

**CULTISM AND NATIONAL INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF BENIN
CITY, EDO STATE**

BY

KELVIN MICHAEL OLUSHOLA

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,

BENIN CITY

OCTOBER, 2023

**CULTISM AND NATIONAL INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF BENIN
CITY, EDO STATE**

BY

KELVIN MICHAEL OLUSHOLA

ART1700879

**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A) HONOURS DEGREE IN
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES AND DIPLOMACY,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY**

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this work was carried out by Kelvin Michael Olushola, in the department of History and international studies, university of Benin , under my supervision.

MR WILLIAMS ORUKPE

Project supervisor

DR. FRANK IKPONMWOSA

Head of Department

Date

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved mother Mrs. Charity blessing Olushola and also to the Almighty God, who gave me the strength to finish this programme. May his name be forever praised.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With unfathomable gratitude, I acknowledge the support and encouragement of my supervisor, Mr Williams Orukpe for the useful suggestions, corrections and encouragement in the course of this research. Your contributions will forever be appreciated.

I also acknowledge the support of numerous other persons who supported in various ways during this programme. The most outstanding are Yetunde esmelrada, my beloved siblings, marvis and elvis, my father Olushola Idowu and also Gideon, peace and sapphire.

Kelvin Michael Olushola

2023

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Before the mid-seventies, receiving an offer to study at a Nigerian university for any degree was considered an honor and a significant achievement for both the aspiring student and their parents. This achievement was so esteemed that it called for celebrations. During that era, there were only a limited number of universities, and only the brightest and most privileged students secured admission into these scarce slots. This was a time when universities were highly regarded as institutions of excellence, upholding strong academic traditions, often referred to as the "Ivory Tower" concept¹ However, the situation has drastically changed today due to the persistent problem of cultism that has infiltrated and firmly rooted itself in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This menace has expanded its reach, and its detrimental effects have become more widespread.² It is cogent to note that cultism, characterized by violence, torture, suppression, and unwarranted intimidation carried out by these cult groups, has not only permeated higher education but has also spread to secondary schools.³

Undoubtedly, the quality of higher education doesn't just depend on what is taught but also on the campus environment. Unfortunately, in many Nigerian universities, issues like crime, unrest, and insecurity seriously disrupt the learning atmosphere. One specific and concerning issue in these institutions is the presence of secret cults. Secret cults have been around in Nigerian society for a while, but what's new is how they operate and the impact they have.

The emergence and behavior of these cults are shaped by the contemporary social problems and economic challenges of our time. Many students join these groups without fully

understanding the negative consequences on their education. Some students believe that cultism greatly affects learning, and they see cult members as often facing difficulties in their studies.⁴

In reality, the existence of these cult groups and their activities have been growing in our universities, causing disruptions in academic programs, loss of lives, insecurity, and damage to campus facilities. Tragically, cult activities have even resulted in the tragic deaths of innocent students and staff, and in some instances, led to the closure of educational institutions.⁵ Despite the existence of Decree 47 of 1989, which stipulates a five-year prison sentence for individuals involved in campus cults, cultism continues to be a significant social problem and a major disruptor of peace and harmony in many Nigerian tertiary institutions. Note that even though some universities have taken actions like suspending or expelling students engaged in cult-related activities and violence, the overall influence of cults has grown stronger.⁶

This persistence may be attributed to the fact that influential university staff and other prominent members of society are known to be associated with secret cults. They often act as mentors or "godfathers" to these young cult members, contributing to the cults' resilience.

The term "cultism" traces back to the Latin word "cultus," which means worship and is typically associated with the worship of a single God or Supreme Being. However, the word 'cultism' has its roots in the Latin word 'Occukre,' which signifies something hidden, secretive, mysterious, or enigmatic. cults can be described as groups of people who share and promote unique beliefs that are revealed exclusively to their members.⁷

To elaborate further, observations about the behavior of cult members exhibit an exceptionally strong and unquestioning devotion to their leader, viewing their leader's beliefs,

ideology, and practices as absolute truth. Cultism is generally associated with engaging in ritualistic practices that are often considered dangerous.⁸

Aims and Objectives

1. To examine the historical development of cultism in Nigeria
2. To examine the types and identities of cult groups operational in Nigeria
3. To interrogate the activities of the Neo Black confraternity group in Benin city
4. To examine the impact of the activities of the Neo Black confraternity group on internal security in Benin city
5. To explore valid methodologies and strategies for stemming cultism in Benin city and Nigeria in general.

