

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE APPLICABILITY OF MAICIBI'S FORMULA AND COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING IN MITIGATING CULTISM IN ILORIN METROPOLIS, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

Abdulganiy Aremu Sulyman¹, Muhammad Sheikh Alhassan²

^{1,2}Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria

Corresponding author: abdulganiy.sulyman@fulokoja.edu.ng

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Abstract

This study examined students' perceptions of the applicability of Maicibi's formula and cognitive restructuring in mitigating cultism in tertiary institutions within Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. Cultism remains a persistent challenge that undermines campus security, disrupts academic activities, and threatens the psychosocial development of students. The study adopted a descriptive survey design involving three hundred students selected through stratified and simple random sampling from a university, a polytechnic, and a college of education in Ilorin metropolis. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. The findings revealed that students perceived peer pressure, inadequate parental guidance, the desire for social recognition, weak institutional discipline, and political influence as major factors contributing to cultism. Respondents also perceived cultism as contributing to campus violence, academic disruption, poor academic performance, social withdrawal, and psychological trauma. Furthermore, students expressed positive perceptions regarding the applicability of Maicibi's formula, particularly the deterrent effects of apprehension, conviction, punishment, and social stigmatisation. Respondents also viewed cognitive restructuring as a useful psychological approach for challenging distorted beliefs associated with cult membership and promoting prosocial alternatives. In addition, participants perceived that reductions in cultism could contribute to safer learning environments, improved educational outcomes, and broader socio economic benefits. The study concludes that students generally perceive both Maicibi's formula and cognitive restructuring as applicable approaches for addressing cultism in tertiary institutions, and it recommends strengthened institutional enforcement, enhanced counselling services, greater parental involvement, and youth development initiatives as complementary strategies.

Keywords: cultism; Maicibi's formula; cognitive restructuring; students' perceptions; tertiary institutions

1. Introduction

Cultism remains one of the most persistent challenges confronting tertiary institutions in Nigeria, with serious implications for student safety, academic performance, and institutional stability. Although many cult groups originally emerged as fraternities established for social and intellectual purposes, several have evolved into secret organisations associated with violence, intimidation, harassment, and other anti social activities (Akinade, 2019; Bulus, 2003; Oni, 2009). Within Nigerian tertiary institutions, cult related activities have been linked to campus insecurity, disruption of academic programmes, destruction of property, and psychological distress among students (Arijesuyo, 2011; Onete, 2020). In Ilorin metropolis, concerns about cultism continue to attract the attention of educational administrators, parents, and policymakers because of their adverse effects on teaching, learning, and campus life (Odebode, 2013).

Previous studies have identified several factors that contribute to cultism among students, including peer pressure, the desire for social recognition and protection, inadequate parental guidance, weak institutional disciplinary mechanisms, and political influence (Adewale, 2005; Arijesuyo, 2011; Odebode, 2013; Onete, 2020). The consequences of cultism are equally significant, ranging from violence and insecurity to academic decline, social withdrawal, and psychological trauma (Arijesuyo, 2011; Bamiso, 2006; Onete, 2020). These consequences not only affect individual students but also undermine the broader educational mission of tertiary institutions. Various measures have been adopted to address cultism, including institutional regulations, security surveillance, anti cultism campaigns, and legal sanctions, yet cult related activities continue to occur in many institutions, suggesting the need to explore additional approaches that address both the behavioural and psychological dimensions of the problem.

In this regard, Maicibi's formula and cognitive restructuring offer useful perspectives for understanding and addressing cultism. Maicibi's formula is a deterrence oriented framework that explains criminal behaviour through a cost benefit analysis of actions and consequences (Maicibi, 2004, 2005). The model assumes that individuals are less likely to engage in undesirable behaviour when the perceived costs, such as apprehension, punishment, conviction, and social stigmatisation, outweigh the anticipated benefits. The framework has been applied to various forms of deviant and criminal behaviour, including corruption, examination malpractice, and cult related activities (Alhas, 2015). Cognitive restructuring, on the other hand, is a cognitive behavioural technique that focuses on identifying and modifying irrational or maladaptive beliefs that influence behaviour (Beck, 1995; Hofmann, Asnaani, Vonk, Sawyer, and Fang, 2012).

