3. Youth counterculture expression has no significant impact on Nigeria's moral value and national development.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it offers a deeper understanding of the complex and evolving nature of youth culture within the University of Benin. In recent years, the tension between tradition and modernity has become increasingly evident among young people, who are influenced by global media trends and local socio-political realities. Gaining insight into these dynamics is essential for developing effective strategies to channel youthful energy towards national development rather than social instability.

The study will assist scholars and policymakers in understanding how cultural resistance and the formation of alternative identities influence the values and aspirations of Nigerian youth. It will further contribute to academic discourse in sociology, psychology, and youth studies by providing a contextual analysis of countercultural and contracultural behaviours in a developing society.

For policymakers and university administrators, the findings can inform the design of youth-focused programmes that encourage moral awareness, creativity, and civic responsibility. Ultimately, this research seeks to bridge the gap between youthful expression and societal expectations by fostering a balanced understanding of how young people can serve as agents of positive cultural and national transformation.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on undergraduate students, aged 15-35 years, in line with National Youth Policy (2019). It specifically examines students in the University of Benin as youth. It investigates cultural practices, values, and behavioral patterns reflected in areas such as fashion, music, social media engagement, and political activism.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Youth

The term “youth” refers to a social and age-based group often associated with energy, emotional growth, and the search for identity. In Nigeria, the National Youth Policy (2019) defines youth as people between the ages of 15 and 35, making up more than 60% of the country’s population. This age group is seen as both a great national asset and a potential risk depending on whether they are included in or excluded from development efforts (Akinwale, 2010). Around the world, youth is widely seen as a key stage where individuals are either successfully integrated into society or pushed to the margins (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). Youth are marked for innovation, growth and creativity with desire to change and influence the society.

According to Eugene and Okechukwu (2014), youth in any society are the engine of growth and development, a mass of people whose action and inaction can develop or destroy the hegemonies of the society. The youth represents both a challenge and opportunity for development, therefore youth are engine of growth and development. The concept of youth is therefore not a neutral description of young people, although it is often used as if it were. When not used critically and carefully, it tends to carry predominantly negative assumptions about the behaviour and character of young people, both as individuals and within groups (Jean 2015).

According to Jean (2015), youth is described as a period of transition, implying a journey from one state to another. This phase of transition is based on the idea that childhood and adulthood are distinct conditions, with fundamental differences between the two. The personal aspects of this transition are linked to biological maturity, while the social aspects relate to the shift from

dependence to independence. Personally, it involves progressing through puberty and adolescence towards sexual, emotional, and intellectual maturity. Socially, it involves evolving relationships with social institutions.

From a sociological perspective, Wyn and White (1997) argue that youth is not a fixed category, but rather a social process shaped by time, place, and social context.* This implies that youth is experienced differently across societies and historical periods, often characterised by key transitions such as completing education, entering employment, and attaining social independence.

Young people today are more connected than ever. Through social media and digital platforms, they are not only consuming information but also creating movements, influencing culture, and reshaping norms. Their global outlook and willingness to confront difficult issues signal a future filled with hope and innovation.

Culture

Culture is considered as a people's way of life which is centered on their shared belief, behavior, language, arts and other attributes which differentiates a group of people from another. Edward Tylor (1871) defined culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Culture may be classified as either material or non-material. Material culture refers to tangible, physical objects such as tools, clothing, technology, and architectural structures. In contrast, non-material culture encompasses intangible elements including values, norms, language, and symbols. Both aspects function collectively to offer guidelines for acceptable behaviour and to promote social cohesion.

According to Giddens (2006), culture is both a product and a determinant of social life. It embodies the collective identity of a group and plays a crucial role in the socialisation process, particularly among young people. Culture is dynamic rather than static, it evolves over time, shaped by internal innovation and external influences such as globalisation, migration, and media. Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the meaning of other people's behaviour (Spencer, 2008). Culture is the centre of society and without culture no society can even exist. It is the main difference between human being and animal. It is a heritage transmitted from one generation to another generation. It includes all the way and behaviour of culture. Culture is the entire way of life for a group of people (Patna Women's College, n,d).

Youth culture

Youth culture refers to the common experiences, beliefs, behaviors, and styles that young people share. It's often seen in things like music, fashion, slang, social views, and how they spend their free time. According to Brake (1985), youth culture provides a platform for autonomy from adult authority and mainstream norms. It also acts as a way for them to voice their frustration with the state of society, making it not just a mirror of their reality but also a tool for change.

One of the defining characteristics of youth culture is its propensity for innovation, resistance, and self-expression. Young people frequently develop and embrace cultural forms that challenge the norms and expectations of older generations. According to Brake (1985), youth subcultures emerge as symbolic responses to socio-economic conditions, representing both resistance to and negotiation with prevailing cultural standards. These subcultures are often manifested through distinctive styles, musical preferences, colloquial language, and collective behaviour, serving as

avenues through which young people articulate dissatisfaction, construct identity, and foster solidarity.

In Nigeria, youth culture is dynamic and influenced by globalization, urbanization, and indigenous traditions. From the Afrobeat subculture to “Alté” fashion trends, Nigerian youth have created symbolic and cultural spaces that articulate their identities and worldviews (Nwakanma, 2022). Nigerian youth increasingly engage in social issues, leveraging their cultural heritage to advocate for change. Nigeria’s vibrant youth culture embodies the harmonious interplay between rich heritage and future aspirations. As young Nigerians celebrate their diverse backgrounds while embracing modernity, they pave the way for a cultural renaissance honouring the past and inspiring the future (Abigail Ebuk, 2024). Youth culture is expressed across various spheres, including education, politics, religion, fashion, music, media, entertainment, and other aspects of everyday life.

Youth culture, as a multifaceted and evolving phenomenon, reflects the identities, experiences, and aspirations of young people globally. It influences personal development, collective identity, and social transformation through various forms of expression such as fashion, music, digital technology, and activism. Creating inclusive and supportive spaces for youth engagement is crucial in enabling meaningful contributions to society (Ochieng, 2021). According to Clifton (2024), political engagement is becoming an increasingly vital aspect of youth culture, as young people across the globe mobilise to confront critical social and environmental challenges such as climate change, ethnic injustice, and economic inequality. Youth-led movements including Fridays for Future, March for Our Lives, and various social justice initiatives have galvanised young individuals to take action, raise awareness, and demand meaningful change. Digital technologies and social media play a pivotal role in amplifying youth voices and enabling

collective action, allowing young activists to connect, organise, and collaborate across borders.

Counterculture

Counterculture refers to organized societal groups or movements whose norms and values fundamentally oppose the dominant culture. Roszak (1969) conceptualized counterculture as arising from youth disillusionment with institutional power, particularly during the 1960s in the United States. In the Nigerian context, counterculture manifests in forms such as music glorifying internet fraud, student cultism, and political satire that critiques authority (Obadare, 2010). The counterculture movement took shape in the mid-1960s, originally embraced by middle-class youth as a form of self-identification. It arose at the intersection of political activism and cultural rebellion, as young people began to challenge not only government policies but also societal norms and institutional authority. Key issues fueling this movement included systemic racism, the complicity of universities and corporations in perpetuating the Vietnam War, and restrictive campus regulations rooted in the *in loco parentis* doctrine. These broader political concerns were closely intertwined with more personal and cultural expressions of dissent such as resistance to conventional gender roles, experimentation with drug use, rejection of consumerism, communal lifestyles, and defiance through music, fashion, and appearance (Daniel, 1972). Ultimately, the counterculture became both a political statement and a lifestyle, reflecting deep dissatisfaction with the dominant social order. Such expressions often reflect a broader resistance to marginalization, corruption, and state inefficiency, serving as both protest and alternative cultural production (Hall and Jefferson, 1976).

