

RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.
A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL,
UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT CHAPTER, NIGERIA

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***Abstract:** There is an overwhelming concern of the academic community in tertiary institutions in Nigeria on the effects of students' engagement in religious activities on their academic performance and wellbeing. The study considers scholarly views on the impacts of religious activities on the school lives of the students further explore the correlation between students' involvement in religious activities on campuses and their academic performance and wellbeing, using the Christian Fellowship International, University of Port Harcourt as a case study. Using a historical approach, the study reveals that most of the activities of these fellowships are geared towards improving the academic wellbeing, performance of students and leadership positions equip students for higher responsibilities when they graduate. The study recommends that authorities of higher institutions of learning should not only recognize campus fellowships, but they should enable environments for them.*

Key Words: Christian Fellowship International; Church of God Mission; Port Harcourt; Students' Academic Performance; Students' Fellowships.

Introduction

Most students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria carry their formal religious beliefs and practices into their new communities, impacting and being impacted by the existing religious traditions of the host communities. Some acquire new religious identity, which gives them sense of belonging in their host communities. Most of these students who have left families, friends and familiar grounds suddenly discovers that they either re-interpret their former religious views or be absorbed by the religious traditions of their host communities. Not only do they need to re-interpret their former worldviews or absorbed into their worldview but also faced with new vagaries and realities of life, new questions to answer and new sense, and/or definition of self-identities. These novelties are attended to within new contexts of association, friendship and 'families.' Although there are various avenues in which the youth experience and express these new realities of life such as student unionism,

cultism, field trips, excursions and sports, campus fellowships is the most favourite 'spot' for the Christian youth.

The religiosity of these youth has led to the proliferation of campus fellowships in all tertiary institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.¹ Their 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 generated several concerns to parents, university communities and authorities, and scholars, especially sociologists of religion² and church historians. One of the concerns, is on the interplay between students' religious activities,³ academic performance⁴ and their general development⁵.

The major outcry against student fellowships is that the latter is alleged to constitute nuisance to conducive learning environment on campuses of higher learning in Nigeria. Some wonder whether these religious behaviours have any relationship with the academic performance of students.⁶ Do these activities help in the psychological, social and cognitive development of the fellowship students? How are these students effecting and are being affected by their host communities in the 21st century? What is the very nature and import of some of their activities on the school life of the youth?⁷ Are students who are religious more satisfied with college life? What are some of the mechanisms through which religiosity influences college satisfaction and grades earned?

¹ Comparative data that specifically focuses on the number of student fellowships in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is hard to pin down.

² Sylvia Collins-Mayo, "Youth and Religion. An International Perspective," *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik* 11 (2012): H.1, 80-94; A.K.T. Yip, M. Keenan, and S. Page, *Religion, Youth and Sexuality: Selected Key Findings from a Multi-faith Exploration* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 2011).

³ A.W. Boykin, "The Academic of Afro-American Children, in *Achievement and Achievement Motives*, ed. J. Spence (San Francisco: Freeman; 1983): 360.

⁴ Marcus A. Henning, et al. "Religious Affiliation, Quality of Life and Academic Performance: New Zealand Medical Student," *Journal of Religion and Health* 54, no. 1 (September 2013). doi: 10.1007/s10943-013-9769-z

⁵ Nancy Augustine Gardner, *Does Religious Participation Help Keep Adolescents in School?* (Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum, 2004), 65.

⁶ Pope Bryson, Joseph Price and Dean R. Lillard, "The Impact of Religion on Youth Outcomes" *The Journal of Business Inquiry* 13, no. 1 (2014): 48-60.

⁷ A.L. Ferriss, "Religion and the Quality of Life," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 3, no. 3 (2002): 205.

This study examines the relationship between activities of Christian Fellowship International in tertiary institutions and the overall academic performance, growth and development of their members.

