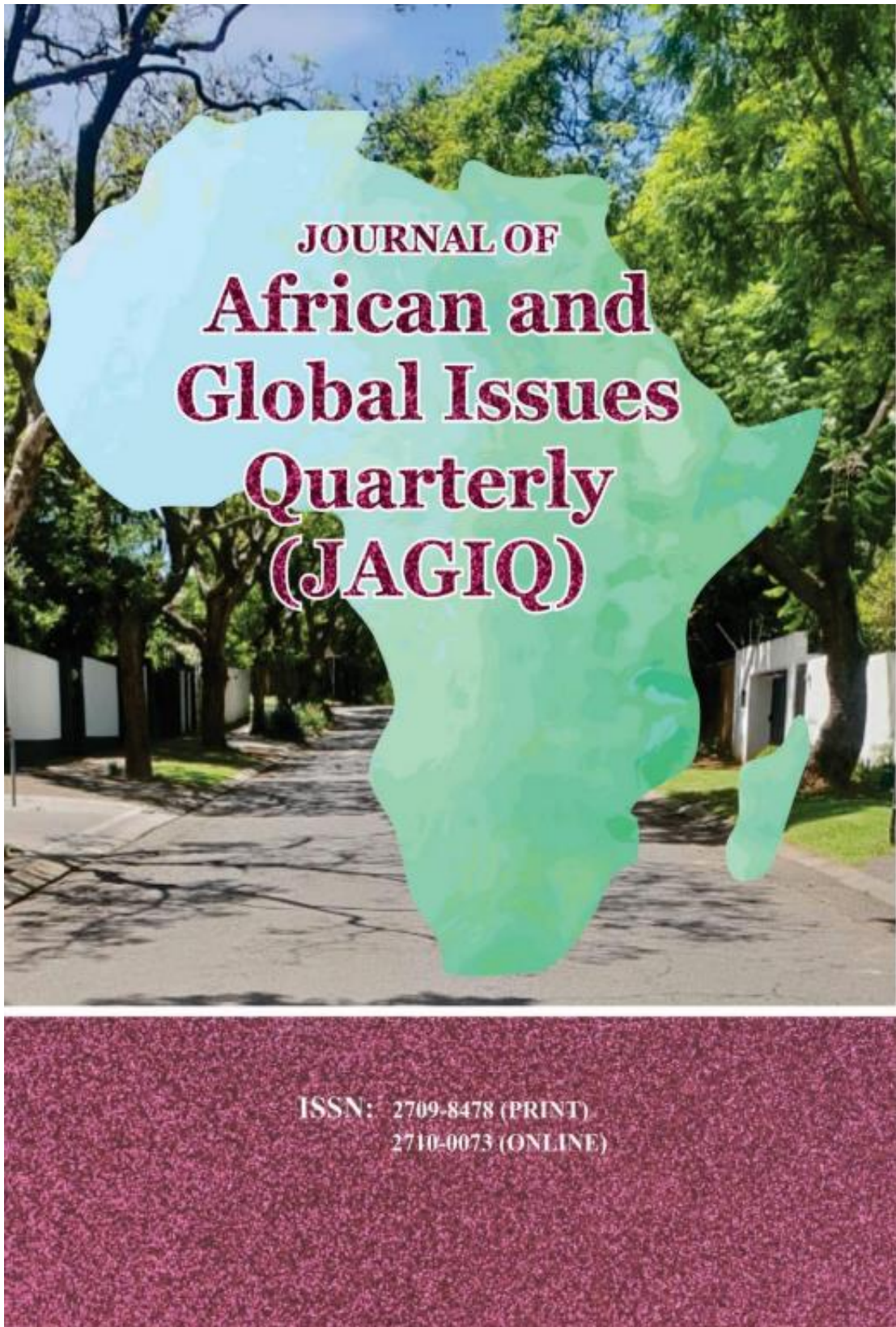




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Editorial Note:

Strengthening Accountability, Confronting Violence, and Reimagining Security in Africa

This Special Issue of African and Global Issues Quarterly arrives at a critical juncture. Across Africa, nations grapple with interconnected crises: the erosion of public trust in financial governance, the devastating rise of organised violence among youth, the persistent marginalisation of vulnerable populations, and the enduring legacy of colonial and neocolonial institutions that continue to shape contemporary realities. The thirteen papers presented here dissect these challenges with intellectual rigour and practical urgency.

We open with Nakabago and Hofisi's forensic examination of Uganda's Universal Primary Education capitation grant. For decades, UPE has been hailed as a pro-poor triumph. Yet, as the authors reveal, weak monitoring and evaluation of internal controls have turned a lifeline into a leaky vessel. Without real-time auditing and community-based oversight, financial accountability remains aspirational. This paper is a clarion call: education funding cannot be separated from forensic vigilance.