Contraculture

Contraculture is closely related to counterculture, contraculture carries a more radical approach. Coined by Yinger (1960), the term refers to groups or movements that not only oppose dominant

societal norms but also aim to completely replace them with alternative value systems. Contra culture goes a step further than counterculture by seeking to replace existing societal norms with entirely different ones. While counterculture seeks reform or expression, contraculture is revolutionary in intent and often militant in practice. In Nigeria, this is evident in extremist groups like Boko Haram, which oppose the secular state and Western education, proposing a theocratic and purist Islamic order instead (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2006; Forest, 2012).

2.2 A Historical Overview Of Youth Culture In Nigeria

Youth culture represents a dynamic and evolving expression of society's shifting values, identities, and aspirations. Rooted in historical movements and continuously reshaped by contemporary influences, youth culture significantly contributes to the development of music, fashion, political engagement, and technological innovation. It serves as both a platform for self-expression and a vehicle for social change, often challenging established norms and advocating for reform. Historically, the Nigerian youths have played important roles in the country's political space, especially in the struggle for independence from colonialists and immediate post-independence political formulations (Jimoh, and Ali, 2016).

The 1980s witnessed radical student activism against military regimes, with movements like the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) championing democratic ideals (Oloruntoba, 2015). However, the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of the 1980s and 1990s, along with the erosion of state welfare systems, shifted youth energy toward survivalist subcultures such as "area boys," commercial motorcyclists ("okada" riders), and cybercriminals (Obadare, 2010).

According to Uche (2014), He stated that contemporary Nigerian youth culture is shaped by digital globalization. Fashion trends, music genres like Afrobeats, and social media influencers have redefined what it means to be young in Nigeria today creating an identity that is fluid,

expressive, and politically aware. These shows how youth culture in Nigeria has evolved through various socio-cultural engagements being influenced by political and socio-economic aspects of our society.

Most of the early political parties before independence were formed and dominated by Youths. Nigerian Youth formed organizations like the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), which challenged colonial rule and advocated for self-governance during the post-colonial period. Nigerian youths and the fight for independence and development from the liberation of African states to Pan-Africanism challenging the existing authority and norms in the diaspora. Youth organizations such as the West African Students Union (WASU) and Nigerian Students' Movement were critical in opposing colonialism (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

2.3 Contraculture and Counter culture in the Nigerian context

Countercultures are often described as radical groups of people who reject established social values and practices and who embrace a mode of life opposed to the mainstream. Countercultures emerge in the wake of dramatic economic and social developments. They are reactions to social dislocation and alienation from society (Cutler,2006)

Contraculture is most evident in radical and extremist youth movements. Boko Haram, founded in the early 2000s, embodies the contracultural rejection of secular education, Western democracy, and Nigerian statehood (Forest, 2012). The group has recruited thousands of youths using a mix of religious ideology, economic incentives, and indoctrination.

Similarly, militant separatist groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have increasingly attracted youth who feel disillusioned by ethno-political exclusion and systemic injustice. These movements reject national integration, often espousing violent resistance (Uche,

2019).

Counter culture in Nigeria emerged as a response to societal norms and mainstream culture, challenging established values and beliefs. Counterculture in Nigeria reflects a deliberate opposition to societal expectations. The glorification of illegal wealth acquisition, typified in “Yahoo Yahoo” culture, is a reaction to perceived systemic injustice. Many youths see legitimate hard work as unrewarded, whereas fraudsters are celebrated as “wise hustlers” (Ibrahim, 2020).

On university campuses, cultism has morphed from social brotherhoods into violent enclaves that often collaborate with corrupt political figures or serve as mercenaries during elections (Salawu, 2010). These groups oppose institutional norms and create alternative systems of power, status, and loyalty.

In music and fashion, Nigeria artiste like Naira Marley, Portable, and others have become icons of counterculture, popularizing themes of sexual freedom, disregard for law enforcement, and alternative moralities. Such figures provide cultural scripts for youths who feel excluded from Nigeria’s socio-economic order (Nwakanma, 2022).

Alté, pronounced locally as "uhl-teh" and cropped from the word alternative, is a concept described by Teezee a founding member of alté group. It include a music genre and fashion trends but it started as a way of being that champions individualistic and non-traditional modes of self-expression. The alté music is embodied with traditionally instruments which some of the genre's artists have been somewhat ostracized from mainstream music (Nelson, 2021).

2.4 Expression of Youth Culture and Counter culture in Nigeria Universities

Youth counterculture within Nigerian universities is characterized by students expressing alternative identities that challenge mainstream norms. Adekola and Oladejo (2020) note that

Nigerian university students actively engage in countercultural expressions through unique fashion styles, music preferences, and language. These elements function as symbolic tools for youths to assert their individuality and resist dominant societal expectations.

Countercultural expression among Nigerian university students are closely linked to moral challenges, with some young people adopting lifestyles that deviate from traditional cultural values. This deviation is often expressed through involvement in cultism, radical political activism, and alternative social groups, which challenge the established moral order within university settings (Okafor, 2018). Adewale (2017) examined various forms of youth counterculture in Nigerian universities, including cultism, political activism, and music subcultures. He emphasises that these expressions are complex and multifaceted, serving both as forms of resistance to societal pressures and as avenues through which young people negotiate their identities within a frequently hostile socio-economic environment.

According to Showbizafrika (2025) campus festivals reflect a cultural shift: young people are no longer waiting for mainstream platforms to validate their presence. They are building their own stages, on campus, on their phones, and on social media. What used to be casual parties are now well-orchestrated festivals, drawing thousands of students and tapping directly into the pulse of youth culture. From coordinated crew entries and skit-maker cameos to pop-up booths and viral dance challenges, the events showcase the creative confidence of young Nigerians.

2.5 Social Media Influence on the evolution of Youth identity

Social media is a platform where young Nigerians expresses their identities with great courage. Media have held a considerable and growing place in the social environment of industrial society in recent decades, transforming the perception that a people have of their place in the world and of their memberships and belonging, creating new paths for social relations, affecting lifestyles,

socialization, and communication processes, and the construction of identity itself (Pattaro, 2015). The role of social media in shaping youth identity is complex and not simply all good or all bad. Social media can provide youth with opportunities to engage with different aspects of their identity, connect with communities that affirm them, and allow them to find their voice within the noise of a digital society (Rehman, 2025)

The advent of social media has fundamentally altered youth culture in Nigeria. Platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram serve as arenas for identity formation, political dissent, and cultural creativity. The #EndSARS movement illustrated how social media enables decentralized mobilization, youth-led activism, and global solidarity (Afolayan and Ogunyemi, 2021).

