

Safeguarding Susceptible Youths and Communities in Anambra State against the Devastating Effects of Cultism and Violent Crime through School/Community-based Value-reorientation Programme

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Abstract

In spite of the interventions and strategies of the government, religious and community leaders, security agencies, and anti-cultism units in academic institutions, cult-group killings and violent crime in Anambra State remain rampant, mostly due to failure to shift emphasis from outward approach to crime management to a more effective inward approach. This study is on the prevalence of cultism in Anambra State and the necessity of introducing value-reorientation campaigns to redirect the beliefs, values and energy of Anambra youths from cult activities and violent crime to positive preoccupations. Anchored on the Theory of Bevalhabism, the study adopted a mixed-method approach, including the use of qualitative and quantitative research design. Data were collected by means of open-ended interviews, semi-structured questionnaire, Likert scale rating tool, and qualitative observation. Key stakeholders surveyed were Anambra youths (in and out of school), schoolteachers and administrators, religious and community leaders, security operatives, and the public. Field notes generated from the interviews were summarized and content analyzed manually. Secondary data were collected from the mass media, the internet, journals, textbooks, and other relevant extant literature. The study concluded that school/community-based ethical reorientation programmes aimed at transforming Anambra State youths and redirecting them towards positive pursuits is one of the most fundamental ways of minimizing and ultimately eliminating youth-driven cultism, cult-group killings and violent crime in the state. A key recommendation of the study is that the Anambra State government, through its relevant ministry, department or agency, should introduce school/community-based value-reorientation and character reformation programme as an instrument for transforming the beliefs, values and habits of cultists and vulnerable youths in the state.

Keywords: cultism, cult-group killings, violent crime, youths, bevalhabism, ethical reorientation, Anambra State

1.0 INRODUCTION

Killings by cult groups in Anambra State, especially in Awka, the state capital, and its environs, have become incessant and unrelenting for many years. Unknown gunmen shootings are the greatest source of social unrest in the state. Hardly any week passes without news of someone or, in some cases, groups of persons being shot dead by masked or unmasked assailants in broad daylight. What is shocking is that after each killing spree, the shooters will jump into a parked vehicle, from which they had emerged, and make good their escape in gangster fashion, unchallenged by terrified onlookers or any nearby security personnel or outpost.

These killings usually take place in public places: open markets, pubs, on the street, in front of the victims' places of work or residence. Some victims have met their untimely death in places of worship or while returning from morning mass. That the gunmen never get caught heightens the sharply growing sense of insecurity and the feeling of helplessness felt by the scared residents of the state, particularly those living in Awka and its environs.

The police and law-enforcement officers in the state, who have lost several colleagues of theirs to gunmen attacks, are evidently too ill-equipped to deal effectively with the situation. Law-enforcement agencies operating in the state include the police, DSS, NSCDC, the Anambra State Vigilante Group (AVG), and the Nigerian Army, among others. Their concerted strategies and the intervention of religious and community leaders have not stopped or reduced the frequent cases of wanton killings by members of cult groups across the state.

A number of strategies and measures have been implemented to reduce the incessant killings by cultists in the state. One of the measures includes the installation of gates at several street entrances and exits. About 54 of such gates have been mounted within Awka, where several village vigilante groups have been formed to safeguard their areas and to complement the work of the operatives of the Special Anti Cultism Squad (SPACS) that frequently patrol the streets. Youth cultism in Anambra remains prevalent in spite of these measures and the punitive anti-cultism law passed by the Anambra State House of Assembly. This indicates that there is need to tackle the problem by influencing the thought and behavioural patterns of Anambra youths through reorienting their beliefs, values and habits (Nakolisa, 2022), thereby conditioning them against joining cult groups.

There is evidence that deployment of this approach (of changing the thoughts and habits of youths) in some troubled societies resulted in significant mindset and behavioural changes. McGuire (2008) stated that:

Overall, it is concluded that there is sufficient evidence currently available to substantiate the claim that personal violence can be reduced by psychosocial interventions, but that much more research is required to delineate the parameters of effectiveness in this context.

The truth of the matter is that if no new youth is recruited into cultism, the activities of cultists would, within a short time, cease to be prevalent, and the cultists would self-destruct themselves (or desist from their evil acts) and finally fizzle out. This is why this study, anchored on Bevalhabismic theory (Nakolisa, 2020, updated in Nakolisa, 2025), is aimed ultimately at blocking the recruitment base of cult groups by reorienting the beliefs, values and habits of Anambra State youths.

