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CULTISM AND CULTURAL DECADENCE IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF STANLEY NNABUO'S *WRONG DECISION*

***Ajayi, E. A. and Adegoroye, A**
Department of Languages, Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria
Corresponding Email: ajayi_ea@yahoo.com

Abstract
Over the years, cultism, particularly in Nigerian higher institutions has been a significant societal hazard impacting the educational sector. This banality of evil has resulted in the loss of millions of innocent lives and has left countless handicapped, both physically and psychologically. However, this paper focuses on the analysis of syntactic features such as the use of declarative, exclamatory and interrogatory sentences employed by the writer to drive home his point. The use of these sentence types is met to create awareness among members of the public on the negative effects of cultism on Nigerian tertiary institutions using Stanley Nnabuo's *Wrong Decision* as a study.

Keywords: Cultism, Syntax, Stanley Nnabuo, *Wrong Decision*

Introduction

Over the years, the evil of cultism has been in continuity in Nigerian higher institutions. However, according to Ikudenyisi (1998), cultism could be understood as "a fraternal relationship which connotes brotherhood. All around the world, fraternities among youngsters, especially the sort encouraged in higher institutions of learning exist to nurture brotherhood, collective aspiration and pursuit of noble aims. They provide a platform for leadership capability development and a forum exhibiting juvenile delinquency and unrestrained, senseless, masochism, least of all and it was never intended to become an avenue to jeopardize life with impurity while in the light of Ogunbameru (2004), cultism could be defined as "any form of organization whose activities are only exclusively kept away from the knowledge of others but such activities are carried out at odd hours of the day and they often clash with accepted norms and values of everyday life. This is thus because cults only pursue the interests of the members and follow firmly their ideologies. However, cultism in Nigeria stretches back to pre-colonization when a group of individuals with the main objective of obtaining protection from their ancestors undertook rituals. Secret cults have always existed in many sections of the country (Ajayi et al., 2010). The Ogboni secret cult is prominent among the Yorubas, the Ekpe secret cult among the Efiks, the Ekine cult in the Delta region and the Owegbe cult among the Edos (Adeola, 1997). Campus cults in Nigeria have been traced back to 1952 when Prof. Wole Soyinka, winner of the 1986 Nobel Prize for Literature and a group of six pals created the Pyrates Confraternity Elite of the University of College Ibadan, then part of the University of London (Orintusin, 1990; Abdu, 2003; Ekong, 2003; Onoyase et al. 2008). Adewale (2005) stated that the Pyrates confraternity was created to develop future Nigerian leaders who should be very proud of their African background but the reverse is the case now. Cultism has taken over all the Nigerian higher institutions. According to Adewale (2005) today there are roughly forty-five (45)

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secret cults in Nigerian schools of study and are all equipped with an extensive hierarchy insignia and different costumes. Some of the more renowned of these secret cults include the Black Axe, Eiye confraternity, Vikings, Amazons, Buccaneer, Mafia and Dragons. The female students are not left as they have their groups among which are the Temple of Eden, Frigrates, Barracudas and Daughters of Jezebel among others. However, there are so many elements that led to the causes of cultism especially in Nigerian higher institutions. According to Fulus (2023), the major factors leading students to join these cult groups are attributed to peer group influence, a sense of belonging, political affiliation, money, job opportunities, and contend with administrative decisions which considered biased. Furthermore, involvement in violent confrontations is basically for political supremacy during electioneering in student union politics. Drug addiction, drinking and indiscriminate sex are all widespread in cult activities. Members of these cult groups feel that there is an obvious shift in their status after becoming members. These modifications include popularity, ego bragging, a sense of belonging and fearlessness. While Chukwurah, et al (2022) stated under their decisions that some of the causes of cultism in Nigerian postsecondary institutions include:

Influence of Peer Group: The influence of peer groups is wildfire and students especially of adolescent age have more intense social contact with their peers readily than any other category of folks. Social relationships rapidly from the parents or guardian to the peer group in the adolescent period. A peer group is a serious agent of socialization and cultism exists as a result of socialization. Considering the present happening in the country, Peer socialization is more dysfunctional than beneficial as a majority of the cultists are lured into joining cultism by intimidation from their peer group while some join through defeat and some are convinced by peer group by joining the cultism without the knowledge of its implications. Peer group influence is revealed as the first-grade root casual component of cultism in the University community (Akinfolarin, 2003; Omoegun and Akanle, 2007).

