

Cultism Development and Its Sinister Influence in Nigeria Universities

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ABSTRACT: *This paper discussed cultism development and its sinister influence in Nigeria universities. The unabated incidence and unrelenting activities of secret cults in Nigerian universities which invariably have caused a lot of havoc on the lives and psych of Nigerians have over the years been a thing of serious concern to educational stakeholders, administrators, parents/ guidance, and the society at large. To wit, this paper examined the concept of cultism in Nigerian universities, concept of development of cultism in Nigerian Universities, sinister influence of cultism in Nigerian universities. The paper concludes that cultism can be eradicated in our secondary schools, universities and other institutions of learning to at least a near zero-degree level. The paper therefore suggested that parents, educational administrators and educational stakeholders should inculcate the fear of God in the lives of their children/wards, and students and that the government and private institutions should establish schools of parenting for parents and parents to be.*

KEYWORDS: cultism, development, sinister, influence, universities.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the culmination of all procedures that enable a child, adolescent, or an adult to acquire the skills, attitudes, and other societally beneficial behaviors. By decoding the prevalent tracts for practical application, it helps people to acquire information and skills. Knowledge, also known as education, is the most valuable resource by any standard to any civilization and is the basis for growth. A fundamental requirement for achieving educational goals and objectives is educational stability. According to Elujekwute, (2019) cultism at tertiary institutions has prompted growing alarm among not just the managers of the institutions but also those worried about the welfare of the students and the long-term viability of these institutions.

Obviously, cultism is said to be the mother of crimes in tertiary institutions, and the phenomenon has negatively affected the image and management of tertiary institutions, the quality of teaching and learning, and the integrity of the Nigeria graduates (Ogbagu, 2013). Nnam (2014) claims that the biggest and most embarrassing problem that Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are facing today is the renewal of the menace and aggressiveness of cult related activities.

Cultism was linked to the Seadog Confraternity (also known as Pyrates), which was started by Wole Soyinka and six other individuals at the prestigious University College, Ibadan (UCI). Wole Soyinka is currently a professor. The non-violent and peaceful confraternity that was founded in 1952 changed into a hidden cult in 1968 and has been known to engage in strange and violent activities at Nigerian tertiary institutions ever since. According to Ogunade (2005), a secret cult is an exclusive holy philosophy and a closed-off community of people who are committed to the same purpose. They also have rituals that revolve around their hidden symbols. Some cult activities involve a lot of blood. It might contain either human or animal blood. Ogunade goes on to say that when opposing groups conflict in academic settings like universities, polytechnics, or colleges of education, blood spills and many people die as a result. Cultism is defined by Ajayi, Ekundayo, and Osahisi (2010) as ceremonial activities carried out by a group of individuals whose membership admission policy, initiation formalities, and method of operations are done in secret and have a detrimental impact on both members and non-members.

However, confraternities operated without any violence when they first appeared in the 1950s. Unfortunately, the military government later hijacked them in an effort to strengthen their control over students in tertiary institutions, particularly those who might challenge their authority. For instance, military officials saw the unionization of violent students as a means of consolidating their control. Therefore, covert cults were employed to dismantle student unions and oppositional activities. However, Onyemwinmina and Aibieyi (2015) assert that since Nigeria's independence, violence has long been a part of its political culture, beginning with protests in the country's western regions. The emergence of cults on the tertiary institutions in Nigeria as alarming as it is proliferated as a result of several factors affecting the fabrics of the Nigeria society.