While existing studies have examined the causes and consequences of cultism, limited attention has been given to how students perceive the applicability of deterrence based and cognitive approaches in addressing the problem, particularly within the context of Ilorin metropolis. Understanding the perceptions of students is important because they constitute the group most directly affected by cult related activities and are therefore well positioned to provide insights into the perceived relevance of various intervention strategies. Such insights may assist educational administrators, counsellors, and policymakers in

designing more responsive approaches to cultism prevention and management. It is against this background that this study examined students' perceptions of the applicability of Maicibi's formula and cognitive restructuring in mitigating cultism in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Cultism remains a major challenge within tertiary institutions in Nigeria, including those located in Ilorin metropolis. Despite the introduction of institutional regulations, anti cultism campaigns, security measures, and legal sanctions, reports of cult related violence, intimidation, harassment, and other disruptive activities continue to emerge (Adewale, 2005; Arijesuyo, 2011). The persistence of these activities poses threats to the safety of students, disrupts academic programmes, and undermines the capacity of higher institutions to achieve their educational objectives. Although both Maicibi's formula and cognitive restructuring possess theoretical relevance for addressing cultism, there is limited empirical evidence regarding how students perceive their applicability within tertiary institutions in Ilorin metropolis. Given the continued prevalence of cult related activities and their implications for educational development, understanding the perceptions of students regarding these intervention approaches is important for policy formulation and institutional practice.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives: to examine students' perceptions of the factors contributing to cultism in tertiary institutions within Ilorin metropolis; to assess students' perceptions of the consequences of cultism; to investigate students' perceptions of the applicability of Maicibi's formula in mitigating cultism; to examine students' perceptions of the applicability of cognitive restructuring in mitigating cultism; and to assess students' perceptions of the socio economic implications associated with a reduction in cultism within tertiary institutions in Ilorin metropolis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultism

Cultism refers to the involvement of individuals, particularly youths and students, in secret confraternities or occult groups that operate within educational institutions and the wider society. Such groups are typically characterised by secrecy, initiation rites, loyalty to group norms, and a strong sense of collective identity among members (Oni, 2009). In the Nigerian context, cultism originated from fraternity movements that were initially established to promote social justice, intellectual development, and solidarity among students. Over time, however, many of these groups evolved into violent associations associated with intimidation, criminality, and social disorder (Akinade, 2019; Bulus, 2003). The attraction of cult groups has been linked to perceived benefits such as protection, power, social recognition, and a sense of belonging, yet participation has been associated with numerous adverse consequences, including violence, academic disruption, psychological trauma, and threats to institutional stability (Okpi, 2021).

2.2 Cognitive Restructuring

Cognitive restructuring is a psychological technique derived from cognitive behavioural theory that focuses on identifying, challenging, and modifying irrational, distorted, or maladaptive thought patterns in order to promote healthier emotions and behaviours (Beck, 1995). The approach is based on the assumption that behaviour is influenced by the way individuals interpret events and experiences, so that changes in cognition can lead to corresponding changes in attitudes and behaviour (Hofmann et al., 2012). The process typically involves recognising negative automatic thoughts, evaluating the evidence supporting such thoughts, and replacing them with more realistic and constructive alternatives (Kendall and Hollon, 2020). Within the context of cultism, cognitive restructuring is particularly relevant because decisions to join or remain in cult groups may be influenced by beliefs relating to power, protection, prestige, social acceptance, or personal identity (Chukwuma and Abiola, 2021).

2.3 Maicibi's Formula

Maicibi's formula is a socio psychological model developed to explain and prevent criminal behaviour through an analysis of the perceived relationship between the benefits and costs associated with a particular action. According to Maicibi (2004, 2005) and Alhas (2015), the model is represented as:

$$B_{1-4} < C_{1-4}$$

where B represents the perceived benefits of engaging in a particular behaviour, while C represents the perceived costs associated with that behaviour. The benefits include monetary or economic gains, psychological or physiological satisfaction, sociological rewards such as prestige and social recognition, and the perceived ease of engaging in the activity. The costs include monetary and time investments, fear of apprehension, the probability and severity of conviction, and the loss of opportunities or social stigmatisation. To make the internal structure of the model explicit, the benefit and cost terms may be expanded as aggregate sums of their respective components:

$$B = M_b + P_b + S_b + E_c$$

$$C = M_t + F_a + P_c + L_o$$

The central assumption of the model is that undesirable behaviour is more likely to occur when perceived benefits outweigh perceived costs, whereas the likelihood of such behaviour decreases when perceived costs exceed perceived benefits. The deterrence condition that discourages participation can therefore be stated compactly as:

$$(M_b + P_b + S_b + E_c) < (M_t + F_a + P_c + L_o)$$

Consequently, the model proposes that prevention strategies should focus on reducing the attractiveness of the anticipated benefits while increasing the perceived risks and consequences associated with the behaviour (Alhas, 2015; Maicibi, 2007). Within tertiary institutions, the framework suggests that participation in cult activities may be discouraged when students perceive higher risks of apprehension, punishment, conviction, expulsion, and social stigmatisation than the anticipated benefits of membership.