Today, young people are skillfully merging conventional elements with contemporary influences, impacting fashion, music, and technology. Social media is pivotal in this transformation, serving as a platform for content creation, entrepreneurship, and more. At the same time, social media has also helped to spread negative behaviors. For instance, many comedy skits and influencer posts that praise internet fraud, show off wealth, or promote violence get millions of views. This kind of content can make these behaviors seem acceptable, especially to young people (Ojebuyi and Salawu, 2020). This shows the mixed effect of social media on youth culture, it can be both positive and negative, encouraging creativity and activism while also spreading harmful values.

2.6Theoretical Framework

This will be grounded by three theories, namely;

Symbolic Interactionism

Subcultural theory

Anomie Theory

Symbolic Interactionism

One of the theories under the heading of socialization theories is symbolic interaction theory. According to this idea, people's interpretations of things, actions, and events determine their meaning, and these interpretations vary from person to person (Asemah, 2016). Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead's work in the 20th century served as the foundation for this social psychology theory. Mead made a significant contribution to symbolic interactionism in 1934, but the work wasn't released until 1969, after his death. It was published following Mead's passing by Herbert Blumer, a pupil of Mead's. He summarized Mead's work's underlying presumptions. According to this idea, people's actions are determined by the meaning they give to various things, people, and events. This theory focuses on how individuals use interaction to create social structures and meaning. To put it another way, interactions between people produce meanings. Since the world is composed of social things with names and meanings that are established by society, meanings cannot truly be obtained without interaction or conversation. When individuals connect, engage, and converse over time, they come to a shared understanding of events in particular way (Asemah 2016).

Actions of people are based on symbolic meanings they find within any given situation. The action of interactions with one another is to create shared meaning. Language itself is a symbolic form, which is used to anchor meanings to the symbols (Changing Mind, 2015). According to Griffin 2009, cited in Bettwy 2011, Mead argued that as a society, we strive to assign meaning, and with this, we act towards people and things based on this meaning. Meaning is said to have arisen from interaction with other people using symbols, or otherwise known as language, as people tend to attach meaning to everything, whether spoken words, handshakes, body language,

etc. Blumer's key premises of symbolic interactionism are:

Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings They ascribe to those things.

The meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of the social interaction that one has with others and the society. Over time these meanings can grow, fade away, or remain neutral.

These meanings are handled and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters. This premise helps us to understand how to decode communication and social interaction. This is also where other theorists have argued that symbolic interactionism is psychological as it involves the mind and how we interpret and handle meaning.

Youth adopt and resist certain cultural expressions based on social meaning and public reaction. In the context of Nigerian youth, symbolic expressions such as fashion, music, slang, and digital behavior (e.g., TikTok trends, Twitter activism) are powerful tools for meaning-making and identity formation. These elements not only reflect youth culture but also act as resistance symbols against dominant social expectations (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1959). For instance:

EndSARs movement : The hashtag #EndSARS#, placards, chants, and even the clenched fist became symbols of resistance, unity, and collective identity among the youth. These were not just slogans, they carried deep social meanings shaped through interaction. The success of the movement was as a result of online platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram where youths interacted, exchanged experiences, and developed a common narrative of injustice, police oppression, and the demand for reform.

Alté movement: One of the most striking things about these Alte kids is their queer taste in

fashion; hairstyles, thrift fashion, experimental sounds, and slang used by Alté youth serve as interactional cues, helping them recognize each other and form in-groups. These symbols reflect status, rebellion, or creative independence. Alté youth negotiate meaning in opposition to what they perceive as restrictive societal expectations, religious conservatism, strict gender roles, or class-based taste. This shows how Nigerian youths through daily interactions and exposure come to a shared understanding of events in particular way (Asemah 2016).

Symbolic Interactionism provides an understanding of how societal institutions and government shape youth cultural expressions. Through laws, media portrayals, law enforcement, and school systems, authorities often assign meanings to youth actions, branding certain groups as “deviant” or “unruly.” These social labels impact how young people view themselves and can shape their responses, sometimes leading them to either conform to expectations or reject them through acts of resistance. This labeling process is crucial in understanding how society’s reactions may unintentionally sustain or intensify the behaviors they seek to control.

Subcultural Theory

Subcultural theory, developed by Al Cohen (1955) and others, argues that criminologists must understand criminal behavior as being rooted in the collective reality of a criminal subculture. Subcultural theory emphasizes how criminals, in their own view, do not act criminally. As members of subcultures, criminals have different behavioral requirements, values, and norms than those of mainstream society. These criminals conform to their own subculture. Thus, what is considered deviant or criminal for one person can be normal for another, even necessary, as it is prescribed by one’s own system of values and norms(Charlotte 2024).

Albert Cohen (1955) argued that many working-class boys aim to adopt middle-class goals and values but often lack the resources or opportunities to succeed by conventional means. This leads

to status frustration and a deep sense of failure and inadequacy when they cannot meet these societal expectations. In response, many of these youths reject mainstream norms and behaviors. Rather than continue striving for approval from a system they feel excluded from, they form delinquent subcultures. These groups create their own value systems, rewarding behaviors that oppose conventional standards and granting status to those who are most rebellious or deviant.

Subcultural theory emphasizes that social inequality leads to alternative value systems among marginalized groups, explaining how deviance can become normal and even necessary within those contexts. In Nigeria, movements like the #EndSARS protests, the rise of the Alté subculture (which embraces non-conformity in fashion, music, and self-expression), and even the growth of street gangs or cult groups, can all be seen as ways young people respond to a society that fails to recognize or support them. Within these subcultures, actions that are seen as deviant by wider society may actually carry social meaning and value such as resistance, solidarity, or self-worth.

Rather than simply labeling such behavior as problematic, subcultural theory encourages us to understand the deeper social and economic forces

that shape it, showing that these youth cultures often arise out of necessity, creativity, and a desire for belonging in a society that leaves many young people behind.

Anomie Theory

Anomie Theory was introduced by Emile Durkheim and later expanded it by others like Robert K. Merton. Robert K. Merton expanded the theory to explain why some people engage in deviant behavior, like crime, suggesting it often arises from a disjunction between societal goals and the legitimate means to achieve them (Charlotte, 2023).

Robert K. Merton's Anomie Theory expands Émile Durkheim's concept of anomie by linking deviant behavior to social structures that create unequal access to culturally approved goals. Crime is understood not as individual pathology but as a collective adaptation to blocked opportunities in a stratified society. Merton argues that when socially approved goals (such as economic success) are universally emphasized but the legitimate means to achieve them are unequally distributed, individuals experience strain that may result in deviant adaptations such as crime (Christian, 2025). Eze and Okeke (2023) interpret youth countercultural expressions as forms of social pathology rooted in economic disempowerment and institutional decay. Their study shows that, in Delta State, many young people reject formal societal values and norms because they believe the system has failed them.