Conceptual Analysis

Religious diversity is likely to stimulate religious interest among young people.⁸ Young people who wish to practice and own their faith have, therefore, had to be particularly reflexive in negotiating the complexities of their religious and ethnic identity. Religious institutions such as campus fellowships “for these young people appears to be a spiritual resource, which calls them to feel at peace with themselves and helps them in moments of difficulty, but also becomes a source of ethical commitment, of responsibility and social commitment.”⁹

Collins-Mayo explains that religiously active youth are attracted to expressions of religion that afford them three things.¹⁰ First, is the sense of an authentic and personal relationship with God that is not curtailed by a religious institution. Second, is a sense of belonging to a community of like-minded believers. Third is an outworking of belief so that faith ‘makes a difference’ to how they live their lives, for example in terms of ethical choices, and civic engagement. Each of these aspects of subjective spiritual engagement – intimacy with God, communal belonging and service – feeds into the other. Being with fellow believers can sensitize individuals to spiritual experiences. The ‘working out’ of belief through service to others is likely to enhance communal belonging and social capital; and affirm the sense that belief matters.

To some other scholars religious groups may demand a lot of the students’ time, thereby decreasing academic performance and creating a subculture that could make students feel socially isolated from the mainstream campus, and that students whose faith are challenged report higher levels of anger and stress.¹¹ Margarita Mooney’s

⁸ Collins-Mayo, “Youth and Religion,” 84.

⁹ Annalisa Frisina, “Young Muslims of Italy. Islam in the Everyday Life and the Public Visibility of a New Generation of Muslims,” *Youth and Religion. Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion* 1 (2010): 320.

¹⁰ Collins-Mayo, “Youth and Religion,” 85.

¹¹ Elaine Howard Ecklund, “Religion and Spirituality among Scientists,” *Contexts: Understanding People in their Social Worlds* 7 (2008): 12; Jeffrey R. Young, “Gay Student Is

study¹² reveals that two measures of religiosity — attending religious services every week or more increase the amount of hours students report spending on academic work and extracurricular activities, as well as reduce, the hours students report going to parties. He notes further that students who attend religious services weekly and those who are more observant of their religious traditions also report being more satisfied at college.

Discussing the correlation between being a member of students' fellowship and time management, Walker's study, which quantified the concepts of spirituality versus religious participation, assessed spiritual differences between African Americans and European Americans, and measured the relationship with academic performance.¹³ In addition to operationalizing spirituality, the study distinguished between spiritual beliefs, which represent the worldview of spirituality, and religious participation, which represents behaviours, practices, or the manifestation of spiritual beliefs.¹⁴ Results support previous findings of scholars¹⁵ that suggest a relationship between spirituality and academic performance. Students who reported higher levels of spiritual beliefs and behaviours received higher GPAs during academic semester and received more academic honours Those with stronger spiritual beliefs reported fewer academic suspensions and probations; however, beliefs did not influence overall

Forced Out of a Campus Leadership Post at an Iowa College," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 49 (2002); https://www.researchgate.net/publication/296576729_Gay_student_is_forced_out_of_a_campus_leadership_post_at_an_iowa_college/references; Christy D. Moran, Dennis J. Lang, and Jenea Oliver, "Cultural Incongruity and Social Status Ambiguity: The Experiences of Evangelical Christian Student Leaders at Two Midwestern Public Universities," *Journal of College Student Development* 48 (2007): 33; Gary A. Tobin, and Aryeh K. Weinberg, *Profiles of the American University: Religious Beliefs and Behavior of College Faculty* (San Francisco: Institute for Jewish & Community Studies, 2007); Carrie Winterowd, et al., "The Relationship of Spiritual Beliefs and Involvement with the Experience of Anger and Stress in College Students," *Journal of College Student Development* 46 (2005): 520.

¹² Margarita Mooney, "Religion, College Grades, and Satisfaction among Students at Elite Colleges and Universities," *Sociology of Religion* 7, no. 2 (2010): 180.

¹³ Katrina L. Walker, "Spirituality and Academic Performance Among African American College Students," *Journal of Black Psychology* 28, no. 2 (2002): 107-121.

¹⁴ Mikail Ibrahim, "Scholastic Incentives and Educational Perceived Value; the Role of Religion in Muslim Students' Achievement Strivings. A Rasch Model Analysis," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2, no. 12 (2012): 18.

