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Students' Perception On The Development And Eradication Of Cultism In Tertiary Institutions In Nigeria: Implications For Educational Managers

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Abstract:

In this work opinion of 939 students from Nigeria Universities, Polytechnics/ Monotechnics and Colleges of Education (451, 302 and 186) were sought concerning the development and eradication of cultism during Christmas break/holiday of 2011 in Etsako area (Central, East and West) of Edo State. Informations concerning cultism such as their nature, names and uniqueness of each group, initiation procedure, rules guiding the operations, strikes, reasons for involvement and level of involvement by gender were elicited. Also, effect of socio-economic background of parents and children involvement, consequences of renunciation by respondent include course realignment, banning of expelled students from campuses, prompt and proper orientation of new students etc. Administrators are asked to take respondents suggestions seriously and make use of them. The study concluded that from all indications, the fight against cultism will still be for a while. Government, religious bodies, managers of institutions, parents, societies and students should intensify efforts to eradicate cultism. Through this intensification, cultism shall be a thing of the past. This study, therefore made some recommendations of which when followed, will go along way to help eradicate cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

1. Background Of The Study

The New Encyclopedia (1998:268) defined cult as “a system of religious belief and practice”. Also, Alsem (1991) sees a cult as a system of religious, worship, devotion, homage or as unorthodox or false religion. The word cult is derived from Latin origin vocabulary cultism, which translates into modern Italian as culto. Cult is therefore a group of people who are adherent of a certain type of worship. It is also a devotion to or craze for a cause (Kolawole, 2008). Secrecy is being used to qualify the types of cults, which explain the secret way the activities of cults are run. The bottom line is whether a cult is open secretive. It is regarded as secret cult when only the initiators, members and adherents understand the nook and cranny of their activities (Kolawole, 2008).

Cultism seems to be one of the greatest contemporary social problems confronting Nigerian educational system today. Though, this phenomenon is not new in the nation's higher institutions. The dimension it has assumed in recent times is both frightening and alarming. It has therefore become a matter of great concern for both educational managers and the entire nation. The general picture is that the tertiary institutions, on which the future of the nation depends, have now become breeding grounds for blood sucking youths who have no regard for the sanctity of human lives (Popoola and Alao, 2005).

Soyinka (1999) emphasized that the secret cult in their days gave them a unique identity and as students, it was an attempt to present a common formidable frontier, which among other things will check the alleged discriminatory policies of the then European staff. It is observed from this that emergence of secret cults then were done to stop the oppression of the then imperial power, the Whiteman who saw African as the land of salvage with insane people.

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2011) section 38 sub-section 4 portrayed that secret cult is a society of the association that uses signs, cloths, rites of symbols but whose meetings or other activities are held in secrecy and secret places whose members are usually under oaths, obligation, or other threat to promote the interest of members under all circumstances without due regards for the expectation of those who are not members. It states that nobody shall be title to form or take part in the activity or be a member of secret society. From this analysis, cultists promote only the interest of members at the expenses of non-members.

Decree 47 of 1989 by the Federal Government outlawed all campus fraternities. According to Ogunbameru (2007), Hank, (1999) and Odetunde (2007), this marked the beginning of banning of secret cults on University campuses in Nigeria. This decree 47 viewed secret cult as illegal, destructive as well as unlawful organization which no students should join, let alone of organizing or initiating students into it. From this decree it has shown that officially, students are not permitted to operate secret cult let alone joining it.

The alarming rate at which cultism has gained ground in Nigeria higher institutions of learning, especially in Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Colleges of Education and the University is now the major source of concern to the silent majority. Steps and approaches that were thought by experts to eliminate cultism in these institutions have come to abrupt stoppage and are now ineffective for want of implementation and commitment and this had further driven cultists and their lords underground instead of

eradication (Odetunde, 2007). This failure is one of symptomatic tensions within education subsystems, which has forced education to operate at low ebb. Based on these, two research questions were raised that were answered.

- What are the extents of students' involvement in cultism by faculties/schools in Nigerian tertiary institutions?
- Does parents' socio-economic background play any role in students joining cult?

