

A QUEST FOR APPRECIATION OF CERTAIN INSTIGATORS OF STRIFE AMONG STUDENTS IN CROSS RIVER STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, AKAMKPA

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Abstract

Across tertiary institutions in Nigeria, strife among students had become almost a normalized abnormally considering the frequency of its occurrence on campuses. Thus, the attendant effect of strife on students as future leaders and drivers of the economy is of great concern. Hence the study unraveled the instigators of strife in tertiary institutions with Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa as a case study. The study relied on primary data sources through the administration of questionnaire to respondents to ascertain what constituted strife instigators in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Recommendations were made according to the findings of the study.

Keywords: Instigators, strife, tertiary institutions, cultism, students

1.1 Introduction

The issue of strife in tertiary institutions in Nigeria and Cross River State College of Education in particular appears to become a normalized abnormally with regards to the frequency of its occurrence amongst students in and outside the campus environs. However, according to the advanced Oxford learners dictionary (7th edition) strife is seen as an angry or violent disagreement between two people or groups of people. Students from different belligerent groups such as the Vikings, VI queens, Clans, Black axe, White Angels, Black brazier and the emerging Malians etc, had at different occasions been caught with weapons on campus with intention of attacking one another, while some are caught in action.

Considering that tertiary institutions are the pathfinder of every modern civilization and economy of States in the 21st Century, concerns about the efficiency of their products toward the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in areas of education, health and security, cannot be underestimated. Considering also that the future of every society the world over, lies in the youths with a larger percentage found in these institutions. Then, if it is true as suggested by most scholars that the future of the Nigerian society's development is in the hands of these students channeled out from these institutions, what happens in the course of the training of these students as identified in the issue of strife as seen in schools today affect the entire fabrics of the society.

What then is the future of the society when the people who are supposedly the leaders and the bastion of the expected civilization and technological advancement from the supposed knowledge acquired are so deviant, hence deny the society of the supposed benefits of the training acquired from the tertiary institutions to drive the economy. Thus, an appreciation of what could constitute instigators of strife among students using the Cross River State College of Education as a case study becomes germane and expedient for a study of this nature to be carried out particularly as the country is faced with a plethora of security challenges across the six geo-political zones of the country.

Given the above scenario, activities in the academic community which comprise of academic, non-academic and students become disrupted as everyone runs for his dear life prompting the introduction of the police force on routine patrol on campus to forestall breakdown of law and order. Thus, it has been observed that strife has largely contributed to the marginal performance of students as well as the ineffectiveness of staff, hence a huge challenge to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria have been mandated with different forms of disturbances. These disturbances could trace largely to the late 1970s of the "Ali Must Go" riot carried out by students of tertiary institutions across the federation. Since this event of "Ali Must Go" pockets of strife among students of tertiary institutions have become militant and incrementally violent in approach with the death of Akintunde Ojo and eight other students in Zaria while protesting over the increase in fees and meal ticket as reported by the committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR, 1999).

The sharing of information on nocturnal and clandestine activities of student on campus has been a challenge like every other security challenge in the country to tertiary institutions management. According to Buratai (2019:287), "Internal security operations, including the fight against Boko Haram, require reliable information and intelligence on the activities, locations, hierarchy and intents of the adversary to enable security agencies take decisive and timely action".

However, strife in tertiary institutions today has become incrementally catastrophic following the attendant carnage recorded in the loss of both life and property whenever clandestine and nocturnal illegal student groups as mentioned above, have their disagreement, life threatening weapons such as machetes, pestles, dagger, charms are apprehended by the school security for interrogation and the eventual hand over to the police authority for further necessary action. As Mgbekem (2004:332), "secret cults are dreaded. Lecturers and students feel insecure and panic ridden as a result of cult activities in university campuses. Cult are destructive, they cause forceful termination of human life and destruction of property, as well as being a danger to socio-economic prosperity of a country".

Meanwhile, most alarming and of great concern in contemporary tertiary institutions is the nature and form which strife has taken. In most cases not only students themselves are the only victims of such disturbances but lecturers inclusive. A survey on students' restiveness and act of strife on campus particularly in the Cross River State college of Education leaves much to be desired of the students following available statistics on the number of students arrested with arms and charms as well as the high number of cult groups on campus confirmed by information extracted from student during arrest and interrogation.