Scope of Study

The researcher wishes to state the scope of the study as follows.

That the topic indicates, the study is restricted to cultism in Nigeria, primarily focus on Edo state, Benin and not whole 36 states of Nigeria.

Significance of Study

The study is considered significance for the following reasons. This study will be of value to the individual, students, parents or guardian, educational sector and the society in general.

The result of the study will enable the educational administrators to design strategies they will adopt in dealing with matters that would help to eradicate cultism in universities. It will also act as bare-line data for future researchers who may want to engage in similar study in future .

Methodology

This research work is based on a thorough scrutiny of primary sources. primary data was collected with the aid of structured questionnaire and focused group discussions, oral interview. Universities repented cultists were a huge part of this.

There was also an intensive and extensive search into libraries for published works on cultism in Nigeria, as well as Newspapers, articles, etc.

Literature Review

Mediyanose *Cultism And Education In Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: Policy Implications* ascribed the origins and perpetuation of cultism in the university setting to declining morality, the educational environment, and inadequate administrative practices.⁹

Owoeye, *Campus cults: A study in urban violence*, on the other hand, established strong correlations between weak family backgrounds and susceptibility to secret cult involvement.¹⁰ In these instances, parents themselves might be affiliated with secret cults or might contribute to instances of child mistreatment and disregard. Many families fall short in their primary role of instilling a strong moral base, especially for children from broken homes who might lack exposure to proper societal values.

In *Area Boys, Area Girls*, Rafiu suggests that societal corruption and the modern family's failure to instill proper cultural values in children contribute to cultism.¹¹

Alanamul book *Cultism In Nigerian Schools, The Psychological and religious global* talked about students involved in cult activities often avoid punishment, which can tempt others to join.

¹² This is also one of the reasons that make students want to belong with them as the ability to get away from punishment and trouble gave them the thrill and pleasure they felt they won't get anywhere else. Amadi in his work also made mention that efforts to eradicate cultism in universities, like suspensions, expulsions, arrests, and public awareness campaigns, have not deterred cultists, as their harmful actions persist on campus.¹³ The lack of funding and recreational facilities, such as sports, could be a concern, as students may turn to cultism when they lack positive outlets for their energy.¹⁴

Omoegun and Akanle mentioned this in their work emphasizing that students at their youthful stage has so much vigor and energy for activities but unfortunately being that they aren't good social outlets or recreational facilities they often channel this strength and vigor toward negativity and one of such being engaging in cultism. Adewale's work further suggests that Nigerian university Vice-Chancellors should unite in the fight against cultism and even involve reformed cult members as university staff.¹⁵

Eneh research on the subject matter also emphasizes that cultism in universities is partly a result of national issues like corruption and poverty.¹⁶ Politicians also exploit cultists for their gain. Despite previous research on university cultism, Ogidefa Cultism in educational institutions in Nigeria found that cult groups and related activities are still prevalent.¹⁷

Offiong works helps us to understand how the activities of secret cults has damaging effects on society as first, it leads to loss of life and then in some cases valuable property.¹⁸ Further more,

he emphasis how the activities of cultism can even get their innocent relatives in danger putting them in harm's way especially when there is a dispute between two or more cult Confraternities.

Ogunbameru work recognizes that certain measures needs to be put in place to check mate the violent and problematic issues brought about by cultist.¹⁹ He emphasis that the society, school institutions and also the government having an important role to play when it comes to making sure the issue of cultism is cut down to it's bearest minimum. Ogunsanya work also talks about the problem of secret cult and how it is a threat to students live and how it brings devastating effect even after violent incident has occurs.²⁰ He further emphasis that while the cult individual may have repented from his ways the past actions can still come back to haunt and bring more problems in future.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter One: Background to the study. This chapter is the introduction. It introduces and then outlines the main features of the work. It contains and talks about the literature review, aims and objectives, research methodology, scope of study and the chapter outline.