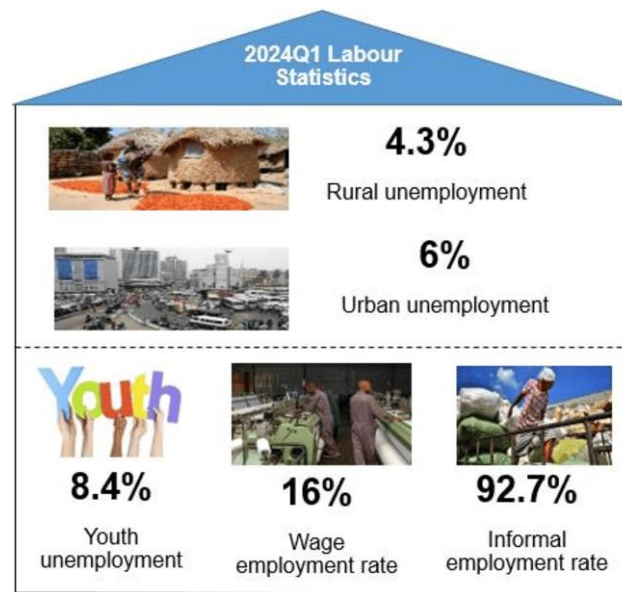
At the moment in Anambra State, many teenagers are lured into cultism due to peer pressure only to end up being drugged and used by their cult leaders, who are hardened criminal-minded adults, to settle scores unconnected with the teenagers and young adults who execute the killings. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in their document, “Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups” (UNODC 2019) has rightly noted that teenagers are usually recruited because they are “Cheaper than adult fighters, they are more easily coerced, controlled, and indoctrinated. They are also less likely than adults to fully comprehend the long-term consequences of risk-taking behaviour”.

Some people have identified youth unemployment as a factor responsible for the increasing involvement of Nigerian youths in cultism and cult-group violence. Others have insisted that the basic cause of the moral failings of our youths is inadequate nurture in the families where many parents and guardians, gripped by materialistic pursuits and immoral lifestyles, are no longer good role models. Our corrupt and decadent society at large has also been blamed, with many people arguing that our youths are simply reflections of the failings of our social systems, corruption in public-service deliveries and the impunity of our political leaders, some of whom have refused to obey court orders, thereby demonstrating to our youths that might is right.

We need to make an observation regarding the issue of youth unemployment. The youths who are involved in cultism are mostly students who ought to devote their time and energy to their studies. This study has

found out that those of them who are not students are engaged artisans or apprentices; unemployment, therefore, cannot be the main reason why they resort to cult-group aggression and crime. Although youth unemployment in Nigeria rose during the first quarter of 2024, according to the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESGROUP), it remained a single-digit figure. Here is the NESGROUP graphic data for the first quarter of 2024:

Figure 1: 2024 Quarter 1 Labour Statistics



In Figure 1 above, the youth segment of the problem (in terms of the percentage of youth unemployment – 8.4%) subtly indicates that youth involvement in cultism is more likely a result of value-system distortion than of unemployment.