The government, institutional, societal, household, and student influences were the main sources and effects of cultism at Nigerian higher institutions. According to Nnajieta and Ahamefula (2015), there are a number of factors that contribute to cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, including the need for protection, the need to exert authority or supremacy, a lack of direction or guidance, drug abuse, the influence of politicians on school administration, academic excellence, the need for revenge among peer groups, poor school conditions, restrictions on unionization, parental influence, and others. According to Elujekwute (2019), there are many factors that can be linked to parents, students, institutions, and society that contributed to the prevalence of cult activities in Nigerian tertiary institutions. These factors include the breakdown of the family institution, peer pressure, school administrators, the population explosion of students, a culture of violence, and government encouragement of cultism, among others. Cultist groups draw students for a number of reasons. In general, the social climate present in higher institutions offers a stimulating setting for the growth of secret cults. Some individuals who eventually join covert cults do so out of a need to inflate their egos, while others do so out of a sense of belonging and the need to be well-connected (Adewale, 2005). Some students join in order to receive financial support in order to secure girlfriends or for self-defense. Adewale goes on to say that some students join cults because they are looking for love, comfort, and significance in their lives. Cultism also seems to have a unique draw for young people who are distressed and emotionally disturbed. Youths

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are particularly vulnerable to the enticements of cult members if they come from broken homes, are penniless, or have open minds. The youngsters who are lonely, depressed, dejected, disoriented and frightened sometimes drift into the waiting arms of secret cultist while others as a result of sheer curiosity.

However, cultism can have a number of negative effects, including the loss of lives and property, disruption of campus academic activities, unsafe university environments, and others. According to Oni (2009), cults mostly carry out their operations covertly, dominating the campus landscape like a goliath whenever they decide to attack. Members of campus cults are brave, daring, and deadly; among other violent crimes, they engage in murder, rape, and robbery while secretly concealing their identities from other students, faculty, and staff at universities, polytechnics, and institutions of education. The employment of weapons including pistols, axes, machetes, knives, and broken bottles is often what characterizes the violence, which has caused varied degrees of homicide, mutilating, and grief. According to Onoyase, Onoyase, and Arubayi (2008), Nigerian tertiary institutions have devolved into decadent, gloomy institutions, filled with fear of bloodthirsty secret cult members, drug-fueled violence and anarchy, and rampant cases of examination malpractice, raping, and killing of innocent people.

Cultism

A cult is defined as a group that demonstrates a high level of passion or devotion to a certain cause or ideal while concealing its activities and participation from the uninitiated. Cult membership and activities are often veiled in secrecy, according to Ajitoni and Olaniyan (2018), and as such, they are sometimes referred to as secret cults. Arele (2006) defines a cult as a group of individuals who share and disseminate strange ideas among their members alone. Cultism, on the other hand, is strongly associated with cult activities. It is a set of religious ideas and practices, or ideology, that often involves rituals. In accordance with this viewpoint, Ajayi, Ekundayo, and Osalusi (2010) define cultism as a ritual practice by a group whose membership, admission policy, and initiation formalities, as well as their mode of operations, are done in secret and kept in secret, with their activities having negative effects on both members and non-members. Some academics describe cults from a religious standpoint, for example, as a distinctive, briefly trendy system of worship or belief. This explains why various cults have distinct rules, conventions, emblems, and other characteristics that are concealed from uninitiated members of society.

Secret cults, according to Ogunbameru (2004), are groups whose methods of operation are hidden, although such activities take place at odd hours of the day, conflicting with convention or publicly accepted ways of life. Ogunbameru goes on to say that these acts are kept hidden from the public eye, that they are camouflaged, and that they are normally carried out behind closed doors. According to Adewale (2005), a cult is a group of individuals who share unusual views and beliefs and participate in hidden conduct. According to the foregoing, it is safe to define a secret cult as a group of people whose activities are carried out in exclusive locations and unusual times without being exposed to the uninitiated, as it has been observed that almost every passing day, new stories of devilish acts perpetrated by secret cults on tertiary institutions

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK in Nigeria are published. Unfortunately, despite all attempts to address the issue, covert cult activities in higher institutions of learning have resisted all answers, and those remedies proposed so far are akin to chopping down a tree while leaving the root firm to the ground or soil.

