

THE NEXUS BETWEEN CULTISM AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED OGBIA COMMUNITIES IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research explores the intricate connection between cultism and economic instability within Ogbia communities in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, where cult activities have significantly hindered economic progress and development. Grounded in the Social Learning Theory, which suggests that people learn behaviors and perspectives through observing, imitating, and receiving reinforcement, this research investigates how socioeconomic conditions compel individuals to join cult organizations and the consequent effects of cultism on economic stability. Employing a descriptive survey design along with quantitative methods, this research gathered information from 376 participants across four selected communities. The results indicate that cultism disrupts economic operations, leads to economic instability, and obstructs economic development, with 53.5% of participants agreeing that cultism devastates livelihoods, impedes business functions, and negatively influences agricultural productivity. Moreover, 50.3% of participants cited poverty and unemployment as major socioeconomic factors that drive individuals toward cult membership. The research suggests enforcing stringent law enforcement and punitive actions against cult members and their backers (with 36.2% of participants endorsing this strategy), creating job opportunities and empowerment initiatives for youth (supported by 31.1% of participants), and fostering community involvement and awareness programs. The outcomes of this study hold important implications for policymakers and stakeholders aiming to combat cultism and enhance economic stability in Nigeria. By clarifying the complex interrelation between cultism and economic instability, this study adds to the existing body of knowledge regarding

the socioeconomic effects of cultism in Nigeria and offers useful perspectives for formulating effective methods to counteract its.

Keywords: Cultism, Economic instability, Poverty, Crime.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultism has increasingly become a destructive social issue in Nigeria, severely impacting various aspects of the nation, including its economy. Cultism refers to the practice of joining and operating within a secretive group that involves ritualistic practices for member initiation, with rules and agreements bound by blood ties. In Nigeria, these activities primarily thrive in areas abundant with educational institutions and youth populations. Ajayi (2005 cited Uzoigwe, C. F. & Okoye, O., 2024) asserts that cultism involves ritual participation by individuals or groups whose membership, admission, policies, initiation ceremonies, and activities are conducted in secrecy and are intended to remain concealed, leading to numerous negative outcomes for both the members and the larger community. Originally, cult groups were established for social bonding and cohesion, with rituals and ceremonies kept confidential. The earliest documented activities of cult groups in Nigerian higher education institutions date back to 1952, initiated by an informal cultural organization, with the goal of combating injustice. However, cultism has since transformed into a widespread issue that affects communities across the nation. The emergence of cultism within universities in 1952 marked a significant change, as these groups became more linked to violence and criminal behavior. Currently, the actions of cult groups have debilitating effects on communities, undermining the socioeconomic activities and well-being of the populace (Onoh, 2006 cited in Uzoigwe, C. F. & Okoye, O., 2024).

At present, cultism is closely associated with gangsterism, with members partaking in initiation ceremonies, enacting rules, and engaging in violent confrontations with rival factions. Although the original purpose of cultism was well-meaning, its evolution into a violent issue has wreaked havoc on communities, resulting in property damage, extortion, and loss of lives. Despite attempts to address cultism through legislative measures and law enforcement actions, the problem continues to persist, driven by factors such as peer pressure, insecurity, and societal decay (Nnamdi, 2022). It is also worrisome to note that cultism propels adverse impact on the economy of Nigeria. The dynamic between cultism and economic instability in Nigeria is complex and multidimensional, with cultism contributing to economic instability through brutality, extortion, and disruption of economic activities. According to Uzoigwe and Okoye, (2024), understanding the socioeconomic factors that contribute to cultism and economic instability is vital for developing effective strategies to address these issues and promote sustainable economic growth.

Cultism is often linked to destitution, disparity, and limited opportunities, driving individuals to join cult groups as a means of survival or protection (Adebayo, 2013). Destitution and inadequate guidance are key factors contributing to cultism in Nigeria. The activities of cult groups further exacerbate economic instability by creating fear and uncertainty, deterring investment, and disrupting economic growth.

