



# Impact of Cult Activities on the Socio-Economic Wellbeing of Rural Dwellers in Orashi Region of Rivers State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated the impact of cult activities on the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State. Specifically, this work sought to: identify socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers, ascertain the factors that pre-dispose youth to cultism, and to determine the nature of cult activities perpetrated by cult groups in Orashi region of Rivers State, among others. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all the adults (male and female) in the study area. From this population, a sample of 800 adults (400 males and 400 females) was purposively sampled from the four local government areas of Orashi region. Four research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The instrument used for the study was a survey questionnaire tagged “Impact of Cult Activities on Socio-economic Wellbeing of Rural dwellers (ICASWR). Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions, and z-test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses. It was found that cult related activities in Orashi region was pre-disposed by parent’s death, separation of parents, ignorance, peer pressure, interest in crime and many more. It was also observed that cult activities which involved armed robbery, kidnapping, looting, raping, killing and others affected the socio-economy of the study area. It was recommended among others that skill acquisition programmes and employment should be provided for youth in the region.

**Keywords:** Cult activities, Rural Dwellers, Socio-economy, Wellbeing,

## INTRODUCTION

The disparity in community development which comprises human and infrastructure, places some communities among urban communities, while others are grouped among rural communities. Communities that are developed and populated are classified as urban while those that are less developed are classified as rural communities (Olisa & Obiukwu in Enyi, 2014). However, there is no universal definition of rural area because it is described based on the number of people within a region and this depends on individual country. Hence, Ekong (2010) described a rural area in Nigeria as settlement with 20,000 persons or less whose occupations are mainly agrarian. In the same vein, Olisa *et al* in Enyi (2014) described rural area in Nigeria as an area with a population of 20,000 people and below. According to Ekong (2010), apart from describing rural area based on population, rural areas are usually associated with lack of, or inadequate basic infrastructure or amenities such as pipe-borne water, electricity, hospitals, good road network, industries, modern banking services, commercial/civic centres, recreational facilities and quality food. People who dwell in rural areas could be regarded as rural dwellers.

From the foregoing, rural dwellers could be described as people who are mostly agrarian since they are not privileged to have other means of survival. In support of this, Ekong (2010) affirms that rural area is an area of settlement in which half or more than half of the adult male working population is engaged in agricultural activities. Ifeanyi and Njoku (2014) mentioned that apart from farming, rural

dwellers are also involved in petty trading, craft, weaving, pottery and other primary industries within their reach. Therefore, the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers is primarily dependent on agriculture and other petty businesses that are mostly produced through craft.

According to Uyang, Akwaji and Ezikeudu (2015), socio-economic wellbeing is the improvement in literacy, income and occupation. This implies creating and widening potentials for economic development, quality of life; accessing empowerment opportunities, facilities and amenities for improved standard of living. However, socio-economic wellbeing could be described as a compound word that describes the way people relate in the community and their economic status. This explains why the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers is primarily dependent on agriculture because, rural dwellers who are predominantly farmers relate with their fellow farmers and at the same time, make a living through marketing of agricultural produce.

However, majority of rural dwellers are facing several problems, which reduces their agricultural productivity, hence, affecting their socio-economic wellbeing. Oyesola (2002) assert that some of the challenges that rural dwellers face include: environmental constraints, infrastructural deficiencies, marketing problems, technological constraints, institutional constraints, high cost of labour, inadequate agricultural incentive and lack of sustainable rural development programmes. More so, United Nations Women in Nyevero (2014) listed gender, cultural norms and security issues as challenges that affect the involvement of rural people in public services, social protection, employment and markets. Security has been a major challenge in some countries which includes Nigeria. Today, Nigeria is challenged with several insecurity issues like the Boko Haram in the North: Biafra agitation in the Eastern part of the country and militancy/cult issues in the western and southern part of the country, among others. Rivers state as part of south-south states are faced with cult related issues, especially in the Orashi region which comprises: Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Ahoada East & West and Abua/Odua Local Government Areas.