Despite the various efforts of Anambra State government, state security agencies, and community leaders to deal with it, cult-group killings and violent crime in Anambra State remain intractable. This indicates that a new form of intervention is required if the prevalence of cultism and cult killings would be outdated in Anambra State. This study delves into the issue of cultism and cult-group crime in Anambra State in order to see the role, if any, an ethical reformation programme anchored on Bevalhabismic theory's Believe-Values-Habit (BVH) paradigm can play in altering the mindset of Anambra youths and in reorienting them from destructive get-rich-quick tendencies to paths of sustainable legitimate pursuits. When the youths are gainfully engaged, they would no longer be agents of destruction but would, rather, become key contributors to the state's economic growth and development.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Cultism and cult-gang killings are among the greatest social menace plaguing Anambra State today. It is prevalent in different parts of the state but is evidently worst in Awka, the state capital, where the executive, legislative, and judicial arms of government as well as the state headquarters of different state security outfits are domiciled. The killings take place in broad daylight and under the glare of everyone, including the police, yet the assailants usually bolt away in their expensive vehicles unchallenged by anyone. The murders are so gruesomely orchestrated that they unfailingly brutalize the psyche of all bystanders, causing society-wide revulsion and confusion. Sometimes, the killers spend extra time to dismember the body of victims, cutting off their heads and genitals, which they take with them as they rush into their waiting vehicle. Cultists engaged in inter-cult reprisal attacks, hired assassination and armed robbery cause much of the insecurity in Anambra state. Efforts of security agencies, including neighbourhood vigilante groups, have not been able to stop, reduce or prevent the almost daily killings that take place in Anambra State. Cultism and cult-group violence, many believe, remain prevalent in the state because the perpetrators of the violent attacks are driven by wrong beliefs, values and habits.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The overall goal of this study is to survey the necessity of introducing school/community-based value-reorientation training as an instrument for altering the beliefs, values and habits of cultists and the negative mindsets of youths of vulnerable communities. The expectation is that introducing the value-reorientation programme will enhance the capacity of participating youths to internalize moral values, exhibit positive habits, and rebuff the slightest attempt to recruit them into cultism. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To determine the level of involvement of Anambra youths in cultism, cult-group killings, and other forms of violent crime in Anambra State;
- To identify the set of beliefs, values and habits that define and characterize cultists and cult groups;
- To survey the necessity of introducing an ethical reformation programme based on Believe-Values-Habit (BVH) paradigm, as a basic and complementary tool for reorienting Anambra youths from

destructive get-rich-quick mindset to paths of sustainable legitimate pursuits.

1.3 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- a. What factors predispose Anambra youths to cult-group recruitment and membership?
- b. What is the extent of involvement of Anambra youths in cultism, cult-group killings and violent crime?
- c. What sort of beliefs, values and habits characterize Anambra cultists and enhance their activities?
- d. Is it necessary to introduce community-based value-reorientation and character reformation programme as an instrument for transforming the beliefs, values and habits of cultists and vulnerable youths in Anambra State?

1.4 Survey Statements

The following survey statements were formulated and rated using Likert scale psychometric rating tool:

- a. Peer-group pressure is the strongest factor responsible for involvement of Anambra youths in cult-group activities.
- b. There is a prevalence of evidence that some Anambra youths are engaged in cultism, cult-group killings and other violent crimes.
- c. Anambra youths who indulge in cult-group violence and criminal acts do so because of their belief that might is right and their desire to get rich quick.
- d. It is necessary to introduce school/community-based value-reorientation and character reformation programme as instrument for transforming the beliefs, values and habits of cultists and vulnerable youths in Anambra State.

Open-ended questionnaires were used to pose follow-up questions aimed at exploring and capturing the “why” and “how” behind any specific answer.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study will be of great significance to Anambra state government's Civic and Social Reformation Office (ANCISRO), and other relevant ministries, departments, and agencies. It will also be of interest to National Orientation Agency, community and religious leaders, and registered youth organisations. Other states of the federation and tertiary institutions experiencing any form of cult-group menace among its youth population will find this study, its findings and recommendations useful and of practical relevance. In addition, the academic community will find, in this study, a significant contribution to the literature on cult-group activities among Nigerian youths, especially with respect to the study's focus on tackling the problem by altering the mindset and orientation of the cultists rather than dwelling mainly on doling out punitive measures.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is delimited to the three senatorial zones of Anambra State, with special emphasis on Awka, the state capital (Anambra Central Senatorial Zone), Onitsha (Anambra North Senatorial Zone), and Nnewi (Anambra South Senatorial Zone). The study focuses on reorienting the beliefs, values, and habits of youthful cultists, by which we mean teenagers and new adults (including males and females). The study's primary target is not old hardened criminals or ex-convicts. Moreover, this study was not extended to other aspects of youth-development, such as skill-acquisition programme.

1.7 Involvement of Anambra Youths in Cultism

Youth cultism is a phenomenon globally associated with violent crime and arms proliferation (Alumona & Amusan, 2019). In Nigeria, statistics show that thousands of lives have been lost as a result of cult-related killings. Although one report, covering a certain period, cited a figure of 5822 deaths (Ukoji, 2023), the police has indicated that much more persons have died as a result of the activities of cult members.

Pertaining to Anambra State, former commissioner of police in the state, Mr Chris Owolabi, is reported to have said that about 90 per cent of cult-related deaths in the state are not documented because most parents and guardians of the deceased would not want such cases investigated (NAN, 2021). The southeastern state of Anambra, where about 34 killings within three weeks occurred as a result of open-air shootouts by cultists (Ujumadu, 2024), is one of the states most vulnerable to cult activism and violence in Nigeria.