The deterrence logic of the model is best appreciated visually. Figure 1 renders the four benefit components and the four cost components on either side of a decision threshold, clarifying that prevention operates by shifting the balance rather than by any single sanction, so that credible enforcement across several cost dimensions is more effective than reliance on one.

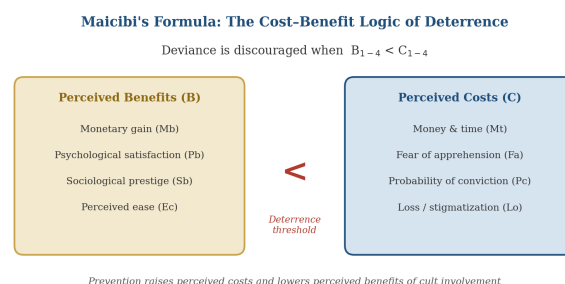


Figure 1: Maicibi's formula represented as a cost benefit balance, in which deviance is discouraged once perceived costs exceed perceived benefits. *Source: Authors' conceptual synthesis based on Maicibi (2004, 2005) and Alhas (2015).*

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Rational Choice Theory, Social Identity Theory, Cognitive Behavioural Theory, and Routine Activity Theory. Rational Choice Theory posits that individuals make decisions after evaluating the potential benefits and costs associated with alternative courses of action (Cornish and Clarke, 1986), a perspective that aligns closely with Maicibi's formula. Social Identity Theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1986), explains how individuals derive part of their identity and self esteem from membership in social groups, which helps to account for the attraction of cult groups that offer belonging, protection, and prestige. Cognitive Behavioural Theory, associated primarily with Beck (1995), posits that thoughts, beliefs, and interpretations influence emotions and behaviour, and it provides the principal foundation for cognitive restructuring. Routine Activity Theory, developed by Cohen and Felson (1979), argues that deviant behaviour occurs when a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardianship converge, drawing attention to the institutional and situational conditions that facilitate cult recruitment.

Taken together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding cultism and the perceived applicability of strategies designed to mitigate it. Rational Choice Theory and Maicibi's formula emphasise deterrence through increased costs and reduced benefits, Social Identity Theory explains the attraction of group membership and belonging, Cognitive Behavioural Theory underpins cognitive restructuring as a means of modifying maladaptive beliefs, and Routine Activity Theory highlights the role of institutional and environmental factors in preventing deviant behaviour. Collectively, the theories suggest that effective responses to cultism may require a combination of deterrent, psychological, social, and institutional measures.

2.5 Empirical Review

Several studies have examined the factors associated with cultism among students in tertiary institutions. Adewale (2005) identified

peer influence, family instability, poor parental supervision, and the desire for social recognition as major factors contributing to cult membership, while Arijesuyo (2011) reported that students often join cult groups in search of protection, social acceptance, power, and economic benefits. Odebode (2013) found that political interference, societal glorification of violence, and ineffective enforcement of institutional regulations contribute to the persistence of cultism, and Onete (2020) observed that economic hardship, unemployment concerns, peer pressure, and the desire for influence were significant predictors of cult involvement.

Empirical studies have also consistently documented the adverse consequences of cultism. Bamiso (2006) reported that cult related violence contributes to physical injuries, loss of lives, destruction of property, and disruption of academic activities, while Arijesuyo (2011) and Smiley, Moussa, Ndamobissi, and Menkiti (2021) found that cultism undermines campus security, creates fear among students and staff, and negatively affects the learning environment. With respect to intervention, Alhas (2015) observed that deterrence oriented interventions may influence behavioural choices when sanctions are visible, consistently enforced, and perceived as credible, while Chukwuma and Abiola (2021) observed that cognitive based interventions may assist young people in challenging beliefs associated with aggression, social conformity, and risky behaviour. Despite these contributions, limited empirical evidence exists regarding students' perceptions of the applicability of these approaches within tertiary institutions in Ilorin metropolis, a gap that the present study addresses.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was considered appropriate because it facilitates the collection of data on respondents' opinions, perceptions, and attitudes regarding a phenomenon without manipulating any variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The population for the study comprised students from selected tertiary institutions in Ilorin metropolis, namely the University of Ilorin, Kwara State Polytechnic, and Kwara State College of Education. These institutions were selected because they represent the major categories of tertiary institutions within the metropolis and provide a broad basis for understanding students' perceptions of cultism and cultism mitigation strategies.