Ogumbameru (2004) defined cult as any form of organization whose activities are not 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 the accepted norm and values of everyday life. More so, Ogunade in Oyemwinmina and Aibieyi (2015) defined cult as an enclosed association or group devoted to the same cause. The act of these cult groups is regarded as cultism. Ajayi, Haastrup and Osalusi (2010) defined cultism as a ritual practice by a group of people whose membership, admission, policy and initiation formalities as well as their mode of operations are done in secrete and kept secret with their activities having negative effects on both members and non members alike.

Cultism in Nigeria is a phenomenon that has existed for some years back. Oyemwinmina and Aibieyi (2015) stated that cultism can be dated back to 1952 when a group of six friends formed Pirates Confraternity in the then University College Ibadan (now University of Ibadan), to find solution to the perceived tribalism and elitism in the University as at then. These groups metamorphosed into other groups inside and outside the University campuses with different objectives contrary to the initial goal that led to its formation (Udoh & Ikezu, 2015). Today, several cult groups have emanated in different parts of the country and these groups have recruited so many youth for one reason or the other.

Several of these reasons have been discussed by researchers as factors that predisposes youths to cultism. Ajayi *et.al* (2010) opined that influence of peer group, parental background, and societal decadence, erosion of educational standards and militarization of the Nigerian polity are some of the factors that predisposes youths to cultism. In the same vein, Udoh and Ikezu (2012) identified corruption, influence of parents in cult, broken homes and harsh economic situation as causes of cultism.

Today, several heinous activities are being carried out by cult groups. These activities are against the norms and values of the society where they operate and beyond. Muyiwa (2004) opined that cult members are involved in activities like extortion, stealing, armed robbery, maiming, rape, murder, use of drugs and so on. Oti in Egbochukwu (2009) explained that cult members are involved in initiation of new members, killing and maiming of fellow students in tertiary institutions. Udoh and Ikezu also observed that cult members are involved in nefarious activities such as armed robbery, prostitution and the like to meet up with their extravagant lifestyle. In order to carry out these activities, and to seek safety, some groups have converted farmlands into camps, where they can reside and perpetrate heinous crime.

These heinous cult related activities have resulted to several damages including loss of human lives, properties and abandonment of business, and many more. Mgbekem (2004) asserts that a lot of lives and properties have been destroyed through cult violence. More so, Jamiu (2008) observed that young graduates who are supposed to be leaders in the future have fallen victims of trigger-happy cultists. In the Niger Delta region where cult violence is wide spread in recent times, properties worth billions of Naira have been destroyed in communities in the area (Ajayi *et.al*, 2010). Furthermore, Adewale (2005) opined that cult related activities have resulted to the sacking of some villages as inhabitants flee from their homes for safety.

This is not different from the situation in Orashi region in Rivers State. Before the wake of cultism in the region, as an area with mass landmark, the people of Orashi were known for their prowess in agriculture. Apart from that, the people were good in sustaining their culture and heritage. Like in the Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, the unique way of greeting which shows unity among the people distinguishes them from other people. The wake of cult related crisis weakened the bond that held the people and their culture hence the region became crippled socially. More so, the fear of not being kidnap by cultists that have turned farmlands into camps limits farmers and fishermen from full participation in agriculture. The Nations (2016) lament that the attacks in Orashi region of Rivers State have claimed over 25 lives and business activities in these region ends by 5.30pm as the people struggle to get to their various homes before darkness falls. Basically, Eze (2015) pointed out that Rivers State is confronted with security challenges, especially illegal bunkering, piracy, kidnapping, armed robbery, political killings and so on.