The deadly effects of the activities of youthful cultists in Anambra State have frequently been reported in the media. Although wanton killings by cult members have occurred at different parts of the state, most of the incidents have occurred within the state capital, Awka, and the surrounding towns. According to Ujumadu (2024), "Areas where the killings have become a common occurrence include Ifite, Okpuno, Dike Street, near Eke Awka Main Market, Obinagu, Nkwelle, Ezinano, UNIZIK junction, among other places." In October, 2024, scores of people were killed during a cultural ceremony in Nibo, a satellite settlement near the governor's lodge; within the same week, several people were shot dead at Ifite. Towns in Anambra State where killings by cultists were recorded in 2024 include Nimo, Nawfia, Ogbunka, Omasi, and Nibo, among others (Daily Trust, 2024). Urgent action is needed to stop the current blood bath going on in Anambra State.

Understanding the way these youthful cultists are recruited is an initial step that would help in devising a workable preventive strategy, for cultism thrives because more and more youths are recruited into cult groups. Most recruitment takes place in the campuses of Nigeria's tertiary institutions (although some are now recruited in their senior secondary school years). Most recruits were lured into cult groups in their first year in the university, polytechnic or some other post-secondary school. Some joined the groups out of sheer naivety, but many enlisted because they were promised power and protection.

In many parts of the country, including Anambra State, a new cultist's formal reception or initiation takes place in the forest. It is a harrowing experience, and the following excerpt taken from a BBC report gives one a good glimpse of what usually happens:

... was a first-year student when he joined...a secret, illegal student society in Nigeria. A brutal initiation ritual was held late at night in the forest. Older members, singing, dancing and drinking, formed a ring around him and other blindfolded initiates, beating them severely until the early hours of the morning. The ritual was supposedly to purge the initiates of weaknesses and instil bravery in them. "The moment you go in there and come out, you are a different person" (Oyibo, 2020).

This study's extreme-case sampling of some cultists in Anambra State revealed that initiation of new members also involves a blood covenant, and that this is what makes it difficult, aside from fear of violent punishment, for a cultist to leave a cult group. The findings of this research further reveals that those who have successfully deserted their groups quietly escaped from

their group's operative setting and ran to a distant location where some spiritual exercises were conducted on them to deliver them from the oath they took on their day of initiation. Many escaping from rival groups, after being involved in inter-cult violence, were chased after indefinitely and were usually captured and killed, sometimes with some innocent relation of theirs.

2.0 Literature Review

Youth cultism usually leads to deviant and criminal behaviour, drug and substance abuse, arms possession and proliferation, gang rape, armed robbery and killings (Anzene, 2014; UNODC, 2019; Alumona & Amusan, 2019; Ukwubile & Adeyi, 2023). In schools and communities, such as those in Anambra State, where it is prevalent, efforts by police and other security agencies to combat it often prove ineffective and frustrating. Cultism and incessant cult killings in Anambra State are fundamentally problems that arise from failure by parents, schools and religious centres to instill moral values in children. The moral decadence and corruption in the larger society generally bereft of good role models imprint the wrong impression on children and young adults, leading them to conclude that might is right and that lawlessness is the order of the day. Scholars who have suggested possible solutions to the problem include Uguru-Okorie (2001, in Arijesuyo & Oyewole, 2011) whose framework of psycho-infrastructuralism is an approach that relies on changing patterns of behaviour by controlling appropriate environmental factors. Uguru-Okorie's intervention model is basically anchored on environmental manipulation.

Some other models prefer to focus on the internal state of the violent individual through the process of value reorientation. The use of value-reorientation seminars and media sensitization campaigns to achieve attitudinal and behavioural changes among individuals and communities vulnerable to violent crime is supported by recent research (Christmann, Rogerson & Walters, 2003; Anzene, 2014; Akinlewa & Aderonke, 2019). Christmann et al's study, conducted in the UK, found that such campaigns enhance community partnerships, reduce crime fear, build community efficacy against organized violence such as that engaged in by cultists, and is likely to lead to the formation of deeper social networks that serve as ethical and social bulwarks against the prevalence of violent crime in sensitized and engaged communities. Anzene (2014) noted that behavioural changes are achieved by inculcating in the youth core values such as "detesting laziness, dignity of labour, respect for parent/elders, hospitality,

public spiritedness, respect for authority, hardwork, respect for sanctity of life, honesty and truthfulness.”