¹⁵ G. H. Brody, Z. Stoneman, and D. Flor, "Parental Religiosity, Family Processes, and Youth Competence in Rural, Two-parent African American Families," *Developmental Psychology* 32, no. 4 (1996): 696-706; R.J. Jagers and L. O. Mock, "Culture and Social Outcomes among Inner-City African American Children: An Afro Graphic Exploration," *Journal of Black Psychology* 19 (1993): 398.

performance as illustrated by GPA. This suggests that the social support aspects of religion or formalized religious rituals are perhaps more influential on academic performance than beliefs are. This is in consonance with other research findings.¹⁶

Jeynes' study assessed the relationship between Bible literacy among secondary school students and their academic achievement and school behaviour.¹⁷ One hundred and forty students in the 7th to 12th grade were randomly selected from a Christian school. Four measures of Bible knowledge were combined to obtain an overall measure of Bible literacy. They included a brief Bible test, the ease with which students declared that they could recite the 66 books of the Bible in order, the final grade from the last Bible course taken, and the results of previous Bible testing. The results indicate that of the three groups of students, those with the highest level of Bible literacy also had the highest average GPA, the highest ranking in test and grade results, and the best school behaviour of the three groups. In contrast, those with the lowest level of Bible literacy also had the lowest average GPA, the lowest ranking in test and grade results, and the worst school behaviour of the three groups.

Jeynes adduced various reasons. The first of these reasons deals with a religious work ethic. It could well be that reading, studying, and applying the Bible encourages a person to maintain a certain work ethic that could influence both their academic life and their behaviour.¹⁸ A second reason to believe there might be a relationship between Bible literacy and academic and behavioural outcomes emerges from the fact that the Bible exhorts people to abstain from behaviours that are often regarded as undisciplined and harmful to academic achievement. He observes that a number of studies¹⁹ demonstrate that religiously committed teens are less likely to

¹⁶ Umaru Mustapha Zubairu and Olalekan Busra Sakariyau, "The Relationship between Religiosity and Academic Performance amongst Accounting Students," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education* 5, no. 2 (2016): 171.

¹⁷ William H. Jeynes, "The Relationship Between Bible Literacy and Academic Achievement and School Behavior," *Education and Urban Society* 41, no. 4 (2009): 420-423.

¹⁸ M. Calestani, "'Suerte' (Luck): Spirituality and Well-Being in El Alto, Bolivia," *Applied Research in Quality of Life* 4, no. 1 (2009): 55.

¹⁹ S.J. Bahr and R.D. Hawks, "Family and Religious Influences on Adolescent Substance Abuse," *Youth and Society* 24 (1993): 443-465. D. Brownfield and A. Sorenson, "Religion and Drug Use among Adolescents: A Social Support Conceptualization and Interpretation," *Deviant Behavior* 12, no. 3 (1991): 259-276.

become involved in drug and alcohol abuse;²⁰ other studies²¹ indicate that religiously committed teens are less likely to engage in juvenile delinquency,²² sexual behaviour or become pregnant while they are still teenagers. The third reason is that reading, studying, and applying the Bible could make one more intellectually sophisticated, in much the same way that reading Shakespeare, and great literature in genre, would produce the same effect. Given that studying the Bible requires a certain degree of reading skill, it may be that engaging in this discipline enhances one's ability to examine other sophisticated passages of literature and other academic material. It may well be that this relationship is less likely than the other two to produce changes in behaviour, it could conceivably help explain why in the overall body of literature, Bible literacy has a stronger relationship with academic achievement than it does with behavioural outcomes.

Methodology and Demography

There are two classes of interviewees. A group is composed of 7 graduates who were the founding members of CFI, UNIPORT Chapter. These are listed under oral interviews at the end of the work. The other group is composed of two hundred and fifty students (110 males, 140 females); these were recruited from the CFI Fellowship. Participants were relatively and evenly distributed across year in university; however, fewer freshman students participated. 43% of the respondents have been involved in leadership at one level or the other. Participation was voluntary.

