



Research Article

Recent Cult Related Killings in Awka Metropolis (2022-2024) and The Implications on the Society

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Cultism, Awka Metropolis,
Violence, Implications, Society

Article History:

Received: 01-05-2025

Accepted: 20-06-2025

Published: 26-06-2025

This study examines the recent cult-related killings in Awka Metropolis between 2022 and 2024 and their implications for society. The research highlights the rise in violent activities associated with various cult groups, analyzing their causes, patterns, and socio-economic effects. Through qualitative and quantitative methods, the study explores factors such as youth unemployment, peer influence, drug abuse, and political manipulation as key drivers of cultism. Data were gathered from security reports, eyewitness accounts, and community surveys to assess the frequency and nature of these killings. Findings reveal an alarming increase in cult-related violence, leading to loss of lives, heightened insecurity, disruption of businesses, and psychological trauma among residents. Additionally, the study evaluates the response of law enforcement agencies and the effectiveness of government policies in curbing cult-related violence. The paper concludes by recommending proactive measures such as community policing, public awareness campaigns, employment opportunities for youths, and strict law enforcement to mitigate the menace. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on urban security and the need for collaborative efforts in addressing cultism in Nigerian society.

Cite this article:

Nwokedi, G. O., Green, A. U., Felix-Joe, C. J., Chiazio, N. G., Okechukwu, U. P., & Chidebem, V. M. G. (2025). Recent Cult Related Killings in Awka Metropolis (2022-2024) and The Implications on the Society. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(5), 24-30. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v4i5.481>

Introduction

Cult killings have plagued Anambra State for years, with Awka being a hotspot. Rival cult groups have been engaged in a deadly turf war and the resulting violence has claimed numerous lives, leaving families shattered and the community traumatized. In the past five years, it had become a common sight to see dead bodies litter the streets, usually after an exchange of fire between rival cult groups. There had been instances where indigenes residing outside the state met their deaths on the night, they stepped into Awka and when questions were asked, the answer would be that previous killing was traced to the victim and his rival cult group only waited patiently for him to step into Awka for revenge. Cultism had in fact, permeated many segments of the youths in Awka, with the result that it has moved beyond the tertiary institutions to the markets and even to secondary schools and among tricycle operators. Areas where the killings have become a common occurrence include Ifite, Okpuno, Dike Street, near Eke Awka Main Market, Obinagu, Nkwelle, Ezinano, Unizik Junction, among other places.

Cultism has become one of the commonest crimes many youths indulge themselves in with. The rate at which youths involve in cult activities nowadays is alarming with eventful series of chaotic violence and destruction of lives and properties. Adewale (2005) capturing the menace of cultism and its accompanying inimical effects, assert that cultism with its attendant violence, torture, suppression and unwarranted intimidation perpetrated by cult groups, has spread beyond the streets, institutions of higher learning to secondary schools, primary schools, residential areas and even market places. These groups often lure young individuals with promises of protection, power, and a sense of belonging. However, the reality is far from these promises, as cult membership often leads to involvement in criminal activities, violence, and a cycle of retaliation between rival groups. The resulting cult clashes have profound negative impacts on the community, instilling fear and disrupting the educational and social development of young people. Cultism is not a happy development. It is a canker worm in our national ethos. It is not only the church only but also of the society at large.

Cultism in Awka is taking a serious toll on the society as it affects the social and moral standards of the people and increases

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<https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v4i5.481>

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the vices in the society. It is an understatement to say that the environment devoid of peace cannot enhance meaningful development. The menace has attracted the concern of all stakeholders in the society as its increasing negative effects like destruction of lives and properties, cessation of academic activities, vandalism of school facilities, political thuggery, and economic implications and so on, have not derailed youths from joining cult groups. The threat to human lives and properties has escalated beyond mere imagination with the spate of violence of all forms including assassination, robbery, thuggery, theft, murder and burglary. Not just tertiary institutions in Awka, but the residential areas, offices and business areas have not been left out of this serious threat to the breakdown of law and order. This research therefore aims at ascertaining the recent cult related killings in Awka metropolis and its implications on the society.