According to Akpabio (2005), rural areas are important in the following ways: training ground for Nigeria's future leaders and technocrats, providing the bulk of food and raw material in the country thereby contributing to the nation's foreign exchange and constituting the resource base of the nation by paying of taxes. They are also consumers of equipment, seeds, chemical and other farm inputs thereby sustaining urban industries, serving as potential sources of manpower and the sustenance of major institutions. Considering the important position occupied by the rural dwellers and the menace of cultism, it beats ones imagination on how the rural people survive in the face of the ravaging cult activities. The question now is how do rural dwellers fair socially and economically? To answer the question makes a study of this nature necessary. Therefore, it is against this background that the researcher decided to investigate the effects of cult activities on the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The study investigated the impact of cult activities on the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. identify socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State.
2. ascertain the factors that pre-dispose youth to cultism in Orashi region of Rivers State.
3. determine the nature of cult activities perpetrated by cult groups in Orashi region of Rivers State.
4. examine the extent to which the nature of cult activities has affected the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State.

#### **Research questions**

1. What are the socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State?
2. What are the factors that pre-dispose youth to cultism in Orashi region of Rivers State?
3. What are the natures of cult activities perpetrated by cult groups in Orashi region of Rivers State?
4. To what extent has the nature of cult activities affected the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State?

#### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significant

1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on the socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on the factors that pre-dispose youth to cultism in Orashi region of Rivers State

3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on the nature of cult activities perpetrated by cult groups in Orashi region of Rivers State.
4. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on the extent to which the nature of cult activities affects the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State.

**METHODOLOGY**

The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Orashi region of Rivers State. The area was chosen for this study based on the fact that it is an area in the Niger Delta region that was at the time of this study challenged with insecurity as regards to cult activities. The population of the study comprised all the adults (male and female) of Orashi region of Rivers State. A sample size of 400 male adults and 400 female adults was purposively sampled for the study from the four Local Government Areas that make up Orashi region, which comprised: Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Ahoada East, Ahoada West and Abua/Odual. The instrument used for the study was a survey questionnaire tagged “Impact of Cult Activities on Socio-economic Wellbeing of Rural dwellers (ICASWR). This instrument was partitioned into four sections that were structured in the pattern of five point Likert rating scale. The instrument was face validated by an expert in the Department of Vocational and Technology Education in Rivers State University, Port-Harcourt. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient method was used to measure the internal consistency of the instrument. This was achieved through the simple random sampling of 10 male and female adults each from Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State who responded to the instrument. The reliability coefficient for this study was 0.77. Copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved by the researchers at the spot. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions while z-test statistical tool was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. For objectives 1, 2 & 3, mean scores < 3.00 were rejected while mean scores ≥ 3.00 were accepted. While for objective 4, mean scores were judged based on Very High Extent (4.00-5.00), High Extent (3.00-3.99), Moderate Extent (2.00-2.99), Low Extent (1.00-1.99) and Very Low Extent (.00-.99).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Table 1: Respondents opinion and result of hypothesis on the socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State**

S/N	Characteristics	Male Adults (n <sub>1</sub> =400)		Female Adults (n <sub>2</sub> =400)		GM	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
		M <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>				
<b>Social activities</b>									
1	Belonging to associations	3.84	1.14	3.92	1.10	3.88	1.01	1.96	NS
2	Age grade meetings	3.78	1.26	3.80	.84	3.79	.26	1.96	NS
3	Camping	3.80	1.21	3.90	1.14	3.85	1.20	1.96	NS
4	Hanging out with friends	3.75	1.20	3.85	1.13	3.80	1.21	1.96	NS
5	Visiting relations	3.85	1.04	3.75	1.20	3.80	1.26	1.96	NS
6	Folktales	3.69	1.24	3.73	1.22	3.71	.46	1.96	NS
7	Festival	3.75	1.12	3.90	.97	3.83	2.02	1.96	S
<b>Economic activities</b>									
8	Petty trading	3.51	1.33	3.52	1.37	3.52	.10	1.96	NS
9	Crop farming	3.74	1.14	3.60	1.27	3.67	1.64	1.96	NS
10	Weaving	3.72	1.16	3.67	1.23	3.70	.59	1.96	NS
11	Bee farming	3.78	1.23	3.65	1.29	3.72	1.45	1.96	NS
12	Fish farming	3.85	1.19	3.89	1.06	3.87	.50	1.96	NS
13	Pottery	3.78	1.16	3.54	1.24	3.67	2.59	1.96	S
14	Bead making	3.93	1.07	3.94	1.07	3.94	.13	1.96	NS
15	Hunting	3.87	1.20	3.88	1.20	3.88	.11	1.96	NS
16	Snail picking	3.94	1.19	4.10	.92	4.02	2.12	1.96	S
17	Mushroom gathering	3.94	.99	3.70	1.29	3.82	2.95	1.96	S
18	Firewood gathering	3.71	1.18	3.67	1.25	3.69	.46	1.96	NS
19	Poultry	3.80	1.16	3.65	1.19	3.73	1.80	1.96	NS