The strength of Anomie Theory lies in its ability to link individual or group behaviour to broader structural conditions. It effectively explains how social breakdown, inequality, and institutional failure contribute to youth frustration and the adoption of countercultural practices. However, the theory is not without limitations. It tends to focus heavily on structural determinants while underplaying the role of individual agency, creativity, and psychological motivation. Moreover, it often views non-conformity strictly as deviance, thereby overlooking the potentially positive, expressive, or transformative aspects of youth counterculture such as political engagement, the creative arts, or social movements.

Anomie Theory remains a useful framework for this study, as it sheds light on how Nigerian university students, particularly those in institutions such as the University of Benin, express resistance to systemic challenges through the adoption of alternative identities. These countercultural expressions, shaped by socio-economic strain and institutional neglect, reflect broader tensions within Nigerian society and the struggles of youth to assert autonomy and

relevance in a rapidly changing world. Anomie theory provides a relevant framework for understanding the rise of youth countercultural behaviours. Students, particularly those experiencing economic hardship, inadequate institutional support, and political alienation, often find the societal promise of education and upward mobility unfulfilled. In response, some adopt alternative lifestyles, forms of dress, music, language, and even involvement in cultism and radical activism as expressions of frustration or rebellion. These behaviours represent attempts to redefine personal and group identity within an environment perceived as unjust or unresponsive.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study will adopt an exploratory research design, which is suitable for examining relatively underexplored social phenomena such as youth culture, counterculture, and contraculture within the academic environment of the University of Benin. The exploratory approach enables the researcher to gain preliminary insights into how young people express cultural behaviours and respond to prevailing societal norms. Given the dynamic and evolving nature of youth identity and expression, this design allows for a flexible yet systematic investigation, with a structured questionnaire serving as the primary instrument for data collection.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of undergraduate students of the University of Benin, Benin city. These students are representative of Nigerian youths who are diverse in their social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. University of Benin provides a microcosm of the broader Nigerian society where youth culture and countercultural expressions are actively reflected. According to the University of Benin official website the student undergraduate population is over 60,000 which includes the ekehan and the Ugbowo campuses respectively. Uniben.edu (2022).

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for this research will be 380 students, determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

Where

n = sample size

N = 60,000 (population size)

e = 0.05 (margin of error for 95% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{60,000}{1 + 60,000 (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{60,000}{1 + 150}$$

$$n = \frac{60,000}{151}$$

$$= 397.35$$

While Yamane's formula suggests a sample size of 397 for 95% confidence level and margin of error, this study adopts a slightly lower sample size of 380 due to incomplete questionnaires. The selected sample still ensures a reliable representation of the student population for the purpose of this study.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study adopted simple random sampling to select participant from student population of the University of Benin. A purposive sampling was also applied by including only respondents who fall within the youth age range of 15-35years, in accordance with the National Youth policy (2019). This approach ensured that all selected participants were appropriate for the study on youth culture, counter culture and contraculture.

3.4 Sources of Data

The study will rely on primary data. Data will be collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire.

3.5 Research Instrument

The main instrument for data collection will be a structured questionnaire designed to capture the objectives of the study. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

Section A: Demographic information of respondents (age, gender, level of respondents and faculty of respondents).

Section B: Questions relating to the research objectives.

Responses will be rated on a five-point likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree"

3.6 Method of Data Collection

Quantitative method would be used in the collection of data for this study

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected will be processed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were employed to summarise respondents' demographic data and responses to closed-ended questions. This made it easier to interpret the responses of the students and to identify trends and patterns relating to youth culture and Counter culture expression. This method was chosen because it provides a clear and straightforward summary of respondents' opinions and characteristics. The results were presented in tables for easy interpretation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from the field. The study investigated "Youth Culture, Counterculture, and Contraculture: A Study of Youth within University of Benin Environment Edo State, Nigeria. A total of three hundred and eighty (380) questionnaires were distributed to undergraduate students. All 380 copies were retrieved and found valid for analysis, representing a 100% response rate. The data is presented using frequency distribution tables and simple percentages, followed by the testing of hypotheses.

4.2 Analysis of Demographic Data

This section presents the personal information of the respondents.

Table 4.2.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	170	44.7
Female	210	55.3
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.2.1 reveals the gender distribution of the respondents. It shows that 210 respondents (55.3%) were female, while 170 respondents (44.7%) were male. This implies a fairly balanced representation of both genders in the study, with a slight female dominance.

Table 4.2.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15–19 years	40	10.5
20–24 years	220	57.9
25–29 years	90	23.7
30–35 years	30	7.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.2.2 presents the age range of the respondents. The majority, representing 57.9% (220 students), fall within the 20–24 years bracket. This is followed by 23.7% in the 25–29 years bracket. This indicates that the study effectively captured the core youth demographic relevant to the research.

Table 4.2.3: Distribution of Respondents by Faculty

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social Sciences	110	28.9
Arts	50	13.2
Management Sciences	60	15.8
Education	40	10.5
Life/Physical Sciences	70	18.4
Others	50	13.2
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.2.3 shows the distribution across faculties. The Faculty of Social Sciences had the highest number of respondents (28.9%), likely due to the study's sociological nature, but there was adequate representation from other faculties to ensure diverse opinions.

Table 4.2.4: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Study

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
100 Level	50	13.2
200 Level	80	21.1
300 Level	110	28.9
400 Level	100	26.3
500 Level	40	10.5
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.2.4 indicates that 300 Level and 400 Level students constituted the majority of the sample (28.9% and 26.3% respectively). This suggests that most respondents have spent enough time in the university environment and have a better understanding and experience of students lifestyle within the school environment.

Table 4.2.5: Distribution of Respondents by Religious Affiliation

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Christianity	250	65.8
Islam	115	30.3
Traditional Religion	5	1.3
None/Others	10	2.6
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.2.5 shows that 65.8% of the respondents are Christians, while 30.3% are Muslims. This reflects the general religious distribution within the region.

4.3 Objective 1: To Ascertain the development and expression of youth culture and counter culture among student in the University of Benin.

The first objective of the study is to analyse the development and expression of youth culture and counter culture among student in the University of benin. The focus of this section is to identiify the various ways in which youth culture can be expressed.

Table 4.3.1. Nigerian Youths today have developed a distinct culture that differs from older generations.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	195	51.3
Agree	140	36.8
Undecided	15	3.9
Disagree	20	5.3
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.3.1 The data shows that a very large majority believe Nigerian youths now practice a culture different from that of older generations. Many respondents strongly agree 195 (51.3%), indicating that they see a clear shift in youth identity, behaviour, and lifestyle. Another large group agree 140 (36.8%), making a total of 88.1% who acknowledge this cultural difference. A few respondents are undecided 15 (3.9%), showing uncertainty about the extent of the cultural shift, while some disagree 20 (5.3%) and strongly disagree 10 (2.6%), believing youth culture still shares similarities with traditional values. Overall, a distinct modern youth culture has clearly emerged in Nigeria.

Table 4.3.2: Youth culture in the University of Benin is largely shaped by fashion, music, and social media.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	210	55.3
Agree	130	34.2
Undecided	10	2.6
Disagree	20	5.3
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.3.2, shows that youth culture in University of Benin is heavily influenced by fashion, music, and social media. Many respondents strongly agree 210 (55.3%) that these elements shape youth behaviour and identity, while others agree 130 (34.2%), bringing total agreement to 89.5%. Some respondents are undecided 10 (2.6%), possibly because they pay less attention to youth trends. A few disagree 20 (5.3%) or strongly disagree 10 (2.6%), suggesting that they believe other factors influence youth culture more. Overall, pop culture and digital media are key drivers of youth behaviour in University of Benin.

