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CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF CULTISM IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS OF NIGERIA

Cultism is a religion or religious act generally considered to be extremist or false, with its followers often living in an unconventional manner under the guidance of an authoritarian, charismatic leader in a group referred to as a cult. a cult is a [social group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_group) that is defined by its unusual [religious](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion), [spiritual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirituality), or [philosophical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy) beliefs, or by its [common interest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Followership) in a particular [personality](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cult_of_personality), object or [goal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goal).

Cultism in Nigeria has been prevalent ever since the 60s but became more vibrant and violent in the late 70s. In modern days, the most prevalent form of cultism is youth cultism. This may be due to the over exposure of youths today to so many things so early in life with improper decision making and guidance. Youth cultism is one of the sources of violence in cities.

Cultism in Nigeria has no doubt taken a new trend as it has relocated from tertiary institutions' campuses where it hitherto holds away to the streets in various communities across the country. It is one word that has been entrenched in the psyche of people in this part of the world, especially because of the hazardous experiences people have had, either directly or indirectly as the cult groups unleash irreparable loss, anguish and pain on youths, families and the society at large.

To determine how Cultism differs in urban and rural areas of Nigeria is insignificant since so many factors contribute to such cases such as means of living, goals and ideals, and many others. The main and common causes of cultism are poverty, drug abuse, peer pressure, emotional instability, etc.

In terms of poverty many people are lured into these vices due to financial hardship. In their quest for help and assistance they fall victim of cultism members who offered them help in a bid to entice them into their social group because some youth are found in this cultism group so as to become known, dreaded and wealthy. The cult members are believed to have influential sponsors and have a lot of money, this myths led a lots of students into this societal ills because they want to be counted among rich individuals in the society and it also give them the avenue to meet wealthy people in the society.

For drug abuse the influence of drug on young people makes them threw away their conscience to the wind. Often than not, individuals who constantly crave for drugs connect with other addicts on a daily basis where they get supply of the drugs. At times they associated with cultist directly or indirectly at the hideout where they usually buy and sell the drugs substances. Through this medium of association an individual can be lured into cultism because those places are highly vulnerable for cultism initiation.

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. Influence goes a long way in changing mindset and behavioral pattern of individual most especially when the pressure is much. At the end individual involve get addicted to their influencer way of like which can be cultism, drug abuse, rapping, clubbing or gambling.

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. One of the features of cultism is that members are brother’s keeper to each other. Many people join cultism in search of protection from harm or any form of harassment or intimidation. The sense of security offered to the members gives them boldness and confidence against any threats in any form. Such sense of protection can lead to arrogance in the members. They are constantly conscious of the backup available to them in case of any emergency.

Emotion is a physiological response to a situation and it can lure someone into cultism. Individuals who face emotional challenges such as depression, melancholy, or loneliness can end up as a cultist if they find solace at the wrong place. Most especially when someone is breakdown totally due to circumstances that threatens their happiness most often time have a high tendency to move with a particular circle of friends/course mate in a bid to be comforted and get cheered up from their present state end up falling victim of cultism. This happen mostly when their heart got broken by their boyfriends/girlfriends. This can also be aggravated by drugs and just like depression finds solace in adventures so also loneliness aid in the company of friends.

Friendships have great influence over each other and in such situation they literally protects and look out for them and such feelings gives the individual the comfort and ease through interaction from members of the cult groups. In no time the individual get involved in drugs, gambling, alcohol, partying and sexual adventures thereby finding a sense of peace and happiness. Having lack of friends can cause low self esteem. The quest to find a way to express oneself could lead a student with low self-esteem to join cult group to feel important. Cultism offers a fertile ground for such students to find ugly confidence in violence and dastardly acts.

When it comes to the effects of cultism, they are mainly negative and damaging to anyone involved in them. The main effect is untimely death. The death of young people these days is so alarming due to cultism practices by students and non student (thugs, touts, deviant individuals) little issues that need settlements end up triggering a lot of calamities in the society. They even go as far as killing themselves over a mere issue like girlfriends and the likes.

Cultism has propelled high increase on drop out students. In Nigerian the major cause of student drop out is usually link to cultism. Although it not in all cases because there are several reasons for which a student may be expelled or suspended from school.

Politicians and government officials usually recruits young people that have tendency of been a thug to assist them in their political affairs during elections and campaigns. Even the religious leaders go as far as using them as body guards which in turn make them misbehave in the society basing their life on the survival of the fittest which will definitely increase insanity in the country.

Theft and robbery is one of the major effect of cultism because this set of individuals go out as a group to do notorious activities as ordered by their captain which is mostly in the night. They usually give them assignment to carry out which can either be robbery, kidnap, assassination, rape, car snatching or bather which need to be carry out within a stipulated period of time.

Other effects of cultism include loss of properties, disruption of academic activities on campuses, unsafe university environments and rape.

I have been lucky enough to not experience cultism or its effects first hand before but my father who schooled in UNIBEN (University of Benin) has told me multiple stories and his encounters with cultists and the effects. Luckily he also was safe from the harms and always did his best to avoid such. Through his stories I’ve learnt so much about cultism and how best to avoid it.