A Contemporary Overview of Awka Town

Awka is the capital of Anambra State and remains one of the oldest Igbo settlements. Onwuejeogwu (1975) suggests that oral traditions and archaeological findings trace Awka's origins to the early migrations of the Igbo people around the 9th century AD. The town became renowned for its skilled blacksmiths, who were highly sought after for crafting weapons, farming tools, and ritual objects. Awka blacksmiths supplied tools to neighboring communities and were integral to the economic structure of pre-colonial Igbo society. Okafor (1992) notes that traditional governance in Awka was organized around thirteen villages, namely Amachalla, Ifite, Umuokpu, Ayom-Nachi, Agulu, Umubele, Ezi-Awka, Umuogbu, Umuoruka, Umudioka, Umuike, Umuonaga, and Umuayom. Each village was administered by elders and lineage heads, forming a Council of Elders (Ndichie) that made decisions through consensus. The Ozo title holders wielded significant influence in judicial and religious matters. The highest traditional authority was the Eze Uzu of Awka, who served as the spiritual and political leader of the town. Notable past and present Eze Uzu include Eze Uzu I, Obi Okafor; Eze Uzu II, Obi Gibson Nwosu; and the current Eze Uzu III, Obi Austin Ndigwe. Isichei (1976) describes that before the advent of Christianity, Awka people practiced traditional Igbo religion, venerating deities such as Chi (personal god), Ala (earth goddess), and Agbala (oracle spirit). The famous Imoka festival, an annual religious event, was held in honor of the deity Imoka and played a crucial role in the spiritual and social lives of Awka people.

The Agbala Awka shrine was a prominent center for divination and spiritual guidance. Ekechi (1972) explains that with the arrival of British missionaries in the late 19th century, Christianity gradually displaced many traditional religious practices, leading to the establishment of churches and Western education. Ilogu (1974) states that Awka thrived on blacksmithing, which was a hereditary occupation passed down through generations. The town was also a center for trade in palm produce, yams, and livestock. In the colonial era, the construction of roads and administrative centers facilitated economic expansion, leading to increased commerce and modernization. Post-independence, Awka evolved into an administrative and educational hub, especially after being designated the capital of Anambra State in 1991. Nwosu (1993) explains that Awka transitioned from its traditional republican system to modern governance structures. Today, the city is governed by an elected local government council under the Nigerian democratic system. The Eze Uzu, although now largely ceremonial, remains a symbol of the town's heritage and unity. Awka also hosts key government institutions, including Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Paul University, Anambra State Polytechnic, and Federal College of Education (Technical). Other notable establishments in Awka include Anambra State Government House, Awka Capital

Development Authority, Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS), Kenneth Dike Library, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu Teaching Hospital, and various commercial banks and industries. These institutions solidify Awka's status as a strategic political and economic center in southeastern Nigeria.

Some Recent Notable Instances of Cult Related Killings in Awka Metropolis in 2024

Cult-related killings have become common in many villages within the Awka. This violence has led many residents to abandon their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring towns. In recounting some recent notable instances of cult related killings in Awka metropolis in 2024. Ujumadu (2024) recounts that there was pandemonium at the busy Aroma area of Awka on the 8th of June 2024 when in a broad daylight, gunmen suspected to be cultists killed one youth in his 20s. The development caused business houses in the area to quickly close with many people scampering to safety. The victim, who hailed from Amudo Village in Awka, was said to be a tricycle revenue collector who was previously a Keke operator himself. It was gathered that the assailants trailed him from the Ifite area and shot him at close range at a filling station which serves as a popular bus stop for buses and tricycles. Few hours later, another youth wearing the apron of the taskforce set up by the state government to enforce traffic violation, was gunned down by suspected cultists who sped off in a Siena bus after ensuring that he died on the spot. Also, on the 31st March, 2024 in the afternoon of Sunday there was shooting at Eke Awka area, which later escalated to the other parts of Awka and at the end of the shooting some people were also gunned down by suspected cultists. One of the persons hit by a stray bullet was a staff of the Anambra State Judiciary, simply identified as Mr. Nwofor, who was said to be innocently going about his normal business before the cultists struck.