The menace of cultism is pervasive in Nigeria, affecting most states of the country. Bayelsa State in the Niger Delta is not exclusive. Thus, this study aims to unravel cultism and economic instability in Bayelsa with particular focus on communities in Ogbia Local Government area of the State. It is noteworthy that cultism in Ogbia communities, may be particularly prevalent due to socioeconomic factors like poverty, unemployment, and restricted access to education and employment opportunities. Economic instability in these communities can be attributed to macroeconomic factors like high inflation rates, which erode purchasing power, reduce consumer spending, and lead to economic instability (Blanchard, 2017), and unemployment, which reduces consumer spending and economic growth (Keynes, 1936). Furthermore, political factors, such as corruption, which undermines trust in institutions, hinders economic development, and leads to inefficient allocation of resources (Mauro, 1995), and inadequate regulation, which leads to risky lending practices and speculative bubbles, potentially resulting in economic instability (Stiglitz, 2010), also play a role. Social factors, including income inequality, which leads to financial instability, asset bubbles, and financial market volatility (Piketty, 2014), and poverty, which reduces economic growth and stability, are also significant.

While recent studies provide valuable insights into addressing cultism and economic instability, including research by Sachini et al. (2022), Borlaug and Jungblut (2022), Chen et al. (2023), Shi et al. (2023), and Banal-Estañol et al. (2023), these studies tend to address different and peculiar environment. Thus, this research investigates the intricate connection between cultism and economic instability within Ogbia communities in Nigeria. This is required to understand the specific socioeconomic elements that fuel cultism across various regions in Nigeria. This study intends to enhance existing knowledge by examining how cultism relates to economic instability in Ogbia communities, particularly focusing on factors such as poverty, unemployment, and peer influence. By illuminating the complex interactions of cultism in these communities, this research aims to guide policymakers and stakeholders toward effective approaches for tackling cultism and fostering economic stability. Specifically, the study will:

- i. Unravel specific ways in which cultism disrupts economic activities in the selected communities.
- ii. Scrutinize how socioeconomic factors like poverty and unemployment intersect with cultism in the communities.
- iii. Examine ways cult groups contribute to economic instability in these communities.

- iv. Proffer possible interventions or programs that can be implemented to address the root causes of cultism in those communities.

1.1. Literature review

Cultism has undergone significant transformations over the years, evolving from a relatively obscure phenomenon to a pervasive societal issue. Scrutinising the meaning and evolution of cultism reveals a multifaceted phenomenon marked by clandestine behaviour and often violent or extreme propensities. Contemporary scholars, such as Nnamdi (2022) and Agbiboa (2017), posit that cultism embodies a form of organised collective behaviour distinguished by confidentiality, secrecy and exclusionary tendencies. The evolution of cultism has been characterised by a gradual shift from traditional to modern forms, with many contemporary cult groups exhibiting a marked degree of sophistication and organisational complexity. According to Amaka (2021), this shift can be attributed to the increasing influence of globalisation and technological advancements, which have enabled cult groups to expand their reach and operations. Furthermore, the rise of social media has provided cult groups with a platform to recruit new members and disseminate their ideology, thereby contributing to the proliferation of cultism.

In the Nigerian context, cultism has been linked to a range of negative outcomes, including violence, crime and social instability (Omede, 2016). The proliferation of cult groups in educational institutions, in particular, has been a cause for concern, with many scholars arguing that it reflects a broader crisis of values and socialisation (Eze, 2020). Cultism can disrupt the learning environment and create a culture of fear and intimidation, thereby undermining the academic achievement and well-being of students (Ejiofor, 2021). The impact of cultism on individuals and society is multifaceted and far-reaching. Cultism can lead to physical harm, emotional trauma and reputational damage. According to Ejiofor (2021), cult-related violence in Nigerian schools has led to physical injuries, psychological trauma and even death among students. Researchers have probed the myriad factors driving individuals to affiliate with cult groups, including the quest for authority, safeguarding, pecuniary benefits, power, status and protection (Chiamaka, 2022; Okpewho, 2018). These factors are often linked to broader societal issues, such as poverty, inequality and social dislocation (Giddens, 2019). Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds may be more susceptible to cult recruitment due to their desire for protection and economic security (Nnenna, 2023). Additionally, the role of peer pressure and socialisation in cult recruitment has been highlighted, with many individuals joining cult groups as a means of gaining acceptance and belonging.