Causes of Cultism in Nigerian Universities

There are various causes of cultism in Nigerian Universities which include the following amongst others:

Peer Group: Peer pressure is a major incentive for young pupils to join secret cults. According to Ibeh (2005), adolescence is defined by extensive social connections in each environment in which he or she finds oneself. The focus on social interactions moves from the parents to the peer group throughout adolescence. As a teenager loses all dependency and contact with his or her parents, he or she shifts to a newly acquired group, which in most instances is any organization on campus that he or she accepts. Akinfolarin (2003) and Omoegun and Akanle (2007) discovered that peer group influence is one of the reasons students join cults in their studies.

Parental Background: Students from homes where outstanding conduct and discipline are strictly enforced are less likely to join a cult or be cultists, even though a tiny number of them may join in certain situations. According to Olajugbe (2001), cult participation may be influenced by family history, a lack of moral direction at home, and the manner in which a child is nurtured. The author underlined that too much parental control, too many limits, might make a person tense and uncomfortable, while a child with boundless freedom may be a great candidate for cult membership in specific conditions.

According to Mgbekem (2004), some parents cherish their children to the point of pampering them. When they make a mistake, rather than chastising them, they let the children off the hook. They grow up with such bad habits and, as a consequence, imbibe criminal conduct, which drives them to join cults. Owoeye (1997) discovered a significant link between a poor and dysfunctional family environment and the impact and tendency of pupils to join secret cults.

The author suspects that his parents are members of secret cults. Cult members may come from broken homes where child abuse and neglect are rampant. According to Ayodele and Ayodele (2002), family breakdown is one of the causes of cultism on campuses. They believe that a child from a shattered home is subject to parental neglect and annoyance. Such a child is easily convinced to join a cult. According to Ogunbameru (2004), Freud's frustration-aggression theory states that frustration leads to violence, either directed at perceived sources of interference or moved to another object. As a consequence, numerous students joined cults to escape the stress of a broken home.

Societal Decadence: According to Ogunbameru (1997), Nigerian culture has created an enabling environment for all forms of crimes, including the issue of campus hidden cults. According to the author, the normal Nigerian mindset has substituted respect with dishonour.

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Mgbekem (2005) also highlighted that the present generation has immoral ideas implanted in them rather than moral and respectable standards. This, according to the author, explains why young people have no qualms about joining a hidden group. Okeowo (1994) also linked the inclination of young people to join cults to Nigeria's general lack of rules.

Erosion of Education Standards: The country's economic difficulties in the 1980s and early 1990s encouraged corruption and lowered educational standards. Despite possessing doubtful credentials, the majority of students were admitted to universities (Akinfolarin 2003). Because of low self-esteem, some students seek solace in cultism in order to survive scholastic rigors at any costs. Survival in the academic system becomes a game of survival at any cost for such students, and as a consequence, they join cult groups in order to intimidate teachers and school administrators.

Need for protection: Some children join cults due to the fact that members get excessive protection. Cultists work relentlessly to protect their adherents' interests, regardless of what it takes. They are continuously seeking special treatment for their members and may be violent in order to protect the interests of their members. Some vulnerable students get convinced or coerced into joining cults out of fear of being abused or harassed by members of covert cults or other unfriendly individuals.

Creation of fears: Some children join cults in order to scare their peers. This permits them to commit whatever evil they choose on campus. Students and university management are both at their mercy since they may wreak havoc at any time of day or night, killing or frightening their classmates or lecturers. Any effort to control their activities may result in violence, disturbing the session's academic schedule (Udoh, 2011).

Broken homes: Broken homes, as well as the fact that sadistic kids are mostly cultists in schools. As a consequence, the family serves as the primary socialization agent, imparting social views and behavioral expectations in the child. It is an agent that imparts social culture to the kid. What occurs in the family throughout the socialization process will surely have an influence on the child's personality and interactions with other members of society. As a consequence, some children turn to cultism as an escape from difficult home conditions, especially when there is discord. Cultism at postsecondary campuses was sometimes encouraged by poor economic conditions and the fact that cultists were not adequately persecuted.