On a thoughtful reflection if education is to be salvaged, this scary situation in Nigerian tertiary institutions' campuses must be eliminated and the culture of silence over issues that are set against the peaceful co-existence of students on the campuses should stop.

2.Review Of Related Literature

Secret cult conveys fear, intimidation and insecurity to the ordinary people (Oduleye, 1985; Kalilu, 1995; Adeyemi, 2005; Azelama, Aluede and Imhonde, 2005 and Akani, 2009). Oduleye(1985), went further to express the extent to which cultist activities have turned higher educational institutions into breeding grounds for armed robbers, arsonist, rapist, thugs to politicians and perpetrators of all forms of criminal activities on earth hitherto known to Nigerians.

A secret cult as defined by Ogunya (2009) is an association that uses signs, rites or symbols, whose meeting and other activities are held mainly in the night in secret, semi dark, obscure places. Members are under oath obligation or under threat to promote interest of its members or to aid one another under all circumstances without regard for merit, fair play or justice to the detriment of the legitimate expectation of those who are not members. Ogunya (2009) traced the origin of cultism to as far back as four thousand years ago in Greece where a living mafia leader is being worshipped. This leader has political, spiritual and economic powers and the group benefited a lot from him. From Greece cultism spread to other parts of the world (Adeyemi, 2005; Odetunde; 2007; Akani, 2009 and Awe, 2010).

The origin of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions can be traced to University of Ibadan in 1953 by a group of students called the G7 under the leadership of Nobel Price Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka and decided to set up a social club that was called Pirate confraternity (Adeyemi 2005and Awe, 2010). Their objectives were directed to fighting what they considered as colonial mentality and to promote the spirit of chivalry and by finding lasting solution to the spirit of tribalism and elitism (Awe 2010). According to him who happened to be one of the students in 1953 and a member of the group, state clearly that the group was not to harm, maim, kill and destroy property. That everything they did was healthy, fun, harmless and above board. He also established that members of pirates confraternity got involved in such philanthropic activities as blood donation, rag day celebration and donation to the poor.

Speaking in Benin City, in November 11, 2002, the Oba of Benin, Omonoba Uku Akpolokpolo Erediauwa as cited by Ohwerwo (2009) opined that secret societies at the tertiary institutions might have evolved from brains just like the science of 419 (advance free fraud) evolved from some clever brains. He further claimed that children whose parents were members of the Ogboni confraternity joined or formed secret societies whenever they are admitted into a tertiary institution which means the geniuses of these students and their strength could be an added advantage. From pirate confraternity as it was called then, about 50 secret cult groups were operating as revealed by Elegbeleye (1997), Echekwube (1999), Azelama, Aluede and Imhonde (2005), Ehase (2006) and Babarinde (2008).

Adeyemi (2005) agrees that due to doctrinal differences and growth in the number of tertiary institutions and students enrolment over the years other groups emerged. They include the Buccaneers, Eieye confraternity, Mafia and Vikings which were formed mainly by non conformed members of the pirates who were either dismissed or left in protest. They followed a proliferation of campus secret cults. Awe (2010) admits that some of the groups were formed by malcontents, expected members and rejects from the pirates confraternity. The seed of unhealthy rivalry was sown in the cults right from their inception. This nature of cults and their activities in Nigerian educational institutions were sought from students in higher institution of learning in Nigeria (Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics and Colleges of Education). Their perceptions formed the basis of this study.

3.Research Methodology

This section discusses the various issues that are related to the methodology employed in carrying out research such as research design, population of the study, sampling procedure, and instrumentation, administration of instrument and method of data analysis.

Being a descriptive study, the survey research design was adopted for the purpose of data collection. According to Pole and Lampard (2007), the survey research approach enables a group people to be studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people considered to be representative of the entire group. The population of the study consists of the entire students in Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics/Monotechnics and Colleges of Education in Etsako area (Central, East and West Local Government Areas). Nine hundred and thirty nine (939) students constituted the sample for this study.

The instrument used is the questionnaire that was designed by the researcher. The instrument was administered on the respondents with the help of three assistants who helped in distributing and retrieving the questionnaire after completion by the respondents. A street method of administration was used in distributing the questionnaire in Etsako area (Central, East and West Local Government Areas) of Edo State, Nigeria, in a stratified manner. The duration was from 25th, November, 2011 to 10th, January, 2012.

