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Teachers' Perception of the Potentials of Religious Education in Curbing Cultism among Secondary School Students in Ilorin, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students in Ilorin on the basis of school type, gender, school proprietorship and subject taught. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 400 teachers from 10 selected schools in Ilorin South. Questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. Four hypotheses were postulated and tested with the use of t-test statistical analysis all at 0.05 level of significance. From the data analysis, it was evident that the general perception of teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students was positive. Although there exist differences in the perceptions of teachers based on gender, school type and subject taught, all the respondents believed that religious education has the potentials to curb cultism among secondary school students. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that the teaching of religious subjects should be promoted in the schools so as to curb cultism. Religious education should also be made compulsory for all students. Teachers of Religious Studies in collaboration with school authorities need to organise constant symposia on the menace of cultism for students.

Keywords: Perception, Potentials, Religious Education, Cultism, Teachers, Students

Introduction

Cultism is perhaps one of the greatest problems confronting our educational institutions today in Nigeria. In recent years, this plague has assumed a frightening and deadly dimension. Its spread to secondary schools in the country is enough to give every caring parent a cause to lose sleep. In fact, a cult is a group of people which places a secondary need in the position of a primary need. In other words, any group of people that place emphasis on secret initiation or rituals for the purpose of group-help, group protection but whose activities are clandestine in nature is a cult.

A cult is a way of life, an attitude, an idea that is becoming very popular as people go to school to learn so also, they form cult alongside with their studies. Among the characteristics of secondary school cultists are that, they hardly stay in class to study; they are fond of moving aimlessly from one class to another, trying to recruit new students or trying to disturb the peace of the class and also disturb the students who refuse to join (Bolaji, 2007).

It is noticeable that some parents have abandoned their responsibility in the area of moral upbringing of their children because of the craze for material wealth. They hardly show interest in the progress of their children at school. Such parents rarely attend parents' forum meetings. In addition, students are exposed to religious instructions (Christian Religious Studies or Islamic Religious Studies) with the prime goal of achieving academic excellence without emphasising the moral lessons that can be learnt from such instructions. The heart of the young is therefore left for the devils to manipulate. Worse still, some religious leaders are not showing good examples to the younger generation (Osakinle and Falana, 2011).

It has been observed that the Nigerian adult's society is materialistic. There is mad ambition for wealth and power. Some powerful members of the society sometimes unleash terror on the other members of the society. Some of them recruit young adults to perpetrate heinous crimes in the society and can erase the long arms of the law. They are the fraudsters, kidnappers, ritual murderers, etc. Children who grow up in this kind of environment may see nothing wrong in cult activities that involve maiming and killing of innocent people, "Godfathers" who are ready to protect cultists from persecution sponsor cult activities (Osakinle and Falana, 2011).

Motivation for joining cults may come from peer groups' influence. Some students have become cultist because their friends are members. The members of the peer group influence one another with the experience they have had in their various families and environments (Osakinle and Falana, 2011). One major problem that contributes to the rapid growth of cultism is the lack of proper moral education by the parents which contribute largely to the quality of products turned over to the universities by primary and secondary schools (Buddy, 2013).

Perception literally connotes the way someone notices things especially with the senses. It also implies an idea, a belief or an image someone has as a result of how

someone senses or understands something. In addition to the above, Jamiu (2008) submitted that perception is a complex phenomenon which involves the process of examining an object through the use of total mental system with the purpose of classifying it.

School proprietorship or ownership and control is an important variable in school administration, funding, staffing, facilities, teaching of specific subject (including religious studies) and general standard of education (Okunloye, 2000). The quality and quantity of teaching staff, facilities, and equipment, funding and general school administration are generally determined by school proprietorship and these can reduce cultism in the school system.