The economic status of their family background is as follows: 10% (high income), 35% (middle income) and 55% (low income). The

²⁰ J.L. Furrow and L.M. Wagener, "Lessons Learned: The Role of Religion in the Development of Wisdom in Adolescence," in *Understanding Wisdom: Sources, Science, and Society*, ed. W. S. Brown (Philadelphia, PA: Templeton, 2000); S. Schieman, "Education and the Importance of Religion in Decision Making: Do Other Dimensions of Religiousness Matter?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 3 (2011): 570-587.

²¹ S.H. Beck, B.S. Cole and J.A. Hammond, "Religious Heritage and Premarital Sex: Evidence from a National Sample of Adults," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30, no. 2 (1991): 173-180 T. B. Holman, and J. R. Harding, "The Teaching of Nonmarital Sexual Abstinence and Members' Sexual Attitudes and Behaviours: The Case of the Latter-day Saints," *Review of Religious Research* 38 (1996): 51-60; B. C. Miller and T. D. Olson, "Sexual Attitudes and Behavior of High School Students Relation to Background and Contextual Factors," *Journal of Sex Research* 24 (1988): 194-200.

²² B.B. Benda, "The Effect of Religion on Adolescent Delinquency Revisited," *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency* 32 (1995): 446-450.

distribution of family religious involvement is 50% strong; 25% nominal; 10% none; and 15% uncertain. 26% of the sample are on self-sponsorship. 21% of the respondents converted to Christianity on campus. The CGPA and anticipated degree level of the respondents are: 10% (1.00 – 1.49 Passed); 24% (1.5 – 2.39 3rd Class); 31% (2.40 – 3.49 2nd Class lower); 28% (3.5 – 4.39 2nd Class Upper); 7% (4.50 – 5.00 1st Class). GPA was not available for freshman students. The ratio of distressed members is: 35% no; 55% yes; and 10% undecided. The 80% of the respondents were interviewed in groups and while 20% were interviewed individually. Data so obtained is analysed qualitatively.

A Brief Historical Overview of CFI, UNIPORT Chapter

Christian Fellowship International (CFI) is a non-denominational Christian Association that has her root from Church of God Mission International. Archbishop Benson A. Idahosa suggested the need to establish a campus fellowship to a group of university students in Faith Arena (Headquarters of Church of God Mission International) after a Sunday service. He believed that there was the need to gather young men and women of the mission under one umbrella in form of a fellowship and to accommodate other denominations of the Christian faith; hence, the name Christian Fellowship International. CFI started during the 1990/1991 academic year at the sport complex of University of Benin.

CFI since its inception has grown with different chapters spreading across the nation in various tertiary institutions (colleges of education, polytechnics and universities). Other chapters are in Ghana and Canada. Positions in CFI at the international level are the International Executive Officer (IEO), the Assistant International Executive Officer (AIEO), International General Secretary (IGS), Assistant International General Secretary (AIGS) and Sector Directors.

Christian Fellowship International UNIPORT Chapter started in 1997. Pastor Progress was the pioneer president of the fellowship but before his leadership there were other leaders that organised campus fellowship, known as Church of God Mission Campus Fellowship. The first president of Church of God Mission Campus fellowship was the Late Pastor Nene Richard. He started Church of God Mission Campus Fellowship four years before Pastor Progress

came to University of Port Harcourt in 1996. Two years later, Richard handed over to Pastor Edward, the second president of Church of God Mission Campus Fellowship UNIPORT Chapter, who in turn handed over to Pastor Progress and some few other persons.

In 1997 Pastor John Bello and Pastor Annefiok of CFI Benin visited University of Port Harcourt to officially inaugurate the new CFI and give them the structure of the Fellowship. This was why Pastor Progress was referred to as the Pioneer President of CFI UNIPORT Chapter. The major setback the fellowship had was venue problem within the campus and unwillingness of most students to participate effectively in the weekly activities of CFI. However, most of the initial setbacks were surmounted overtime. CFI UNIPORT Chapter presently has a population of over Five hundred and sixty worshippers.