A critical examination of the evolution of cultism highlights the importance of addressing the root causes of this phenomenon. According to Adesina (2020), this can involve implementing policies and programmes aimed at promoting social inclusion, reducing poverty and inequality and fostering a sense of community and social belonging. Educational

institutions can play a crucial role in preventing cultism by promoting a culture of academic excellence and providing students with positive role models and support networks. Ultimately, addressing cultism will require a multifaceted approach that involves policymakers, practitioners and community stakeholders working together to promote a more stable and secure society. Examining the social, economic, and personal factors driving cult involvement reveals a complex interplay of influences that contribute to an individual's decision to join a cult group. Researchers have identified various factors that predispose individuals to cult involvement, including social dislocation, poverty, and inequality (Giddens, 2019). Additionally, personal factors such as low self-esteem, insecurity, and a desire for protection and economic security can also play a significant role (Nnenna, 2023).

The role of peer pressure and socialisation in cult recruitment has been highlighted, with many individuals joining cult groups as a means of gaining acceptance and belonging. According to Chiamaka (2022), peer influence can be a powerful predictor of cult involvement, particularly among young people. Furthermore, family background and socioeconomic status can also shape an individual's propensity to join a cult group (Ugwuanyi, 2022). Economic factors, such as poverty and unemployment, can also contribute to cult involvement. Individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds may be more susceptible to cult recruitment due to their desire for economic security and protection (Okpewho, 2018). Moreover, cult groups often promise their members economic benefits, protection, and a sense of belonging, which can be attractive to individuals who feel marginalized or excluded from mainstream society. Unemployment plays a crucial role in cult involvement. The lack of job opportunities and meaningful work can drive individuals to join cult groups out of frustration and a desire for purpose. Cult groups often provide their members with a sense of identity and financial stability through illegal activities, which can be attractive to individuals struggling with unemployment. As noted by Okpewho (2018), unemployment can lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair, making individuals more vulnerable to cult recruitment.

The interplay between poverty, unemployment, and peer influence can create a complex web of factors that contribute to cultism. For instance, an individual struggling with poverty and unemployment may be more susceptible to peer influence and cult recruitment. According to Ejiofor (2021), cultism is often a symptom of deeper societal issues, such as poverty, inequality, and social dislocation. Other personal factors, such as a desire for authority, power, and status, can also drive cult involvement. According to Ejiofor (2021), individuals who join cult groups often do so to gain a sense of power and control over their lives. Additionally, cult groups often provide their members with a sense of identity and purpose, which can be appealing to individuals who feel lost or disconnected from society.

1.2. Conceptual framework

Economic instability refers to a situation where the economy experiences fluctuations that can lead to uncertainty and unpredictability, affecting economic growth, investment, and

employment. According to Łukasz Jannils (2021), economic instability can have detrimental effects on economic growth, investment, inflation, fiscal deficits, public debt, and the functioning of financial markets. This concept is crucial for understanding the challenges faced by economies during periods of crisis. Economic instability can have far-reaching consequences, including increased poverty, inequality, and social unrest. As noted by Ugwuanyi (2022), economic instability can lead to a decline in economic activity, reduced investment, and increased unemployment. Furthermore, economic instability can also lead to a loss of confidence in the economy, making it challenging for policymakers to develop effective strategies for promoting economic growth and stability.

According to Nnenna (2023), economic instability can be caused by a variety of factors, including macroeconomic, political, and external factors. Understanding the causes and consequences of economic instability is essential for policymakers and economists to develop effective strategies for promoting economic growth and stability. Cultism has far-reaching consequences for businesses, investment, and economic growth in Nigeria. The prevalence of cultism in the country has led to a breakdown in law and order, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation that undermines economic activity. According to Ugwuanyi (2022), cultism has significant effects on the social, political, and economic development of a region, including loss of lives, disruption of academic activities, and destruction of property. This, in turn, can discourage investment and hinder economic growth. Azelama, Alude, and Imhonda (2000) conducted a study on the effect of cultism on social, political, and economic development in Andoni Local Government Area, Rivers State, Nigeria. Their research, underpinned by Social Structure Theory (Robert Merton) and Frustration-Aggression Theory (Ted Gur), revealed that cultism has a significant impact on development, leading to destruction of properties, hindrances to infrastructural development, harassment, and molestation. The study employed survey research methods and recommended addressing social, economic, and educational inadequacies to mitigate the effects of cultism.

