

## SOCIO-CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS UNREST IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN EKITI STATE

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### Abstract

*The study investigated the influence of socio-cultural factors on attitude of students towards unrest in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The study examined the causes of students' unrest and the roles played by religious beliefs, gender and social status of students toward unrest. The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted in this study. The population consisted of all students from the public tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The sample consisted of 562 students drawn from three public tertiary institutions using Multistage Sampling technique. The instrument used was the "Socio-cultural factors and Students' Attitude towards Unrest Questionnaire (SCFSATUQ)". A reliability co-efficient of 0.76 was obtained. The responses obtained were collated and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Regression analysis). All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that students' unrest occurred as a result of disagreement between transporters and students over fare; students' reaction to management policies; increase in school fees or service charges; lack of electricity supply to students' hall of residence among others. Also, a combination of socio-cultural factors such as students' gender and students' religious beliefs are significant in contributing to students' attitude towards unrest. Based on the findings it is recommended among others that authorities of various institutions should be more focused on preventive strategies in order to reduce unrest in schools and handle issues concerning students particularly those that have to do with their welfare with all seriousness.*

**Keywords:** Socio-cultural, Attitude, Religious beliefs, Gender, Social Status

### Introduction

The main aim of higher education in Nigeria is to give very sound and qualitative education which will enable individuals to function effectively in any environment in which they find themselves. The researcher's experience has shown that students' crisis is as old as the tertiary institutions in Nigeria itself. Today, students' militancy in the nation's tertiary institutions has come to be an issue of serious concern. However, revolts, protests, unrests and violence, as well as incessant closure of schools for months in the wake of unrest have become a regular feature of Nigeria's tertiary institutions. It is the state of disharmony that is brought about by differences of impulses, desire or tendencies. It occurs when there is a

tension or when people intend to revolt against certain social ills or irregularities in an organization. Thus, university students tend to show their displeasure through agitations, protest, demonstrations, bonfire, and so on. Unrest tends to be the result of conflict which is described as a natural and inevitable part of people working together.

Students who could have been more useful to themselves, their parents and the nation seem to be dropping out of school. This may not allow them to function effectively in their environment or they may die during the crisis or unrest thereby leading to waste of human resources. Moreover, incessant closure of institutions seems to have serious impact on

the quality of higher institutions in Nigeria, as it is difficult to give students a very sound and qualitative education which is one of the major aims of establishing the institutions.

The incidence of students' unrest have been observed to first manifest by boycott of classes, refusal to obey the school rules and regulations, carrying of placards and singing war songs by the students to make their grievances known to the authority as well as cultist activities involving the seizure of fellow students and disturbing the peace of the universities. The most common unrest noticeable within the Nigerian university system are the crises between students and the authorities, crises between students and (cultist group) and between students and government over issues ranging from welfare to autonomy and policies (Ogunlade, 2005).

Several factors play a vital role in influencing student's attitude. These factors can be categorized into three distinctive groups. Firstly, factors associated with the students themselves. Some of these factors include anxiety, student's self-concept, extrinsic motivation and experiences at high school (Klein, 2004). Secondly, the factors that are associated with the school, curriculum pattern and leadership style. Thirdly, factors from the home environment and society also affect students' attitude towards unrest. Factors such as educational background of parents, occupation of parents (Klein, 2004) and parental expectations play a crucial role in influencing students' attitude towards unrest.

Religious beliefs, students' gender and social status appear to be socio-cultural factors that have great impacts on students' unrest in tertiary institutions. Religious fundamentalism has been observed to be contributing factor to crisis in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Membership of one or the other of the various religious denominations entails a fierce sense of territory, sometimes physical and they even go spiritual. This compulsive territoriality might be one of the remote reasons behind the increasing incidences of religious violence on

the campuses. What is clearly evident is that each of the two dominant religions (Christianity and Islam) perceives itself as being involved with the other in a never-ending struggle for physical space and political resources on campus (Obadare, 2008). Suffice it to add that they both see the campus itself as a social space to be conquered and brought under their spiritual control. Another example observed is the struggle by Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) agitating for a lecture free period between 12noon and 3.00pm on Fridays. Though some institutions have complied but most tertiary institutions especially in the Southern region of Nigeria are yet to accept the policy. This alone seems to have led to students' unrest in tertiary institutions because the Muslim students believed they are being cheated since there are no lectures on Sunday which is the religious day for Christians.

Gender of students could also be a contributing factor that determines unrest in our tertiary institutions. Males appear to be more likely involved in crises than females because of the physical strength and biological characteristics they possess (Aluede, 2001). Males seem to engage in a physical fight or destroy school property during any unrest. However violence among female students appears to have increased because they seem to influence the male counterpart in fighting for their rights or the collective rights of all the students.