Table 4.3.3: Exposure to global trends has significantly influenced the behavior and values of youths.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	180	47.4
Agree	150	39.5
Undecided	20	5.3
Disagree	20	5.3
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.3.3 shows that globalization has significantly influenced youth behaviour and values. Many respondents strongly agree 180 (47.4%) and others agree 150 (39.5%), producing a high total of 86.9% who believe global trends shape youth attitudes. Some respondents are undecided 20 (5.3%), showing uncertainty about how global culture interacts with local values. A small group disagree 20 (5.3%) or strongly disagree 10 (2.6%), believing Nigerian youths are still guided mainly by traditional values. Overall, global exposure strongly contributes to the changing values of Nigerian youths.

Table 4.3.4 The youth culture in Nigeria reflects a mix of traditional and modern values.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	100	26.3
Agree	160	42.1
Undecided	50	13.2
Disagree	40	10.5
Strongly Disagree	30	7.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.3.4 shows that youth culture in Nigeria reflects a blend of modern and traditional values. Respondents who strongly agree 100 (26.3%) and agree 160 (42.1%) together make 68.4%, showing that most see a hybrid cultural identity among youths. Some respondents are undecided 50 (13.2%), likely because the balance between modern and traditional values varies from person to person. Others disagree 40 (10.5%) or strongly disagree 30 (7.9%), believing modern influences have overshadowed traditional values completely. Overall, Nigerian youth culture is a mixture of both old and new practices.

Table 4.3.5. Peer influence plays a major role in shaping youth behavior and identity.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	200	52.6
Agree	140	36.8
Undecided	10	2.6
Disagree	20	5.3
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.3.5 shows that peer influence remains a major force shaping youth behaviour. Many respondents strongly agree 200 (52.6%) that friends significantly influence decisions, behaviour, and lifestyle choices, and others agree 140 (36.8%), giving a strong 89.4% total agreement. A small group is undecided 10 (2.6%), showing uncertainty about how much peers influence behaviour. A few disagree 20 (5.3%) or strongly disagree 10 (2.6%), believing youths make decisions independently. Overall, peer groups play a dominant role in shaping identity and behaviour among youths in University of Benin.

Tabl 4.4 Objective 2: To examine the socio-economic and institutional factors influencing counterculture behaviour among youth.

Objective two is focused on the socio-economic and institutional factors that contributes to countercultural behaviours among youth in the University of Benin.

Table 4.4.1: Many youths reject traditional cultural values and norms.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	120	31.6
Agree	140	36.8
Undecided	40	10.5
Disagree	50	13.2
Strongly Disagree	30	7.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.1 suggests that a significant portion of youths are moving away from traditional cultural expectations. Those who strongly agree 120 (31.6%) believe many youths now oppose customs such as modest dressing, cultural respect, and behavioural restraint. Respondents who agree 140 (36.8%) reinforce this view, giving a total of 68.4% acceptance. The undecided 40 (10.5%) may see some youths still upholding traditional norms. Those who disagree 50 (13.2%)

and strongly disagree 30 (7.9%) believe youths still follow traditional values to a reasonable extent. Overall, there is a clear drift away from traditional norms among Nigerian youths.shows that 68.4% of students perceive a rejection of traditional norms, signaling the growth of countercultural sentiments.

Table 4.4.2: Countercultural behavior such as unconventional dressing, music, and activism is common among University of Benin students.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	160	42.1
Agree	150	39.5
Undecided	30	7.9
Disagree	25	6.6
Strongly Disagree	15	3.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.2 confirms that countercultural behaviour is widespread on campus. Those who strongly agree 160 (42.1%) believe unconventional fashion, expressive music styles, and activism are now normalized. The group that agree 150 (39.5%) brings total agreement to 81.6%, indicating strong visibility of counterculture. Respondents undecided 30 (7.9%) may not engage

socially enough to observe these behaviours. Those who disagree 25 (6.6%) and strongly disagree 15 (3.9%) represent students who believe such behaviours are exaggerated or limited to certain groups. This table strongly establishes University of Benin as a space where counterculture thrives.

Table 4.4.3: Countercultural movements like “Alté culture” and “Marlians” represent youth resistance to societal expectations.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	145	38.2
Agree	135	35.5
Undecided	50	13.2
Disagree	30	7.9
Strongly Disagree	20	5.3
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.3 This table shows how contemporary youth movements reflect rebellion. Those who strongly agree 145 (38.2%) view Alté and Marlian culture as expressions opposing societal pressure and rigid cultural norms. Respondents who agree 135 (35.5%) add up to a total of 73.7%, showing strong recognition of youth resistance. The undecided 50 (13.2%) may see these movements as entertainment rather than rebellion. Those who disagree 30 (7.9%) and strongly disagree 20 (5.3%) believe these trends are harmless lifestyle choices, not resistance. Overall, many youths use cultural movements as tools of identity and resistance.

Table 4.4.4: Social media platforms promote countercultural ideas and behaviors among youths.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	190	50.0
Agree	150	39.5
Undecided	20	5.3
Disagree	15	3.9
Strongly Disagree	5	1.3
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.4 show that social media is the strongest driver of counterculture. Respondents who strongly agree 190 (50.0%) believe platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat spread rebellious lifestyles and ideas. Those who agree 150 (39.5%) bring total agreement to 89.5%, highlighting social media's powerful influence. The undecided 20 (5.3%) may not be active on social media. The small groups who disagree 15 (3.9%) and strongly disagree 5 (1.3%) may believe offline factors influence youths more. This table clearly shows that digital platforms shape modern youth behaviour and identity. With 89.5% agreement in Table 4.4.4, social media is identified as the primary vehicle for spreading countercultural ideas.

Table 4.4.5: Contraculture involves total rejection of the Nigerian social system and authority.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	80	21.1
Agree	100	26.3
Undecided	90	23.7
Disagree	70	18.4
Strongly Disagree	40	10.5
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.5 shows mixed reactions; only 47.4% agreed, while a significant 23.7% were undecided. This implies that the distinction between "Counterculture" (reform) and "Contraculture" (total rejection) may be subtle for some students.

Table 4.4.6: Some young people engage in illegal or deviant behavior (e.g., cybercrime, cultism) as a form of rebellion against the system.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	170	44.7
Agree	130	34.2
Undecided	30	7.9
Disagree	30	7.9
Strongly Disagree	20	5.3
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.6 shows concern over deviance among youths. Those who strongly agree 170 (44.7%) see illegal acts as rebellion triggered by frustration, unemployment, and moral decay. The group who agree 130 (34.2%) makes total agreement 78.9%. The undecided 30 (7.9%) may not have enough knowledge on deviant groups. Those who disagree 30 (7.9%) and strongly disagree 20 (5.3%) believe deviance is motivated by greed or peer influence, not rebellion. This table exposes how societal failure pushes youths into deviant alternatives. is revealing, with 78.9% agreeing that crime is sometimes viewed as rebellion. This is a strong indicator of Anomie in the society.