The crisis of youth violence, examined across two complementary studies by Somtochukwu, Muyideen, and colleagues, forces us to look where society often refuses to look: inside Ogun State's correctional facilities. Their first paper critically submits that socioeconomic indicators unemployment, broken kinship networks, and educational exclusion are causal pathways into cultism. The second adds a psychosocial layer, revealing how trauma, identity displacement, and the search for belonging drive young inmates deeper into violent collectives. Together, these studies argue that incarceration without therapeutic intervention is not rehabilitation but a factory for recidivism.

History matters. Daniel Oluwafemi John takes us into Igangan Town, Oyo State, between 1973 and 2021. The farmer-herder crisis is often framed as a contemporary emergency, but John demonstrates its long arc: decades of land tenure ambiguity, climate-induced migration, and state neglect. Understanding 1973 is essential for solving 2026. This is a sobering lesson in how unresolved grievances become inherited wars.

Joel Odaudu moves beyond Africa's borders with a multidimensional causal analysis of terrorism. Rejecting single-factor explanations, Odaudu insists on the confluence of political exclusion, economic inequality, and social fragmentation. His framework is a necessary tool for any government designing a counterterrorism policy that does not merely react but prevents.

The international justice system faces a necessary reckoning in Avitus A. Agbor's incisive critique of the International Criminal Court's racist image and agenda. Through comparative analysis of the situations in Ukraine and Palestine, Agbor exposes the selective application of international law a double standard that undermines the Court's legitimacy and perpetuates global hierarchies of victimhood.

Choma, Thobejane, and Ranneditsheni's revisiting of human rights for people living with albinism foregrounds a community too often marginalised in both policy and scholarship. Their work reminds us that human rights discourse must move beyond abstract universality to address specific, lived vulnerabilities rooted in superstition, stigma, and systemic neglect.

Governance and accountability receive comprehensive treatment. Mohono, Gabanakgosi, and Shopola's Public Value Theory perspective on parliamentary oversight provides a fresh framework for understanding democratic governance in Southern Africa. Zweni and Mahlala extend this conversation to grassroots public participation in municipal budget development, demonstrating that budgets are political statements about whose needs are prioritised.

The spectre of fragmentation looms large in Kelechi Johnmary Ani's unravelling of secessionist movements in Ambazonia and Biafra. By examining governance failures, identity politics, and historical grievances, Ani illuminates the root causes of separatist aspirations rather than merely managing their symptoms.

The private sector's challenges in volatile environments are explored by Parsad and Chummun, whose study of operational excellence in VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) environments focuses on South Africa's insurance industry, offering practical insights for navigating uncertainty.

Academic rigour and methodological integrity come under the spotlight in Musaigwa, Nojiyeza, and Tabane's practical guide to writing strong conclusion chapters, addressing a perennial challenge in research dissemination and preempting reviewer criticism.

Nthambeleni Charles Netshisaulu's conceptual analysis of reversible metaphors in Tshivenda adds a rich linguistic dimension, demonstrating how language reflects and shapes cognition, culture, and social relations.

Taken together, these contributions remind us that accountability is not a bureaucratic checkbox. It is the thread linking school grants to classroom outcomes, correctional policies to safe communities, land history to peaceful coexistence, international law to genuine justice, and linguistic expression to cultural identity. The papers collectively argue that sustainable development in Africa demands simultaneous attention to financial probity, social inclusion, historical reckoning, and institutional reform.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all contributing authors for their intellectual rigour and commitment to advancing knowledge that serves African communities. In a world increasingly characterised by complexity and contestation, the role of critical scholarship has never been more vital. This Special Issue intervenes with rigour, compassion, and hope.

Editor

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PSYCHOSOCIAL ANALYSIS OF YOUTHS' INVOLVEMENT IN CULTISM IN OGUN STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES, NIGERIA

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Abstract

It is evident that psychological indicators are mental and emotional conditions (low self-esteem, identity crisis, anxiety, unresolved trauma, depression, emotional neglect, or a need for acceptance) that negate generally accepted culture and increase youth involvement in cult-related activities. In Nigeria, the rate at which Nigerian youths are integrated and initiated into cult gang members is alarming and detrimental to nation-building. The extant national and international literature was reviewed to support the inquiry's outcome, while Sigmund Freud's theory of instinctual drives was adopted to justify it. The study was conducted at three correctional facilities in Ogun State, Nigeria: Sagamu, Oba, and Ibara. Mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) and cross-sectional survey design were adopted. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ogun State Ministry of Justice and the Ogun State Correctional Service. As at the time the research was conducted the total population of the inmates both convicted and detained in the three selected facilities is 2,777 but with the help of the correctional warders and wardress a sum total of 180 inmates to include male and female were identified and qualified to partake and gives response to the served structured questionnaire while 15 In-depth interviews were granted among the inmates who are