Chapter Two: Historical background of cultism in Nigeria: This chapter is a historical introduction to the to the origin of cultism in Nigeria and how it rose over time. It examines the root cause of what brought about the need for cult groups and how it was taken over by negative vice.

Chapter Three: The Neo Black Movement in Benin City, Edo state: This chapter studies the Neo Black Movement of Africa also know as the Black Axe Confraternity cult. It studies how it originated in the university of Benin in 1977, how the nature of the cult is and how it was a response to another Confraternity called pyrates.

Chapter Four: Policies and Strategies for Combatting Cultism in Benin city, Nigeria.

This chapter focuses on the negative consequences and effects of cultism in Nigeria. It studies how it affects the students and how it disintegrates society and act as a stombling block to Nation building. This chapter also focuses on certain ways and measures that can be taken to reduce the problem of cultism in Nigeria.

Chapter five: Conclusion

This chapter gives a general overview of the entire research work.

ENDNOTES

1. Itedjere, P. O. (2006).Current issues in the Nigerian educational system. Abraka: DELSU Publishers.
2. Langone, M. (1988).Cultism and questions. Retrieved from <http://www.issuesoncultism.org>
- 3.Adewale, R. (2005). Violence in the citadel: The menace of secret cults in the Nigerian universities. Nordic Journal of African Studies14 (1), 79-98.
4. Echekwube, A. O. (1996).Cultism problems in Nigeria . Lagos: Spero Books Limited.
5. Arijesuyo, A. E. &Olusanya, O. O. (2011).Theoretical perspectives on campus cultism and violence in Nigerian universities: A review and conceptual approach. International Journal of Psychological Studies 3(1). www.ccsenet.org/ijps
6. Echekwube, A. O. (1999).Cultism in our higher institutions: The scourge of a Nation. Lagos: Spero Books Limited.
7. Lalich, J. &Langone, M. (2006).Characteristics associated with cultic groups – Retrieved from <http://www.ksahome.com/>
8. Echekwube, A. O. (2005).Youth restiveness and cultism: Effects on societal development. Lagos Spero Books Limited

9. O. E. Mediayanose, "Cultism And Education In Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: Policy Implications", *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law*, 10, 2016.
10. J. Owoeye, "Campus cults: A study in urban violence. In: OA Ogunbameru (Ed.): *Reading on Campus Secret Cults. Ile-Ife*", Obafemi Awolowo
11. A. Rafiu, "Area Boys, Area Girls", *The Guardian*, 8th April, 1993, p. 15.
12. Alanamul, et.al., "Cultism In Nigerian Schools, The Psychological and religious global" *Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol.6, No.4, 2010, pp.66-72
13. R. N. Amadi, "Communication strategies as panacea for curbing cultism in Port Harcourt based universities", *Reiko international journal of social and economic research*, 2013, vol. 6. No. 3
14. M. M. Omoegun, and F. F. Akale, "Perceived causes and effects of cultism in Nigeria universities. Prevention and solution with counselling implications", *Journal of sociology and Education in African*, 6 (i), 2007 pp
15. R. Adewale, "Violence in the citadel: The menace of secret cults in the Nigerian universities", *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 2005,14(1) pp.: 79-98.
16. O. C. Eneh, "Cultism in the Nigerian Educational Institutions: Incidence,Causes, Effects and Solutions", *The Nigerian Journal of Development Studies* 2008, Vol. 6(2):39-62.
17. I. Ogidefa, "Cultism in educational institutions in Nigeria: causes, possible solutions and counseling implications" 2008. www.devifinder.com (Retrieved on 19/02/2010).