The impact of cultism on businesses is multifaceted. For instance, cult groups often engage in violent clashes, extortion, and kidnapping, which can disrupt business operations and deter investors. Moreover, the fear of cult-related violence can lead to a decline in economic activity, particularly in areas where cultism is prevalent. As noted by Ejiofor (2021), cultism can have long-term consequences for individuals and society, including increased violence, crime, and social instability. Cultism also affects investment in Nigeria. The risk of cult-related violence and instability can make investors hesitant to invest in the country, leading to a decline in foreign direct investment. According to Nnenna (2023), corruption and cultism can decrease economic growth by preventing efficient production and innovation.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) has its roots in the works of psychologist Albert Bandura, who posited that individuals acquire behaviors and attitudes through observation, imitation, and reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). This theoretical framework suggests that people learn from observing others, and this learning is influenced by the consequences of the observed behavior. If the behavior is rewarded or reinforced, it is more likely to be emulated. In the context of exploring the relationship between cultism and economic instability in selected Ogbia communities, SLT can be applied to understand how individuals might be socialized into cult groups through observational learning and reinforcement (Akers, 1998).

The application of SLT to this topic is justified because it can help researchers comprehend the social processes that contribute to cultism in these communities. By examining how individuals learn and adopt cult-related behaviors, researchers can identify potential targets for intervention and prevention (Burgess & Akers, 1966). Furthermore, SLT can help elucidate how economic instability might contribute to the emergence and persistence of cult groups, by highlighting the role of social learning in shaping individual behavior. In communities experiencing economic instability, individuals may be more likely to observe and imitate behaviors that promise financial gain or protection, such as cult-related activities. By understanding the social learning processes that drive cultism, researchers can develop targeted interventions to promote positive behaviors and reduce the appeal of cult groups. The SLT framework can provide valuable insights into the complex relationships between cultism and economic instability in the selected Ogbia communities. By applying this theory, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how individuals learn and adopt cult-related behaviors, and how economic instability might contribute to the emergence and persistence of cult groups. This understanding can ultimately inform strategies to address cultism and promote economic stability in these communities.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey design using quantitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between cultism and economic instability in four selected communities in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. The population of the study comprised residents of the four selected communities, with projected populations of 14,471 in Imirigi, 17,890 in Otuasega, 17,780 in Otuokpoti, and 18,908 in Opume, amounting to a total population of 69,049 from 1991-2024, according to the National Population Commission Yenagoa office (Personal Communication, 2025). A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants from the four communities, taking into consideration certain criteria such as age and duration of stay in the various communities. This enabled the researcher to gather relevant data from participants who had knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under study. The Taro Yamane sampling size calculation formula was adopted to determine the sample size, which yielded 398 participants.

Questionnaires were administered to this sample to collect quantitative data on their economic activities, experiences, and perceptions of cultism in the communities.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants from the four communities, taking into consideration certain criteria such as age and duration of stay in the various communities. The Taro Yamane sampling size calculation formula was adopted to determine the sample size, which yielded 398 participants. Questionnaires were administered to this sample to collect quantitative data on their economic activities, experiences, and perceptions of cultism in the communities. Out of the 398 questionnaires administered, 364 were retrieved, representing a high response rate. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency distribution and mean. Chi-square was also employed to determine the actual effects in the relationship across variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section centers on the presentation and interpretation of findings, entailing the examination and understanding of outcomes derived from respondent data. The responses from the survey are displayed in tabular format, utilizing proportions to enable straightforward analysis. The examination of findings for this investigation is founded on the 376 surveys collected from participants, representing a 94.5% response rate out of the 398 distributed.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on the specific ways in which cultism disrupts economic activities in the communities

Details	No of Respondents	Percentage
By creating an environment of fear, leading to reduced investment and economic growth	96	25.5
Cultism has no significant impact on economic activities in communities	11	2.9
By destroying livelihoods, hindering business operations, and affecting agricultural productivity, ultimately contributing to economic instability	201	53.5
Cultism only affects social activities, not economic ones	68	18.1
Total	376	100

Source: field survey, 2025

Table 1 above shows that 25.5% (96 respondents) are of the opinion that the specific ways are by creating an environment of fear, leading to reduced investment and economic growth, 2.9% (11 respondents) say that cultism has no significant impact on economic activities in communities, 53.5% (201 respondents) are of the view that cultism disrupts economic activities by destroying livelihoods, hindering business operations, and affecting agricultural productivity, ultimately contributing to economic instability, and 18.1% (68 respondents) believe that cultism only affects social activities, not economic ones.