Harsh economic circumstances in the country: This is another aspect that prompted some students to adopt cultism. A harsh economic scenario which develops from a high rate of corruption and results in a high rate of poverty in the country is a cause for worry. School fees are thought expensive because of the rate of poverty in society thus making cultism an attractive option for students to survive at all costs (Ogwudile, 2020).

Affluence: This is a contributing factor to the reasons for cultism in school. A student enters cultism solely for fame, pursuit of power, money, prestige and protection (Ajayi and Ayodele, 2002; Okwu, 2006). This is due to the value system of the society. The system values affluence without adequate respect for the means (Omoegun and Akanle, 2007). So, some students just feel like embracing cultism to build a name, to be feared, and revered within and outside the school community.

Inadequate financing of the University to acceptability takes care of student welfare: This has been a concern for centuries. Negligence on the part of the government to establish a good and welcoming learning environment, by supporting the University and supplying basic amenities for learning and recreational facilities in the University to fully engage the students, many of them find solace in membership of secret cults. (Ogwudile, 2020).

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Non-Prosecution of Cultists: Despite the enactment of Decree 47 of 1989 and laws made by various state governments stipulating some year jail terms without an option of fine for any culprits of cultism found guilty (Ibe, 2005 and Fasanmi, 2006). The majority of the students caught in cult activities are not prosecuted. This causes some pupils to become cultists. Students join cultism because there must be a way out even when they are caught that is to show that they have a backup. The law is present but not effective in Nigeria, everything is doable as long as you have a political godfather. This is as a result of the corrupt nature of the society. However, in support of the foregoing, Udoh and Ikezu (2015) presented some ways to reduce cultism in Nigerian postsecondary institutions. These include: The government should create programmes on television, radio and other awareness programmes such as workshops and seminars meant to inform the pupils about the implications and the danger of joining secret cults.

Guidance and counsellors should be deployed to every tertiary institution in Nigeria with the responsibility of counselling the students and staff exclusively. These counsellors should report consistently causes of unexplained and unjustified advance of students to female or male lecturers, and that of lecturers to students.

The institutions' administration should maintain proper inspection, supervision and monitoring of the personnel and students on cultism.

There should be a venue where the students and professors should discuss the subject of cultism.

Parents should train their children in morals and strive to meet their requirements. They should inspect the company their children keep and counsel them periodically.

The government should establish a tribunal to try cultists and if proven guilty should be jailed accordingly. This will be the damage to individuals who have joined or those who have the intention of joining the secret cults.

The government should cut the high cost of education in Nigeria so that everyone can afford it.

Churches, mosques and other religious institutions should establish strong youth forums in other to provide youths with the opportunity to vent their worries.

While in the light of Osezua (2016) as he/she proposes how cultism should be abolished in Nigerian higher institutions. These include the provision of an enabling environment for learning. To render cultism unattractive and a needless alternative.

There should be better facilities and living circumstances on campuses to minimize strain on the social structure, which underlies cultism in our universities.

Our institutions should be reformed to be capable of providing for those who reside within them and be able to redress the injustice against any student or group of students by peaceful and legitimate means.

Parents should be urged to committedly establish a firm moral basis for their children.

The government should introduce execution punishment to individuals detected engaging in cult activities to serve as deferent to others.

There should be campus publications such as newsletters, journals or magazines to expose the activities of cults as a manner of exposing the cults ridicule some of the tales of the students and staff alike on campuses.

And finally, students should heed the company they keep and choose their buddies wisely.

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However, the foregoing are feasible strategic strategies for removing. Cultism in Nigerian higher institutions.

Discussion of Syntactic Features in Stanley Nwabwo's *Wrong Decision*

Abrams (2005) defines syntax as "the study of the way that sequences of words are ordered into phrases, clauses and sentences". While Grady (2011) sees it as "the analysis of sentence structure''. From the above definitions, syntax is a branch of language which deals with the study of arrangements of words into phrases, clauses and sentences or syntactical constructions. However, the following are sentence types (declarative, interrogative and exclamatory) employed by Stanley to expose the negative effects of cultism on Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Declarative Sentences

Murthy (2007) defines declarative sentences as "sentences that state or declare something. From the above definition, a declarative sentence could be seen as a sentence that makes a statement to convey facts, opinions or assertions. The following are declarative sentences used by the playwright to convey facts, opinions or assertions in the play.