willingly to partake in the research exercise while all information supplied were treated with confidential and academic purpose only. The outcome of the regression analysis shows that out of the nine psychological components tested as psychosocial indicators of youth involvement in cultism only feelings of isolation ($B = 0.660$, $p = 0.008$) and sense of identity ($B = 0.674$, $p = 0.005$) were statistically significant. while the outcome of verbal transcription indicated that apart from psychosocial variables other variable such as socioeconomic and environmental factors plays vital role in explaining the causes of youth involvement in cultism in Nigeria It was on this ground the following are recommended School based prevention strategies should be developed and monitor, Popular empowerment of youths through different platform and adequate profiling records for rehabilitation.

Keywords: *Correctional-facility, Cultism, Cult-membership, Psychosocial,*

Introduction

Globally, evidence from national and international publications indicates that cultism is a global concern among scholars, educationalists, and non-governmental organizations due to its harmful consequences, which endanger the security of the state, personal life, and the future of the young generation. The UNODC (2020) explains that persistence in cultism will lead to physical and psychological weaknesses such as unresolved trauma from past experiences, identity crises, neglect, and peer pressure, among others. But Nwaogu et al., (2020) supported the above view stating that rather than attributing psychological weakness as the major determinant of youth involvement in cultism, other factors such as institutionalized factor and socioeconomic determinants are deeply connected to the root causes of youth involvement in cult activities Despite the submission of the above scholars Akinpelu et al (2025) argued that less attention and researches were done on how psychological indicators could

influence youth involvement in cultism compared with huge researches published on how socioeconomic indicators influence youth involvement in cult activities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The authors further explain that the supposed institutional methods for curbing the prevalence of the menace had proved abortive, therefore showing the need for filling the gap in knowledge on how psychological characteristics influence youth involvement in cult activities in Nigeria. Moreover, Ogunmefun et al. (2022) further state that the lack of transparency in the operational mode of security personnel, specifically the Nigeria Police, contributes to the ever-growing involvement of youth in cult-related activities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The authors further emphasized that one of the major challenges affecting the Nigerian prison system and the rehabilitation process is overcrowding and delays in the criminal justice system in Nigeria.

Publications of the past and present show that there is extensive literature

on cult-related studies. Also, studies have shown that the threat of youth cultism is still prevalent in the African continent, thereby leading to the decline of peace and city development. (Ogunmefun et al, 2024; Adedayo, 2020; Adedeji, 2022) The unfortunate truth is that cultic activities and recruitment are still ongoing among teenagers and young adults in spite of the number of deterrence attempts and strategies put in place to educate teenagers and eradicate cultism in the country. The submission of Eche (2019) could not be relegated because it envisages a wide range of factors at play that predispose youths or teenagers to cultism. Although previous investigations mostly focused on how sociocultural and socioeconomic characteristics serve as dominant determinants, this has left the study of cultism imperfect and underrepresented in the current situation in Nigeria.

Chukwurah, John-Nsa, & Isimah (2022) explain that the psychological vulnerabilities of cult members, their activities, and the consequences associated with the menace can be shaped by an individual's early experiences, current social situation, and psychological maturation processes. Likewise, Adesina (2018) explains that adolescents undergoing an identity crisis, emotional abandonment, and unresolved trauma, from being socially rejected, may become psychologically vulnerable to cult recruitment in the quest for validation, power, or some form of emotional refuge. The above submission justified the role played by emotions and other psychosocial components in shaping

the mind and orientation of youths who engaged in cult-related activities in Ogun State, Nigeria. To advance the study, the contribution of Isiguzo & Isiguzo (2023) explains how psychological vulnerability stemming from trauma during childhood, neglect by parents, witnessing domestic violence, and physical or emotional abuse may lead to an array of psychological problems such as low self-esteem, dissociative behavior, identity confusion, and impulsivity. Scholars of the past and present explains how relevant is psychological components to the study of youth involvement in cult related activities in the global South and North.