Statement of the Problem

Several researchers and writers have carried out researches in the area of cultism in Nigerian institutions. For instance; Ekeanyanwu & Igbinoba (2007) researched on "The Media and Cultism in Nigerian Higher Institutions of Learning: A Study of Coverage, Treatment and Relevance" while Jekayinfa (2008) investigated the cult activities in the Nigerian institutions of higher learning. Francis (2010) wrote on the menace of secret society in Nigeria while Bola (2005) examined how peace education could be used for curbing cultism as a means of fostering Nationhood and Hazzan (2011) wrote on a study of cultism in tertiary institutions. Osakinle and falana (2011) researched into using counseling and behavior modification to curb cultism in higher institution of learning. Furthermore, Muhammad (2009) carried out investigation on the role of social institutions in curbing cultism. Ajayi, Ekundayo and Osalusi (2010) investigated the menace of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions and the way out. Sunday (2011) worked on anti-cultism committee strategies toward curbing the menace.

The aforementioned researchers have focused their studies on cultism in higher institutions. The present study, however, aims at examining the teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education to curb cultism among secondary school students. In order to fill part of the gap in knowledge left uncovered, the present research therefore investigates the teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students in Ilorin, Nigeria. This angle forms the problem that necessitates the current study.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study examined the following:

1. Religious and other teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students.
2. Teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism

- among secondary school students on the basis of gender.
3. Missionary and non-missionary school teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students.
 4. Perception of teachers in public and private schools of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in the study:

1. What is the perception of teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?
2. What is the difference in the perception of religious teachers and teachers of other subjects on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?
3. What is the difference in the perception of male and female teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?
4. What is the difference in the perception of missionary and non-missionary school teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?
5. What is the difference in the perception of teachers in public and private schools on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of religious studies teachers and teachers of other subjects' perception on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?
3. There is no significant difference in the perception of missionary and non-missionary schools' teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?
4. There is no significant difference in the perception of teachers in public and private schools on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?

The Roles of Religious Studies in Curbing Cultism

Religion has been described as the only agent that can correct the wrong of all other agents. This is because; socialization at this level of agent is based on metaphysical knowledge (knowledge beyond human understanding). So, it's believed that this agent works on the holy scriptures (Quran and Bible) and ordinarily as human being we take God as the last opportunity for human survival (Ayorinde, 2007). Religion is an integrated set of ideas by which a group explains the meaning of life and death. It could also be regarded as a normative system defining immorality and sin as well as morality and virtue. It could, therefore be inferred that human conduct falls under the purview of religion. Since it prescribes what an individual ought to do as well as the consequence of misconduct, religion has behavioral implications as it constrains the behaviour of the community of believers, thereby playing a social control function. This is done by ensuring that there are explicit rules to obey that if violated are punished; and again, through the process of socialization children internalize religious beliefs and the rules. Thus, that develops a conscience that keep them in line with cultural norms and values (Eitzen and Zinn, 1993)

The teaching of religion aims at providing individuals with adequate answers that legitimize the institution of society as well as human existence. Religious studies enable the youths to imbibe quite early, the legitimate influence of religion on social norms (Abdur-Rafiu, 2009).

Nigeria has two dominant religions: Islam, and Christianity religion. Islam sees cultism as evil and condemns the activities of the cultists. The Qur'an categorically prohibits collaboration and association on the basis of enmity and wrong doing. It encourages collaboration on the basis of benevolence and piety. "You help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and rancour: fear Allah : for Allah is strict in punishment" (Quran 5:2) Allah says: "The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress men and rebel in the earth without justification; for such there will be a painful torment" (Qur'an 42:42). These verses show that all forms of aggression and intimidation which is the core of cultism in Nigerian is prohibited and that the perpetrators will be tormented in the hereafter.

Similarly, Christianity frowns at cultism and prohibits any form of bloodshed. While reiterating the Christian's injunction on cultism, Ogunade (2003), made reference to the following biblical excerpts "God created man and gave him intellect. He made him superior to all other creatures. Of all that man has dominion over, his intelligence is yet to fathom how blood can be created. He lacks the mechanism of blood creation. He can only supply diet for multiplication of blood. He cannot make blood originally. Since this aspect of the human life transcends the capabilities of man, it behoves us naturally that man must not spill blood unlawfully. Spilling an innocent blood means taking the life of a man (Ogunade, 2003).