Poor School Management – Students relationship: The school management of some tertiary institutions do not have good relationship with the students. In some cases, students unions are not allowed to function and the authorities are very autocratic in their relationship with students. In such situation, numerous students who consider the school management too powerful and rigid join secret cults in order to protect their interest. Sometimes when school management and government disallow or limit student unionism, student fight back through cults.

Encouragement of Cultism by the Government: Politicians and government officials can sometimes inspire cultism by giving the appearance that they are above the law. The rule of law is no longer popular. Politicians in government flout laws with impunity and without punishment; others are cultists who commit crimes and get away with it. This measure encourages many students in our academic institutions to join hidden cults. Assurance of connection to important persons in school and politicians from larger society might be a motivating element for some potential cult members.

Love of Power to Control Others: Individuals who seek to assert authority or dominance sponsor cults in order to demonstrate their power or influence to other members of their school community. The fight for dominance in society, as well as the use of violence to dominate others, fosters cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It forces politicians to engage in do-or-die politics. This is marked by widespread election manipulation, arson, and the death of innocent people.

Moral Decadence: Many people no longer regard moral standards. There is a high crime rate, and society is already infected with social vices; some persons in positions of power or influence are members of hidden cults. Because teenagers see and initiate what is going on in society, many of them do not find anything wrong with cultism and consequently join covert cults in higher institutions.

Development of Cultism in Nigerian Universities

Cultism in Nigeria dates back to the time before the country was colonized, when a small group of individuals would conduct rituals in order to ask their ancestors for protection. Throughout the history of the nation, several different regions have been home to mysterious religious groups. According to Adelola (1997), the Yoruba people have the Ogboni secret cult, the Efik people have the Ekpe secret cult, the Delta region has the Ekine cult, and the Edo people have the Owegbe cult. Nearly everywhere on the planet, different kinds of secret ritual groups are used in the articulation of organizational functions for a variety of social and political purposes. There is an enormous amount of variation across these civilizations in terms of what is considered private and what is considered public. In some, participation in the rituals is open to the public but membership is kept secret; in others, the reverse is the case: membership is open to the public while participation in the rituals is kept secret.

According to Opaluwah (2009), one of the benefits of these societies is that they do not injure until provoked, and they may be able to operate as a tool for ridding the society of any cultural garbage. In addition, these societies do not need much maintenance. The author asserts that some societies, such as the Poro and Mende societies of Sierra Leone and the Oviaosese of Ogoniland, even perform the function of socialization groups by bringing young adults into adulthood.

Cults on today's college campuses are aggressive, engage in a range of anti-social practices, and have been known to murder and maim people. Because of this, a number of different steps are required in order to render them unlawful at institutions. Prior to the establishment of the Seadogs confraternity (also known as the Pyrates) in 1952 by Wole Soyinka, who is now a professor, along with six others (Olumuyiwa Awe, Ralph Opara, Tunji Tubi, Daigun Imokhuede,

Pius Olegbe, and Olu Agunloye), secret cults were not associated with any of Nigeria's educational institutions. Since the confraternity was never meant to be a covert cult, its founding beliefs were not just patriotic but also focused on giving back to the community. According to Orintusin (1990), the primary objectives of the seadogs were to revive the chivalric era, fight against the imposition of foreign norms in a manner that was peaceful but intellectually and victorious, and find a long-term solution to the problems of tribalism and elitism.

There are around forty-five (45) hidden cults operating in Nigerian educational institutions as of today. Each of these cults has its own convoluted hierarchy, distinctive symbols, and unique attire. The Black Axe, Eiyeye Confraternity, Vickings, Amazons, Buccaneer, Mafia, and Dragons are some of the best-known clandestine cults in existence today. Students that identify as female do not go unnoticed since they have their very own clubs and organizations, such as Daughters of Jezebel, Temple of Eden, Frigates, and Barracudas (Adewale 2005).