Considering the importance of tertiary education as the driver of every modern economy through the provision of middle, higher and super manpower production, continuous strife as seen in schools today, if not checked, may become a nut in the wheel of the country's development in no distant future. Given the importance of tertiary education in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the areas of education, health and security, studies on strife amongst student becomes expedient in order to reveal its indicators to prevent future occurrence.

However, to unraveled this challenge as pointed out above, the Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa, as a microcosm of the entire tertiary institutions in Nigeria, is considered lucid to periscope this challenge. In this regard therefore, the study interrogates;

- What could constitute strife among students
- Whether increase in student enrolment could be a causative factor
- How strike actions by both academic and non-academic staff unions have encouraged strife.

1.3 Cultism (Secret Cults)

According to Igwe (2007:99), cultism has to do with “the beliefs and practices of cults, usually secret and illegal pseudo-religious but ungodly fraternities which seek self-defined but anti-social meanings to life and promote their aims by violence, intimidation, sometimes outright robbery and other criminal activities”.

However, cultism has become a tropical issue and a challenge towards the academic achievement of tertiary institutions students. The need for these monsters to be destroyed in Nigeria tertiary institutions can never be compromised following its devastating on campuses and the society at large. As Mgbekem (2004:330), “Secret cults are secret in all their ramifications. They exhibit obscurity and non-identity. The members do not want people to know about them and their activities”. Thus, this constitute the character of secret cults, as they are always clandestine and nocturnal in their operations.

Meanwhile, from the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), secret cults are defined as thus;

Associations, whether registered or not, but use secret signs, oaths, rites or symbols formed with the aim of promoting a cause, the purpose of which is to promote the interest of members and aid one another, under any circumstances, without due regard to merit, fair play or justice to the detriment of the legitimate interest of those who are not members.

Following the antithetical development arising from strife among students in tertiary institutions, available statistics as at the time of this research, shows the number of students arrested with arms and charms from different cult groups by the security operatives of the Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa as seen in table 1 below;

Names of cult groups	No. Arrested	Date of Arrest	Year of Arrest
Vikings	5	10 th October	2015
	9	9 th February	2015
Black Axe	2	22 nd July	2015
Clans	1	4 th March	2016
Viqueens	2	26 th May	2016
	2	8 th August	2016
Malians	1	10 th August	2016
White Angels	1	12 th August	2016
Black Brazier	1	14 th September	2016
Daughters of Jezebel	1	22 nd September	2016
	1	19 th September	2017
	1	13 th November	2017
	3	24 th November	2017
	2	15 th March	2021
	3	16 th July	2021
	3	21 st July	2021
	2	13 th December	2021

Source: OGON, S. O Survey report

1.4 Instigators of Strife

Findings by this study revealed the following factors as the major instigators of strife among tertiary institution students; as categorized by (Mgbekem 2004:323):

- Man's nature of aggressiveness and revenge is a likely cause of strife amongst students. Some students join secret cult in order to revenge an offence committed against them. They are unwilling to forgive offenders. Hence, the only opportunity open to them is to join secret cult to facilitate vengeance.
- The-not-do-well students: this category of students in different dimensions cause others to dislike their studies and lure them to joining secret cults, so that they both will belong to a disappointed group. This group of persons are those who will be happy to join secret cult as soon as they are expelled from the university. Cult practice becomes alternative to university education. Some of the students that are suspended or expelled from the university hang around with their friends to cause students to engage in rioting in order to destabilize activities. Students who listen to these trouble shooters often obey and get recruited into secret cults.
- Rivalry among students: male students mostly are involved in rivalry in girls for friendship. In the quest to get a girl, who ordinarily would turn down the request for friendship from a particular boy, such a boy might join a rival cult perceived to be stronger in activities and fame for protection purpose. Hence, many boys join secret cults to enjoy the fame and protection of a particular cult.
- Moral decadence in the society: the 21st Century global system is fast changing with greater interconnectivity facilitated by information communication technology, thus exposing students to wrong values. Many students observe and imitate what is happening in societies across the global space through the electronic media (android phones) at the comfort of their hostels. Immoral values are imbibed instead of inculcating moral and decent values. Student in contemporary times think that to do bad is profitable than doing good. This explain why students feel no qualms in joining secret cults. They copy and imitate what they watch in Nollywood and Hollywood films.

- Quest for cheap popularity: most students erroneously belief that the easiest way to be popular on campus is to join cults. When some students are seen as leaders of their cult group with titles like “Capon” and hail amongst his peers, it sends wrong signals of popularity to junior students who may not be aware of the negative consequences of such popularity. When such students are leading in brutality, violence, killing and vandalism as a process of “value and greatness” amongst students, they regard those who do not belong to cults as cowards, hence to be popular and not to be branded as cowards, they join secret cults.