Cardwell et al., in their 2015 study anchored on Bandura’s (1986) theory of moral disengagement (MD), studied “the extent to which persons have internalized moral values that promote rule obedience and guard against rule violation” and concluded, *inter alia*, that “persons with a greater internalization of moral values will be less likely to engage in acts of wrongdoing than those with a weakened or compromised value system”. Cardwell et al.’s research used longitudinal data to examine heterogeneity in MD and to determine the extent to which such heterogeneity matches up to criminal offending in a sample of “serious adolescent offenders followed from mid-adolescence to early adulthood...the longest empirical examination of longitudinal patterns of MD among serious adolescent offenders who are transitioning from mid-adolescence to early adulthood, a critical developmental period that is relevant for studying persistence and desistance in offending”.

Other studies (Parhar, Wormith, Derkzen, & Beauregard, 2008; Andrews & Bonta, 2010) have shown that law enforcement against juvenile delinquency without “a therapeutic foundation” is usually ineffective. De Vries et al. (2018), referring to research done by Welsh et al. (2008), Lipsey (2009), and Loeber, Burke, & Pardini (2009), observed that “Young adolescents with disruptive and delinquent behavior, showing multiple risk factors, need constructive change-oriented treatment. Given that these youngsters are at risk of developing a chronic and serious criminal trajectory, and are highly costly to society, it is essential to invest in (early) preventive interventions”.

Mwangangi (2019) examined the relationship between crime by juveniles and young adults and family-related crises. She found that child crime is related to family-based factors such as degree of family cohesion, physical violence, and uninvolved parenting. According to the study, non-family factors that impact on juvenile delinquency include “the failure of the juvenile justice system, poverty, a lack of access to education, drug abuse and genetic problems”.

Anzene (2014) studied “The Challenges of Value Re-Orientation in Nigeria’s Tertiary Education System” and concluded that “The decay in the society has affected the values and moral character fabric of our tertiary education system. This has manifested in many social vices, which include cultism, drug abuse, examination malpractice, indecent dressing, sexual harassment among others”.

From the above and similar studies, it is clear that without a foundational change in the ethical mindset of cultists and without a moral reorientation of the larger society in which cultists dwell, a lasting solution to cultism and cult-gang killings in Anambra State may never be found. Dealing with external manifestations of moral derailments, such as cultism, armed robbery, murder, etc, cannot erase the internal causes of the problems. Reorienting the values, tendencies and behavior of Anambra youths will address the root causes of the problem. This is why this study is surveying the necessity of embarking on school/community-based ethical reorientation of vulnerable youths and communities as a strategic move against the devastating effects of cultism, cult-group killings and violent crime in Anambra State.

This study's objectives are supported by theoretical frameworks emerging from the fields of philosophy, behavioural sciences, psychology, media studies, and motivational management. Recently, emphasis has shifted from outward approach to crime management (detection, arrest and punishment of criminals) to inward approach to crime management (dealing with the forces inside the individual that pull them towards criminal activity); this new shift and its superior benefits has been canvassed in competent studies such as "Prevention of Child Recruitment and Exploitation by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System" (UNODC, 2019) and "Variability in moral disengagement and its relation to offending in a sample of serious youthful offenders" (Cardwell et al., 2015).

The belief-values-habit (BVH) paradigm explored in detail by Nakolisa (2022) focuses on the internal dynamics of behavioural changes. The new shift emphasizes *changing* the person who is likely to commit crime (to reduce or remove his propensity to do that) in preference to focusing only on *chaining* him down (to prevent him from or punish him for committing crime).

School/community-based ethical reorientation strategies are required to deal with the problem of cultism and cult-group killings in Anambra State from the roots. Unless the character and ethical foundation of Anambra youths are reoriented and changed, it is futile to hope that the prevalence of cultism in Anambra State can be minimized or eliminated through the external influence of law enforcement. Several studies have indicated that a more sustainable way of dealing with this kind of social crises is to change the mindset and moral fabric of the perpetrators of the evil acts and the ethical landscape of the society at large (Christmann, Rogerson & Walters, 2003; McQuire, 2008; Vries et al., 2018).

