



Article

# Assessment of the Impact of Christians Religious Institutions in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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**Abstract:** This paper examine the impact of Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The paper is a position paper. The paper employed secondary data. The secondary data were collected from prints and online publications. The paper concluded that improvement in academic performance of students, reduction in social vices (cultism, rape, and prostitution), provision of community service, enhancing spiritual growth and leadership development of students and addressing spiritual concerns of students are some of the impact of Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Based on this, the paper recommends that tertiary institutions managers should provide financial support to Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Private institutions and Christian bodies or Churches should provide support, care and facilities to Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions to enable the institutions carry out their spiritual functions.

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## 1. Introduction

Tertiary education is defined by National policy on Education (2013) as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). Tertiary education offers a broad range of academic disciplines and professional programs, including bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, doctoral degrees, and professional certifications. It focuses on in-depth exploration of subject areas, critical thinking, research skills, and the development of specialized expertise (Proctoredu 2023).

Tertiary institutions is an organized social institutions made up with stakeholders like the students, lecturers (academic staff), non-academic staff and researcher whose

responsibilities are lecturing, organization of instructional resources, assessment of students, marking of students' scripts and projects supervision (Ogunode, & Adamu, 2021). According to Edinoh & Wali-Essien (2023), tertiary education is a social agent of progress and development in the society and aids technological advancement. It is designed to help in the development of nations by providing the high as well as the middle level manpower needed for the social, economic and political advancement through the programme of teaching, learning, research and community services. This function places tertiary education at the apex in the ranking of educational institutions and it is designed to accommodate knowledge acquisition and production.

Tertiary education is an organized educational system that is consciously designed for manpower production, in-service training and national development. Tertiary education is an education that advances teaching, research and community services for national development. Tertiary education is an education industry that is meant for the production of manpower and national development via implementation of teaching, research and provision of community services (Ogunode, 2025). The objectives of tertiary education includes; to provide higher education opportunities via effective teaching, researching and provision community services; to develop produce students with specialized knowledge and skills for solving personal problem and national problem; to prepare student for national workforce and to contribute to societal and community development; to provide academic program of various disciplines; to provide quality instruction in field of studies and to conduct researches to generate new knowledge for national development and to solve complex problems (Ogunode, 2025).

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria is characterized with different groups of people from different backgrounds and religion beliefs. Islam and Christianity religion dominated the Nigerian tertiary institutions. These religious institutions carry out campus fellowship to build the spiritual growth and development of their members. The Christian religions institutions are mostly in dominance in the South part of Nigeria while the Muslim campus fellowship spread across the Northern Nigeria. Uroko (2022) noted that Nigeria's tertiary institutions have recently had an increasing number of churches and fellowships on campus. Sometimes, fellowships exist in some of the classrooms in institutions of higher learning. The common name known to be given to these fellowships is "campus fellowship." This is because they draw their memberships from campus students.

Campus fellowships have long been a hub for different perspectives, ideas, and beliefs. For many students, tertiary education marks an important transition to independence and self-discovery. The tertiary institutions is no different from every other institutions of learning that has different set of people with different beliefs. Tertiary institutions houses various campus groups and communities, ranging from religious groups to social groups. Among these religious groups, churches and Christian fellowships actively seek to engage and recruit new members. The religiosity of these youth has led to the proliferation of campus fellowships in all tertiary institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The Campus fellowships programme and activities and membership drive are on daily basis. This proliferation of student fellowships and the dynamic nature of their activities in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have led to some positive development. This paper seeks to discuss the the impact of Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research uses an exploratory approach through literature studies sourced from Web of

Science, Scopus, PubMed, Scholar, and Sinta, which are scientific databases capable of storing high quality articles. Key words used: "Christian Campus Fellowship ". Inclusion criteria was published within the last ten years (2015-2025) to ensure the review

was up to date, the full text was written in English and there was discussion about quality assurance in higher education. These articles were excluded if they did not fit the topic of discussion (adapted from Mayulu, & Tricahyadinata, 2024).

The term 'fellowship' denotes a meeting of a group of people who share similar ideas and do things together for the common good of its members. It is a meeting of those who share the same religious interests and beliefs (Ugwu, & Chukwuma, 2021). Enemu (2021) reiterated that it is how people who share the same interest and ideologies come together to worship their god and offer sacrifices to their god or supernatural being.

