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Cultism in Nigeria: The educational institutions

In modern English, a cult is a social group that is defined by its unusual religious, spiritual, or philosophical beliefs, or by its common interest in a particular personality, object or goal. The word first appeared in English in the early 17th century derived from the French culte, meaning "worship" which in turn originated from the Latin word cultus meaning "care, cultivation, worship". Cultism therefore is defined as a ritual practice by a group of people whose membership, admission, policy and initiation formalities as well as their mode of operation are done and kept in secret with their activities having negative effects on both members and non-members alike.

Cults have always existed in many parts of the country; the Ogboni secret cult among the Yorubas, Ekpe secret cult in the Delta region, Oviaosese in Ogoni land and Owebge cult among the Edos. In Sierra Leone, there are the Poro and Mende Societies. Others exist in other parts of the African countries. Almost everywhere in the world, different types of secret ritual groupings are manipulated in the articulation of organization function for a variety of social and political purposes. These societies differ in what is kept hidden and what is made public.

In the 1950's nationalism was intensified in Nigeria with the aim of fighting colonialism and gaining independence for the country. Nigerian students were not left out in this fight for independence. Therefore, in 1952 the first secret cult, The Seadogs Confraternity (a.k.a Pirates Confraternity) was formed by Nigeria's only Nobel Laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka Aig Imoukhueme, Pius Oleghe, Ralph Opara, Nat Oyelola, Prof. Muyiwa Awe, Olu Agunloye and Tunji Tubi. The formation of this secret cult was in good faith and with good intentions with their actions and mannerisms symbolic and imitative of the pirates of the Treasure Island literature book. The Pirates Confraternity was not known for violence, they never practiced primitive savagery or wickedness that is common among present-day cultists. They dominated university scene for twenty years before other cults came into existence.

In the 70's and 80's trouble broke out in the cult as a result of unresolved leadership problems. Some members of the cult broke out and formed the Buccaneers Association of Nigeria (BAN), a.k.a Sealords, others formed the Vikings fraternity all leading to the explosion of secret cults in Nigerian universities. By the early 1990's there was cult explosion such as Maphites, KKK. Mgba brothers, The Red Devils, Red Berets, Green Berets, the Trojan Horse, etc. Among the female cults were The Daughters of Medusa, White Angels, Dirty virgins, the Amazons, the Sharons, Daughters of Eve, Black Queens, etc. these female confraternities acted as spies for the male confraternities and operated as prostitution syndicates. Unfortunately, these cults have filtered into our secondary schools and are seriously destroying the lives of our vibrant youths.

Originally students had very good intention of joining cults. The idea was patriotic and altruistic. The students, especially the bright, intelligent and political conscious, joined because they wanted to fight tribalism, revive chivalry and abolish conventions, to serve as a pressure group to dismantle undue status quo. But today, with the explosion of cult groups, students join with obnoxious, deadly, diabolic and other unreasonable, illogical reasons:

1. **Quest for Power and Social Identity:** The major causes of cultism is the quest for power and social identity among their colleagues in school. Many students becomes members of

the cults because of their quest for power and authority, this is mostly common among those with the aim of fighting for their rights and other people's rights.

2. **Poor Parental Training:** The present day parenthood suffers a bridge of communication and intimacy with their wards(children) and this has led a lot of students to cultism because most parents fail to inculcate norm, moral, value and discipline to their wards. There is a deviation in the parenthood of this present dispensation, the pursuit of career or money has led a lot of children astray. Some in the quest of making a source of livelihood neglect their wards to lack home training.
3. **Peer Pressure/ peer group Influence:** Pressure from peers group can make even a decent person do some awful things at times that is why peer pressure is another major cause of cultism. Through the process of interaction influence are bound to happen which either can be positive or negative. And it will be pretty difficult for the individual to break away from such circle of friends because any attempt to do that will certainly lead to threats from the cult members. And those that are lured into it end up accepting it because of fear of being killed.
4. **Revenge:** Some people who are victims of harassment, Assaults, rape, bullying, child abuse or painful past seek revenge through cultism because they believe the group will give them the platform to fleetly take their own pounds of the flesh. They believe the team work assistance from the cult members make such mission fast and possible. Also, cultism gives members a high morale to do the unimaginable through the initiation process.
5. **Use of Cultists by Politicians:** Politicians who use cultists as thugs during campaigns and elections are part of people who are encouraging cultism in this part of the world. Some even go as far as having direct or indirect affiliation with them.

Others include: emotional instability, drug abuse, loneliness, poverty, promise of protection, low self-esteem etc.

Cultism has been made categorically and crystal clear to have no advantages. Students may argue their reasons for joining cults as aforementioned. But, these reasons are deceptive-oriented, they lack fact, subjective and meant to satisfy temporary needs. The truth is that cultism is destructive, debilitating, depraving and ruinous. Nothing good comes out of being a cultist the consequences of cultism are in two ways which are:

1. Consequences on the society

2. Consequences on the individual

1. **Consequences on the society:** These are the consequences of cult activities which are suffered by the society at large they include the following;

i. Loss of innocent lives

ii. Destruction of valuable properties

iii. Increase in crime rate

iv. Increase in violence:

- v. Fall in education standard
- 2. Consequences on the individual
 - i. Death
 - ii. Poor academic performance
 - iii. Expulsion from school
 - iv. Prison time
 - v. Lack of peace
 - vi. Shame and embarrassment

Cultism if not tackled, will continue to eat down into every of the society with more effects on individuals, families, schools, religious setting and the society at large. The following are the suggested solution to cultism in the country.

1. Public Campaign against Cultism

If government, schools, religious gathering, parents and non-governmental organization can organize workshops, lectures, talks, seminars and campaigns on the dangers associated with cultism all over schools without leaving out the primary schools.

2. Discipline

There is this popular saying that goes thus “charity begins at home” if parent should enforce discipline in their wards or inculcate the necessary morals and values in their children the menace will be curbed totally, or reduced to a controllable manner.

3. Government Standard

If the government can put into law the punishment due for anybody grasp with anything that has to do with cultism or racism, it thinks it will go a long way in curbing this social vices. It is not only by decreeing it, it will be better for the parliament to also pass it into law through the Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution that anyone guilty of cultism will be sentenced to this particular year of imprisonment without penalty or fines.

With all the solutions listed above, if well adhere to it will surely eradicate cultism to a manageable level instead of the continuous escalation of cultism we are hearing all over our community.

(Alexander, 2012, pp. 152-163)

(Babatunde, 2019)

(Inyang, 2017)