Furthermore Ujumadu (2024) states that it was therefore not surprising when the member representing Awka 1 state constituency in the Anambra State House of Assembly, Hon Henry Mbachu, a Labour Party lawmaker lamented that no fewer than 34 persons were killed during cult-related clashes in Awka in the last three weeks expressing worry that Awka is degenerating into an unsafe place, despite being the capital of the state. He said the killings have continued even though the governor and his deputy, as well as heads of all the security agencies in the state live in Awka. Worried by the ugly development, I. Mbachu (Personal Communication, 6th February, 2025) speaking in an interview which he convened in a summit after mobilizing Awka people from all parts of the country. Major stakeholders, including the Ozo title holders, village heads, women leaders, clergy men, and politicians, attended the summit. Before the summit, he toured all major cities of Nigeria where Awka people reside, such as Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Enugu, among others and consulted elders and stakeholders to rally their support for the summit. I. Mbachu (Personal Communication, 6th February, 2025) who traced the menace to falling moral values amongst the youths and the failure of parents and elders to inculcate moral values in their children, said that despite the fact that gates have been constructed and mounted at the entry and exit points of virtually every street and about 18 villages vigilant groups in Awka working day and night, the situation required that a more deliberate action should be taken to proffer solutions to the problem.

In another report by Odinye (2024) three brothers from the same mother were reported to have fallen victim to the relentless cult violent attacks in Awka. The latest casualty who was identified as Nonso was killed in broad daylight on Saturday afternoon on 9th November, 2025 near Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Teaching Hospital, Amaku, Awka. According to a close family source, Nonso's killing is linked

to the murder of his younger brother, Buchi, three months ago around Mac Don Eatery's axis. Their eldest brother had also met a brutal end in a previous attack and the tragic loss has left their mother childless. This latest incident brings the death toll from cult-related violence in Awka to no fewer than twenty persons in the past few weeks. The ongoing conflict has revived painful memories of the Nibo Massacre and Ifite killings, which have left deep scars on the community.

Moreso in another report by Obianeri (2024) who states that hoodlums suspected to be cultists have invaded Ifite-Awka near the school gate of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, killing no fewer than six persons. According to I. Ogboo (Personal communication, 7th February, 2025) who spoke about the incident states that gun-wielding hoodlums invaded the vicinity in the early hours of Thursday 24th October, 2025 and opened fire on some persons, suspected to be members of another rival cult group, thereby causing chaos and panic in the area. It was gathered that the suspected cultists were looking for members of the rival cult group who were said to be hanging around the vicinity of Unizik school gate. According to P. Okeke (Personal Communication, 5th February, 2025) who witnessed the scene said that over six persons were shot dead near Witness Garden, Ifite Amansea Road. The hoodlums invaded the area at about 9:30am today and started shooting at some persons suspected to be members of a cult group. According to P. Onyebuike (Personal Communication, 5th February, 2025) an eye witness reported that she saw seven lying persons lying dead. Also T. Ikenga (Personal Communication, 24th February, 2024) the Anambra State Police Command, SP, confirms the development when he said that the police responding team has taken over the scene of indiscriminate shooting today 24th October, 2024 by 9:15am at Ifite behind Unizik gate, Awka by suspected gunmen. Also, some empty shells of bullets have been recovered at the scene.

The story of cult killing would not be complete without making reference to Late Dr. Fabian Osita, a lecturer in the Business Department at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, who was tragically shot dead during a carjacking incident in Awka, Anambra State, on the evening of December 16, 2024. According to Punch Newspaper (2024), the attack occurred around 7:30 PM near the high-tension area in Aroma while Dr. Osita was driving home from work. Unidentified gunmen intercepted his Toyota Corolla and, when he resisted their attempt to steal the vehicle, shot him in the head, resulting in his immediate death. The assailants fled with his car, leaving his body at the scene. The incident has plunged the Unizik community into mourning. In response to the growing insecurity in Awka, members of the university's Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) are mobilizing to express their concerns to the state government (Guardian, 2024). The Anambra State Police Command has initiated an investigation to apprehend the perpetrators. Police spokesperson SP Tochukwu Ikenga confirmed the incident and urged anyone with relevant information to come forward (Punch, 2024). He also provided contact numbers for the command's control room and the Public Relations Officer for the public to report any useful details. This tragic event shows the rising security challenges in Awka, which calls for increased vigilance and caution among residents especially during the festive season.