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017. Mean score < 3.00, rejected, otherwise, accepted.  
GM- Grand Mean, NS- Not Significant, S- Significant

Table 1 showed the mean and standard deviation responses of male and female adults of Orashi region of Rivers State on the socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers in the region. The Grand Mean of respondents showed that the following variables: belonging to associations (3.88), age grade meetings (3.79), camping (3.85), drinking with friends (3.80), visiting relations (3.80), folktales (3.71) and festivals (3.83) all have their mean scores above the acceptable mean value of 3.00, thus, all the variables were accepted as social characteristics of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State. More so, the Grand Mean responses of respondents showed that petty trading (3.52), crop farming (3.67), weaving (3.70), bee farming (3.72), fish farming (3.87), pottery (3.67), bead making (3.94), hunting (3.88), snail picking (4.02), mushroom gathering (3.82), firewood gathering (3.69) and poultry (3.73) all have their mean scores above the acceptable mean value of 3.00, thus, all the listed variables were accepted as economic characteristics of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State. Furthermore, the z-cal for all the variables, apart from 7, 13, 16 & 17 variables were < the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, all the variables, apart from 7, 13, 16 & 17 variables were considered not significant, which means that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on belonging to associations, age grade meetings, camping, drinking with friends, visiting relations, folktales, petty trading, farming, weaving, bee farming, fish farming, bead making, hunting, firewood gathering and poultry, as socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State. On the other hand, there was significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on festival, pottery, snail picking and mushroom gathering as socio-economic characteristics of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State. This present research work is in line with Ifeanyi and Njoku (2014) that opined that apart from farming, rural dwellers are also involved in petty trading, craft, weaving, pottery and other primary industries within their reach.

**Table 2: Respondents opinion and result of hypothesis on factors that predisposes youth to cultism in Orashi region of Rivers State**

S/N	Factors	Male Adults (n <sub>1</sub> =400)		Female Adults (n <sub>2</sub> =400)		GM	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
		M <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>				
1	Separation of parents	3.80	1.25	3.79	1.21	3.80	.11	1.96	NS
2	Death of parents (s)	3.97	1.19	3.61	1.34	3.79	4.01	1.96	S
3	Ignorance	3.77	1.28	3.64	1.33	3.71	1.41	1.96	NS
4	Peer pressure	3.74	1.23	3.55	1.19	3.65	2.22	1.96	S
5	Interest in crime	3.66	1.37	3.56	1.27	3.61	1.07	1.96	NS
6	Lack of parental care	4.00	1.05	3.80	1.25	3.90	2.45	1.96	S
7	Involvement of cultist in politics	3.52	1.30	3.78	1.33	3.65	2.79	1.96	S
8	Youth exuberance	3.83	1.29	3.50	1.43	3.67	3.75	1.96	S
9	Recognition of cult groups for employment	3.55	1.38	4.13	1.06	3.84	6.66	1.96	S
10	Forceful initiations	3.59	1.28	4.00	1.00	3.80	5.04	1.96	S

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017. Mean score < 3.00, rejected, otherwise, accepted.