Table 4.4.7: The #EndSARS protest was a form of youth countercultural movement against injustice.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	250	65.8
Agree	100	26.3
Undecided	10	2.6
Disagree	15	3.9
Strongly Disagree	5	1.3
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.7 confirms youth activism as countercultural resistance. Those who strongly agree 250 (65.8%) see #EndSARS as rebellion against corruption and oppression. Respondents who agree 100 (26.3%) bring total support to 92.1%. The undecided 10 (2.6%) may not have participated in the protests. Those who disagree 15 (3.9%) and strongly disagree 5 (1.3%) view the protest as purely political or economic. This table highlights the political force of youth counterculture in Nigeria.

Table 4.4.8: Unemployment has contributed to the rise of countercultural behaviour among youths.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	220	57.9
Agree	120	31.6
Undecided	10	2.6
Disagree	20	5.3
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.8 Most respondents believe unemployment drives counterculture. Those who strongly agree 220 (57.9%) see economic frustration as pushing youths into alternative lifestyles. The group that agree 120 (31.6%) brings total agreement to 89.5%. The undecided 10 (2.6%) may be unsure about socio-economic causes. Those who disagree 20 (5.3%) and strongly disagree 10 (2.6%) may believe cultural influences matter more than economic issues.

Table 4.4.9: Political exclusion and lack of youth representation encourage rebellion and resistance.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	180	47.4
Agree	140	36.8
Undecided	20	5.3
Disagree	25	6.6
Strongly Disagree	15	3.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

In Table 4.4.9, Those who strongly agree 180 (47.4%) feel youths are marginalized politically. The group who agree 140 (36.8%) makes total agreement 84.2%. The undecided 20 (5.3%) likely lack interest in politics. Those who disagree 25 (6.6%) and strongly disagree 15 (3.9%) feel rebellion has more cultural or economic roots. Political exclusion is a major trigger of resistance among youths.

Table 4.4.10: Weak educational and moral systems have failed to shape youth values positively.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	150	39.5
Agree	150	39.5
Undecided	30	7.9
Disagree	30	7.9
Strongly Disagree	20	5.3
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.10 highlight failures in youth moral development. Those who strongly agree 150 (39.5%) believe that institutions no longer effectively guide youth behaviour. The group who agree 150 (39.5%) brings agreement to 79%. The undecided 30 (7.9%) may see mixed results in the school system. Those who disagree 30 (7.9%) and strongly disagree 20 (5.3%) may believe the family plays a stronger role than schools. This table shows education and moral systems have weakened in shaping youth values.

Table 4.4.11: Institutional corruption makes youths lose faith in the government and societal norms.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	230	60.5
Agree	110	28.9
Undecided	10	2.6
Disagree	20	5.3
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.11 captures one of the strongest influencers of counterculture. Those who strongly agree 230 (60.5%) believe corruption destroys youth trust in national institutions. The group who agree 110 (28.9%) brings total to 89.4%. The undecided 10 (2.6%) may not fully understand governance issues. Those who disagree 20 (5.3%) and strongly disagree 10 (2.6%) believe other factors affect youth behaviour. Corruption is a leading cause of rebellion and resistance among Nigerian youths.

Table 4.4.12: Family upbringing has a strong influence on the moral and cultural orientation of youths.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	190	50.0
Agree	130	34.2
Undecided	20	5.3
Disagree	25	6.6
Strongly Disagree	15	3.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.4.12 show that the family remains a major shaper of youth values. Those who strongly agree 190 (50.0%) believe the home environment determines youth behaviour. Respondents who agree 130 (34.2%) bring total agreement to 84.2%. The undecided 20 (5.3%) may come from unstable families. Those who disagree 25 (6.6%) and strongly disagree 15 (3.9%) believe peers and media have stronger influence. Despite modernization, family upbringing still plays a central role in shaping youth culture.

4.5 Objective 3: To find the implications of youth countercultural movements Nigeria's for moral and national development .

The last objective of this study is focused on the implications of youth counterculture for moral value and national development within the larger society. This section evaluate both the negative and positive implications of youth culture.

4.5.1 Youth culture has the potential to promote innovation and social progress in Nigeria.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	175	46.1
Agree	155	40.8
Undecided	20	5.3
Disagree	20	5.3
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.5.1 The data reveals that most respondents believe countercultural believes that youth culture can promote innovation and social progress in Nigeria. A large number strongly agree

175 (46.1%) while many others agree 155 (40.8%), forming a combined 86.9% majority that views youth culture as a form of innovation in Nigeria. Some respondents are undecided 20 (5.3%), showing uncertainty about the positive impacts of youth culture , while a few disagree 20 (5.3%) and strongly disagree 10 (2.6%), believing youth culture represents moral decline rather than mere modernisation. Overall, countercultural behaviour is increasingly viewed as a form of social progress rather than a threat to Nigeria’s traditional moral foundation.

Table 4.5.2: Countercultural movements can serve as catalysts for social reform and justice.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	160	42.1
Agree	140	36.8
Undecided	40	10.5
Disagree	25	6.6
Strongly Disagree	15	3.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.5.2 shows that 78.9% believe counterculture is useful for reform, validating its role in checking societal excesses.

Table 4.5.3 Contracultural behaviour threatens Nigeria’s moral values and stability.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	140	36.8
Agree	120	31.6
Undecided	40	10.5
Disagree	50	13.2
Strongly Disagree	30	7.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.5.3 reveals the perceived danger; 68.4% agreed that extreme behaviors threaten stability, acknowledging the double-edged nature of this phenomenon.

Table 4.5.4: Nigerian youths can be reoriented toward constructive national development through education and empowerment.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	200	52.6
Agree	140	36.8
Undecided	20	5.3
Disagree	15	3.9
Strongly Disagree	5	1.3
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.5.4 is optimistic, with 89.4% believing in the potential for reorientation and positive change.

Table 4.5.5: Cultural awareness programs in universities can help balance freedom of expression with moral responsibility.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	170	44.7
Agree	160	42.1
Undecided	20	5.3
Disagree	20	5.3
Strongly Disagree	10	2.6
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Analysis:

Table 4.5.5 concludes the descriptive analysis with 86.8% support for institutional intervention through cultural programs.

4.6 Test of Hypotheses

This section tests the three research hypotheses formulated in Chapter One.

Hypothesis One

Counter culture does not exist among Nigerian students in the University of Benin .

Table 4.6.1: Pearson Correlation for Socio-Economic Challenges and Countercultural Behavior

Variables	N	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Socio- Economic Challenges	380	1		
Countercultural Behavior	380	0.482**	0.000	Significant

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation:

Table 4.6.1 shows a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.482 with a probability value (Sig.) of 0.000.

Conclusion: There is a significant positive relationship between socio-economic challenges and the rise of countercultural behavior among youth. This implies that as economic hardship increases, countercultural tendencies also increase.

Hypothesis Two

Institutional inefficiency and political exclusion do not significantly influence the development of contracultural movements in Nigeria.