A Christian campus fellowship is a formal gathering of students for Christian religious purposes. Some staff of various campuses also belong to Christian campus fellowships in which case, they oversee the activities of the students who are often in the majority. Christian campus fellowships provide students with the opportunity of contemporary Christian worship and support. Christian campus fellowships promote the Christian faith amongst students (Ugwu, et al 2021).

Campus religious organizations also known as campus fellowships have made their mark on universities and on the students that join them. To be sure, the relationship between religion and higher education is often precarious. While universities were at one time an extension of the general Protestant ethos that permeated American society in to Nigeria in the colonial era, the influx of modernism into the academy weakened religious influences on higher education as a whole (Marsden, 1994). Campus ministry emerged in response to the declining Protestant influence within universities as a way to nurture students effectively in their faith and provide a secure, affirming community for them (Winnings, 1999).

On the contemporary scene, spiritual matters have piqued the interest of some scholars and students, especially with the rise of postmodernism (Love, 2000), but secular higher education—and the research university in particular—has remained ambivalent toward religion overall (Smith, 2001). Yet, even public institutions are not bereft of all spiritual influence, as the inclinations of many students toward faith and spirituality have become increasingly evident on campuses of all types (Astin, Astin, Lindholm, Bryant, Szélenyi, & Calderone, 2005). Groups that devote considerable effort to recruitment and evangelism have become particularly noticeable on campuses, and their memberships have swelled in number (Bryant, 2005; Carroll, 2002; Cherry, DeBerg, & Porterfield, 2001; Swidey, 2003). Observations such as these lead to critical questions about the values that define these groups and how such groups impact students in terms of key college outcomes.

In this paper, a Christian campus fellowship is a group of students who come together to share their faith and build a community on a university or college campus. The objectives of Christian campus fellowship in Nigerian tertiary institutions are to provide a space for students to deepen their faith, build a community of like-minded individuals, and reach out to those in need. Through various initiatives such as Bible studies, fellowship meetings, and outreach programs, the Christian campus fellowship aims to foster a supportive and inclusive environment for students to grow in their faith and personal development. Additionally, the fellowship strives to promote Christian values, ethics, and principles to positively impact the university community and society as a whole. Overall, the objectives of Christian campus fellowship in Nigerian tertiary institutions are geared towards creating a strong spiritual foundation for students to thrive academically, socially, and spiritually.

### 3. Results and Discussions

The impact of Christians religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions includes; improvement in academic performance, reduction in social vices, provision of community service, spiritual growth and leadership development and addressing spiritual concerns of students

#### **A) Improvement in academic performance**

The impact of Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions have led to improvement in the academic performance of students because students are encouraged to study hard and plan their academic activities on campuses. Research shows that students who participate in Christian fellowship activities have higher levels of satisfaction and academic success compared to those who do not. These groups offer a safe and welcoming space for students of all backgrounds to come together and discuss topics related to faith, academics, and personal growth. This sense of belonging and inclusivity has a positive effect on the mental health and overall well-being of students. Studies by Jeynes (2002, 2003a) and Regnerus (2000) found that religiously committed urban children performed better on academic measures than their less religious counterparts, even when controlling for socio-economic status, race, and gender. These results, from various studies, were based upon analytic approaches, meta-analyses, nationwide datasets, and qualitative techniques. Specifically, religious students of color outperformed their less religious counterparts. Astin (1993a) confirms that religious service attendance has a positive effect on emotional health which plays a significant role in academic performance. According to Fiesta, Strange, and Woods (2002), religious well-being, religious faith, and religious practice correlate positively with academic adjustment amongs studrntrts. Low and Handal (1995) also found significant positive relationships between religiousness and overall college adjustment, although the effects varied by institution and sex.

#### **B) Reduction in social vices (Cultism and Rape)**

The activities of Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions have led to reduction in social vices on campuses across Nigeria. Social vices like cultism, prostitutions, examination malpractices and rape have reduced to minimal in the various campuses.