1. They drove recklessly (page 2)
2. Don't you know that in this country almost ninety percent of our lawyers belong to secret cults while in school? (Page 74)
3. He's an American-based businessman and a very successful one (page 94).
4. A girl is never too old for marriage (page 98).

In extract (1), Jack came to report to Mr. Alex how his boys had been arrested by the police for driving recklessly. The above sentence expresses a factual statement in the play.

In extract (2), Tony one of the characters in the play was asking Lewis, his friend if he was not aware the majority of the lawyers in the country belonged to cults while they were in school. This sentence is an assertion that Tony believes. However, the sentence was declaratively expressed from the point of assertion to convey a piece of information in the play.

In extract (3), the above sentence was declaratively expressed by Mrs Ume who came with his family to ask for the hand of Rose in marriage to their son, Ikechukwu, who is a successful businessman in the United States. Mrs. Ume eventually expressed and introduced her son to the family of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson.

In extract (4), the above sentence was expressed by Rose. The sentence declaratively expresses from her point of opinion, that a girl is never too old for marriage.

The above sentence was declaratively expressed by the novelist to convey opinions, assertions and facts in the play.

Interrogative Sentences

Interrogative sentences according to Murthy (2007) are "sentences that ask questions". He further added that the usual function of a question discussed is to request the listener to respond verbally with information that the questioner seeks. However, the following are some of the interrogative sentences used by Stanley to convey information in the play.

1. What did the police say they did? (Page 2)
2. Why didn't you say that in his present? (Page 45)
3. How are you feeling now? (Page 57)

4. And did you hear that from me? (Page 16)

In extract (1), the above sentence was interrogatively asked by Mr. Alex to know what exactly his boys had done to be arrested. The questioner (Mr. Alex) demanded an answer.

In extract (2), the above sentence was interrogatively asked by Louis Rose. He demands an answer from Rose as to why she can't tell Chad that she does not love him.

In extract (3), the above sentence is interrogatively asked by Tony, who wants to know how Louis is doing after being beaten by Chad and his boys.

In extract (4), the above sentence is interrogatively asked by Louis Chad. Louis was asking Chad when he heard that a guy on campus was dating Rose. Louis has anxiously demanded an answer from Chad.

The above extracts are some of the interrogative sentences used by the playwright to ask questions in the play. With the help of this sentence type (interrogative) character's mind was unravelled.

Exclamatory Sentences

Exclamatory sentences according to Murthy (2007) are "sentences that expressed some strong or sudden feeling. From the above definition, it's a sentence that is used to convey surprise, anger, excitement, joy, or any other interesting feeling that the speaker wants to express. Exclamatory sentences are usually punctuated with an exclamation mark (!) to indicate the strong emotion or feeling being expressed.

The following are some of the exclamatory sentences used by Stanley to make an exclamatory of feelings in the play:

- What a mess! (Page 7)
- Whew! That's a nice catch (page 8)
- You are warned! (Page 55)
- My God! (Page 61)

In extract (1), the above sentence was exclamatory expressed by Julienne to Rose. Julienne was seriously angry with Rose to stop fantasizing about Chad. The sentence expresses anger in the play.

In extract (2), the above sentence was exclamatory expressed by Julienne to Rose. Julienne was happy to hear that her friend met a nice guy on campus. The above sentence exclamatorily expressed joy and happiness in the play.

In extract (3), the above sentence was exclamatorily expressed by Chad to Tony. Chad was warning Tony to desist from backing Louis. The above sentence was expressed in anger.

In extract (4), the above sentence was exclamatorily expressed by Louis to Tony. Louis was scared of Chad since he knew Chad was a cultist. The above sentence was expressed in shock when Tony told him that he couldn't face him.

The above sentences are some of the exclamatory sentences used by the playwright to convey his exclamatory feelings such as excitement, anger, joy and emotions in the play.

Conclusion

This paper critically examined cultism as a cultural decadence through syntactic analysis. The syntax deals with the analysis of sentence structure. However, the paper employed syntactic features such as sentence types (declarative interrogative and exclamatory) used by the playwright (Stanley) in his play (*Wrong Decision*) to discuss the negative effect of cultism on Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. Therefore, the paper will be useful for other

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researchers who want to research syntactic features in Stanley's *Wrong Decision*.

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