Table 4.6.2: Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.551 ^a	0.304	0.299		0.8012

a. Predictors: (Constant), Institutional Inefficiency, Political Exclusion

Table 4.6.3: ANOVA for Regression

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	145.82	2	72.91	80.52	0.000 ^b
Residual	337.18	377	0.89		
Total	483.00	379			

b. Dependent Variable: Contracultural Movements

Interpretation:

Table 4.6.3 The R Square value of 0.304 indicates that institutional inefficiency and political exclusion account for 30.4% of the variance in contracultural movements.

Conclusion: Institutional inefficiency and political exclusion significantly influence the development of contracultural movements in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three

Youth counterculture expression has no significant impact on Nigeria's moral value and national development.

Table 4.6.4 Pearson Correlation for Counterculture and National Development

Variables	N	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Countercultural Expression	380	1		
Moral & National Development	380	0.385**	0.000	Significant

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation:

Table 4.6.4 indicates a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.385 and a p-value of 0.000. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected.

4.7 Discussion of Findings

4.7.1 Overview

The analysis reveals that youth culture in the University of Benin is vibrant, diverse, and influenced by multiple social forces including media, peer networks, and institutional structures. Respondents recognized the growing shift toward expressive and independent youth identities, though not without accompanying tensions regarding morality and social order.

4.7.2 Socio-Economic Challenges and Counterculture

The first hypothesis showed a strong and positive relationship between socio-economic hardship and countercultural behavior. This supports the assumption that when legitimate opportunities are limited, youths develop alternative forms of identity and expression. The finding aligns with **Merton's Anomie Theory**, which argues that strain resulting from blocked access to societal goals often leads individuals to create non-conventional means of achieving recognition or self-worth. Within the university context, this manifests in the form of distinct dressing styles, resistance movements, and non-conformist ideologies.

4.7.3 Institutional Inefficiency, Political Exclusion and Contraculture

The regression result confirmed that weak institutions and political marginalization significantly contribute to contracultural tendencies. Students who perceive governance systems as corrupt or unresponsive are more likely to adopt radical postures that reject established norms altogether. This aligns with **Subcultural Theory**, which holds that deviant subcultures emerge in response to systemic exclusion from mainstream opportunities. In Nigeria's case, the persistent feeling of disillusionment among educated youths fosters opposition to authority and, in extreme forms, leads to the creation of counter-societies or contracultural movements.

4.8.4 Counterculture Expression and National Development

The third hypothesis revealed a dual relationship: counterculture is both a vehicle for reform and a perceived threat to moral stability. This nuanced outcome reflects the ambivalence of youth

identity in contemporary Nigeria. Many young people use countercultural platforms like music, fashion, social media, or activism to challenge injustice and express creativity. However, others express discontent through destructive or anti-social channels. This finding is consistent with **Symbolic Interactionism**, which explains that meanings are socially constructed and that youth symbols may be interpreted positively or negatively depending on context.

To ascertain the development and expressions of youth culture: The study confirmed that youth culture at UNIBEN has evolved into a distinct social force shaped by both local and global influences.

To examine the socio-economic and institutional factors influencing contracultural behavior: Results established a strong link between unemployment, corruption, exclusion, and rebellious youth tendencies.

To find the implications of youth counterculture for national development: Findings showed that while counterculture challenges social norms, it also provides a platform for innovation, reform, and self-expression among Nigerian youth.

4.3 Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that youth culture is not merely a trend but a social phenomenon reflecting the broader realities of inequality, disillusionment, and hope. Youths are redefining their identities through expressions that oscillate between creativity and resistance. Rather than viewing these behaviors as purely deviant, they should be understood as responses to social conditions and as potential tools for reform and national renewal.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as the concluding segment of the research endeavor, providing a comprehensive synthesis of the entire study titled "Youth Culture, Counterculture, and Contraculture: A Study of Youth within University of Benin Environment, Edo State, Nigeria ," with a specific focus on the University of Benin. Having navigated through the background of the study, the review of relevant literature, the methodological framework, and the detailed presentation of data in the preceding chapters, this section aims to distill the empirical findings into a coherent narrative. It interprets the statistical evidence gathered from three hundred and eighty respondents to draw logical conclusions regarding the current trajectory of youth behavior in Nigeria. Furthermore, this chapter proffers actionable recommendations directed at various stakeholders including the government, university administrators, parents, and the youths themselves to address the challenges identified and harness the potential of youth culture for national development.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The empirical investigation yielded profound insights into the sociological dynamics of youth behavior within the university environment. The demographic analysis revealed a balanced participation of both male and female students, with the majority falling within the vibrant age bracket of 20 to 24 years. This confirms that the study effectively captured the perspectives of the core youth population who are most active in shaping and consuming contemporary culture.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the confirmation that Nigerian youths have evolved a distinct cultural identity that stands in stark contrast to that of older generations. The

data overwhelmingly suggests that this unique youth culture is not indigenous in isolation but is a hybrid product of globalization. Respondents affirmed that fashion, music, and social media are the trinity of forces shaping this new identity. The study found that the digital space has become the primary arena for socialization, where global trends are assimilated and repurposed to fit the local Nigerian context. This supports the notion that the youth culture in the University of Benin is a melting pot of traditional values and modern, westernized expressions, although there is a palpable tension as modern values increasingly overshadow traditional norms.

In the realm of counterculture and contraculture, the findings were particularly revealing. The study established that a significant portion of the student population rejects traditional cultural norms, viewing them as obsolete or restrictive. This rejection manifests in "countercultural" behaviors such as unconventional dressing, the adoption of distinct slang, and the popularity of movements like the "Alté" subculture and the "Marlian" movement. The analysis showed that these are not merely entertainment trends but are symbolic forms of resistance against societal expectations. More critically, the research identified a darker strand of "contraculture" a total rejection of societal authority. A disturbing but vital finding was that a substantial number of respondents perceive deviant behaviors, including cybercrime and cultism, not necessarily as criminal acts, but as forms of rebellion against a system they view as failed. This aligns with the Anomie theory, suggesting that when legitimate paths to success are blocked, youths innovate through deviance.

The study also unearthed the root causes driving these behaviors. It was unanimously agreed by the respondents that socio-economic factors are the primary catalysts for youth resistance. Unemployment and poverty were identified as the most potent drivers of countercultural behavior. The narrative that emerged from the data is one of frustration; young people feel

economically marginalized and politically excluded. The high level of agreement regarding institutional corruption indicates a deep-seated loss of faith in the government and societal norms. This institutional failure has created a vacuum that countercultural groups fill, offering alternative hierarchies and systems of validation for disenchanting youths. The #EndSARS protest was cited by the vast majority of respondents as the quintessential example of this dynamic—a moment where youth culture mobilized to confront systemic injustice directly.

Despite these challenges, the implications of the findings were not entirely negative. The study found a strong consensus that youth culture holds immense potential for innovation and social progress. The respondents believed that the same energy used for resistance could be channeled into creativity and national development if the right environment is provided. However, there was also a sober acknowledgment that without intervention, extreme contracultural behaviors pose a credible threat to Nigeria's moral fabric and stability.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the extensive findings of this research, it is the conclusion of this study youths are currently at a critical crossroads. The phenomenon of youth culture in the University of Benin is a reflection of the broader contradictions within the Nigerian state. It is a culture born out of necessity and a coping mechanism for a generation that feels abandoned by the institutional structures meant to support them.