The leadership structure of Christian Fellowship International UNIPORT Chapter consists of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) and the General Executive Committee (GEC). The Central Executive Committee (CEC) is the highest administrative arm of the body of CFI. The CEC has membership of fourteen brethren who occupy the following offices the President, Vice president, Secretary General, Bible study secretary, Prayer secretary, Evangelism Secretary, Follow-Up Secretary, Welfare Secretary, Financial Secretary, Brothers Leader, Sisters Leader, Music Director, Organizing Secretary, and the Final Year Brethren Co-Ordination. There is also another important office in CFI. It is the Pastorate, which consists of the President, Vice Present and other higher ministerial body in Christian Fellowship International. The General Executive Committee (G.E.C.) consists of the leadership at all the levels; from the President to Assistant Unit and Cell Leaders.

For effective fellowship, Christian Fellowship International has a cell group system that helps to cater for the growth of each member. This in turn has growth effect on the general fellowship. Each of these cells has sub-cells according to location. The maximum number of people expected to be in each sub-cell is 15 persons; once a sub-cell group grows to 15 persons, they mutate to allow them reach out to more people. It is compulsory for a member of Christian Fellowship International to belong to at least one, but not more than two, of the following groups/units: Drama, Protocol, Organizing, Media, Technical, Dance, Library, Decoration, Sports, Ushering,

Information (CNN of CFI), Tag Team, Prayer, Welfare, Evangelism, Business, Rap, Financial, Bible Study, Follow-Up, Choir, or Music units. These groups/units help boost potentials and maximize results. The units can be given names to allow for creativity, but the job description remain as established in the Christian Fellowship International Constitution. As needs arise in fellowships, the Central Executive Committee (CEC) creates more units.

Activities of Christian Fellowship International UNIPORT Chapter

This section of the study investigates key religious activities in Christian Fellowship International to ascertain their influence on the school life of students in University of Port Harcourt.

Get Set

This programme is usually the first CFI programme held at the beginning of every session/semester. It is a prayer and fasting programme for every member including ministers and leaders. Get Set is always an encounter with God; CFI members look forward to GET SET as avenue to express themselves and experience God through prayers. It is a belief in CFI that experiencing a semester of financial abundance, good grades, divine security, divine favour, even when one does not deserve it, is largely dependent on one's participation in GET SET. Members who have this understanding or knowledge, try their best not to miss GET SET for any reason, especially those who have experienced the effectiveness of the programme on their general life, mostly academics. Various testimonies have come forth from GET SET of which time will limit us to share but a few.

One Master Clement, who had terrible grades in his study before he attended GET SET of 2010, complained to the leadership of CFI of forgetting in examination hall what he had previous studied. This affected his grades. Before his encounter in a GET SET prayer meeting, he had been a nominal member of CFI. He attended services but had never been to any GET SET meeting. So, he complained to his neighbour, Theophilus, a leader in CFI. Theophilus explained to him how miraculously, with little effort, he had been achieving great result academically and encouraged him to attend the next semester's GET SET. Clement consented. On the third day of the 2010 GET

SET programme, Clement claimed to have had an encounter with God which was a turning point in his life. According to his testimony, while others were praying, the only thing he prayed bitterly about was his inability to get good grades after exams. While he was praying prophesy came through one Brother Peter, “God said that there is somebody who attended this programme because of the issues he was experiencing academically. The individual has been praying for this issue since the beginning of this programme. Say to him that he shall have a turnaround result.” Clement shared he ‘claimed’ the prophecy for himself by faith and by the end of 2010 first semester, he had followed eight courses. When the result came out, he scored six A’s and two B’s. He testified that this was his best result ever since he had been a student of the university. His testimony also gave other people reasons to come for the next GET SET expecting their own miracle to take place and of course, they saw the effect.

Another testimony was of a girl named Ese also a student in UNI-PORT and a member of CFI. Her mother was diagnosed of cancer and was to be operated. The operation was not a guarantee that she would survive but just an attempt to see if she could survive. Ese came back to school from Warri, where her parents reside, the last day of GET SET. She decided to attend and prayed about her mother’s situation asking for a miracle. When she reached the prayer venue that evening, prayers had not started yet, and she told the leaders that were available about the family situation. They encouraged her and assured her the church was going to pray about it. Ese’s mother health was a major prayer intention. After the prayers, one of the leaders had an instruction from God that her mother should be served the Holy Communion. She called home and referred them the prophecy. They prepared the communion, blessed it and served her.