18. Offiong, D. A. 2003. Secret Cults in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.: Enugu, Nigeria.

19. Ogunbameru, O. A. 1997. The sociology of campus secret cult. In: Ogunbameru (ed.), Reading on Campus Secret Cults. Ile-Ife Publishing House

20. Ogunsanya, 2012. Impact of campus secret cult organizations on university administrator. A case study of university of Ibadan, Nigeria. In: Lebean Yann and Ogwanya Mobolaji, The Dilemma of Post-Colonial Universities (eds.), pp. 75-92. Ibadan IFRA and African Book Builders

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CULTISM IN NIGERIA

Introduction

Nigeria is a diverse West African country known for its rich geography and a population that reflects a wide range of ethnicities, cultures, and languages¹. Nigeria is situated in West Africa, sharing borders with Benin to the west, Chad and Cameroon to the east, Niger to the north, and the Gulf of Guinea in the south. The country's landscape is varied, featuring a coastal plain in the south, dense rainforests in the southeast, and savannas that spread across the central and northern regions². The Jos Plateau in the center of the country is known for its elevated terrain and unique rock formations. Nigeria is traversed by several significant rivers, including the Niger and Benue rivers, which meet in the country's central region. These rivers are vital for transportation and agriculture³. Nigeria has a tropical climate, with a wet season from April to October and a dry season from November to March. The southern coastal areas receive heavy rainfall, while the north experiences a more arid climate.

Peoples of Nigeria

Nigeria had a population of over 206 million people, making it the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous in the world⁴. Nigeria is incredibly diverse, with over 250 ethnic groups. The largest ethnic groups include the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, but there are many others, each with its own languages, cultures, and traditions.

English is the official language and serves as a unifying medium of communication. However, numerous indigenous languages are spoken throughout the country, including Hausa,

Yoruba, and Igbo⁵. Nigeria is religiously diverse, with the majority of the population practicing Islam in the north and Christianity in the south. Traditional African religions also persist in many regions. Nigeria has also experienced rapid urbanization, with major cities like Lagos, Abuja, and Kano becoming significant economic and cultural hubs. Lagos, in particular, is one of the largest cities in Africa⁶. Nigerian culture is rich and varied, with a blend of traditional and modern influences. It is known for its vibrant music, including genres like Afrobeat and Highlife, as well as its diverse cuisine, which varies by region.

Social Values and Cultism In Nigeria

Social values and cultism in Nigeria are two interconnected topics that have significant implications for the country's social fabric and security. Nigeria is a diverse nation with numerous ethnic groups, languages, and cultures, each of which contributes to a complex web of social values. These values, while diverse, often share common elements such as respect for elders, communal living, and a strong sense of identity and belonging⁷. However, in recent decades, the rise of cultism has challenged and, in some cases, undermined these traditional social values. Cultism in Nigeria refers to the proliferation of secret and often violent groups or societies, which are primarily found in educational institutions and some communities⁸. These groups often operate outside the law, and their activities include violence, extortion, and other criminal acts. The term "cult" is used in Nigeria to describe these groups, but they bear little resemblance to the conventional notion of cults. Instead, they have evolved into powerful criminal entities with their own initiation rituals, hierarchies, and codes of conduct.

The relationship between social values and cultism in Nigeria is complex⁹. On one hand, traditional social values promote unity, harmony, and respect for one another within

communities. Elders play a crucial role in guiding the younger generation and instilling these values¹⁰. However, as economic challenges and modernization have eroded some of the traditional support structures, some individuals, particularly young people, may seek alternative sources of identity and belonging. This is where cultism often enters the picture. Cults in Nigeria often attract young individuals who feel marginalized or disenfranchised. These groups offer a sense of belonging, protection, and a warped sense of identity that can be appealing to those who feel disconnected from their communities¹¹. This can result in a clash between traditional social values and the values promoted by these cults. Furthermore, cultism often leads to violence and insecurity, destabilizing communities and educational institutions. It poses a grave threat to the stability and development of Nigeria as a nation. The violence associated with cult activities has led to numerous deaths, injuries, and disrupted social life in many regions of the country¹². Addressing the issue of cultism in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. First and foremost, there is a need for improved education and awareness campaigns to teach young people about the dangers of cultism and the importance of upholding traditional social values. Schools and communities must work together to create support systems that empower young individuals and provide alternatives to joining cults.