The study concludes that "Counterculture" is a rational response to socio-structural strain. It is not merely a rebellion without cause; it is a demand for recognition, economic inclusion, and social justice. The shift from "Counterculture" (seeking reform) to "Contraculture" (seeking destruction or total rejection) is driven directly by the level of alienation the youths feel. As long as unemployment remains high and political exclusion persists, the youth will continue to drift

away from mainstream societal norms, creating parallel societies where the rules of the state do not apply.

The study concludes that the youth possesses an extraordinary resilience and capacity for innovation. The vibrancy of their youth culture seen in music, technology, and advocacy demonstrates that youths are ready to lead. The conflict arises only because the old systems fail to accommodate their new realities. Therefore, the future of the Nigerian youth depends on the willingness of the older generation and the government to bridge the gap, moving from a posture of suppression to one of engagement and empowerment.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This research makes a distinct contribution to the field of Sociology and Anthropology by providing empirical evidence on the evolving nature of youth resistance in a Nigerian university context. Unlike general studies on youth deviance, this research specifically dissects the nuances between "Counterculture" (constructive resistance) and "Contraculture" (destructive rejection), offering a more granular understanding of youth unrest. It empirically validates the relevance of Robert Merton's Anomie Theory and Subcultural Theory in explaining contemporary Nigerian issues like "Yahoo-Yahoo" and political activism, thereby enriching the academic discourse on social deviance and youth sociology.

5.5 Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions drawn, the following detailed recommendations are proffered to guide policy and social action:

Government and Policy Makers:

The primary recommendation addresses the root cause of youth agitation: the economy. The government must move beyond rhetoric and implement concrete economic empowerment

policies. This goes beyond temporary handouts; it requires the creation of an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship, particularly in the creative and digital industries where the youth have already shown dominance. Furthermore, political inclusivity is non-negotiable. The political class must open up the space for genuine youth representation. When young people see themselves represented in power, the allure of "contracultural" rebellion diminishes, replaced by constructive civic participation.

University Administration:

The university environment plays a crucial role in shaping the mindsets of young people. It is recommended that the University of Benin and similar institutions revamp their approach to student affairs. Instead of merely policing morality, the university should create platforms for cultural expression. "Cultural Awareness Programs" should be integrated into the General Studies (GST) curriculum, not to preach dogma, but to facilitate open debates on ethics, national identity, and the balance between modern freedom and traditional responsibility. Guidance and Counseling units must also be equipped to deal with modern challenges such as digital addiction and the psychological pressure of social media lifestyles.

Parents and Families:

The family unit remains the first agent of socialization. Parents must recognize that the world their children live in is vastly different from their own. The authoritarian parenting style of the past often pushes youths toward secretive, contracultural groups. Therefore, parents are encouraged to adopt a more dialogic approach, engaging their children on the realities of the internet and peer pressure, and providing a moral anchor that is based on understanding rather than fear.

The Youths:

Finally, the youths themselves must recognize the power they hold. While their frustration with

the system is justified, the resort to destructive contraculture (such as crime or drug abuse) ultimately harms their future more than it harms the oppressor. Youths are encouraged to channel their countercultural energy into advocacy, innovation, and political organizing. The creativity used in fashion, music, and social media should be leveraged to build legitimate enterprises and pressure groups that demand accountability without destroying the social fabric.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

While this study was conducted with improved methodological rigor, it was not without limitations. The geographical scope was restricted to the University of Benin, which, while representative, may not capture the full diversity of youth experiences in other environment.. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires means that some respondents might have been hesitant to fully disclose their involvement in deviant contracultural activities due to fear of stigmatization. Time constraints also limited the researcher's ability to employ qualitative methods like Focus Group Discussions, which could have provided deeper psychological insights into the motivations behind specific youth behaviors.

5.7 Suggestions for Further Studies

To build upon the findings of this research, it is suggested that future scholars consider a comparative analysis of youth culture across different geopolitical zones in Nigeria to understand how regional factors influence counterculture. Furthermore, a longitudinal study tracking a cohort of students from their first year to graduation would provide invaluable insight into how the university environment specifically alters cultural values over time. Finally, more research is needed into the specific role of the Nigerian music industry as a primary agent of socialization, investigating how lyrical content directly correlates with behavioral shifts among undergraduates.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Title: Youth Culture, Counterculture, and Contraculture: Where whither the Nigerian Youth (A Case Study of University of Benin Students)

Section A: Demographic Information

(Please tick [✓] where appropriate)

1. Gender:

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. Age:

☐ 15–19 years

☐ 20–24 years

☐ 25–29 years

☐ 30–35 years

3. Faculty:

☐ Arts

☐ Social Sciences

☐ Management Sciences

☐ Education

☐ Engineering

☐ Law

☐ Life Sciences

☐ Physical Sciences

☐ Pharmacy

☐ Medical Sciences

☐ Environmental Sciences

☐ Others (specify): _____

4.Level of Study:

☐ 100 Level

☐ 200 Level

☐ 300 Level

☐ 400 Level

☐ 500 Level

5.Religious Affiliation:

☐ Christianity

☐ Islam

☐ Traditional Religion

☐ None

☐ Others (specify): _____

Section B: Youth Culture in Nigeria

(Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by ticking one option)

Key:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

S/N	STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1	Nigerian youths today have developed a distinct culture that differs from older generations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Youth culture in is largely shaped by fashion, music, and social media.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Exposure to global trends has significantly influenced the behavior and values of Nigerian youths.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	The youth culture in University of Benin reflects a mix of	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	traditional and modern values.					
5	Peer influence plays a major role in shaping youth behavior and identity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
S/N	STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
6	Many Nigerian youths reject traditional cultural values and norms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Countercultural behavior such as unconventional dressing, music, and activism is common among University of Benin students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Countercultural movements like “Alté culture” and “Marlians” represent youth resistance to societal expectations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	Social media platforms promote countercultural ideas and behaviors among youths.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Contraculture involves total rejection of the Nigerian social system and authority.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Some young people engage in illegal or deviant behavior (e.g., cybercrime, cultism) as a form of rebellion against the system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	The #EndSARS protest was a form of youth countercultural movement against injustice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
S/N	STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
13	Unemployment has contributed to the rise of countercultural behavior among Nigerian youths.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Political exclusion and lack of youth representation encourage rebellion and resistance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Weak educational and moral systems have failed to shape youth values positively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	Institutional corruption makes youths lose faith in the government and societal norms.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	Family upbringing has a strong influence on the moral and cultural orientation of youths.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

S/N	STATEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
18	Youth culture has the potential to promote innovation and social progress in Nigeria.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	Countercultural movements can serve as catalysts for social reform and justice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	Contracultural behavior threatens Nigeria's moral values and stability.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21	Nigerian youths can be reoriented toward constructive national development through education and empowerment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	Cultural awareness programs in universities can help balance freedom of expression with moral responsibility.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