After three days, Ese’s mother went for her usual check-up preparing for the surgery but when a test was conducted on her, the cancer that she was earlier diagnosed of was no more. The doctor confirmed that she was healthy and there was no need for any surgery. When Ese had the news, she was so excited that she could not wait for a Sunday service to share her testimonies but began to call leaders and members to tell the what the Lord had done for her family.

Apart from the miracles, CFITES experience when they come for the prayers, GET SET give members reasons why they should pray, the prayer life of CFITES is built through GET SET. They become spiritually alert and it helps them build a better relationship with God knowing that prayer is the strongest means of communication between God and his children. They communicate with God and build stronger relationship more so, that their prayer life does not just end in GET SET or the regular church fellowships but they understand the value of building a personal altar for themselves with prayers.

Academic Service

This is usually held between the first two Sundays at the beginning of every semester. This service aims at re-informing members about the importance of their academic achievements/studies. An invited guest is usually an Alumnus who must have graduated with a first-class degree. He/she tells the people the importance of their academic results/success to the fellowship and advises them not to let their academic work suffer because of engaging in too many church activities. He/she enlightens them on how their academic performances could either bring other students like them to the fellowship or discourage them from coming. The resource person also helps students to understand that their studies come first before fellowship. Emphasis is laid on the fact that admission to university gave them the opportunity of becoming members of CFI; that if studying has not brought them to UNIPORT, they would not have been members of the fellowship. They were informed that prominent leadership positions are dependent on academic performance. This is to say that CFI as a Christian body plays great importance on the academic performance on their leaders and members.

After the service is held, students are now re-informed about the concern of the fellowship in their studies expressed in the organization of a free tutorial for students, asking members who are academically sound to collaborate to ensure that all fellowship members achieves the best academic results. Strategies are also offered during the service on how to follow lectures, study and understand and memorize the reading material and how to answer exam questions. They finally teach them how to draw a personal timetable as a university student.

Evangelism Service

The service is coordinated by the evangelism unit of CFI called “Evangel 216”. This programme is strictly “to reach out to the souls” around the school environment with God’s word and love. Different location of the school environment will be covered by members of CFI doing one-on-one (personal) evangelism. It has always been of very great experience for CFITES as some of them shout for joy and propose in their heart never to stop spreading the good news of Christ. This programme introduces new ideas on how to evangelize overcoming the usual modality to tell them how unclean and sinful they are but projecting God’s love for them and how they can embrace the love of God and be saved.

The main target of this programme is those whom the society considered a useless nuisance: cultist, armed robbers, rapist and evil doers. These are the targets of evangelism weekend when members go out to places where they can find this kind of people, even those that are not student but live around school environment. Evangelism weekend has great effect as the following examples attest.

There is the case of Prince,²³ encountered by Oseni Gloria²⁴ during the evangelist programme in 2014. Despite he was smoking marijuana, she preached the gospel to him. She did not condemn him but explaining how God is a father and friend. She explained God to be at ‘the eleventh dimension’ why men stop at the third dimension. The earth and all therein ends in the third dimension but God is far above all. If we are with him in the heavenly places then we are above our problems, challenges, poverty, weakness, and struggles because we have a God that is higher than all this issues. To this young man, this was the first time he heard the Gospel in another dimension. He confessed that he was expelled from University of Benin because of cultism; he shared that came to UNIPORT to hide because of shame; he was frustrated and even his family members have rejected him. However, the word he heard through Gloria restored his hope; he gave his life to Christ and became a member of

²³ Prince was a university drop out from University of Benin, Nigeria who lived in Aluu. he was a deviate until the very day Gloria met him. After his conversion, he re-enrolled into school.

²⁴ Oseni Gloria graduated from the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, with a Second-Class Upper Division. She was a member of CFI while in school.

CFI. His presence in the church attracted many others to the fellowship because they came to understand that if God could not give up on Prince, then any other can be accepted in his presence.