4.Discussion And Data Analysis

Nine hundred and thirty nine students of different institutions from Nigeria tertiary educational institutions Etsako responded to the questionnaire. They were made of students of Universities (Federal State and Private). Students of Polytechnics/Monotechnics(Federal and State) and students of Colleges of Education (Federal and State).

Institutions	Numbers of Respondents
Universities	451 (48.03%)
Polytechnics/Monotechnics	302 (32.16%)
Colleges of Education	186 (19.81%)
Total	939 (100%)

Table 1: Respondent Of Students Of Institutions And Composition In Percentages

The gender composition of the respondents are shown in table 2

Sex	Number and Percentages Respondents
Male	597 (63.58%)
Female	342 (36.42%)
Total	939 (100%)

Table 2: Gender Composition In Percentages

Respondents mentioned various cult groups that existed in their respective tertiary institutions.

4.1. Male

Arabella, Baracudas, Black Panthers, Black Axe, Black Cats, Black Berets, Buccaneers, Doro, Dragons, Draenla, Eieye of Air Lords, Green Berets Fraternity, Holoro, Juries, KKK Fraternity, Mgba-Mgba Brothers Fraternity, Neo-Black Movement, Pirates, Red Berets, Sea Dogs, Sea Lords, Seven Stars, The Canary, The Damsets, The Osiri Fraternity, The Trojan Horses (Oasis of Silhouette), The Twelve Disciples, The Scorpion Fraternity and Vikings.

4.2. Female

Black Bra, Daughter of Jezebel, Daughter of Zeru, Jezebel, Pink Lady, Queen and Night Rangers and White Angels.

4.3. Description Of Different Cults

The respondents were asked to describe each cult groups. More than 793 said that they were not members and so could not give account. While other respondents however gave brief and good account which are summarized as follows.

4.4. The Buccaneers

The cultists in this group are matured students who are very brilliant as their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) must not be less than 3.5. They don't usually cause trouble but very deadly in operation when offended. Most of the time they don't fight directly with anyone or group who offended them in their campus. Rather they go to other schools of their choice to invite the Buccaneers there to fight in their campus. For clarity of expression, if buccaneers in say Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (AAU) have disputes with any other cult groups in their campuses, they can invite buccaneers from University of Lagos (UNILAG) or Auchi Polytechnics to take charge and vice versa.

4.5. The Flyers (Eieye)

This is one of the largest group cultists. They are not quite intelligent as explained by the respondents. They are the worst of all and they go about to intimidate students on campuses. They look for trouble and use forceful means to get things that do not belongs to them. They steal, rape and do all sorts of nasty things on campuses without being checked by the school authorities. The attitudes of the Eieye are usually against the rules and regulations of their institutions.

4.6. The Pirates (Peace Markers)

This group don't look for trouble as explained by the respondents but very dangerous in their actions when they are hurt.

4.7. Black Axe (Ake)

This group doesn't look for trouble but very deadly when they are offended according to the respondents. They don't forgive. In fact to forgive according to them is a sin.

Responses were also sought from selected students as to the extent of involvement of students by faculties/schools in cultism and the following responses were gathered.

4.7.1. What are the extents of students' involvement in cultism by faculties/schools in Nigerian tertiary institutions?

Faculty/School	Number and Percentages Respondents
Social & Mgt. Sciences	396 (42.17%)
Engineering	390 (41.53%)
Sciences	63 (6.39%)
Arts/Humanities	60 (6.39%)
Medicine	23 (2.45%)
Environmental	7 (0.75%)
Total	939 (100%)

Table : 3

Table 3 above shows that 786 (83.7%) respondents felt that social/management sciences and Engineering students were more involved in cult activities than other schools/faculties as indicated in the table.

As to the involvement by sex, the respondents 871 (92.76) said that male students were deeply rooted more involved in cultism than female while 68 (7.24%) felt that both male and female students were equally involved in cultism.