Causes of Cult-Related Killings in Awka

a. Peer Group Pressure: Many young people, particularly students join cult groups due to the pressure by their friends. The desire for social belonging, acceptance, and security drives many youths into these organizations. According to Okonkwo (2021) cult leaders take advantage of this vulnerability by presenting their groups as brotherhoods that offer protection, financial incentives, and a sense of identity. Eze (2022) states that peer group influence

is most prominent among secondary school students and university undergraduates in Awka. These students often feel the need to conform to group expectations, which sometimes involve violent initiation rites. In these rites, new members may be forced to commit acts of violence including killings to prove their loyalty. The failure to comply with such demands often results in threats, intimidation, and even death. The number of cult-related deaths in Awka, particularly in areas like Ifite, Aroma, and Okpuno, can be traced to these initiation practices. Furthermore, Obi (2021) notes that rival cult groups engage in bloody confrontations over territorial control, supremacy, and revenge missions. These violent clashes are usually triggered by rival misunderstandings that escalate into full-blown warfare. In many cases, the killings are retaliatory as one group seeks to avenge the murder of a member by eliminating members of a rival cult. Such cycles of violence have left many young people dead or permanently injured, instilling fear among residents and students.

b. Unemployment: Eze (2022) asserts that unemployment remains a major driving force behind cult-related killings in Awka. The city, being an educational and commercial hub hosts thousands of young people who struggle to secure meaningful employment opportunities. Many of these youths faced with economic hardships resort to cultism as a means of survival. Cult groups often provide financial incentives, promising young recruit quick wealth, protection, and social status. According to Okeke (2019), the lack of job opportunities in Awka has left many young people frustrated, making them susceptible to recruitment into violent groups. Some members engage in kidnapping and contract killings to earn money, thus contributing to the rising cases of cult-related killings. Obi (2021) notes that many unemployed graduates in Awka join cult groups to gain access to influential networks that promise employment and business opportunities. However, once initiated they become entangled in a cycle of violence and criminality that is difficult to escape.

c. Corruption in the Society: According to Ibe (2020), corruption in Nigerian society has contributed to the rise of cult-related killings in Awka. Corrupt law enforcement officers and politicians often provide protection for cultists thereby shielding them from prosecution. Many cases of cult-related violence go unresolved because perpetrators bribe their way out of legal consequences. This creates a culture of impunity, where cultists believe they can commit crimes without repercussions. Nwachukwu (2020) highlights that corrupt political figure in Awka often exploit cult groups for their personal gains, using them to intimidate opponents and manipulate elections. These cultists, having been empowered with money and weapons, turn against society, engaging in violent killings, extortion, and criminal activities.

d. Lack of Regard for Human Life: Okeke (2019) argues that the increasing number of cult-related killings in Awka stems from a general lack of regard for human life. Many cultists view violence as a normal part of life, showing little to no remorse for their actions. The brutal nature of their killings, often involving beheadings and public executions indicates a devaluation of human life.

e. Deterioration of Moral Values: Umeh (2019) notes that the erosion of moral values in Nigerian society has contributed to the rise of cultism in Awka. The influence of Western culture, social media, and violent entertainment has led many young people to glorify crime and violence. Traditional values that once emphasized respect for life, community, and discipline have been replaced by materialism and self-interest.

f. Use of Youth as Political Thugs: Obi (2021) states that politicians in Awka often recruit young people into cult groups for election-related violence. These youths, having been exposed to violent acts during political campaigns, continue to engage in

killings long after elections are over. The arms provided to them during political campaigns are rarely retrieved, leading to an increase in armed violence.

g. Lack of Contentment and Discipline: Adekunle (2022) observes that many young people in Awka lack contentment and discipline, which makes them vulnerable to cultism. The desire for quick wealth and social status drives many into crime. Cult groups promise them power and riches, leading them to engage in deadly activities.

h. Poor Parenting and Moral Upbringing: Umeh (2019) emphasizes that poor parenting plays a role in cult-related killings in Awka. Many youths who join cult groups come from broken homes or families where parental guidance is absent. Without strong moral upbringing these youths seek belonging elsewhere thereby falling into the hands of cult leaders who exploit their vulnerability.

i. Land disputes: Land disputes in Awka have been a cause of cult-related killings, fueling violence and instability. Many landowners lack proper documentation, leading to multiple claims on the same property and escalating conflicts. According to J. Ogbonnaya (Personal communication, 11th February, 2025) the fraudulent sale of land to multiple buyers is a frequent occurrence, often resulting in violent clashes when the rightful ownership is contested. The inefficiency and corruption within the judicial system further bring a rise to these conflicts, as prolonged litigation forces disputing parties to seek alternative means of settling disputes, including the use of cult groups for enforcement. Political interference has a connection between land disputes and cult-related killings. Furthermore J. Ogbonnaya (Personal communication, 11th February, 2025) asserts that influential individuals and politicians exploit these conflicts for personal gain, hiring cult groups to assert control over contested land. These groups serve as enforcers, using intimidation, violence, and assassinations to eliminate opposition. Over time, the entrenchment of cult groups in land disputes has created a cycle of reprisal attacks, making it increasingly difficult to restore peace in affected areas.