Dare Boldly to be Different

This activity, popularly known with its abbreviation ‘DB2BD,’ is held every two years in CFI and it is the major programme in CFI UNIPORT. Publicity is done to ensure that every student in UNIPORT is aware and the fellowship invests money to bring popular gospel singers that can attract a huge crowd. The idea behind this is to use a popular artist to draw large number of students and a ‘strong man of God’ to minister salvation to them. One such programme that brought about transformation in the life of the student was 2009 DB2BD, where the fellowship brought an extraordinary gospel rapper, Bucky, that blew the minds of people.

The program took place in the CBN Hall; the place was so full that some people had to stay outside. Presents testified that while Bucky was ministering, “the presence of the Lord was so strong that students could not hold themselves; some of them fell down and started crying.” Furthermore, something unusual happened that day: a group of boys ran out from the back of the hall to the front crying and screening for help. They confessed that they were cultists and that their reason for coming was to enjoy the music and steal people’s phones and money. But the spirit of God had taken all over them; they begged that they want to dedicate their lives to God and a prayer was made for them.

Old School Service and the Future Today

It is also a beautiful programme, where every member of the fellowship is expected to come to church dressed in their old school attire. It is a time to reminisce how worships and praise were done in the past as several old songs were rendered. After ‘old school service’ comes the ‘future today.’ In this service all members are expected to come dressed as they imagine themselves to be in the future; it is a time to commit the future and destinies of members of the fellowship in the hands of God. As they believe that their dreams and aspirations would be met according to God’s plan.

This program also stands as a reminder to people on how they should work to achieve the kind of future they desire; the church leadership

tell their members how important their future is to CFI, because their tomorrow has a lot to offer to the fellowship. On this special service, CFITES celebrate their future in advance thanking God for a great tomorrow. Some persons are given the opportunity to explain the outstanding thing about their future and how it can contribute to the growth of the society.

Rapship

The program is a concert, strictly organized for rap and worship as the word 'Rapship' summarises. Rapship is a platform where both CFITES and non CFITES members can showcase their God given talents by presenting a gospel rap or song

Does Occupying Leadership Position in CFI have any Effect on the Student's CGPA?

CFI is concerned about the academic performance of their members and leaders. For this reason, before members are entrusted with any leadership position, a background check is performed to ensure that the candidates have a high CGPA and are able to balance leadership with academic excellence. The minimum CGPA requirement for any candidate aspiring for any leadership position in CFI is 3.5. Even in the process to be promoted to higher authority, current CGPA is requested and compared it with the ones written on their leadership appointment form: If it is better church authorities will congratulate and encourage the candidates, but if it becomes less they will advise them to withdraw from leadership position. CFI believe in excellence; therefore, they believe that all their member must express excellence in all they do and academic is one of those areas members and above all leaders are expected to be excellent.

Becoming a leader, contribute to a student's academic performance, because people like to acquire leadership positions and they work hard to achieve and maintain a high CGPA. However, the research reveals that some leaders' CGPA dropped drastically during their term of office because they were unable to manage their time, to include fellowship work and academic work. Lack of concentration; procrastination etc. were affecting factors. But on a scale of 1-10, eight improved their CGPA while serving; they testify of how

leadership has taught them how to pursue academic excellence. The following are some examples.

Pastor Alex Akuru has been in leadership position since level 200 (Medicines & Surgery): he is currently in level 500 and serving as president of CFI. Pastor Hope Peters was an engineering student who served in CFI as the president for two administrations 2009 to 2010 and 2010 to 2011. He came into leadership with a CGPA of 3.8 and graduated with a CGPA of over 4 point. Pastor Clinton was a student of human anatomy. He was the president in 2011 to 2012 administration. He came into leadership with 4.01 but graduated with 4.23. Pastor Roland (Department of animal and environmental biology), president from 2012 to 2013, was the best student in his department but, unfortunately, he died in the second semester of his final year second semester.