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Theory of Bevalhabism, first propounded by Duve Nakolisa in his 2020 book, *The 3 Most Powerful Success Determinants*, and recently updated in the lengthy paper, “Bevalhabism: A Theory of Personal Growth” (Nakolisa, 2025). According to Nakolisa, the theory of Bevalhabism presents “processes by which individuals can utilize beliefs, values and habits to determine the outcome of their undertakings”. The processes can be adapted to suit individual needs as long as those involved are willing to take necessary steps to reorient their beliefs, values, and habits and use them as channels for realizing their desired success outcomes.

Bevalhabismic theory’s relevance in this study rests on its core thesis that “people succeed or fail because of their beliefs, values and habits. All the other factors of success rest upon these three.” By using the theory’s transformative principles, a value-reorientation programme can be designed and implemented on cooperative young cultists and vulnerable youths.

2.2 Gap in Literature

Although there are previous studies on mindset and cognitive-behavioural interventions, this researcher is not aware of any study that specifically investigated the effect of targeting the beliefs, values, and habits of young Nigerian cultists as a way of reducing their aggressive tendencies and frequent resort to violent crime. In addition, no previous research had surveyed the relevance of introducing a belief-values-habit transformative programme as a panacea to the incessant problem of cultism and cult-group violence in Anambra State. This study fills this gap by exploring the option of applying belief-values-habit intervention as a basic step in dealing with cultism and cult-group violence in Anambra State.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed methods research design that matched its purpose of surveying the necessity of introducing school/community-based value-reorientation training as an instrument for altering the beliefs, values and habits of cultists and the negative mindsets of youths of vulnerable communities.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

Key stakeholders in the three senatorial zones of Anambra State, namely, Anambra Central Senatorial Zone, Anambra North Senatorial Zone, and Anambra South Senatorial Zone were sampled. The stakeholders included students, youthful artisans, teachers, parents and guardians, law enforcement agents, school administrators, religious and community leaders, self-confessed cultists, and some members of the public. All of them were purposively selected and sampled at Awka, Onitsha, Nnewi, and some neighbouring communities. When dealing with issues concerning the secretive operations of the cultists, which only cultists were in the best position to reveal, extreme case sampling technique was adopted.

3.3 Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire titled “Dealing with Cultism in Anambra State Questionnaire” (DCASQ) was used to collect data about the respondents, their thoughts on cultism – its causes, manifestations, and possible solutions. A four-point Likert rating scale complemented the questionnaire. Open-ended, follow-up questions were used to further explore and capture the “why” and “how” behind some answers.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Specialists in the fields of education, behavioural sciences, motivational management and law enforcement established the face and content validity of the instruments while a pilot test established the reliability of the data-collection tools.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Questionnaire Responses

Most of the respondents acknowledged the prevalence of cultism, cult-group killings and other forms of cult-related crimes in Anambra State. Answering the question, “What in your opinion and observation is the cause of youth involvement in cultism in Anambra State”, the respondents identified the following factors as the causes of the phenomenon:

- Lack of good home training, which is blamed on the failure of morally inadequate parents to inculcate in their children sound ethical values;

- Dearth of good role models in our society where people with a track record of honesty, integrity, and hard work have been displaced by rich connen, corrupt politicians and public servants;
- Wanton display of impunity and executive lawlessness by senior government officials at federal and state levels, as publicly showcased in failure to obey court orders, and in the reckless behaviour of executive outriders;
- Inordinate display of sudden ill-gotten wealth by fraudsters flaunted in a manner that makes the rigours of education and legitimate modes of wealth acquisition unattractive to many Anambra youths;
- Evident failure of the policing and judicial system, which creates the impression, particularly to our impressionistic youths, that self help and other forms of illegitimate interventions have become the order of the day;
- Proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria, which has made it easier for deviant youths to obtain and use weapons to achieve criminal ends; and
- Failure of the authorities of our secondary schools and tertiary institutions to establish well-trained and well-motivated anti-cult units, with intelligence-gathering capabilities, in our institutions of learning.

Other responses obtained from the questionnaire, and responses to follow-up questions and interviews, as well as the study's qualitative observations, were reflected in other parts of this report.