This is an indication that majority of our respondents 53.5% (201 respondents) are of the view that Cultism can disrupt economic activities in several ways. It can lead to the destruction of livelihoods through violence, intimidation, and instability, causing businesses to shut down or relocate, and resulting in loss of income and livelihoods for individuals and families. Additionally, cult-related activities can hinder business operations by creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, making it difficult for businesses to operate effectively. This can lead to reduced investment, decreased economic growth, and lower productivity. Moreover, cultism can affect agricultural productivity, by destroying crops, intimidating farmers, and disrupting supply chains. This can lead to food insecurity, reduced agricultural productivity, and economic instability. Ultimately, the cumulative effect of cultism on economic activities can contribute to economic instability, reduced economic growth, and decreased investor confidence, having far-reaching consequences, including increased poverty, unemployment, and social unrest.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents' views on how socioeconomic factors like poverty and unemployment intersect with cultism in communities.

Details	No of Respondents	Percentage
They drive individuals to join cult groups as a means of survival or to gain power and protection	189	50.3
They have no limit to cultism in communities	11	2.9
Cultism is solely a result of individual failure not socio-economic factors	73	19.4
Poverty and unemployment are outcomes of cultism, not contributing factors	103	27.4
Total	376	100

Source: field survey, 2025

Table 2 above indicates that 50.3% (189 respondents) believe that these factors drive individuals to join cult groups as a means of survival or to gain power and protection. In contrast, 2.9% (11 respondents) think they have no link to cultism in communities. Meanwhile, 19.4% (73 respondents) attribute cultism solely to individual failures, rather than

socioeconomic factors. Additionally, 27.4% (103 respondents) consider poverty and unemployment to be outcomes of cultism, rather than contributing factors. The above analysis is an indication that the highest of our respondents 50.3% (189 respondents) are of the view that Poverty and unemployment can indeed intersect and drive individuals to join cult groups as a means of survival or to gain power and protection. According to them when people lack access to basic necessities and opportunities, they may become desperate and vulnerable to groups that promise them a sense of belonging, security, or financial stability.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents' views on how cult groups contribute to economic instability in communities.

Details	No of Respondents	Percentage
By promoting entrepreneurship and job creation	-	-
Cult groups have no impact on economic instability in communities	109	28.9
Cult groups contribute to economic instability through violence, intimidation, and extortion, which hinder economic growth and development	194	51.6
Cult groups stabilize economies by providing security services	73	19.5
Total	376	100

Source: field survey, 2025

Table 3 above indicates that 28.9% (109 respondents) believe cult groups have no impact on economic instability, 51.6% (194 respondents) think cult groups contribute to economic instability through violence, intimidation, and extortion, hindering economic growth and development. In contrast, 19.5% (73 respondents) believe cult groups stabilise economies by providing security services. Majority of our respondents 51.6% (194 respondents) are of the view that cult groups can significantly impact economic stability. They perpetuate violence, disrupting businesses and damaging infrastructure, which creates an atmosphere of fear. Additionally, intimidation is used to force individuals and businesses to comply with their demands, often through extortion or threats. Extortion also occurs, where money or resources are demanded from businesses, individuals, or communities, undermining legitimate economic activity. As a result, investment is reduced, economic growth is decreased, poverty and unemployment increase, and communities are destabilised. This highlights the need for effective strategies to address cult-related activities and promote economic stability.

Table 4. Respondents' views on interventions to address cultism's root causes.

Details	No of Respondents	Percentage
Implementing programs that provide employment opportunities, empowerment and education to youths, as well as community engagement and awareness initiatives to prevent cultism	117	31.1
Implementation of law enforcement and punitive measures against cult members and their sponsors	136	36.2
Focusing solely on individual counselling & therapy for cult members	94	25
Provide financial incentive to individuals who leave cult groups	29	7.7
Total	376	100