##### **Cultism**

Cultism can be referred to as the practices of any social or religious group whose ideologies are secret and esoteric. Ibenegbu (2018) reiterated that the characteristics of cultism are thus: (1) cultism is a social or spiritual or religious practice, (2) cultism is practised by a group of individuals, (3) cultism changes the values of the individuals who engage in it, and (4) cultism affects the overall life of a community whose members engage in it. By implication, the negative effects of cultism go beyond an individual and extend to a society. Another is the prevalence of cultism. The vice, in spite the detrimental tendencies and its unacceptability both in socio-cultural and religious point of view, students are still actively engaged in it. The presence of rival cult groups on campus creates atmosphere of restiveness and insecurity due to frequent clashes that are most time brutal and fatal (Obafeme, 2024). However, campus evangelism strengthens spirituality amongst Christian students and has continued to draw from the path of destruction, students involve in anti-social acts into the path of eternal life. Campus evangelism saw to the birth of various Christian student fellowships. The establishment of student fellowships has been instrumental to the spread of the gospel among the youths in order to share with them the unwavering love of Christ to them and also to help them grow in the process of knowing and loving God. The fellowship provides the platform for students to meet, pray and share the word of God.

##### **Rape**

Rape is one of the common social vices in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. The rate at which this social vices have been committed have reduced due to the activities of

Christians' campus fellowship. Bukky (2019) submitted that the campus fellowship has a significant role in fighting social vices in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. By fostering a sense of community, promoting positive values, and providing support and guidance, campus fellowships can effectively combat social vices among students. Through various initiatives such as awareness campaigns, mentorship programs, and social activities, campus fellowships can educate students on the negative impacts of social vices and empower them to make better choices.

Christian religious institutions in Nigeria have had a significant impact on the fight against social vice in tertiary institutions. These institutions have played a crucial role in promoting moral values and ethics among students, as well as in creating a safe and healthy learning environment. Christian institutions have contributed to the fight against social vice is through their emphasis on moral teachings and principles. By instilling these values in students, Christian institutions help to promote a sense of responsibility and respect for others, which can help to reduce social vices such as drug abuse, bullying, and sexual misconduct. Christian institutions also play a crucial role in creating a positive and inclusive community within tertiary institutions. This can be seen through their various campus ministries and outreach programs, which seek to bring students from different backgrounds together and promote understanding and respect for one another. By fostering a sense of unity and belonging, Christian institutions help to prevent social vices that stem from feelings of isolation and exclusion. Through their teachings, support services, and community-building efforts, these institutions have played a vital role in promoting a safe and positive learning environment for students (POP 2025).

### **C) Provision of community service**

The Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions have performed well in the provision of community services in their respective institutions. Lawinside, (2024) defined Community service programme as social and economic projects that are designed to serve community purposely in the fields such as health, social service, environmental protection, education, urban and rural redevelopment, welfare, recreation, public facilities, public safety, and child care. Community service programmes are organized projects, supervised activities that are a direct benefit to the community and are designed to improve the welfares of the whole communities. Community service programme is the third cardinal programme of the tertiary institutions. Community service programme is an organized and planned service programme of higher institutions for the benefit and betterment of their host community. Community service programme of higher institutions are community inclined services initiated by the institutions to develop the communities. Community services of higher institution are services provided by institutions to benefits the community people (Ogunode, Iyabode & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022)

Example of community services of tertiary institutions include; sensitization and awereness programme; employment opportunities programme, agricultural research programme, health service programme, small scale business programme, community youth empowerment programme, social programme, information sharing programme, community engagement programme, adult education programme, women education programme (Ogunode, Hassan & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2023), sanitation and climate changes programme (Olatunde-Aiyedun, Olatunde & Ogunode, 2022), research findings sharing programme, sport development programme. For tertiary institutions, Emezie, and Igwe(2017) noted that their communities service could come in form of employment of indigenes of the host communities, scholarship opportunities to deserving students from communities, extension of healthcare services by the health department of the institutions whereas the academic libraries can donate books to rural schools which are less privileged. Although academic libraries are not independent but are part of the

tertiary institutions, their role as information providers impacts positively on the environment. They are considered a kind of social responsibility due to their contributions to social, educational, cultural and economic aspects (Eid, Altamimi & Shaheen, 2016). Adeyemi, (2017) and Bukky, (2019) observed that the impact of Christian fellowship extends beyond the individual student to the wider community. Many groups organize outreach programs and volunteer activities, contributing to the development and improvement of the local community. This fosters a sense of responsibility and social awareness among students, preparing them to become active and engaged citizens in the future.