GM- Grand Mean, NS- Not Significant, S- Significant

Table 2 showed the mean and standard deviation responses of male and female adults of Orashi region of Rivers State on factors that predisposes youth to cultism in the region. The Grand Mean of respondents showed that the following variables: separation of parents (3.80), death of parents (3.79), ignorance (3.71), peer pressure (3.65), interest in crime (3.61), lack of parental care (3.90), involvement of cultists in politics (3.65), youth exuberance (3.67), recognition of cult group for employment (3.84) and forceful initiation (3.80) all have their mean scores above the acceptable mean value of 3.00 thus, all the variables were accepted as factors that predisposes youth to cultism in Orashi region of Rivers State. Furthermore, the z-cal for 1, 3 & 5 variables were < the z-crit of 1.96, while 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10 variables were > the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, 1, 3 & 5 variables were considered not significant, while 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10 were considered to be significant, which means that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on separation of parents, ignorance and interest in crime as factors that predisposes youth to cultism in Orashi region of Rivers State. On the other hand, there was significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on death of parents, peer group, lack of parental care, involvement of cultists in politics, youth exuberance, recognition of cult groups for employment and forceful initiation as factors that predisposes youth to cultism in Orashi region of Rivers State. This present research work

is in consonance with Udoh and Ikezu (2015) that examined the causes, effects and strategies for eradicating cultism among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria using 50 students, 30 lecturers and 20 non-academic staff and found that corruption, influence of parents in cult, broken homes and harsh economic situation are causes of cultism. More so, Ajayi *et al* (2010) assert that cultism can be caused by; influence of peer group, parental background, and societal decadence, erosion of educational standards and militarization of the Nigerian polity.

**Table 3: Respondents opinion and results of hypothesis on the nature of cult activities perpetrated by cult groups in Orashi Region of Rivers State**

S/N	Cult activities	Male Adults (n <sub>1</sub> =400)		Female Adults (n <sub>2</sub> =400)		GM	z-cal	z-crit	Remark
		M <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>				
1	Armed robbery	3.53	1.28	3.52	1.29	3.53	.11	1.96	NS
2	Kidnapping	3.71	1.23	3.74	1.24	3.73	.34	1.96	NS
3	Collection of illegal tax	3.61	1.18	3.63	1.16	3.62	.24	1.96	NS
4	Harassment of people	3.65	1.13	3.64	1.12	3.65	.13	1.96	NS
5	Conversion of farmlands into cultists camp	3.55	1.23	3.53	1.26	3.54	.23	1.96	NS
6	Looting	3.57	1.18	3.60	1.16	3.59	.36	1.96	NS
7	Raping of farmers	3.76	1.34	3.71	1.08	3.74	.23	1.96	NS
8	Killing	3.52	1.27	3.53	1.28	3.53	.11	1.96	NS

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017. Mean score < 3.00, rejected, otherwise, accepted.

GM- Grand Mean, NS- Not Significant, S- Significant

Table 3 showed the mean and standard deviation responses of male and female adults of Orashi region of Rivers State on the nature of cult activities perpetrated by cult groups in the region. The Grand Mean of respondents showed that the following variables: armed robbery (3.53), kidnapping (3.73), collection of illegal tax (3.62), harassment of people (3.65), conversion of farmlands into cultists camp (3.54), looting (3.59), raping of farmers (3.74) and killing (3.53) all have their mean scores above the acceptable mean value of 3.00 thus, all the listed variables were accepted as nature of cult activities perpetrated by cult groups in Orashi region of Rivers State. Furthermore, the z-cal for all the variables were < the z-crit of 1.96, therefore, all the variables were considered not significant, which means that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on armed robbery, kidnapping, collection of illegal tax, harassment of people, conversion of farmlands into cultists camps, looting, raping of farmers and killing as nature of cult activities perpetrated by cult groups in Orashi region of Rivers State. This finding corroborated the assertion of Oti in Egbochukwu (2009) that cult members are involved in initiation of new members, killing and maiming of fellow students in tertiary institutions. Also, Udoh and Ikezu further observed that cult members are involved in nefarious activities such as armed robbery, prostitution to meet up with their extravagant lifestyle.