Empirically, there are diverse ways and factors that could be held responsible for the prevalence of youths involvement in cult related activities in Nigeria ranging from personal factor, sociocultural factor, economic factor, role model factor, peer influence factors among others but for the purpose of this research there are needs to research on various psychological indicators that influence youth involvement in cult activities in Nigeria Evidence gathered from scholars indicated that apart from various indicators that predisposed youth into cult activities There are also need to research on various established dimensions to explains the menace of cultism such as language, symbols mode of dressing, methods and techniques that could be adopted to provide solutions to the menace. The menace tends to have a negating impact on human and societal development compared with the cult group's demand and satisfaction. There is a need for

thorough psychological counseling for youth at grassroots levels across the country, and the negative impact of cultism and the popular empowerment of youth in Nigeria should be addressed (Ogunmefun & Okunneye, 2020; Ogunmefun, 2020). Also, extensive researches are needed on psychological characteristics that drives Nigerian youth into emotional depression, power tussle, quest for security and safety, perceived marginalization, rejection and oppression. Researches in this area will give rooms for policy makers to develop measure or strategies suitable to address the menace at micro (elementary) level before it get to the macro (society) level which may pose as threat to human safety and properties.

This research seeks to bridge gaps by analyzing the psychological factors that influence the rate at which youths engage in antisocial behaviours that undermine human security and developmental progress in Ogun State, Nigeria. The outcome of the study may eventually assist policy makers and youths who may likely be interested in joining cult gangs in Ogun state, Nigeria, with a focus on correctional centers as a case in point. Thorough tackling of the psychological roots of this phenomenon will provide comprehensive insight into the study of cult-related menace rather than the over-researched sociological and economic perspectives towards the development and safety of Nigerians.

This study tends to provide functional suggestions for the reinforcement of preventive measures for curbing cult

operations in Nigeria, with emphasis on how psychological characteristics influence youth involvement in cult-related menace in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

The contributions of scholars from the global north and south cannot be underestimated, as the outcomes of scholarly publications reviewed show a high level of diversity in the knowledge, causes, and consequences associated with the menace of cultism worldwide... In an attempt to keep peace, security, and national development, a set of youth are increasingly engaging in cult-related activities, frustrating the needed human conditions and societal safety. According to UNODC (2020), cult activities are a global phenomenon that are increasing and attracting collective responsibility to curb the situation before it degenerates into other social vices that will affect the entire human living standard. They further argued that the rate at which cult activities and members gain their momentum in the developing countries called for global assistance in curbing the menace because African youths are exposed to recruitment into cults, gangs, and violent organizations. However, the ever-increasing nature and pattern of youth's involvement in cult activities were related to root causes of extreme poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and lack of quality education among others as the predisposed conditions (Ogunmefun & Okunneye, 2020). The above statement indicated that the fight against the ever increasing nature of cult related activities and the

consequences associated with it need collective consensus towards fighting the menace. This statement was supported by the United Nations and World Bank in 2019, where the organizations maintained that on several occasions, cases of causes and consequences associated with the menace of youth involvement in cult-related activities are continuously addressed with large emphasis on how actionable solutions could be implemented to maintain peaceful coexistence among residents of the developed and developing countries. (OECD, 2019)

There is a need for scholars to continuously research the trends and patterns used by youths to recruit members into their cult groups. This is because the prevalence of cultism has been gaining momentum across the African continent, especially in Nigeria and South Africa, due to several factors, including weak institutions, political instability, weak social services, and economic inequality (Akinlabi & Agboola, 2017). In a study of youth involvement in cult-related activities across the African continent, Mueller (2021) explains that youths are the primary instrument used by the political elite to perpetrate the destruction of peace and harmony among countries. More so, they are the object recruited into armed groups, used as political thugs, engaged in street gangs and street cults, which are rampant all over the continent, particularly in Nigeria and South Africa, due to the struggle for hegemony, status, security, or material rewards.

The above submission was supported by Chika (2016) when the author explains that mental disorders distort the moral perception of most youths who joined or are recruited into cult-related groups. However, their mental disorder and immoral emotional perceptions make some of the recruited youth stand as a suitable target for older members who are perceived as role models to recruit them into a cult gang, like prey on their emotional emptiness because they offer them a pseudo-family, power, and identity.

Extant publications reviewed have not really put forward the causes, consequences, and implications associated with psychological factors on how they affect youth involvement in cult activity. But there is increasing awareness of the contributive role played by mental and emotional vulnerabilities, which serve as fertile ground for cult recruitment. However, psychological vulnerabilities can be shaped by an individual's early experiences, current social situation, and psychological maturation. The above statement was supported by Chukwurah, John-Nsa, and Isimah (2022) when they aver that adolescents undergoing an identity crisis, emotional abandonment, and unresolved trauma from being rejected socially by friends and families may become psychologically vulnerable to cult recruitment in the quest for validation of power or some form of emotional refuge. The authors further stressed that psychological vulnerability stems from trauma experienced by a child or children during childhood, caused mainly by abusive parents who

indulged in domestic violence and physical or emotional abuse, which may lead to an array of psychological problems, such as low self-esteem, dissociative behavior, identity confusion, and impulsivity.