A sample of three hundred respondents was selected for the study, consisting of one hundred students from each institution. Stratified sampling was first employed to ensure adequate representation of the three categories of tertiary institutions, after which simple random sampling was used to select respondents within each stratum. The institutions were analysed collectively because the study sought to obtain a metropolitan wide assessment of students' perceptions. Although institutional differences may exist, the selected institutions operate within the same socio cultural environment and face comparable cultism related challenges, which makes pooled analysis appropriate for the objectives of the study.

Data were collected using a researcher designed questionnaire titled Students' Perceptions of the Applicability of Maicibi's Formula and Cognitive Restructuring in Mitigating Cultism Questionnaire. The instrument was structured into sections

corresponding to the objectives of the study and was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation to ensure the clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the items. To determine the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted among students outside the selected institutions but with characteristics similar to those of the study participants, and the data obtained were analysed using the Cronbach alpha reliability technique, yielding a coefficient of 0.78, which indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011).

Given the sensitive nature of cultism related issues, ethical procedures were carefully observed throughout the study. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant institutional authorities prior to data collection, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to all respondents, and participation was entirely voluntary. Informed consent was obtained before administration, no identifying information was collected, and participants were assured that all responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. A mean score of 2.50 and above was interpreted as agreement, whereas a mean score below 2.50 was interpreted as disagreement.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The study analysed responses from three hundred students, evenly drawn from the three major tertiary institutions in Ilorin metropolis, namely a university, a polytechnic, and a college of education. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic distribution of respondents (n = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Type of institution	University	100	33.3
	Polytechnic	100	33.3
	College of Education	100	33.3
Gender	Male	165	55.0
	Female	135	45.0

Source: Field survey, 2026.

Table 1 shows that the study drew equal representation from the three categories of tertiary institutions, namely the university (33.3 per cent), the polytechnic (33.3 per cent), and the college of education (33.3 per cent). This balanced distribution ensured that the views obtained reflected the perspectives of students across the major categories of tertiary institutions within the study area. The gender distribution indicates that one hundred and sixty five respondents (55.0 per cent) were male, while one hundred and thirty five respondents (45.0 per cent) were female, suggesting adequate representation of both genders.

Figure 2 depicts the demographic composition of the sample, confirming the deliberate parity across the three institution types and the moderate male majority in the gender distribution.

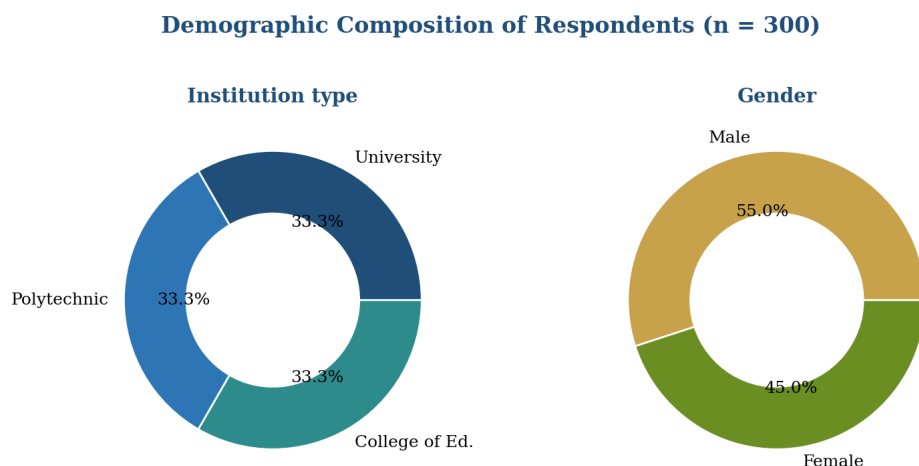


Figure 2: Demographic composition of respondents by institution type and gender (n = 300). Source: Field survey, 2026.

4.1 Perceived Factors Contributing to Cultism

Table 2 presents respondents' perceptions of the factors contributing to cultism in tertiary institutions within Ilorin metropolis.