**Table 4: Respondents opinion and result of hypothesis on the extent to which the nature of cult activities has affected the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State**

S/N	Variables	Male Adults (n <sub>1</sub> =400)		Female Adults (n <sub>2</sub> =400)		GM	z-cal	z-crit	Remarks
		M <sub>1</sub>	SD <sub>1</sub>	M <sub>2</sub>	SD <sub>2</sub>				
1	Relating with friends and relatives	4.39	.64	4.40	.72	4.40	.21	1.96	NS
2	Effective farming	4.78	.97	4.32	.77	3.67	7.25	1.96	S
3	Fishing activities	4.08	1.01	4.05	1.04	4.07	.41	1.96	NS
4	Confidence in starting a business	3.91	1.21	3.98	1.15	3.95	.84	1.96	NS
5	Business activities	4.12	1.00	4.14	1.04	4.13	.28	1.96	NS
6	Participation in age grade meetings	4.06	.82	4.10	1.13	4.08	.57	1.96	NS
7	Participation in family meetings	4.21	.99	4.86	1.12	4.55	8.70	1.96	S
8	Availability of capital to start a new business	4.13	1.06	4.10	.99	4.12	.41	1.96	NS
9	Effective participation in festivals	3.88	1.36	3.95	1.25	3.92	.76	1.96	NS
10	Social attributes of rural dwellers	3.93	1.27	4.03	1.15	3.98	1.17	1.96	NS

**Source:** Field Survey, 2017. GM- Grand Mean, NS- Not Significant, S- Significant

Table 4 showed the mean and standard deviation responses of male and female adults of Orashi region of Rivers State on the extent to which the nature of cult activities has affected the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in the region. The Grand Mean of respondents showed that the following variables: relating with friends and relatives (4.40), effective farming (3.67), fishing activities (4.07), confidence in starting a new business (3.95), business activities (4.13), participation in age-grade meetings (4.08), participation in family meetings (4.55), availability of capital to start a new business (4.12), effective participate in festivals (3.92) and social attributes of rural dwellers (3.98) all have their mean scores above the acceptable mean value of 3.00 thus, all the listed socio-economic variables were accepted to have been highly or very highly affected by nature of cult activities perpetrated by cult groups in Orashi region of Rivers State. Furthermore, the z-cal for all the variables, apart from 2 & 7 variables were < the z-crit of 1.96. Therefore, all the variables, apart from 2 & 7 variables were considered not significant, which means that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female adults on the extent to which the nature of cult activities has affected the socio-economic wellbeing of rural dwellers in Orashi region of Rivers State for all the variables, apart from 2 & 7 variables. This present research work is in line with previous research works. The Nations (2016) stated that the attacks in Orashi region of Rivers State have claimed over 25 lives and business activities in these region ends by 5.30pm as the people struggle to get to their various homes before darkness falls. More so, Eze (2015) pointed out that Rivers State is confronted with security challenges, especially illegal bunkering, piracy, kidnapping, armed robbery, political killings and so on.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it was deduced that youths in Orashi region were predisposed to cultism by the separation of parents, death of parents, ignorance, peer pressure, interest in crime, lack of parental care and forceful initiation of youth, and others. These cultists carried out different activities that manifested in the form of armed robbery, kidnapping, collection of illegal tax, harassment, looting and even killing. It was also deduced that the activities of cultists have affected the socio-economic wellbeing of the people of Orashi region such that people find it very difficult to relate with friends and relatives, farm effectively, participate in fishing activities and transact business effectively.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

- 1 Massive employment of graduates in the study area. This will help in engaging youths meaningfully thereby preventing them from associating with their fellow peers that can easily cajole them into becoming cult members through wrong orientation.
- 2 Provision of skills for non-graduate youth. Like the graduate counterpart, provision of skill acquisition programmes will help to engage the non-educated youths thereby providing a source of living for so many non-graduate youths in the region.
- 3 Government must be sincere in tackling cultism which will prevent cult groups from carrying out their nefarious activities.

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