Pastor Ovie Jeremiah graduated from Civil engineering. He came into office of president 2013 to 2014 administration with CGPA 3.5 and graduated with the same grade. Pastor Feyi Igbogun (Gas engineering) was the secretary general from 2013 to 2014 administration; she graduated with CGPA 3.8 as the fourth best student in her department. Brother Grant Woruka, one-time leader in CFI 2010 graduated with first class from the Department of Linguistic and Communication Studies. Pastor Ebimo, vice president 2011 to 2012, from the Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Crop and Soil Science graduated with a Second-Class honour (upper division) and as the best graduand from her department.

Conclusion

This study is an insider account, and it reveals that the activities of Christian Fellowship International are generally geared towards the betterment of its members. The welfare department, for instance, meets some basic needs of the students, most of whom are far away from friends and family members. There are instances where the welfare unit of CFI assumes responsibility for the health care of their members. Housing of students who are unable to secure accommodation in the university hostel or pay for one off campus is a major concern of CFI. To assume a leadership position in CFI one must have a CGPA of not less than 2.4. The desire for leadership propels an aspiring student to be more studious.

The study reveals that most of the students occupying leadership positions in CFI have CGPAs within the brackets of 3.5 to 4.7. It is a tradition in CFI to remove anyone whose CGPA is below expectation from the leadership position. Besides, occupying leadership positions in a fellowship exposes the students to good leadership qualities. Such skill enables them to perform equally well in the wider society.

Furthermore, CFI organizes matriculation parties for fresh students and tutorial classes for their members. Those within very high CGPAs in their various departments are called upon to tutor their colleagues. We should argue here that there is a symbiotic benefit between the tutor and the tutored. The tutor, by implication of his responsibility, researches more into the subject area and thereby increasing his or her knowledge on the subject. The tutored, on the other hand, is exposed to techniques of studying to achieving excellence in his or her academic venture. It is on record that some of the past leaders of CFI graduated with a First-Class degree honour.

CFI is striving to make the university students to be what they are expected to be; peaceful, responsible, and law-abiding citizen. This is important because students' objective within the academic community must be to acquire knowledge, skills, expertise and generally be rational and responsible. With economic hardship prevailing in the country (and the depreciation of the value of Naira), whereby parents can hardly feed their children or bear educational and healthy expenses, a good proportion of our youths especially in the universities have resorted to illicit activities.

With the help of Christian fellowship International, the rate of steal and burglary in the University of Port Harcourt has reduced since most of the youth who were involved in such criminal acts are gradually being changed through the activities of Christian Fellowship International. Social injustice which has being the basic cause of the imbalance and poverty has been alleviated by CFI. The people that are converted will naturally desist from bribing and corruption, victimization and will be law abiding people.

This study reveals that:

1. Young people, in the face of the challenges of urbanization are forced to forge for themselves new self-identities.
2. Organised religion is alive in even secular tertiary institution in Nigeria.
3. Religious students become more vocal in an environment where they are not constrained by organised religious institutions, and that college students' interest in spirituality remains high.
4. The teachings and activities of Campus fellowships create a disciplined life or a general work ethics that enhances academic performance of students.
5. For students from disadvantaged backgrounds, campus fellowships act as external buffers by promoting certain positive norms and providing positive role models that can sway students toward more studious behaviours.
6. Student fellowships positively influences education mainly because most of the fellowship's activities contribute to establishing social control which promote positive educational outcomes. For example, religious students are less likely to engage in anti-social vices such as cultism in school, which increases their high school completion rates

The study agrees with other research findings that believers find solace in religious belonging in times of trouble, thereby enabling them to deal better than nonbelievers with stressful events that might otherwise negatively impact their academic achievement.²⁵

Secondly, most leaders in CFI use their personal funds to cater for the indigent members.

From the foregoing, it has been established that students' involvement in campus fellowship does not negatively affect their academic performance, as such we recommend that authorities in institutions of higher learning should recognize Christian students' fellowships and give them enabling environments to carry out their activities. We equally call on Church of God Mission and other churches that

²⁵ Daniel T.L. Shek, "Spirituality as a Positive Youth Development Construct: A Conceptual Review", *The Scientific World Journal* 12 (2012); doi:10.1100/2012/458953

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have students' fellowships to do well in adequately financing such fellowships. Within CFI herself, we recommend a cordial relationship between the fellowship members and their alumni body.

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