Chika (2016) explains the importance and role played by mental disorder and wrong moral perception of most youth who engaged in cult-related activities, making them prey on their emotional emptiness. More so, the author further describes how language, symbolism, and group identity within cult groups satisfy deep psychological needs among the new members who just join or those who are recruited into the cult gangs by their role model in their various schools or communities. Chika further stressed that the symbols of cult members include a need to belong, approval, and emotional support. In addition, most cult groups are open to certain rituals, coded speech, and command structures that objectify allegiance and self-worth, thus giving direction and significance to psychologically vulnerable youths in a pathological manner.

Isuguzo & Isiguzo (2023) conducted a study at the University of Port Harcourt in Nigeria, involving 300 participants, using an ex post facto design. The authors observed that low self-esteem and peer pressure were substantial contributors with respect to susceptibility to undergraduate cultism. Likewise, Uzoigwe and Okoye (2024) explain how the modern era brings a voice of change to youth involvement in cultism through cyber cultism. They further explain that the infiltration of

cult recruiting practices across all digital platforms has been helped by cracking down on some of the perpetrators who are televised online in programmes such as Confraternities in Nigeria (Confranaija) and other networks.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the instinctual drives theory to explain the inquiry. The instinctual drive theory was attributed to the scholarly works of Sigmund Freud to justify the inquiry. According to Freud, the fundamental assumptions of instinctual drives theory are that every human being has two distinct drives that direct or shape their decisions and actions. Freud identified and divided the instinctual drives into two major components, namely.

1. The Eros instinctual drive and
2. The Thanatos instinctual drive

Freud explains that the two major drives determine whether an individual's actions, decisions, and behaviour are progressive or regressive toward human and societal development. According to Freud, the Eros instinct drive enhance positive thinking in an individual or person to think positively such as thinking toward acquiring quality education, marriage, employment, getting promotions, going on vacations, attending progressive social gathering, becoming a world class individuals, making sure you built your personal house, good office, sending your wards to good schools among others while Thanatos instinct drive direct individuals toward negative thinking such as overpowered with the

feeling of total rejection, marginalized, unwanted, hated, subjugated, oppressed, forgotten, loneliness, isolated among others. Freud's theory of the two identified instinctual drives determines an individual's final decision or actions at the end of the day. In addition, Freud explains that the decisions or actions to follow in determining an individual's behavior are tailored to selected patterns from the two mentioned instinctual drives, depending on how individuals analyze the drives. For example, Freud explains that when the feeling or drive towards acquiring quality education, getting good employment, getting married, and having children (progressive thinking) outweighs the thinking of rejection, subjugation, marginalization, and oppression (retrogressive thinking). To him, such a person will never want to engage in antisocial behaviour, but once the thinking toward rejection, marginalization, oppression, and hate outweigh the thinking toward quality education, marriage, such an individual will engage in antisocial behavior, leading to a high rate of individual involvement in cult activities due to a high level of immorality that preoccupies their mind or thinking abilities.

In relation to the study, most youths in Nigeria who engage in cultism are products of extreme poverty, unemployed Nigerians, uneducated members of the Nigerian society, whose feelings are matched with a thanatos thinking drive. This is because Freud had clarity the assumptions of the instinctual drives theory that most youths in Nigeria that engaged in cult

related activities are the youths whose feelings are over powered by the thanatos feeling of rejected, marginalized, oppressed, subjugated and unwanted in Nigeria which predisposed them joining cult gangs that can assist them to fight for their rights and guarantee their safety. Literature of the past and present period have tremendously agitated for causes of cult involvement in cult activities from both sociological and psychological perspectives. For example, Isiguzo & Isiguzo (2023) observed that low self-esteem and peer pressure were substantial contributors to susceptibility, which are factors that increase the rate at which youths are recruited into gang and cult activities. The authors used the Proneness to Cultism Inventory (PCI) and reported a reliability coefficient of 0.81, indicating high internal consistency of the instrument. While Nwaogu et al (2020) explain that youth cultism stems from a psychological perspective that has helped in rehabilitation and prevention, integrating psychologists or behavioral counselors into schools, community centers, and prisons is pertinent. The authors, in their findings, recommended the need for regular mental health screening for students, inmates, and trauma-informed therapy providers who treat youth who are at risk of cult-related activities in Nigeria. In their recommendations, the authors called for incorporating psychological resilience training into school curricula to equip students with skills in emotional regulation, decision-making, and critical thinking. They further added to the knowledge, stating that the

two approaches would counteract cultism's emotional appeal while sharpening the youths' mental defenses against manipulation and indoctrination. These mental disorders distort the moral perception faced by the youths, making them a bait for cult recruiters.