4.2 Likert Scale Rating

Qualitative insights in this paper were captured using fixed/open-ended questionnaires. The administration of the questionnaires was either kick-started or followed by measuring the respondent's attitudes, opinions, and perceptions via Likert scale psychometric rating tool. Four survey topics were sampled. Even, rather than odd, Likert-scale options were used in this research in order to avoid the collection of neutral answers, which are typically selected by those who choose to be on the fence. In the context of this research, sitting on the fence was considered counterproductive since the key goal of the research was to determine if school/community-based value-reorientation training, centred on transforming the beliefs, values and

habits of youthful cultists, was an effective way of curbing their criminal activities in Anambra State. The four-point scale format used in this research delivered definite verdicts and actionable insights, which the respondents in each of the four surveys (80 purposively chosen persons picked from the earlier-listed stakeholders) were encouraged to further clarify through follow-up questions that probed the *why* and *how* behind some of the choices. At the end, a combined table detailing the four Likert-scale statements, respondents' measurable responses, frequency, and percentages emerged (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Likert-Scale Rating on Challenges of Cultism in Anambra State

Survey Statements	Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Peer-group pressure is the strongest factor responsible for involvement of Anambra youths in cult-group activities.	Strongly Disagree	6	7.5	7.5
	Disagree	8	10	10
	Agree	44	55	55
	Strongly Agree	22	27.5	27.5
	Missing	0	0	0
	Total	80	100	100
There is a prevalence of evidence that some Anambra youths are engaged in cultism, cult-group killings and other violent crimes.	Strongly Agree	12	15	15
	Disagree	12	15	15
	Agree	38	47.5	47.5
	Strongly Disagree	18	22.5	22.5
	Missing	0	0	0
	Total	80	100	100
Anambra youths who indulge in cult-group violence and criminal acts do so because of their belief that might is right and their desire to get rich quick.	Strongly Disagree	8	10	10.3
	Disagree	10	12.5	12.8
	Agree	44	55	56.4
	Strongly Agree	16	20	20.5
	Missing	2	2.5	
	Total	80	100	100
It is necessary to introduce school/community-based value-reorientation and character reformation programme as instrument for transforming the beliefs, values and habits of cultists and vulnerable youths in Anambra State.	Strongly Disagree	12	15	15
	Disagree	16	20	20
	Agree	34	47.5	47.5
	Strongly Agree	18	22.5	22.5
	Missing	0	0	0
	Total	80	100	100

In the above table, it is established that 55% of the respondents “agree” that “Peer-group pressure is the strongest factor responsible for involvement of Anambra youths in cult-group activities” while 27.5% “strongly agree”, raising the percentage of those in agreement with this proposition to 82.5%. The second statement, “There is a prevalence of evidence that some Anambra youths are engaged in cultism, cult-group killings and other

violent crimes”, was supported by a total of 56 persons or 70% of the respondents. The third statement, “Anambra youths who indulge in cult-group violence and criminal acts do so because of their belief that might is right and their desire to get rich quick”, received 55% “Agree” and 20% “Strongly Agree” ratings, making it a total of 75% positive responses. Fifty persons or 67.5% responded favourably to the fourth survey statement, “It is necessary to introduce school/community-based value-reorientation and character reformation programme as instrument for transforming the beliefs, values and habits of cultists and vulnerable youths in Anambra State”. This indicates that the majority of the respondents, who represent the key stakeholders involved in this issue, would like the Anambra State government to introduce school/community-based value-reorientation and character reformation programme across the state.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Surveying the issue of cultism and the necessity of introducing value-reorientation training in schools and vulnerable communities is the main objective of this study. The proposed value-reorientation programme is intended to serve as an instrument for altering the beliefs, values and habits of cultists and the negative mindsets of youths of vulnerable communities. The value-reorientation programme is also expected to enhance the capacity of participating youths to internalize moral values, which will be translated into positive and productive behaviour.

5.2 Recommendations

1. The Anambra State government, through its relevant ministry, department or agency, should introduce school/community-based value-reorientation and character reformation programme as instrument for transforming the beliefs, values and habits of cultists and vulnerable youths in the state. Such a programme can be developed from Bevalhabism’s BVH paradigm and customized to suit the cultural and social peculiarities of the state.
2. As a preliminary step to the takeoff of the recommended value-reorientation exercise in all secondary schools, the Anambra State government should set up a train-the-trainers body and charge them with the responsibility of developing a manual to guide the envisaged programme aimed at transforming Anambra youths.

3. Anti-cult units in tertiary institutions within and outside Anambra State should be trained in the art of effective intelligence gathering to enable them to easily identify and frustrate the machinations of campus cult recruiters and other criminal actors in our institutions of higher learning.

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