Religious education has the potentials to reduce or curb cultism, examination

malpractices, murder, stealing and fraud, gambling, alcoholism /drug abuse, sexual immorality, riot, bribery and corruption, intolerance, tribalism, theft, homicide/suicide etc if well internalized. In addition, religious education has the potentials to inculcate in the learners the spirit of honesty, patience, love, faith, tolerance/forgiveness, righteousness, contentment, simplicity, justice, respect/humility, kindness, cooperation, dignity of labour, modesty in dress etc if well implemented (Bibire, 2010).

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey. The study sampled 400 senior secondary school teachers out of 1,925 teachers in the 53 secondary schools in Ilorin South Local Government with the use of simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire adapted from Bibire (2010) was used to elicit information from the respondents. The items were structured on a four-point Likert scale viz; Strongly Agreed (SA) which value is 4 points, Agreed (A) which is value is 3 points, Disagreed (D) which is value is 2 points and Strongly Disagreed (SD) which value is 1 point. The instrument was both content and face validated through the assistance of experts in the fields of Religious Studies Education and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument was subjected to pilot testing and found to have a coefficient of reliability (r) of 0.76 Pearson product moment correlation coefficient methods.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers administered the copies of the questionnaire with the assistance of religious teachers in the schools and retrieved them immediately. Percentage distribution was used to analyse the demographic data of the respondents. The questionnaire items for the research questions were also answered using percentage analysis. In addition, t-test statistical tool was used to test all the research hypotheses at alpha 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the perception of teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students?

Table 1: Perception of teachers to the Questionnaire items that provide answer to the research question 1

Items	SA	%	A	%	SD	%	D	%	Total
Potentials of religious	152	38	66	16.5	68	17	114	28.5	400

education to reduce cultism									
Spilling the innocent blood and its punishment as provided in religious education curbs cultism	148	37	70	17.5	51	12.75	131	32.75	400
Religious education prohibits secrecy on evil motives among the students	133	33.25	85	21.25	92	23	90	22.5	400
Religious education clearly prohibits drinking of alcohol and other hard drug as a way of curbing cultism among the students.	123	30.75	95	23.75	81	20.25	101	25.25	400

It could be seen from Table 1 above that the majority of the respondents, 152 of them representing 38% and another 66 representing 16.5% agreed respectively that religious education has the potentials to curb cultism. Furthermore, 218 representing 54.5% of the teachers agreed that religious education has the potential to curb spilling the innocent blood among the students while the rest 182 representing 45.5% expressed disagreement with the statement.

Hypotheses Testing

All four hypotheses formulated earlier were tested with the use of independent t-test at alpha level of 0.05.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in religious teachers' perception and other teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school student.

Table 2: t-test Table showing the Analysis of the perception of Religious teachers and other Teachers on the potentials of Religious Education in curbing cultism

Variables	Freq	Mean	S D	Df	Cal. t value	Critical t value	Remark
Religious teachers	150	58.05	15.56	398	10.00	1.96	H ₀₁ Rejected
Other teachers	250	43.70	10.54				
Total	400	101.75	26.10				

Significance level= $p \leq 0.05$

Table 2 shows that the calculated t- value is 10.00 while the critical value is 1.96 with 398 degree of freedom at alpha level of significant. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, hypothesis 1 is hereby rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This means that a significant difference exists between the perception of religious teachers and other teachers on potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students in Ilorin South Local Government Area. Since religious teachers have the mean scores (58.05) which is higher than the other teachers mean scores which is (43.70). Therefore, religious teachers perceived that religious education can curb cultism among secondary school students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in male and female teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students

Table 3: t-test Table showing the Analysis of the perception of Male and Female Teachers' Perception of the Potentials of Religious Education in Curbing Cultism

Variables	Freq	Mean	S D	df	Cal. t value	Critical t value	Remark
Male teachers	250	52.98	11.21	398	2.631	1.960	H ₀₂ Rejected
Female teachers	150	43.70	10.54				
Total	400	108.99	22.22				

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value is 2.631 while the critical value is 1.960 with 398 degree of freedom and at alpha level of 0.005. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, hypothesis 2 is hereby rejected and alternative hypothesis upheld. That, a significant difference exists between the perception of male and female on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students. Since female teachers have the mean scores (56.01) which is higher than the male teachers mean scores (52.98). Therefore, female teachers perceived that religious education can curb cultism among secondary school students.