#### **D) Spiritual growth and leadership development**

While their primary outcomes might be focused on evangelism or seeing the gospel penetrate the campus, Nigerian students seem clear about their desired impact: “to develop tomorrow’s leaders for transforming the nation,” which is written in their brochures and talked about up front. Would other Nigerians Miss NIFES if it ceased to exist? It seemed clear that the answer would be yes—so much so that the vice president of Nigeria (and his entourage) planned a visit to the conference! In previous years, governors and senators have also visited, to affirm the importance of NIFES’ ministry in Nigeria. In addition, NIFES leaders are often asked to speak at the Nigerian National Council of Churches, and are closely connected to the archbishops and other national Christian leaders. They are seen as instrumental in the building up of all of Nigeria—including the Muslim North—and in various ecumenical faith initiatives, all while still maintaining their primary focus on the campus (Lin, 2024). The presence of Christian fellowship groups in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has had a significant impact on the overall academic experience for students. These organizations provide a sense of community, support, and encouragement for students pursuing higher education. Through regular meetings, events, and activities, Christian fellowship groups promote spiritual growth, leadership development, and community service among students.

#### **E) Solving spiritual Challenges**

Additionally, campus fellowships can serve as a safe and welcoming space for students to discuss their challenges and seek guidance from their peers and mentors. Overall, the presence of campus fellowships in tertiary institutions plays a crucial role in promoting a healthy and responsible campus culture and combating social vices. Oludare (2024) maintained that Christian fellowships employ different modes of operation to draw in fresh students, often blurring the lines between genuine support and strategic recruitment. While some groups take a more direct approach, preaching the gospel to newcomers, others offer assistance with the registration process, and others provide help with general guidance. It’s possible to offer genuine support and, at the same time, hope to get something in return, but the divide between these two actions is often undefined. And, at the end of the day, the ultimate goal remains the same: to persuade fresh students to attend their church or fellowship. This tradition raises pressing questions regarding the trends of campus evangelism, student agency, and the boundaries between genuine support and proselytization. On one hand, Christian fellowships argue that their efforts stem from a desire to share their faith and build a vibrant spiritual community. Obafemi (2022) narrated how the Redeemed Christian Church of God also benefitted from campus fellowships as the General overseer, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, through the various special programmes organized across campuses in the country help spread revival through student fellowships. It is reported that it is through the Redeemed Students Fellowship that the first set of educated elite of the RCCG were recruited. The importance of Student Fellowships on campus can therefore not be overemphasized or wished away as irrelevant. Due to the move of the kingdom of darkness to capture youths with materialism, it is important that Churches and denominations of Christian fold ensure that adequate attention is invested on student

fellowships while proper monitoring and encouragement is not lacking in order to expand the kingdom of God rather than to lose precious souls of young Nigerians to the king of darkness. Bukky, (2019) concluded that through active engagement of campus fellowship many students spiritual and social needs concerns have been solved. Adeyemi, (2017) noted that many Christians fellowship in the Nigerian tertiary institutions have supported poor students to pay their school fees and provided spiritual deliverance to those under the influence of evil spirit. Christian institutions often provide various support services for students who may be struggling with social vices. This can include counseling services, peer support groups, and educational programs that aim to raise awareness about the negative consequences of engaging in social vices. By addressing the root causes of these issues, Christian institutions can help students overcome and prevent social vices.

The paper showed that the impact of Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions includes; improvement in academic performance of students, reduction in social vices (cultism, rape, and prostitution), provision of community service, enhancing spiritual growth and leadership development of students and addressing spiritual concerns of students are some of the impact of Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the presence of Christian fellowship groups in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has a profound effect on the academic, personal, and social development of students. As a result, these groups play an essential role in creating a well-rounded and holistic educational experience for students. So, tertiary institutions managers should provide financial support to Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Private institutions and Christian bodies or Churches should provide support, care and facilities to Christian's religious institutions in Nigerian tertiary institutions to enable the institutions carry out their spiritual functions.

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