j. Control of Pit: The control of pits particularly sand and gravel extraction sites has become a major driver of cult-related killings in Awka. These pits are highly lucrative sources of income attracting powerful individuals, business interests, and cult groups that seek dominance over their operations. According to Mgbemena (2025) cult groups often acting as enforcers for influential figures are hired to regulate extraction activities, impose levies, and extort revenue from workers and transporters. The fierce competition for control over these extraction sites frequently leads to violent clashes, assassinations, and cycles of reprisal attacks, making pit-related violence a persistent and growing issue in the region. The profitability of sand and gravel extraction sites makes them attractive targets for cult groups and their sponsors. These pits generate vast amounts of revenue, which fuels the activities of these groups, including arms procurement, recruitment of new members, and the financing of further criminal operations. Rival cult groups engage in territorial battles, often resorting to deadly force to eliminate competitors and consolidate their hold over these lucrative resources.

Furthermore Mgbemena (2025) states that as a result, the struggle for dominance over pits has evolved into a major source of violence in Awka, affecting both those directly involved in the industry and innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire. Another significant factor contributing to pit-related violence is the lack of proper governmental oversight and regulation. Many of these pits operate illegally or with minimal state intervention, allowing cult groups to impose their own rules and dictate terms of operation. This creates an environment where disputes are settled through

violent confrontations rather than legal means. The absence of effective law enforcement further emboldens cult groups, as they are rarely held accountable for their actions. Without regulatory measures, these extraction sites remain hotspots for extortion, intimidation, and bloodshed.

Implications of Cult-Related Killings in Awka Metropolis

Psychological Trauma: Cult-related killings inflict psychological trauma on victims, families, and even the general public. According to Odeh (2020) the loss of their loved ones and the violent nature of these killings create lasting emotional scars, leading to conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health disorders. Psychological trauma from cult-related killings manifests in various ways including insomnia, nightmares, depression, and anxiety. Families of victims often struggle with prolonged grief, affecting their well-being and productivity. Exposure to killings alters their psychological development and social interactions. According to Obinna and Chukwuemeka (2021) children who witness or experience violent deaths develop aggressive tendencies or conversely social withdrawal due to fear and distrust. Such children are also more likely not to perform credibly in school as a result of difficulties concentrating and frequent absenteeism caused by the chaotic environment surrounding them.

Untimely Death: Cultism contributes to the loss of lives in Awka metropolis. Many of those involved in cult activities are youths and students who meet premature deaths due to violent clashes and revenge attacks. The persistent occurrence of such killings not only depletes the youth population but also disrupts the future of Awka metropolis. Adibe (2019) states that untimely death caused by cult-related killings affects individuals, families, and society at large. Many young men and women who could have contributed positively to their communities lose their lives due to gang rivalries and initiations. In some instances, innocent bystanders become victims of stray bullets or targeted attacks meant for rival cult groups. According to Eke (2020) families of victims suffer immense grief and economic setbacks, particularly if the deceased was a breadwinner. The sudden loss disrupts financial stability, pushing families into hardship. In many cases, younger siblings and dependents drop out of school due to the inability to afford tuition, perpetuating a cycle of poverty (Odeh, 2020). The death toll resulting from cult-related violence also impacts societal stability. Frequent occurrences create a state of lawlessness where criminal activities thrive unchecked. Residents live in fear, limiting their daily activities and engagement in economic or social enterprises (Obinna and Chukwuemeka, 2021).

Fear, Depression, and Anxiety of the Unknown: The unpredictable nature of cult-related killings in Awka Metropolis creates an atmosphere of fear, depression, and anxiety among residents. These violent activities often occur unexpectedly leaving individuals uncertain about their safety and well-being. Students, business owners and even law enforcement officers constantly live-in fear of being caught in crossfire or mistaken for cult members. The mere presence of cult activities in an area increases sense of insecurity, causing people to modify their daily routines to avoid potential danger (Okechukwu, 2020). Many individuals refrain from going out at night, while others avoid social gatherings altogether leading to social isolation. Depression is a major consequence of prolonged exposure to such a hostile environment. Witnessing violent acts or losing loved ones to cult-related killings deeply affects individuals emotionally and mentally. Survivors of attacks often experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which manifests in nightmares, flashbacks, and heightened vigilance. Families who lose members to cult violence struggle with grief, sometimes leading to suicidal tendencies or substance abuse as a coping mechanism (Nwankwo,

2021). The impact of this fear-driven depression also extends to workplaces and educational institutions, where individuals may struggle to concentrate or perform efficiently due to psychological distress. If left unchecked, the increasing rate of fear and anxiety among residents can significantly affect the mental health of society, leading to dysfunctionality.