Table 2. Respondents' views on factors responsible for cultism

SN	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Peer pressure influences students' decision to join cult groups	140	110	40	10	3.267	Agree
2	Inadequate parental guidance contributes to cultism	120	130	40	10	3.200	Agree
3	Desire for social recognition and prestige drives involvement	150	100	40	10	3.300	Agree
4	Weak institutional discipline promotes cult growth	80	140	60	20	2.933	Agree
5	Political influence contributes to the spread of cultism	90	120	70	20	2.933	Agree
	Grand Mean					3.127	Agree

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Criterion mean = 2.50. Source: Field survey, 2026.

The findings reveal that all the identified factors recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating general agreement among respondents. The desire for social recognition and prestige recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.300), suggesting that respondents perceived the quest for status and recognition as a major factor contributing to cult involvement. Peer pressure (M = 3.267) and inadequate parental guidance (M = 3.200) were also identified as important contributing factors, while weak institutional discipline (M = 2.933) and political influence (M = 2.933) were likewise perceived to contribute to the growth and spread of cultism. The grand mean of 3.127 indicates overall agreement that cultism is influenced by a combination of social, familial, institutional, and political factors, a pattern consistent with previous studies (Adewale, 2005; Arijesuyo, 2011; Odebo, 2013; Onete, 2020).

Figure 3 orders the five perceived factors by mean score, making visually explicit that the desire for social recognition, peer pressure, and inadequate parental guidance form the leading cluster of drivers, while the institutional and political factors, though still endorsed, attract slightly weaker agreement.

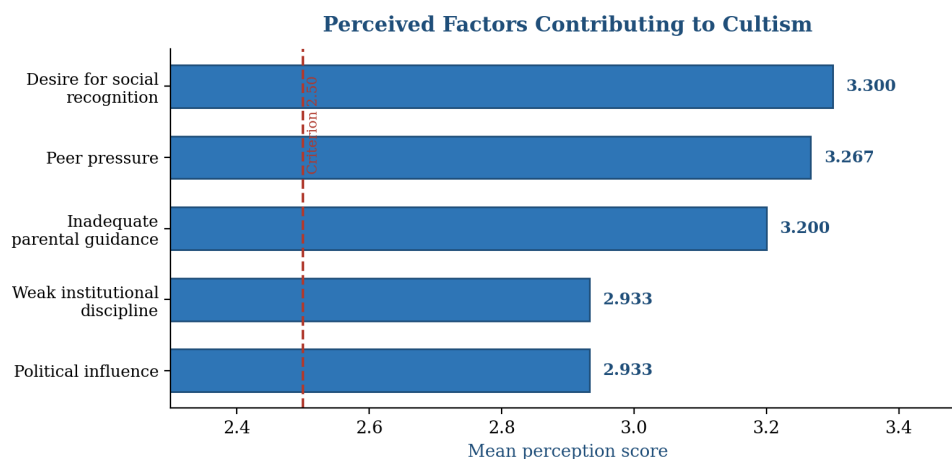


Figure 3: Perceived factors contributing to cultism, ranked by mean score against the criterion mean of 2.50. *Source: Field survey, 2026.*

4.2 Perceived Consequences of Cultism

Table 3 shows respondents' perceptions of the consequences of cultism in tertiary institutions.

Table 3. Respondents' views on consequences of cultism

SN	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
6	Cultism increases campus violence and insecurity	160	100	30	10	3.367	Agree
7	Membership negatively affects academic performance	130	120	40	10	3.233	Agree
8	Fear of cultism causes students' social withdrawal	110	120	60	10	3.100	Agree
9	Cult clashes disrupt academic calendars	140	110	40	10	3.267	Agree
10	Cult exposure leads to psychological trauma and anxiety	150	100	40	10	3.300	Agree
Grand Mean						3.253	Agree

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Criterion mean = 2.50. *Source: Field survey, 2026.*

The findings indicate that all the identified consequences recorded mean scores above the acceptance threshold of 2.50. The item stating that cultism increases campus violence and insecurity recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.367$), indicating strong agreement that cult related activities contribute significantly to insecurity within educational institutions. Respondents also agreed that cult exposure leads to psychological trauma and anxiety ($M = 3.300$) and that cult clashes disrupt academic calendars ($M = 3.267$), while membership was perceived to negatively affect academic performance ($M = 3.233$) and fear of cultism was considered a factor contributing to social withdrawal ($M = 3.100$). The grand mean of 3.253 demonstrates a strong consensus that the consequences of cultism extend beyond individual participants and affect the broader academic environment, supporting earlier studies (Arijesuyo, 2011; Bamiso, 2006; Onete, 2020).