Ogun State is located in the Southwest region of Nigeria, known for the rising rate of cult-related clashes and activities in schools and on the streets, as reported in print and electronic media (Premium Times, 2025; Punch Newspaper, 2024; Global Tribune, 2024). The level of cultism among youths in both schools, among the junior and senior students, cannot be relegated to the background in the study, even though the prevalence of street gang cultism is overwhelming and continues to rise among teenagers. The problem also increases criminality in society, as well as the prevalence and impact of violent events and the spread of dangerous ideologies. The research aims to discover some of the major issues concerning the involvement of youth in cultism in Ogun State in relation to various psychological indicators. While the research is based on youth in Ogun State, the main site of the research has been the state's correction centers, where the group is selected to simplify the production of the same. The study, through the identification of the roots and enablers of the problem, seeks to offer adequate and effective solutions to wipe out the cult practice and increase educational efforts throughout the state. The same people who are at the margin feel the pain of being in that position and the

need to be with others something propel them to join cults group or belong to a gang to defend themselves. .

Material and Methods

Within the purview of the three approved correctional facilities in Ogun state, Nigeria, where the research inquiry was conducted among inmates who are apprehended, detained, and convicted due to their involvement in cultism. Dealing with human subjects in any research necessitates ethical compliance, especially in sensitive environments such as correctional centres. The study observed all the ethical provisions governing the protection of the rights, dignity, and welfare of all participants. However, ethical approvals were obtained from relevant institutions, such as the Ogun State Ministry of Justice at Oke-Mosan, Abeokuta, and the Ogun State Correctional Service (NCoS) Ogun State Command, upon presentation of an official letter. For the purpose of this research work, a mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative) approach was adopted, with a descriptive research design. The total number of inmates in the three approved correctional facilities was estimated to be 2,777 at Oba, Sagamu, and Ibara, Ogun State Correctional Services, including both male and female inmates, as at the time the research was conducted. The identification of the participants (detained and convicted cult members), administration of the structured questionnaires, and the interviews were successfully carried out due to the help of the warders and wardresses in the three approved

correctional facilities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The total number of inmates identified as detainees and convicted for cult activities was estimated to be 189 in the three correctional facilities. After the administration of the structured questionnaires to the identified participants, upon retrieval of the questionnaires, screening, coding, and editing were conducted, which resulted in a total sample size of 180. However, 10% of the quantitative sample was used to determine the qualitative sample size, which was rounded up to 19 participants. During transcription of the collected verbal data, 15 interviewees were found useful for the study. The purpose of collecting verbal data was that some of the participants apprehended, detained, and convicted for cult-related activities were illiterates who could not fill out the structured questionnaire, but were willing to participate in the research work. During the collection of verbal data through interviews in the three correctional facilities, the Nigerian correctional facilitators did not allow the use of phones and tape recorders from the entrance of the big eye gate, but field notes were used to record all the responses gathered from the detained and convicted inmates who

indulged in cult-related activities. The snowballing technique was adopted by the correctional warders and wardresses to identify the groups that fell within the scope of the research before the research was conducted. The purposive sampling technique was used to administer the structured questionnaires and to collect verbal information through in-depth interviews for documentation. Other ethical conditions, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity, were observed before, during, and after the fieldwork. The collected mixed data were analyzed and interpreted using bi-dimensional approaches (descriptive, inferential statistics, and content analysis). The quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires were analyzed with the use of inferential (Linear Regression) and descriptive (frequency and percentages), while the qualitative data collected from the participants (verbal communication) through In-depth interviews were recorded in field notes, which were later transcribed through the use of a content systematic method. This gave room for the growth and development of triangulation methods

Results

Table 1: Multi Variant Linear Regression Result showing whether psychological factors predispose youths to cult involvement.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			

1	(Constant)	10.371	1.320	7.859	.000
	Social Rejection	.146	.262	.044	.558
	Low Self-Esteem	.360	.245	.115	1.473
	Trauma & Abuse	.452	.259	.141	1.744
	Coping Mechanisms	.447	.256	.141	1.749
	Need for Belonging	.017	.245	.005	.069
	Mental Stress	.291	.256	.086	1.136
	Sense of Identity	.674	.230	.221	2.943
	Lack of Mental Health Support	-.216	.248	-.069	-.873
	Feelings of Isolation	.660	.244	.222	2.703

Dependent Variable: Cult involvement

Source: Field Work Study

Table 1 shows the outcomes of regression analysis examining the influence of psychological and emotional causes on the involvement of youths in cultism. Out of nine predictors, only feelings of isolation ($B = 0.660, p = 0.008$) and sense of identity ($B = 0.674, p = 0.005$) were statistically significant. While other psychological variables tested were not significant at 0.005 level of significant such as social rejection ($B=0.146, p=0.577$), Low self-esteem ($B=0.360, p=0.143$), trauma and abuse ($B=0.452, p=0.083$), coping mechanism ($0.447, p=0.082$), needs for belonging ($0.017, p=0.945$), mental stress ($B=0.291, p=0.258$), and lack of mental health supports ($B=-.216, p=0.384$). This attests that young folks who feel emotionally disconnected and socially isolated are likely to be drawn

into cult-related activities. The positive coefficient indicates that the likelihood of cult participation increases as feelings of isolation and a need for identity grow.