As to brutality of cultism 844 (89.85) respondents were of the opinion that male cultists were more brutal in action than female cult members. But however 95 (10.12%) said that both were equally brutal in action. The question that elicited interesting response is that of the respondents' membership in any cult group in the campuses 903 (96.17%) said categorically that they were not members of any cult group but 36 (3.83%) respondents left that questions unanswered. Interestingly, a large percentage of the 36 gave descriptions of cult activities which suggested that they were likely to be members of some of the cult groups mentioned earlier on in this discussion.

4.7.2. Does parents' socio-economic background play any role in students joining cult?

A section of the questionnaire tried to find out if the socio-economic background of parents has anything to do with the students in cultism. Table 4 shows the perception of the respondents.

Socio-Economic Background	Number and Percentages Respondents
Children of poor parental background are more involved	59 (6.28%)
Children of rich parental background are more involved	480 (51.12)
Children of both poor and rich parental background are equally involved	400 (42.60%)
Total	939 (100%)

Table 4: Influence Of Socio-Economic Background Of Parents And Children Involvement In Cultism

Table 4 shows that children from rich parental background are more involved in cultism as 480 (51.12%) indicated.

The respondents were also asked to suggest what might likely be the reasons that make students to be interested in joining one cult group or the other. The following are the summary of the reason expressed by the respondents which might likely serve as sources of interest in cultism.

5. Opinions of Respondents of Students Joining Cultism

According to the respondents, there were various reasons why students in tertiary institutions joined cult groups, these are:

- Peer group influence playing significant role
- Poor orientation by the various institutions of higher learning which different cult groups takes advantages of. The cult groups quickly arranged their own orientation tagged "catch them young".
- Ignorance of the total implication of what cultism is all about.
- Fear of failure in course of study leads some students to join the cult groups.
- Egoism in which case students want to be celebrated in the campus.
- For security purpose.
- Parents careless attitudes to their children ways of life.
- Fetish nature of some parents which lead their children to see cult activities as natural way of living their lives because of their parents' involvement in secret societies like Ogani confraternity.

These reasons were corroborated by Olukoya (2004). Rasheed (2010) and Sam (2009) when they attributed the sudden increase of cultism to indifferent attitudes of parents and unchallenging academic activities.

6. The Nature of Cults and their Activities in Tertiary Institutions

According to the respondents account, it is not difficult to differentiate cult members from non-cultists. The cult members are usually found in two or three or even more than that walking together. The cultists are usually in the same uniform and their activities are mainly nocturnal. They usually organize meaningless parties and stay far into the night and come to the campus in different types of vehicle and most of the times are found smoking and drinking alcohol together.

7. Initiation

The respondents gave different method of initiation ceremonies which are held in secret places like the outskirts of town, by the river bank, streams or sea side, in the bush/forest, in secluded hotels or restaurants. According to the respondents the initiation used to involve oath taking of blood, drinking of concoction or performance of some rites on the intending members. Some concoction could be blood or part of murdered students' body with the remaining part of the corpse found in the bush the following days.

8. Differentiating Cult Groups

The cult groups are differentiated from one another despite the resemblance in their operation as explained by the respondents. Each group has its own mode of dressing, colours and styles' especially the colours of their berets and these are made manifest during the initiation periods. Different colour of berets showed different cult group. For example:

Cult group	Colour of berets
Black Axe	Black berets
Sea dogs	Deep red berets
Green Beret fraternity	Green berets
Red Beret fraternity	Red berets

Moreover the respondents further described the hierarchical nature of cult organization even though these hierarchies are only used to explain the various leadership positions in the eieye confraternity where birds are used to identify their various leadership positions. The various colours are shown in their regalia leadership positions presented by colour.

Name	Colour
Ibaka	A red regalia
Ostrich	A black regalia
Eagle	A blue regalia
Flamingo	Wine
Pecker	A wine blue
Wood perker	Red and blue
Parrot	Black with red stripes
Nightingale	Red, purple and blue stripes
Dove	A black regalia

Table 5: Leadership Positions And Correspond In Regalia Colour

The Ibaka is the leader of all birds and others listed in table 5 are in descending order of authority. Another cult group that was discussed by the respondents is the New Black Movement. The officers were detected using different special names for different positions.