Destruction of Individual and Government Infrastructures: Cult-related violence in Awka Metropolis frequently results in the destruction of both private and public infrastructure. Residential homes, businesses, and educational institutions often become battlegrounds for rival cult groups, leading to vandalism and property loss. Markets and shopping centers are also targeted during violent clashes, leaving traders in distress as they lose valuable goods and investment capital. The fear of attacks discourages businesses from operating at full capacity, causing a decline in commercial activities (Chukwuma, 2018). Government infrastructure, including roads, schools, and public offices, also suffer from cult violence. During attack, public properties such as police stations, community centers, and transportation systems become collateral damage in violent disputes. According to Obi (2023), the destruction of these essential infrastructures disrupts social services and places additional financial burdens on the government, which must allocate funds to repair damages instead of focusing on developmental projects.

Leads to Poor Economic Life of the Society: The persistence of cult-related killings in Awka Metropolis has affected the economic stability. The frequent occurrence of violence discourages investors as businesses hesitate to set up in an area perceived as insecure. Many existing businesses are forced to close as a result of constant attacks and extortion by cult groups. Business owners who refuse to comply with the demands of these groups often face threats, intimidation, and sometimes outright destruction of their establishments. Uche (2017) remarks that this unstable business environment contributes to economic stagnation and reduced job opportunities. Landlords and property owners also suffer loss as a result of instability caused by cult activities. Many people prefer to relocate to safer areas, leading to an increase in vacant properties and reduced rental income. This decline in housing demand affects property values, further weakening the economy. The rise in unemployment as a result of business closures and reduced investments forces many youths into criminal activities, further fuelling the cycle of violence.

Distortion of Some Religious Activities: Religious institutions in Awka Metropolis have not been spared from the negative effects of cult-related violence. Churches and mosques, which traditionally serve as places of refuge and spiritual upliftment have become targets for cult activities. Religious gatherings such as night vigils, crusades, and other events are often disrupted due to security concerns. Many worshippers fear being attacked on their way to or from church leading to a decline in attendance. Some cult groups infiltrate religious institutions, using them as fronts for recruitment or to settle scores with rival groups. This infiltration creates an atmosphere of distrust among congregants, who may become skeptical about the safety of their worship centers. Religious leaders who speak out against cult violence often receive threats, forcing them to remain silent or flee the area. Adeyemi (2022) is of the opinion that this limitation on religious expression weakens the morality of society as institutions that traditionally serve as advocates for peace and social order become incapacitated. If left unchecked, the distortion of religious activities due to cult violence could lead to a decline in moral and ethical values within the community, further perpetuating the cycle of crime and instability.

Suggested Practical Solutions to Cult-Related Killings in Awka Metropolis

Religious Teaching and Emphasis on Sanctity of Human Life: Religious leaders should intensify efforts in preaching peace, tolerance, and the value of human life. Sermons and teachings should focus on discouraging violence and promoting moral values. According to E. Okafor (Personal communication, 10th February, 2025), the church must take a proactive role in reorienting the youth. We must emphasize on forgiveness, love, and the sacredness of life in every sermon.

Parents' Devotion to the Spiritual and Moral Upbringing of Their Children: Parents should play active roles in shaping their children's behavior by instilling discipline, teaching moral values, and monitoring their peer associations to prevent negative influences. Many young people join cult groups due to peer pressure or lack of parental guidance. According to A. Nwosu (Personal communication, January 31, 2025), it is our responsibility as parents to guide our children. We must take time to talk to them, know their friends, and ensure they are not exposed to criminal influences. Parents should also encourage their children to participate in positive extracurricular activities that foster discipline and social responsibility, such as sports, music, and academic clubs.

Traditional Leaders' Partnership with Local Security Agencies: Traditional rulers should collaborate with security agencies to identify and address cult-related activities. They should also establish conflict resolution mechanisms to curb violence. O. Nweke (Personal communication, January 31, 2025) state that as custodians of culture, we must work with the police and vigilante groups to rid our communities of cultism. Regular town meetings should be held to sensitize the public on the dangers of these activities.