1.4 Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. Data was gathered from 223 respondents comprising teaching, non-teaching staff and student of CROSS River State College of Education Akamkpa. The instrument used was a self-designed ten item questionnaire to collect information from the respondents by filling the answers in the space provided for the purpose. Section A has to do with the information of the respondents while section B is a six item four point Likert item questionnaire. The questionnaire required the respondents to indicate strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (D) and strongly disagreed (SD).

A total of two hundred and thirty three copies of the questionnaire was administered to the respondents in the various schools made up of Art and Social Sciences, Education, Languages, Primary Education/Early Child Care, Sciences and Educational Studies and same number was retrieved.

The data was analyzed using mean and rank order statistics. To arrive at a criterion or cut off mean, the weighted options were added up as follows:

SA + A + D + SD which was graded in 4-Likert scale thus: (4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree)

That is $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10/4 = 2.5$

Therefore 2.5 is the criterion mean score. Any item whose mean score fall from 2.5 above is accepted while the item whose mean score is below 2.5 is rejected.

Research Question 1

How does the school authority address the welfare situation of students?

Table 2: Mean and rank order score of respondents on the welfare situation of students N = 233

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Rank	Remarks
1	The school provides good accommodation	4	1	5	223	2.49	3 rd	Disagreed
2	There is regular power and water supply	1	3	5	224	2.46	2 nd	Disagreed
3	There are comfortable classrooms for learning	8	17	75	133		1 st	Accept

Source: OGON, S. O., survey report

Research Question 2

Is there an effective Students' Union Government?

Table 3: mean and rank order scores of respondents on Students' Union N = 233

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Rank	Remarks
1	Management impose candidates on students	15	5	45	168	3.33	3 rd	Accept
2	The female gender are not well represented	9	16	85	123	3.77	1 st	Accept
3	SUG do only binding of school authority	10	15	107	101	3.70	2 nd	Accept

Source: OGON S. O., survey report

1.5 Results and findings

From table 2 above the high mean of 3.66 corresponding with the item which read: “there are comfortable classrooms for learning” was accepted. The order means scores of 2.46 and 2.49 were below the criterion mean of 2.50 and were therefore disagreed with. It therefore implies that the school doesn’t provide good accommodations, no regular power and water supply too.

Table 3 all have very high mean scores of 3.77, 3.70 and 3.33 respectively. The implication is that all items in the questionnaire were accepted. Thus, the female genders are not well represented, SUG do only binding of school authority and management impose candidates on students.

2.1 Summary and conclusion

Contemporary security challenges in Nigeria, to a very large extent have a nexus with strife amongst students in tertiary institutions as a microcosm of the larger Nigerian society. Strife has been identified as one of the causative factors of instability in tertiary institutions. As seen in our take off point, strife is defined as an angry or violent disagreement between two people or group of people.

Strife amongst students is caused by certain factors which we termed as instigators in the study. These instigators create room for anti-social grouping resulting in cultism with grievous drawback in teaching and learning on campus. A member of cult group was mentioned as seen in tertiary institutions in Nigeria today and CRS College of Education in particular.

In view of the unproductive nature of strife as a result of its attendance consequences on the economy, it becomes imperative that strife in whatever form in the higher institution be ripped in the bud as the future of Nigerian state lies in the hands of these young men and women that populate the institutions. Thus, this is targeted at exposing those instigators of strife which to a very large extent have been neglected by the authority. Hence, the need for strife to be eliminated or curtailed in the Cross River State College of Education Akamkpa, constitute the thrust of this study.

2.2 Recommendations

- The hostel which serves as the residence of student is where they meet and to a very large extent interrupted by the school authority as they go about their private lives. Thus, surveillance equipment like Circuit Camera Television (CCTV), should be installed in students hostels in addition to the physical presence of security operatives. This will enhance the effective monitoring of some of the nocturnal and clandestine activities of students in and around the school environment.
- The school management should endeavor to provide electricity on campus particularly in student hostel during the night hours. This is because our investigation revealed that night hours are the period used mostly by cult groups for their meetings and initiation activities. A situation where light is given for one or at most two hours during the night on campus as seen in C.O.E, Akamkpa, social activities by students.
- A comprehensive data base of students from the day of admission should be originated and to be in custody of the security department of the institution.

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