Source: field survey, 2025

Table 4 above indicates 31.1% (117 respondents) suggest programmes providing employment opportunities, empowerment, and education for youths, alongside community engagement and awareness initiatives. Meanwhile, 36.2% (136 respondents) recommend strict law enforcement and punitive measures against cult members and sponsors. Additionally, 25% (94 respondents) propose individual counselling and therapy for cult members, and 7.7% (29 respondents) suggest financial incentives for individuals leaving cult groups. The highest of our respondents of 36.2% (136 respondents) indicated implementing strict law enforcement and punitive measures against cult members and their sponsors as an effective way to curb cult-related activities. This according to them involves holding cult members and sponsors accountable for their actions through thorough investigations and fair trials, imposing significant penalties such as imprisonment or fines to deter others, and confiscating assets obtained through cult-related activities to disrupt their financial networks. Collaboration with local communities is also crucial according to them in order to identify and prevent cult recruitment and activities. By taking a firm stance against cultism, governments and law enforcement agencies can reduce violence, disrupt cult operations, and deter recruitment. Ultimately, they viewed the effective law enforcement and punitive measures can contribute to a safer and more stable environment, promoting economic growth and development.

4. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

This study canvassed the nexus between cultism and economic instability in four Ogbia communities in Bayelsa State. Cultism has become a major concern for economic stability in various communities across Nigeria, particularly in the Ogbia areas of Bayelsa State. This issue arises from a complicated mix of elements, such as socioeconomic status, peer pressure, and the desire for dominance and safety. This investigation carried out in the four communities within Ogbia has brought to light the connection between cultism and economic unrest, emphasizing the necessity for a comprehensive strategy to tackle this challenge. According to the study's results, cultism interferes with economic activities in the Ogbia region, as a notable portion of respondents (53.5%) linked the devastation of livelihoods, obstruction of business activities, and negative impacts on agricultural output to cultism. This aligns with existing research, indicating that cultism can deeply affect economic development and growth (Nnenna, 2023). The ongoing violence, intimidation, and extortion perpetrated by cult organizations foster a climate of fear, which deters investments and obstructs economic advancement.

Moreover, the study indicates that poverty and unemployment serve as significant catalysts for cultism in Ogbia communities, with 50.3% of respondents pointing to socioeconomic factors as a cause of cultism. This observation supports the Social Learning Theory, which suggests that individuals acquire behaviors and attitudes via observation, imitation, and reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). In relation to cultism, socioeconomic circumstances can cultivate an environment that makes individuals more vulnerable to recruitment by cult organizations. Additionally, the findings of the research emphasize the impact of cultism on economic stability, with 51.6% of participants asserting that cult groups contribute to economic instability through acts of violence, intimidation, and extortion. This is in agreement with existing studies, implying that cultism can compromise economic growth and progress by engendering an environment of unpredictability and instability (Ejiofor, 2021).

In light of these findings, a number of suggestions can be proposed to tackle cultism and enhance economic stability in the Ogbia communities. Policymakers and other stakeholders should implement a holistic strategy to combat cultism, which includes rigorous law enforcement and punitive actions against cult members and their backers. Creating job opportunities, empowerment programs, and educational initiatives for youth can play a crucial role in preventing cultism. Additionally, community involvement and awareness campaigns can aid in thwarting cult recruitment efforts and activities, fostering a safer and more stable environment.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study highlight the necessity for a comprehensive strategy to combat cultism and enhance economic stability in Ogbia communities. By comprehending the intricate relationship between cultism and economic instability, policymakers and

stakeholders can formulate targeted measures to address the fundamental causes of cultism and encourage economic development. It is crucial for all stakeholders including the government, community leaders, and individuals to unite in efforts to establish a safer and more stable environment. Through such collaboration, Ogbia communities can harness their full potential and attain sustainable economic growth and development. Ultimately, tackling cultism necessitates a collective endeavor and a committed focus on fostering peace, stability, and prosperity within Nigerian communities.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Implement strict law enforcement and punitive measures: Governments and law enforcement agencies should take a firm stance against cultism by holding cult members and sponsors accountable for their actions, imposing significant penalties, and confiscating assets obtained through cult-related activities.
- ii. Provide employment opportunities and empowerment: Programmes that provide employment opportunities, empowerment, and education for the youth in Ogbia communities can help prevent cultism and promote economic stability. Job opportunities and empowerment schemes, such as vocational training and entrepreneurship initiatives will be helpful. Addressing socioeconomic factors such as poverty and unemployment through economic empowerment programmes, education, and job creation can help reduce the vulnerability of individuals to cult recruitment.
- iii. Promote community engagement and awareness: Community engagement and awareness initiatives can help prevent cult recruitment and activities, ultimately contributing to a safer and more stable environment. Community engagement and awareness programs, including outreach initiatives and public awareness campaigns could deter cult recruitment and activities.

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