4.3 Perceived Applicability of Maicibi's Formula

Table 4 presents respondents' perceptions regarding the applicability of Maicibi's formula in mitigating cultism.

Table 4. Respondents' views on Maicibi's formula in reducing cultism

SN	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
11	Fear of apprehension discourages cult membership	140	110	30	20	3.233	Agree
12	Publicising strict punishments reduces cult activity	130	120	30	20	3.200	Agree
13	Social stigmatisation discourages involvement in cultism	120	130	40	10	3.200	Agree
14	High risk of conviction deters cult activities	160	100	30	10	3.367	Agree
15	Reducing perceived benefits minimises cult membership	110	120	50	20	3.067	Agree
Grand Mean						3.213	Agree

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Criterion mean = 2.50. *Source: Field survey, 2026.*

The findings indicate that all the items recorded mean scores above 2.50, reflecting general agreement regarding the relevance of deterrence based measures. The item stating that a high risk of conviction deters cult activities recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.367$), suggesting that respondents perceived conviction as a significant deterrent. Fear of apprehension ($M = 3.233$), the publicising of strict punishments ($M = 3.200$), and social stigmatisation ($M = 3.200$) received similar levels of agreement, while respondents further agreed that reducing the

perceived benefits associated with cult membership may minimise involvement ($M = 3.067$). The grand mean of 3.213 indicates that respondents generally perceived the components of Maicibi's formula as applicable strategies, lending support to the assumption that behavioural choices may be influenced by perceptions of costs, risks, and consequences (Alhas, 2015; Maicibi, 2004).

4.4 Perceived Applicability of Cognitive Restructuring

Table 5 presents respondents' perceptions of the applicability of cognitive restructuring in mitigating cultism.

Table 5. Respondents' views on cognitive restructuring in mitigating cultism

SN	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
16	Restructuring helps identify distorted beliefs about cultism	120	130	40	10	3.200	Agree
17	Counselling replaces pro cult attitudes with alternatives	110	140	40	10	3.167	Agree
18	Restructuring reduces belief that cultism guarantees protection	100	150	40	10	3.133	Agree
19	Changing perceptions of respect and power reduces attraction	90	140	50	20	3.000	Agree
20	Therapy helps cult members reintegrate into student life	100	130	50	20	3.033	Agree
	Grand Mean					3.107	Agree

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Criterion mean = 2.50. Source: Field survey, 2026.

The findings reveal that all the items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean, indicating agreement regarding the relevance of cognitive approaches. The item stating that restructuring helps identify distorted beliefs about cultism recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.200$), followed closely by the view that counselling replaces pro cult attitudes with alternatives ($M = 3.167$) and that restructuring reduces the belief that cultism guarantees protection ($M = 3.133$). Respondents also agreed that cognitive restructuring can assist in changing perceptions relating to respect and power ($M = 3.000$) and that therapy can facilitate the reintegration of cult members into normal student life ($M = 3.033$). The grand mean of 3.107 suggests that respondents generally perceived cognitive restructuring as an applicable psychological strategy, consistent with studies emphasising the role of cognitive behavioural approaches in modifying maladaptive beliefs (Beck, 1995; Hofmann et al., 2012).

Figure 4 places the deterrence items alongside the cognitive restructuring items, revealing that while both clusters sit comfortably above the criterion mean, the deterrence items attract marginally stronger endorsement, with the risk of conviction emerging as the single most strongly perceived mechanism.

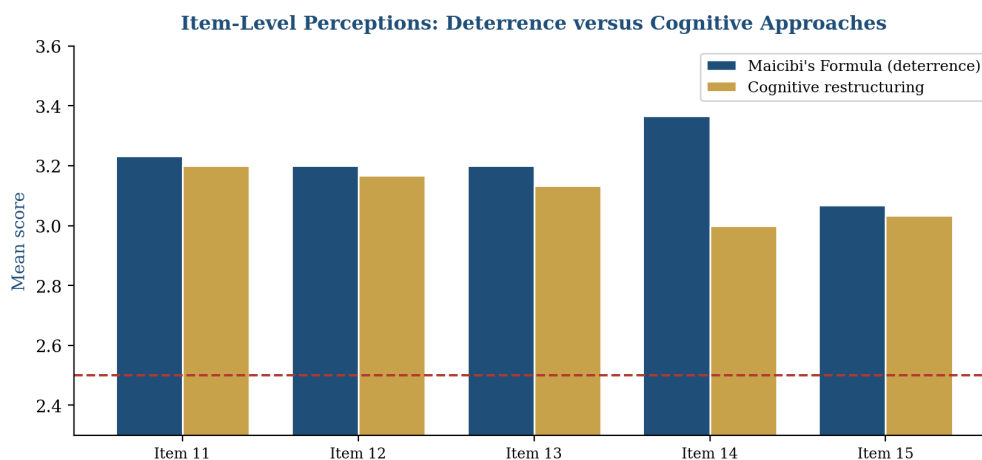


Figure 4: Item level comparison of perceptions of Maicibi's formula and cognitive restructuring against the criterion mean. Source: Field survey, 2026.