In the regression analysis, coping mechanisms ($p = 0.082$) and trauma and abuse ($p = 0.083$) approached significance, but the psychological variables mentioned did not reach the 0.05 level of significance, which is considered statistically insignificant. However, such near-significant results quantify a point for increased relevance and warrant further investigation. Other predictors, such as social rejection, low self-esteem, need for belonging, mental stress, and self-identity issues, showed positive coefficients but were not statistically significant, suggesting that, while conceptually the insignificant

variables play a role, their individual influence is not independently potent in the given model.

With the exception of one variable, the unstandardized coefficient values were positive for all predictors, bearing out the popular view that increased psychological or emotional stress increases the manifestation of cult involvement. The lone exception, the lack of mental health support, had a negative coefficient ($B = -.216$); however, the result was statistically insignificant ($p=0.384$).

Overall, regression analysis has also underscored the significance of emotional isolation and sense of identity as major psychological risk factors for cultism. The results once again affirm the earlier studies, which state that cult groups at times act as surrogate families or emotional safe havens for the youth who are vulnerable. Hence, social linking, accessibility of counselling, and emotional support systems being there turn out to be very critical in preventing children from going to cults.

Qualitative Data Analysis on Psychological Factors Influencing Cult Involvement

The psychological dimensions of cultism found an extremely strong correlation to the tales of the inmates. A lot of the participants mentioned undergoing rejection, being traumatized, feeling depressed, and almost losing the desire to live just to have a feeling of belonging before

entering a cult group. For the majority, the cult was less a source of violence and profit but more a way of getting emotional safety and identity. Yet, some of the inmates contested this viewpoint, suggesting personal choice or the thrill of seeking as their reason for participating in a cult.

Growing up, I was always treated like a nobody—even in my own house. My elder brothers mocked me, my parents didn't care much, and in school, I was constantly bullied. I never felt seen. But when I met some guys in town who were in a cult, they treated me like I was important. For the first time in my life, people listened to me. That feeling of belonging was too powerful. I didn't even think about the consequences.

IDI/Male Inmate/23yrs/Sagamu

Another inmate submitted that:

I joined because I was broken. My mum died when I was 13 and my dad remarried. My stepmother hated me, so I ran away from home. I lived on the street for a while before some cult boys found me. They fed me, gave me a place to sleep, and said I was part of a family. I didn't know what I was getting into. All I knew was that someone finally cared if I lived or died.

IDI/Male Inmate/26yrs/Ibara

One of the comments of an inmate was:

Before I got involved in cultism, I was battling depression. I had failed JAMB three times, lost a close friend to an accident, and just felt like my life had no meaning. A friend introduced me to

a group that 'could help me become something.' At first, it felt like therapy. They built me up, called me 'General', and I started feeling alive again. But it came with a price.

IDI/Male Inmate/29yrs/Ibara

Another inmate disagreed, stating:

I didn't join because I was depressed or poor. I joined because I liked the thrill. The fights, the fame, the fear in people's eyes when they saw us. It made me feel alive. I don't regret everything. Just the part where I ended up here.

IDI/Male Inmate/20yrs/Oba

This inmate reflected:

When my girlfriend left me, I lost control. She said I was too poor and had no future. I started drinking heavily. One of the older guys who had been trying to recruit me said, 'Join us and become a man.' I did. I thought it would make me stronger. But now I see that I only added more pain to my life.

IDI/Male Inmate/28yrs/Oba

The interviews present a deeper understanding of the emotional aspects related to cult-affiliated youths, who were mostly unprotected emotionally during the recruitment process. The factors behind cult affiliation appear to be issues like the need for social acceptance, self-esteem, and emotional trauma protection. This, in fact, supports the quantitative findings, where emotional and mental health variables were significantly or nearly the same in relation to cult

involvement, such as loneliness and coping struggles.