Table 4: t-test Table Showing the Analysis of the Perception of Missionary and Non-missionary Teachers on the Potentials of Religious Education in Curbing Cultism.

Variables	Freq	Mean	S D	df	Cal. t value	Critical t value	Remark
Missionary school teachers	150	60.57	10.48	398	10.034	1.960	H ₀₃ Rejected
Non-missionary school teachers	250	47.42	13.84				
Total	400	107.98	24.98				

Significance level = $p \leq 0.05$.

Table 4 shows that the calculated t-value (10.034) while the critical value (1.960) with 398 degree of freedom and at significance level of 0.05. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, hypothesis 3 is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. That, there is a significant difference in the perception of missionary school teachers and non-missionary school teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students in Ilorin South Local Government Area. Since missionary school teachers have the mean scores which is (47.42).

Therefore, missionary teachers perceived that religious education can curb cultism among secondary school students.

Ho₄: There is no significant difference in public and private school teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students

Table 5: t-test Table Showing the Analysis of the perception of public and private school Teachers on the potentials of Religious Education in curbing cultism

Variables	Freq	Mean	S D	df	Cal. t value	Critical t value	Remark
Public school teachers	250	50.42	12.49	398	5.827	1.960	HO ₄ Rejected
Private school teachers	150	57.65	11.16				
Total	400	108.0667	23.65				

Significance level= $p \leq 0.05$.

Table 5 shows that the calculated t-value is 5.827 while the critical t-value is 1.960 with 398 degree of freedom and at alpha 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value is greater than the critical value, hypothesis 4 is hereby rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. That, there is a significant difference in the perception of public school teachers and private school teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students in Ilorin South local Government Area. Since private school teachers have the mean scores (57.65) which is higher than the public school teachers mean scores (50.42). Therefore, private school teachers perceive that religious education can curb cultism among secondary school student.

Discussion of Findings

From the findings of this study, it was revealed that there was a significant difference in the perception of religious teachers and other teachers on the potential influence of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students in Ilorin. Obviously, it is clear that religious teachers perceived that religious education can curb cultism among secondary school students. The findings of this study are in agreement with the work of Idowu (1992) when he posited that religious studies moulds the life of people both young and old. It is strongly believed that if the moral life of the people most especially students are moulded; the problem of cultism will be reduced drastically if not eradicated completely.

Another finding of this study revealed that there was a significant difference in male and female teachers' perception of the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism. The finding of this study supported the finding of Bibire (2010). He found that female teachers believed that religious education would definitely curb all the maladaptive behaviour including cultism in our secondary schools. Moreover, the findings of this study also revealed that a significant difference existed in the perception of missionary teachers and non-missionary teachers on the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism among secondary school students in Nigeria. This finding is in line with the observation of Eitzen and Zinn (1993) that human conduct falls under the purview of religion.

Finally, the finding of this study revealed that a significant difference existed in the perception of private school teachers and public school teachers the potentials of religious education in curbing cultism. Private school teachers perceived that religious education has the potentials to curb cultism among secondary school students. This finding disagrees with the finding of Yusuf (2012) who found that school type does not influence teachers' perception.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The curriculum planners, developers and policy makers should attach more importance to the teaching of Religious Studies in secondary schools. This could be done through making Religious Studies compulsory for all secondary school students.
2. Teachers of Religious Studies in collaboration with school authorities need to organise constant symposia on the menace of cultism for students.
3. Teachers of Religious Studies in collaboration with school counselors should offer religious counseling to their students on the ill of secret cultism.
4. There is need for revision of the entire contents of religious education curriculum in secondary school so that more concepts that can help in curbing cultism could be incorporated in the new curriculum.
5. Government should organise seminar for the religious teachers on how to inculcate moral and religious education that will make the students shun the habits that can jeopardize their future ambition most especially cultism.
6. The parents should discipline, train, advise, counsel and educate their children and wards adequately with religious moral values. Such responsibility should not be left to the teachers alone.

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