Prevalence of Cultism on Campuses

Despite the fact that cultism has a long history on the campuses of Nigerian universities, its participation in violent acts did not become obvious until around twenty years ago. The existence of these groups on college campuses has made living on such campuses both perilous and meaningless for the teaching staff as well as the students. Their behaviors include, but are not limited to, the following: bullying any non-members who have taken a member's lady friend or "sugar daddy" (in the case of female cultism); harassing any female students who refuse their amorous attempts; and harassing any professor who insists on merit for passing examinations. In the case of female cultism, the term "sugar daddy" refers to an older guy who financially supports the members of the cult.

According to Akor (1994), one of the first known incidents of covert cult violence occurred in 1985 at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This occurred after a noncult student earned the displeasure of another student, a cult leader, for taking the latter's girlfriend. This incident is considered to be one of the earliest known cases of covert cult violence. Adewale (2005) also reported the following: in 1991 a student of University of Port Harcourt was beheaded during a feud between cult members; at Delta State University in Abraka, the activities of secret cult groups resulted in the death of a Principal Assistant Registrar and his wife; on 5th August, 2002 a 300 level economics student was shot dead and slaughtered at the Dallimore area of Ado-Ekiti, the capital city of Ekiti State.

At twelve o'clock noon on June 8, 2006, several members of a cult assaulted the University of Ado-Ekiti, where they set fire to the cadet's office, shot and killed three students, and injured a large number of others (Omoegun and Akanle 2007). According to the authors, on June 28, 2006, a professor by the name of Seun Oyedola was kidnapped and murdered during a cult conflict at Olabisi Onabanjo University in Ago-Iwoye, which is located in Ogun State. In Nigerian higher education institutions, cultists have assaulted and murdered multiple students. The most terrible instance occurred at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, when cultists shot down around 10 students in a single day (Jamiu, 2008). What started as a platform to increase socio-cultural awareness of our elite in order to combat oppression, racism, and color

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discrimination has been bastardized due to a number of reasons, and cult activities are a type of derailment from that platform. Cult activities are a kind of derailment from that platform. On July 10, 1999, five students from Obafemi Awolowo University were killed, according to Ogidefa (2008). Among the deceased students were George 'Yemi Iwilade, who served as the Secretary General of the OAU Students Union at the time of their deaths, as well as Tunde Oke, who was a member of the Democratic Socialist Movement.

Yemi Ajiteru, Efe Ekede, and Eviano Ekelemu). Kehinde Dosumu, Olalekan Ajao, and Omotayo Suraju were all killed in October of 2003 when they were students at the Kwara State Polytechnic. In addition, Ogidefa (2008) reported that Tony Ileogbuna, acting Head of the Geology Department at Enugu State University of Science and Technology, was killed; Yomi Edeki, a professor at the University of Benin, was killed on February 4; and Vincent Uloho, a professor at the University of Benin, Benin-City, was killed in cold blood on Tuesday, March 9, 2004. All three of these men were killed at the University of Benin. In addition to Ashifat Olatunji Saheed, a student at The Polytechnic Ibadan, who was murdered in March 2005, Wale Adeyori and Banji of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro were also murdered in July 2004. Gbenga Joseph, a police officer assigned to the Kwara State police command's anti-cult squad, was killed by suspected cultists in June 2005. In September of 2005, members of a cult took the life of Bolaji Toniwa, a student at Lagos State University.

Sinister Influence of Cultism in Universities in Nigeria

The sinister influence of cultism in the tertiary institutions is numerous and some of this influence is briefly examined below:

(Poor Academic Performance: Both teaching and learning are known to flourish more when they take place in settings that are free from dangers such as violence, terrorism, neighborhood boy syndrome, gangsterism, and other similar issues. The cults' reign of terror at higher institutions hampers teaching and learning by fostering fear and tension on campus. As a consequence of this, it has an effect on the academic performance of students. When cult members assault competitors or their victims, or even worse, when they are attempting to escape attack by opposing rival cult members, they often fail to study diligently or take their studies seriously (Ukpon, 2005). Cult members also forget to work hard at their studies or take them seriously.