Social status of students appear to be another socio-cultural factors which is evident in terms of association students belong to, economic status and level of self - esteem. Some students and cult groups believe they are more superior to another. This is always manifested when two or more cult groups face each other in a context for superiority. There had been several instances of cult groups clashing each other in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This alone appear to have led to the death of many innocent students and closing down of tertiary institutions several times. The students who are not socially involved tend to isolate themselves from those who are socially involved thus influencing students' unrest

among students. Their economic status seems to interfere with their social status and academic adjustment at the university. Consequently, some students spend their school fees on luxuries so that they can be socially recognized only to find out later that there could be problems which might even result in missing examinations and student unrest.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of socio-cultural factor and attitude of students towards students' unrest. In addressing this problem, one research questions and three hypotheses were raised.

### **Research Question**

- What are the causes of students' unrest in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

### **Research Hypotheses**

- There is no significant relationship between students' religious affiliation and their attitude towards unrest.
- There is no significant relationship between gender and students' attitude toward unrest.
- There is no significant relationship between the students' social status and their attitude towards unrest.

### **Literature Review**

Unrest on Campus are growing in number, kind and complexity. The current context is clearly more challenging than in the past. The range of conflicts and the forms available are much more far reaching than ever before. Studies by Olamosu (2000); Salami (2004), Adeyemi (2009) discovered that factor such as declining economic conditions which have affected student's lives and studies poor funding of tertiary institutions, insufficient and aging of social amenities and academic facilities, socialization influence, brain drain and poor attention to students, ideological and political reasons, secret cult activities among others are major causes of unrest in tertiary institutions.

Adeyemi, Ekundayo and Alonge (2010) discovered that students' crisis is becoming

more rampant in the tertiary institutions and the resultant consequence has been to the detriment of the teaching-learning atmosphere. The studies of Jezer and Karasel (2010) revealed that tertiary institution based unrest vary from campus to campus and reflect size, location, student population, mission specialization, governance and unionization. While Klein (2004) stressed that students' unrest, from the psychological point of view has been ascribed to "generational gap". Agbonna (2009) stated that youths possess traits of attitude which seem to completely run contrary to that of the elders of today. This according to him is largely due to the fundamental changes within the social system which are manifested in the current craze of dances, songs, dress and social activities of the youths that is not only challenging but obliterate the accepted moral values of the society.

Ernest (2004) considered unrest as very important as it helps in pressing home the demand of students hence it can be said that students' attitude towards unrest are very subjective and varies among the students.

### **Methodology**

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted in this study. The population consisted of all students from the public tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The sample for this study was 562 students which were selected from three tertiary institutions using Multistage Sampling technique.

Socio-cultural factors and Students' Attitude towards Unrest in Tertiary Institutions Questionnaire (SCFASATUQ)" was used to collect relevant data for the study. The face and content validity of the instrument was ensured while the reliability of the instruments was determined through test-retest method. The data collected from the two sets were correlated using the inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). A co-efficient of 0.76 was obtained from the analysis and this was regarded as high enough to make the instrument reliable.

The data collected through the instrument were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research question was answered using frequency counts, means, standard deviation and percentages. Hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

Results of the findings were presented at the end of the analysis.

**Research Question 1:** What are the causes of students' unrest in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

**Table 1:** Descriptive analysis showing the causes of students' unrest

S/N	ITEMS	N (F)	Agreed % of Respondent	Disagreed % of Respondent	Mean	Standard Dev.
1.	Point at which transporters drop students	562	324 (57.7%)	238 (42.3%)	2.51	1.12
2.	Disagreement between transporters and students over fare	562	396 (70.5%)	166 (29.5%)	2.72	0.95
3.	Students' reaction to management policies	562	411 (73.1%)	151 (26.9%)	2.87	1.02
4.	Snatching of girl friends/boy friends	562	231 (41.1%)	331 (58.9%)	2.33	0.98
5.	Increase in school fees or service charges	562	493 (87.7%)	69 (12.3%)	3.08	1.13
6.	Lack of electricity supply to students resident	562	337 (60.0%)	225 (40.0%)	2.53	0.87
7.	Inadequate water supply	562	264 (47.0%)	298 (53.0%)	2.41	1.11
8.	Inadequate lecture theatres	562	218 (38.9%)	344 (61.1%)	2.27	0.96
9.	Leadership position during Students' union election	562	374 (66.5%)	188 (33.5%)	2.63	1.07
10.	Setting time limit for course registration and payment of school fee	562	403 (71.7%)	159 (28.3%)	2.81	1.09

From Table 1, point at which transporters drop students could be a cause of unrest as 57.7% agreed while 42.3% disagreed with their mean and standard deviation being 2.51 and 1.12 respectively. On disagreement between transporters and students over fare, 70.5% respondents agreed while 29.5% of the respondents disagreed with a mean of 2.72 and standard deviation of 0.95. In the case of students' reaction to management policies; 73.1% of the respondents agreed while 26.9% of them disagreed with a mean of 2.87 and standard deviation of 1.02. Snatching of girlfriends and boyfriends attracted 41.1% agreement and 58.9% of disagreement with a mean of 2.33 and standard deviation of 0.98. Increase in school fees or service charges attracted 87.7% agreement while 12.3% disagreed with a mean of 3.08 and standard deviation of 1.13. Lack of electricity supply to students' resident attracted 60.0% agreement

while 40% disagreed with a mean of 2.53 and standard deviation of 3.87. Inadequate water supply attracted 47% agreement while 53% of the respondents disagreed with a mean of 2.41 and standard deviation of 1.11. Inadequate lecture theatres attracted 38.9% agreement while 61.1% of the respondents disagreed with a mean of 2.27 and standard deviation of 0.965. Leadership position during students' union election attracted 66.5% agreement while 33.5% of the respondents disagreed with a mean of 2.63 and standard deviation of 1.07. Lastly, on setting time limit for course registration and payment of school fees, 71.7% agreed, 28.3% disagreed with a mean of 2.81 and standard deviation of 1.09. It can be inferred that all the above contribute to the causes of unrest in our institutions.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between students' religious affiliation and their attitude towards unrest.