The Elected Officers	Position
The Head (Top Officer)	General Oversea
The Chief Priest	Spiritual Head
The Chairman	Head of Council of Elders
The Butcher	The Disciplinarian
The Eye	The Secretary
The Crier	PRO
The Ihazar	Treasurer

Table 6: New Black Movement Officer With Corresponding Names

On initiation day members wear white shirts on black trousers, yellow stockings and black berets to the initiation oath ground with a "7" inscribed in yellow at the back. The head normally wear red regalia and the chief priest wears white regalia. The respondents listed their signs or words symbols as follows:

Name	Colour
Temple	Area of operation
Aye	Members
Heoha	Meetings
Kokowa	Drink
Controls	Girls
School fees	Dues
Jew men	Non-members
Janet	Cane
Elpees	Songs
Jolly	Initiation
7	Axe
Bull dog	Gun
Groundnut	Bullet

Table 7: Word Symbols And Meanings

The cult members have their codes as summarized from the responses in form of rules and regulations.

9. Rules and Regulations

The cult members have rules and regulations that guide members as described by all the respondents. Some of the rules and regulations according to the respondents are as follows:

Don't kill innocent people, Fear not, No cheating, Stealing is not allowed, Raping is not permitted, Non-exposure of fraternity activities, Blind obedience, Secrecy and Forgiveness is a sin

These rules and regulations are strictly abide by members because each cult member knows that if found violating any of the rules according to Babarinde (2008) he is as good as dead, since the penalty is always as severe. In practice some innocent students have been found to be rapped, cheated and even killed especially female students who refuse to enter into friendship with the male members. Some time, some teachers who are very principled may suffer in the hands of the cultist.

9.1. Strike Action

Whenever cultists have reason to strike most of the time, one cult group say, Black Axe against Aye it is always very violent. Their method of striking is usually rough, violent and bloody, striking physically, facing each other and using gun, acid bath, knife, machetes, sword, arrows, chains, cutlass, axe, metaphysics and planks.

9.2. Intervention

Respondents were asked to make suggestions as to how actions can be reduced, their views are described below:

- Those who responded felt that courses should be realigned to be more meaningful.
- Course advisers (lecturers) should get closer to their advisees (students) and work harder.
- Proper school orientation should help students to know what is expected of them
- Crash programme in higher institution should be stopped.
- Intervention should start from home; parents should guide their children right from when they are going to secondary schools and they should stress the implications of friendship with bad gangs and joining bad association.
- There should be massive public campaign in various forms by religious bodies and non-governmental organizations.
- Expelled students should not be allowed to stay in campuses causing problems everywhere for management. Their parents should be contacted by the management of their expelled children.
- Introduction of more recreational activities will go a long way in reducing idleness and boredom.

9.3. Renunciation

Renunciation is difficult according to 731 (78%) of the respondents while 208 (22%) said that they would not be able to discuss the consequences or effect of renouncing cultism since the ex-cultists don't discuss the situation and what they go through openly. However the 78% of the respondents who responded said that unless those non-cultist change schools or even travels out of the country to continue their studies other cultists might trace and kill them.

10. Conclusion and Recommendation

The fight against cultism will still be for a while. But as government, religious bodies, managers of institutions, parents, the society and students should intensify effort to eradicate cultism. In its eradication, cultism shall become the menace of the past and the students shall enjoy peace and safety in their campuses.

On the recommendation, the following suggestions will go along way to help eradicate cultism in tertiary institution in Nigeria.

- Management and lecturers should look at the various suggestions made by the respondents and get themselves fit in.
- Proper guidance and counseling and better communication network as well as active religious institution should be pursued in Nigeria tertiary institutions.
- Expelled students should not for any reason be called back to campuses after they have been found guilty of engaging in cultism, nether should they be allowed to hang around the campuses or the schools.
- There is need to involve parents in an effort to curb the activities of cultists. It is important for parents to visit their children on campuses from time to time in an attempt to monitor their activities and the type of friends they keep in campuses or the schools.
- The content of minimum standards of the tertiary institutions should be reviewed regularly.
- Students should be properly engaged in extra-curricular activities by the institutions with different kinds of activities.

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