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**CULTISM IN NIGERIA- CAUSES, EFFECTS AND SOLUTIONS**

Cultism is a system or practice of a cult. Cult on the other hand is a group of people with a religious philosophical or cultural identity sometimes viewed as a sect, often existing on the margins of society or exploitative towards its members. Cultism is a very serious problem that really affected the Nigeria has a whole, especially the tertiary institutions. Apart from this problem, we must first understand where and how cultism started from. This is the brief history of cultism.

 Cultism in Nigeria began as far back as 1952. It started out as fraternities, and they were confined within universities campuses with the motive of maintaining law and order on campuses. It was not until the 1990s that they began spreading to the streets and creeks. The first fraternity in Nigeria was the Pyrates Confraternity at the University College, Ibadan. The Pyrates Confraternity was started by seven students among which was the popular Nigerian Nobel Laurette, Wole Soyinka. They called themselves the ‘Magnificent Seven.' The confraternity was founded because the university then was filled with wealthy students backed by colonial powers. The few poor students were doing everything they could in dressing and manner to blend in with the advantaged students. They also noticed that the social life was determined based on tribalism. All these things prompted the Magnificent Seven to form the Pyrates Confraternity and their goal was to differentiate themselves from the conventional establishment. And also to support social justice and human rights in Nigeria. The Pyrates Confraternity activities were non-violent dispute resolutions and fighting against elitist nonsenses and pretenses. The motto of the confraternity was ‘Against all conventions.' Their logo was the skull and crossbones. Some of the members gave themselves name such as Long John Silver and Cap’n Blood. The confraternity membership was made open to any promising male students irrespective of race or tribe. Although application and selection were very rigid and many students were denied. For almost twenty years, the Pyrates Confraternity was the only fraternity in most Nigerian universities.
By the early 1970s, other fraternities began to spring up as a result of leadership tussle among members the previous confraternity. One of them was the Buccaneers which was formed in 1972 by a former member of the Pyrates Confraternity. The Buccaneers was established by Dr. Bolaji Carew after he was expelled from the Pyrates Confraternity for not following teachings of the fraternity. On the 31st of October 1980, the Pyrates formally registered with the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Nigeria under name, National Association of Seadogs.

As more fraternities began to emerge, their practices began to deviate from the original intention of the first fraternity. As a result of different disturbing acts, the Pyrates Confraternity pulled out of the universities and shut down all student campus branches. The Buccaneers Confraternity also registered themselves as National Association of Sea Lords.
During the period of 1980s - 1990s, under the military rule of General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, these cult groups became notorious. Following the coup organized by Ibrahim Babangida which led to a lot of political tension, fraternities were used by military leaders as a check on university staffs and student unions. The university staffs and staff unions were the major organized opposing forces to the military rule. The cult groups were provided with weapons and money to use. The weapons were eventually used in deadly inter-confraternities rivalries. Some confraternities were protected by universities vice-chancellors who used them to attack students that challenged their authorities. It is ⁸believed that all these changes led Wole Soyinka to declare that the Seadogs shouldn’t operate on any Nigerian university campus.
In the early 1990s, activities of the confraternities expanded to the streets and creeks. Different confraternities were involved in bloody battles of supremacy. It was around this time that The Family Confraternity also known as the Mafia of Campus Mafia emerged. The Campus Mafia was modeled after the Italian Mafia. As time went on and the emergence of democratic rule, most of the on-campus confraternities began to move out of campus. This was as a result of movements which were planned to end cultism in Nigerian Universities. Amnesty was granted to every cultist member who decided to renounce their membership.
So, cult groups have moved their meetings and other practices to neighborhoods and streets around their campuses. Although it seemed the move was effective for a while, cult groups soon resumed their activities on campuses. This was because the University authorities and the government could not provide enough facilities to security personnel to tackle cultism on campuses. Also, some of the renounced cultists became vulnerable to attacks from rival groups who now knew their identity. So they returned to the groups for protection. Cults in Nigeria now became established both on and off campuses.
Cult groups in Nigeria were involved in a lot of known criminal activities and deaths. They have been involved in different kidnappings and beating of lecturers who crossed their paths. Some lecturers or other individuals have been dealt with by cult groups for stealing a cult member’s girlfriend or sugar daddy in the case of female cult groups. Some were involved in cyber crimes and armed robberies. Cult groups in Nigeria were also employed by politicians to scare or deal with their political rivals. Some of them were also involved in fighting and kidnappings in the Niger Delta regions.
One of the most popular organized crime of cult groups in Nigeria is the Obafemi Awolowo University massacre. The massacre took place at the Awolowo Hall of the university and left five people dead and several others injured. It was an organized attack carried out by members of the Black Axe as revenge against some leaders of the Student Union. One of the recent cult group popularly known as Badoo has been involved in numerous ritual killings this year.

Cultism in Nigeria is caused by different factors and the most common causes are as followed as; Cultism, Quest for power or social identity, Poor parental training, Peer pressure/peer group influence, Revenge, Emotional instability, Wealth, Loneliness, Use of cultists by politicians, Drug abuse, poverty, Search for protection. This factors has brought about the increase in cultism and as this effects as not being solved.

Effects of cultism has led to so many the causes because it has been the major disadvanges of being a cultism. This is the general effects of cultism as follows; the death of young people this days is so alarming due to cultism practices by students and non student (thugs, touts, deviant’s 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 issues like girlfriends and the likes. Also, 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. Consequently, 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.
Apparently, 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. Public campaign against cultism. If government, schools, religious gathering, parents and non-governmental organization can organise workshops, lectures, talks, seminars and campaigns on the dangers associated with cultism all over schools without leaving out the primary schools, i think it will help in curbing this social menace faced by everyone in the society. 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 i think if this menace is not curb totally, it will be reduced to a controllable manner. Imperatively, Parent should endeavours to visits their children in their respective schools and also monitors who their children associate with in the school environment. Most importantly parent should also be an exemplary features to their wards by desisting from secret organizations and live a life worth emulating. Also, school authorities should have high standard discipline with stringent punishments for cultist caught in the school premises or outside the four walls of the school. 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. However, the political leaders supporting them should also be put to judgment because they are damaging the lives of other children to make theirs better, this should not be tolerated if truly we want to curb or eradicate this menace in our society. 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.