4.5 Perceived Socio Economic Implications of Reducing Cultism

Table 6 presents respondents' perceptions of the socio economic implications associated with a reduction in cultism.

Table 6. Respondents' views on socio economic implications of a decline in cultism

SN	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
21	Decline in cultism improves retention and graduation	130	120	40	10	3.233	Agree
22	Reduced cultism enhances graduate employability	120	130	30	20	3.167	Agree
23	Decline improves learning environment and productivity	140	110	30	20	3.233	Agree
24	Lower violence creates a favourable climate for investment	110	130	40	20	3.100	Agree
25	Decline supports youth entrepreneurship and stability	115	125	40	20	3.117	Agree
	Grand Mean					3.170	Agree

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree. Criterion mean = 2.50. Source: Field survey, 2026.

The findings show that all the items recorded mean scores above the acceptance threshold of 2.50, indicating agreement regarding the potential benefits associated with lower levels of cult related activities. The highest mean scores were recorded for the view that a decline in cultism improves retention and graduation ($M = 3.233$) and that a decline improves the learning environment and productivity ($M = 3.233$). Respondents also agreed that reduced cultism enhances graduate employability ($M = 3.167$), creates a more favourable climate for investment through lower levels of violence ($M = 3.100$), and supports youth entrepreneurship and stability ($M = 3.117$). The grand mean of 3.170 indicates that respondents generally perceived reductions in cultism as having positive socio economic implications.

Figure 5 consolidates the five domain grand means into a single comparative view. The consistency of the scores, all clustered between 3.107 and 3.253, conveys the central empirical message of the study, namely that students endorse the relevance of every dimension examined, with the consequences of cultism attracting the strongest agreement and cognitive restructuring the most measured.

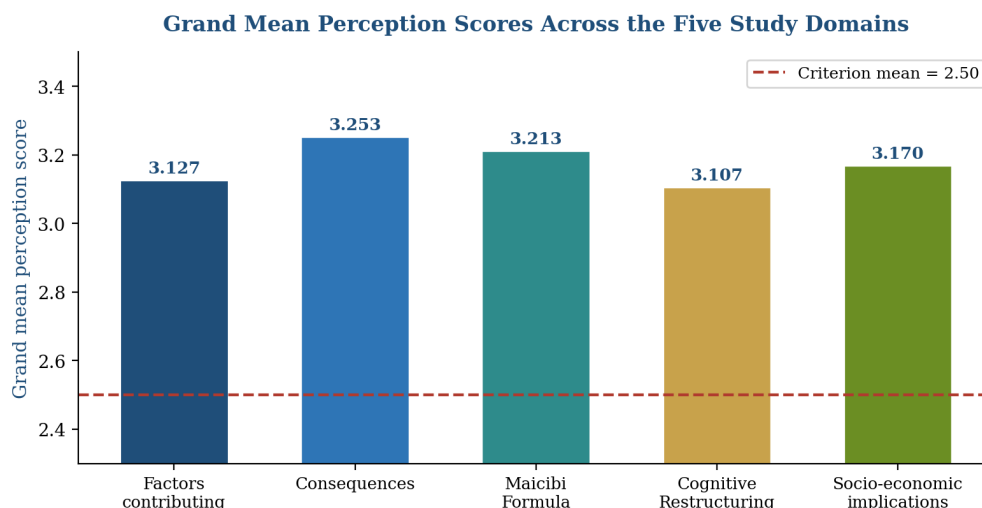


Figure 5: Grand mean perception scores across the five study domains, all exceeding the criterion mean of 2.50. *Source: Field survey, 2026.*

5. Discussion of Findings

The results present a coherent picture in which students in Ilorin metropolis endorse both the diagnosis of cultism and the two intervention frameworks examined. With respect to the factors contributing to cultism, the prominence of the desire for social recognition and peer pressure indicates that cult involvement is understood by students less as an isolated act of deviance and more as a socially embedded pursuit of belonging and status. This interpretation is consistent with Social Identity Theory, which holds that individuals derive self esteem from group membership (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), and it suggests that interventions which offer legitimate avenues for recognition and belonging may be as important as those which raise the costs of participation.