Discussion and Research Findings

The findings from the current study highlight the role of psychosocial variables such as social rejection, low self-esteem, trauma and abuse, coping mechanisms, needs for belongings, mental stress, sense of identity, lack of mental health supports, and feelings of isolation on youth involvement in cult activities with reference to three correctional facilities in Ogun State, Nigeria. In fact, feelings of loneliness and a sense of identity were the only two independent variables found to be statistically significant in the regression analysis among all nine psychological variables tested for the research inquiry. In course of the research work two other psychosocial variables tested during this study indicated close level of relationship at 0.005 level of significant which are trauma, coping, and emotional instability. The submission of the inmates interviewed (detainees and convicted for cult activities shows that apart from the researched psychosocial variables other variables such as socioeconomic and environmental factors plays vital role in the decision of either to join cult group or not. The quantitative data collected is relevant to the qualitative data collected from the participants in the field. This is because scholars explain cultism as a mechanism of coping with rejection, depression, unresolved trauma, and identity crises. In this aspect, the cults use their membership as a family and

emotional support, thus being the main source of their identity. This is a strong indication that references to previous researchers (e.g., Nwaogu et al., 2020; Adesina, 2018) affirm that cultism is rather a response to unaddressed emotional and psychological issues than a deviant subculture. Consequently, this finding confirms how psychosocial factors can strongly push youth towards cult involvement. The outcome of the verbal information gathered from detained and convicted inmates at Sagamu, Oba, and Ibara correctional facilities through qualitative interviews was later transcribed, showing how socioeconomic and environmental factors can predispose youth to join cult members. These predisposing factors include social needs, power struggles, intimidation, personal interests, extreme poverty, and unemployment, among others. This submission was supported and clearly stated in Ogunmefun & Okuneye's research work carried out in 2020, stating that most groups or youths who join gang or cult-related violence are suffering from extreme poverty, poor parental upbringing, lack of respect for moral values, lack of detachment from peer pressure, or a lack of role models, among others.

Conclusion

The study titled Psychosocial Analysis of Youth Involvement in cultism in Ogun State correctional facilities, Nigeria, deciphers that cultism is a multidimensional phenomenon,

negating human, socioeconomic, physical, educational, and environmental development. Several psychological indicators were adopted, such as social rejection, low self-esteem, trauma and abuse, coping mechanism, needs for belonging, mental stress, sense of identity, lack of mental health supports, and feelings of isolation, which were all tested using linear regression and content method, respectively, in the three selected correctional facilities in Ogun State, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, it can be inferred from the submission of the detained and convicted inmates in Oba, Ibara and Sagamu correctional facilities that the involvement of youths in cultism in Ogun State is motivated by psychosocial variables such as emotion, traumatic experiences, self-worth among others. The study confirms that: psychosocial vulnerabilities like low self-worth, traumatic experiences, and rejection from society make the youth susceptible to cult membership. Conclusively, the phenomenon of cultism among youths in correctional facilities of Ogun State should not just be treated like a crime, but a lot of research is needed to test all the psychosocial, socioeconomic, and environmental variables that determine the prevalence of youth involvement in cult-related violence in Ogun State, among Nigerian youths.

In this research inquiry, the following recommendations were drawn from psychological factors that propel youth

into cultism in Ogun State, Nigeria, to provide strategies for combating the menace at the elementary stage before it affects the larger society.

The study recommended the creation and development of a strategic Economic Empowerment and Opportunity Team/Group in Nigeria at the Federal, State, and Local Government levels to monitor the growth and development of rehabilitated cult members rather than just releasing them due to political influence.

ii, The study also recommend proactive surveillance techniques such as the use of Closed Circuit cameras in dark spot areas where cult activities are known for numerous cult activities. Also, a reactive surveillance approach should be adopted by making sure that there are constant vehicular and foot patrols in dark spot areas to deter the gathering of illegal cult members in any communities in Ogun State.

iii, The use of a proper profiling mechanism should be developed in Nigeria in the correctional facilities to checkmate the number of recidivists in Nigeria, and those that yield to the progressive side of rehabilitation programs that are well integrated into society.

iv, To successfully reduce and eradicate the problem associated with cultism among youths in Nigeria, the development of School-Based Preventive Campaigns should be developed and implemented on a regular basis because the issue of cultism is grounded more in both the streets and among junior and senior students in the State

v, The societal members should strive to accept them back through transparent integration because the final societal reformation depends largely on the network of their social acceptance. The role of the families, friends, and members of the society cannot be downplayed because this is where all the rehabilitation programmes can be tested to know if they work or not

vi, There is a need for enactment and implementation of progressive and actionable policy and legislative Actions to really checkmate the global standard of the training of the officers in charge of the prisons/correctional facilities, and also needs to strengthen the rehabilitation programs to meet the global standard required and the environment where the inmates are kept for rehabilitation procedure in Nigeria

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