**Table 2:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between students' religious affiliation and their attitude towards unrest

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	r-cal	r-tab	Remark
Students' Religious Beliefs	562	2.53	0.96	0.437	0.195	Significant
Attitude toward unrest	562	2.57	1.01			

$P < 0.05$

Table 2 showed that r-cal (0.437) is greater than r-table (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance. The r-cal is positive and moderate. The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was significant relationship between students' religious beliefs and their attitude towards unrest. In other

words, students' religious beliefs had a significant relationship with their attitude towards unrest in tertiary institutions.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between gender and students' attitude toward unrest.

**Table 3:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between the students' gender and their attitude towards unrest

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	r cal	r tab	Remark
Students' Gender	562	2.52	1.03	0.531	0.195	Significant
Attitude towards unrest	562	2.57	1.01			

$P < 0.05$

From table 3, the r-cal (0.531) was greater than the r-table value (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance. The r-cal is positive and moderate. The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was significant relationship between students' gender and their attitude toward unrest. Hence, students'

gender has positive impact on their attitude towards unrest.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between the students' social status and their attitude towards unrest.

**Table 4:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between the students' Social status and their attitude towards unrest

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	r-cal	r-tab	Remark
Students' Social Status	562	2.03	1.04	0.148	0.195	Not Significant
Students' attitude toward unrest	562	2.57	1.01			

$P < 0.05$

From table 4, the r-cal (0.148) is less than r-table (0.195) at 0.05 level of significance. The r-cal is positive and low. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between students' social status and their attitude towards unrest.

### Discussion

The findings revealed that students' unrest occurred as a result of disagreement between transporters and students over fare; students'

reaction to management policies; increase in fees or service charges; lack of electricity supply to students' hall of residence; leadership position during students' union election; and setting time limit for course registration and payment of school fees among others. These causes might vary from institution to institution depending on the situation of each. It could also be as a result of the non-challant attitude of the management

in attending promptly to students' complaints before escalating into unrest. This result is in agreement with the study of Adeyemi, Ekundayo and Alonge (2010) and Yinusa (2005) who stressed that autocratic leadership style and lackadaisical attitude of leaders in terms of provision of amenities result to crises situation in most of the tertiary institutions.

The study further discovered that there was significant relationship between students' religious beliefs and their attitude towards unrest. This might be as a result of the competitive attitude existing between the two major religions where one religion always want the same treatment given to the other religion. The finding is supported by Ibrahim (2008) who observed that religion has not faded away with modernity; it has not disappeared with the triumph of science and rationalism. He concluded that religious belief is still attached to man's attitude and action.

Another finding from the study is that there was a significant relationship between gender and students' attitude toward unrest. Both male and female was found to play active role during unrest. This could have been because the cause of the unrest might be something that has to do with the life and comfort of both sexes in the institution and they might feel that such agitation from the management can be best achieved when both sex fight for the cause together. This result negate the studies of Crowell and Burges (1996) who found that males engage in physical fight or destroy school property during any unrest. As a result of their physical strength and biological characteristics which men possess and that women have much fear for crime than men.

Another result from the study showed that there was no significant relationship between students' social status and their attitude towards unrest. This implies that social status does not matter when it comes to factors that cause unrest in institutions and why students put up such attitude during unrest. It appears that students who are not socially involved do not isolate from those who are socially involved thus enhancing cooperation during students' unrest. This finding disagree with the

Vice-Chancellors' Report (2000) who reported that social clusters based on social status of the students create frustration among students as they compare and even ridicule each other on this basis

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the findings of the study it is concluded that students unrest do exist in various forms and way in tertiary institution. Socio-cultural factors greatly affect students' attitude towards unrest. A combination of socio-cultural factors such as students' gender and students' religious beliefs are vital issues contributing to students' attitude towards unrest while the social status does not influence their attitude towards unrest

Based on the findings it is therefore recommended that authorities of various institutions should always embark and focus more on preventive strategies in order to reduce unrest in schools rather than curative measures. Also there is need to reduce the extent of volatile and militant students' unionism on campus, and all factors causing unrest should be given prompt attention. It is suggested that students be involved in decision-making particularly on issues that border on their welfare and academic development.

However, Tertiary Institution authorities and Management should show seriousness in handling issues concerning students particularly those that have to do with their welfare. Parents should provide all educational needs for their children or ward and monitor them against bad influence while in school.

Finally, sentiment on religion should be discouraged in our institutions by the Management and other stakeholders in education.

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