The strong agreement regarding the consequences of cultism, particularly campus violence, psychological trauma, and academic disruption, underscores the severity with which students experience the phenomenon. That the highest single consequence score attached to campus violence and insecurity ($M = 3.367$) mirrors the emphasis in earlier work on the destabilising effect of cult clashes (Arijesuyo, 2011; Bamiso, 2006) and situates the present findings within an established evidentiary tradition while extending it to the specific perceptions of students in Ilorin metropolis.

The favourable perception of Maicibi's formula, with conviction risk emerging as the strongest deterrent, aligns with the assumptions of Rational Choice Theory and with the deterrence literature which holds that credible and consistently enforced sanctions shape behavioural choices (Alhas, 2015; Cornish and Clarke, 1986). Importantly, the item level pattern indicates that no single sanction operates in isolation, a reading reinforced by Figure 4 and by the structure of the formula itself, in which deterrence emerges from the aggregate of several cost dimensions. The comparably strong endorsement of cognitive restructuring suggests that students do not regard deterrence and psychological intervention as competing alternatives but as complementary approaches, one addressing the perceived costs of membership and the other addressing the distorted beliefs that render membership attractive in the first place.

Finally, the perception that reductions in cultism carry positive socio economic implications reveals that students connect campus security to broader developmental outcomes such as employability, productivity, and stability. While the present study does not measure these outcomes directly, the consistency of the perceptions across all five domains, evident in the tight clustering of grand means in Figure 5, lends internal coherence to the account and strengthens the case for integrated intervention. Taken together, the findings support a combined strategy in which institutional enforcement, counselling grounded in cognitive restructuring, parental involvement, and youth development operate in concert rather than in isolation.

6. Conclusion

This study examined students' perceptions of the applicability of Maicibi's formula and cognitive restructuring in mitigating cultism in tertiary institutions within Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that students perceive cultism as a

multifaceted phenomenon influenced by peer pressure, inadequate parental guidance, the desire for social recognition, weak institutional discipline, and political interference, and that they perceive cultism as having serious consequences, including increased violence and insecurity, academic disruption, psychological trauma, and social withdrawal.

In relation to intervention strategies, students generally perceived Maicibi's formula as applicable for mitigating cultism through deterrence mechanisms such as apprehension, conviction, punishment, and social stigmatisation, and they perceived cognitive restructuring as applicable for modifying distorted beliefs and reshaping attitudes associated with cult membership. Respondents also perceived that a reduction in cultism may carry positive socio economic implications, including improved academic performance, better graduate employability, enhanced learning environments, and broader societal stability. The study therefore concludes that both deterrence based and cognitive based approaches are perceived by students as relevant and potentially complementary frameworks for addressing cultism in tertiary institutions within Ilorin metropolis.

7. Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations are made. First, university administrators and student affairs units should strengthen existing disciplinary policies and enforcement mechanisms in order to increase the perceived risks associated with cult involvement. Second, institutions should intensify awareness campaigns that clearly communicate the legal, academic, and social consequences of cultism in order to reinforce deterrence based prevention.

Third, counselling units in tertiary institutions should incorporate cognitive behavioural approaches, particularly cognitive restructuring techniques, into student support programmes in order to help challenge and modify beliefs that encourage cult involvement. Fourth, parents and guardians should be encouraged to provide stronger moral guidance and monitoring of students' social activities, given the significant role of family influence in shaping behavioural choices. Fifth, government and institutional stakeholders should continue to promote safe and secure learning environments, and interventions aimed at reducing cultism should adopt a combined approach that integrates the deterrence strategies reflected in Maicibi's formula with psychological interventions such as cognitive restructuring, since students perceive both approaches as relevant and complementary.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that no conflicting interests exist.

Funding Statement

No funding was received for the conduct of this study.

Author Contributions Statement

The authors were involved in the conception and design of the study, the collection of data, data analysis, the drafting of the paper, revising it critically for intellectual content, and the final approval of the version to be published, and they agreed to be

accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Ethical Approval

Ethical procedures were observed throughout the study. Permission was obtained from the relevant institutional authorities, participation was voluntary, informed consent was secured, and the anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents were maintained.

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