(ii) Examination Malpractice: Cheating on exams and engaging in other antisocial behaviors such as violence, rape, arson, drug abuse, and so on are all encouraged in cults. Cultism may lead to test misconduct when members of the cult who do not put in the necessary effort to study attempt to undermine assessment systems by inducement, simple aggression, or blackmail. At the end, this serves as a replacement for quality control and standards at Nigeria's universities.

Disruption of School Calendar: Academic calendars of various tertiary institutions are disrupted as a result of cult activities which usually lead to their closure. There are instance where some tertiary institutions are closed for more than two months as a result of cult related activities or violence. Sometimes school management has been compelled to shut down their

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development-UK institutions for a long time as a result of mindless destruction of live and property due to cultism in the schools.

Loss of Life: For some students, cults wreck their lives. Some of them are murdered by cult members, while others end up going mad from taking heavy narcotics and consuming Indian herbs at tertiary institutions. Cultists inflict mayhem on teachers, students, and members of the school administration to the point where some have died or had lifelong disabilities as a result of violent school activities including shooting, stabling, acid attacks, and other deadly assaults; as a result, these attacks have an impact on the educational system. It results in the untimely murders of innocent students, employees, and other members of society who fall prey to cult violence.

Destruction of property: Cult members violate public peace and order by using violence, which often results in the loss of life and property. Through acts of violence, rape, the murdering and maiming of innocent students, it generates insecurity on several campuses. To call attention to their problems, cults are known to harm the property of their victims or educational institutions. Cult members have completely destroyed or destroyed property belonging to educational institutions, including homes, stationery, cars, and other infrastructural equipment.

Heinous Crimes: Expelled cultists from tertiary institutions become a nuisance to society; many of them are involved in violent attacks on various tertiary campuses. Some turn become political thugs, miscreants, and ethnic militia, inflicting havoc on society's members. Cult members engage in illicit acts such as armed robbery and prostitution to fund their luxurious lives, as well as other deadly actions to frighten their victims and frequently to get weaponry from corrupt law enforcement personnel. When its members are attacked and injured, they may pay for their medical costs as well as legal expenditures when they are jailed for various offenses. Diseases such as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) might spread by cults sucking blood during oath swearing.

CONCLUSION

It has been established in the cause of this study that the problem of cultism in Nigeria dated as far back as pre-colonial era. Cultism involvement in violent activities in Nigeria could be said to have started during the military regime in the 60's which of course was actually as a result of the fact that the military leaders felt unsafe with the students intellectual and effective ways of fighting abnormalities in society. Cultism has caused a lot of havoc in Nigerian universities, other institutions of learning and the society at large. It has inflicted pains and death upon its members and non-members. Hence, it is important for educational stakeholders, administrators and parents/guadians to work together towards the eradication of cultism in our secondary schools, universities and other institutions of learning to at least a near zero degree level.

Recommendations

In view of the above, the writer hereby make the following suggestions which if strictly followed amongst others could to a large extent help eradicate cultism in Nigeria Universities at least to almost zero degree level.

1. Parents/guidance, educational administrators and educational stakeholders should inculcate the fear of God in the lives of their children/wards and students.
2. Government and private institutions should establish schools of parenting for parents and parents to be.
3. Parents/guidance, teachers and lecturers should use words or statements that are capable of boasting the self-esteem of our children/wards and students.
4. Parents/guidance and lecturers should avoid words that could erode their children and students self-esteem.
5. Government should increasing educational bursary facilities to students especially to those from humble background.
6. University management should install CCTV in campuses and hostels in all Nigerian Universities.
7. The university management should adopt measures that will make the students feel safe while in school.
8. Parents/guidance should ensure to a large extent that their children/wards move or make friends with children who are not deformed.
9. The government should improve the economy of the country which invariable will impact positively on the country's educational system and per capital income of their citizens.

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