Government Enforcement of Disciplinary Actions on People Caught in the Act: The government should implement strict legal actions against individuals involved in cult-related killings. Effective law enforcement will serve as a deterrent to others engaging in criminal activities. According to C. Eze (Personal communication, February 7, 2025), we need stricter laws to deal with cult-related offenses. Many offenders escape from justice due to delayed court proceedings, which emboldens others to continue these acts. Government efforts should also include rehabilitative programs for former cult members, providing them with alternative means of livelihood to discourage reoffending.

Proper Equipping and Training of Security Personnel for Effective Discharge of Responsibilities: Security agencies should be well-equipped with modern tools and receive adequate training to tackle cult violence effectively. Increased surveillance and intelligence gathering will aid in curbing crime before it escalates. A retired police officer J. Okafor (Personal communication, February 7, 2025) state that our security personnel need training in modern crime-fighting techniques. The government must provide more resources to enhance their capabilities, including drones and community policing strategies. Improved security measures such as the installation of surveillance cameras in high-risk areas and the establishment of rapid response teams can significantly reduce cult-related activities.

Conclusion

The recent cult-related killings in Awka Metropolis have brought devastating consequences thereby affecting individuals, families, and the larger society. The causes of these killings are tied to societal issues such as peer pressure, unemployment, corruption, moral decay, and the exploitation of youth by political actors. These factors create an environment where cultism thrives,

leading to tragic loss of lives and severe psychological distress. The implications of this violence are: psychological trauma, untimely deaths, fear, and destruction of infrastructure, economic downturns, and disruptions in religious activities. Residents of Awka Metropolis live under constant anxiety, businesses suffer, and social cohesion deteriorates, making it difficult for the community to thrive. These challenges require a collective effort from religious institutions, parents, traditional leaders, and the government. Emphasizing the sanctity of human life, promoting moral upbringing, strengthening security measures, and enforcing strict legal actions against cultists are essential steps toward curbing this menace. Moreso, youth empowerment programs, skill acquisition initiatives, and job creation opportunities can help divert young people from cult-related activities. If these solutions are effectively implemented, the tide of cult-related killings in Awka Metropolis can be reversed, leading to a safer and more progressive society where peace, economic stability, and social harmony prevail.

Recommendations

Here are some recommendations to complement the recent cult related killings in Awka metropolis and its implications:

- i. Schools should incorporate anti-cultism education in their curriculum. Regular seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns should be conducted to inform students about the risks associated with cultism and the benefits of leading a violence-free life.
- ii. The government and private sector should invest in job creation initiatives and skill acquisition programs for youths. Unemployment is a major factor driving cultism, and providing alternative means of livelihood can deter young people from joining these groups.
- iii. The government should enforce stringent laws against cultism, ensuring quick prosecution and punishment for offenders. Legislative efforts should focus on both punitive and rehabilitative measures to prevent reoffending.
- iv. The deployment of well-trained security personnel should be prioritized. Advanced surveillance technologies such as CCTV cameras, community policing, and intelligence-driven operations can help curb cult-related violence in Awka.
- v. Former cultists should be given opportunities for reintegration into society through counselling, vocational training, and employment support. This will prevent them from returning to criminal activities.
- vi. Parents and religious institutions should work together in instilling strong moral values in young people.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWED PEOPLE

Sl. No	Name	Gender	Location	Occupation	Date of Interview
1	Mr. Ikenna Mbachu	Male	Ifitte, Awka	Trader	6 th Feb, 2025
2	Mr. Innocent Ogboo	Male	Unizik, Awka	Security Personnel	7 th Feb, 2025
3	Mr. Paul Okeke	Male	Aroma, Awka	Civil Servant	5 th Feb, 2025
4	Miss Precious Onyebuike	Female	Ifite Awka	Student	5 th Feb, 2025
5	Mr. Anthony Nwosu	Male	Ifite Awka	Trader	31 st January, 2025
6	Mr Obinna Nweke	Male	Okpuno, Awka	Electrician	31 st January, 2025
7.	Mr Chibueze Eze	Male	Ifite Awka	Entrepreneur	31 st January, 2025
8	Mr John Okafor	Male	Ifite Awka	Teacher	7 th February, 2025
9	Dr. Joshua Ogbonnaya	Male	Awka	Lecturer	11 th February, 2025