Additionally, law enforcement agencies must play a significant role in identifying and dismantling these criminal groups. Legal measures should be taken to bring cult members to justice, while also addressing the social and economic factors that contribute to the growth of cultism. In conclusive truth, the relationship between social values and cultism in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted. While traditional social values promote unity and respect, cultism often attracts those who feel marginalized and disconnected from their communities. Cultism poses a serious threat to the stability and security of Nigeria and requires a comprehensive

approach that combines education, awareness, and law enforcement. By addressing the root causes of cultism and promoting traditional social values, Nigeria can work towards a more harmonious and secure future.

Secret Cults as Cultural Groups In Pre Colonial Nigeria

Secret cults in pre-colonial Nigeria were enigmatic and exclusive groups that held a vital role in the cultural and social dynamics of various ethnic communities across the region. These clandestine societies were characterized by elaborate initiation rituals, sacred practices, and a hierarchical structure, and they played essential roles in maintaining order, settling disputes, and preserving traditions¹³. In this introduction, we will explore the significance and diversity of these secret cults that were an integral part of Nigeria's rich historical tapestry.

Ogboni (Ogboni Fraternity):

The Ogboni cult was prevalent among the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria. It was primarily an exclusive men's society. The Ogboni had a complex system of initiation, and members were often elders who held influential positions in the community¹⁴. They were responsible for maintaining order, settling disputes, and conducting rituals to appease the ancestors and the earth goddess, Oduduwa. Members were known for their distinctive regalia, which included staffs and metal staff heads, as well as their secretive meetings in sacred groves¹⁵.

Ekpe (Egbo Society)

The Ekpe society was prominent among the Efik and Ibibio people of southeastern Nigeria. It was a men's association with various hierarchical grades and secret initiation ceremonies¹⁶. The Ekpe was responsible for law enforcement, settling disputes, and preserving

the customs and traditions of their communities. Members wore masks and colorful costumes during their performances.

Nze-na-Ozo (Title Society)

Among the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria, the Nze-na-Ozo was a prestigious title society. It was open to both men and women, but predominantly male. Membership was often associated with social status, and initiation involved elaborate rituals and sacrifices.

The Nze-na-Ozo members were responsible for upholding tradition, offering sacrifices to the ancestors, and advising the leadership in the community.

Abiku (Spirit Children)

The Abiku cult is primarily associated with the Yoruba people but was also present among other Nigerian ethnic groups. It revolved around beliefs related to children who were believed to be reincarnations of spirits. Initiations were not as formal as in other cults, but rituals and ceremonies were performed to protect Abiku children from harm and ensure their survival.

Mami Wata (Water Spirit Cult):

The Mami Wata cult is associated with various ethnic groups across Nigeria. It revolves around the veneration of water spirits and their female embodiment. Members made offerings to the spirits, and the cult was known for its syncretic nature, often blending indigenous beliefs with elements of Christianity. These secret cults were integral to the religious, social, and political life of pre-colonial Nigerian societies. They contributed to the maintenance of order, preservation of traditions, and the spiritual well-being of their communities. While many of these cults have

evolved or disappeared over time, their influence on Nigerian culture and history remains significant.

Western Education And The Rise Of Modern Cultism In Nigeria

Western education has played a significant role in shaping the socio-cultural landscape of Nigeria, but it has also had unintended consequences, including the rise of modern cultism. In this write-up, we will explore the influence of Western education on Nigerian society and delve into the emergence and growth of modern cultism in the country. Western education was introduced to Nigeria by colonial powers, primarily the British, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It aimed to provide formal schooling and spread European values and knowledge. Over the years, Western education has brought several benefits to Nigeria, including improved literacy rates, better access to information, and the development of a skilled workforce. However, it has also had some unintended consequences. Western education has significantly improved the literacy rate in Nigeria. People have gained access to reading and writing, which has allowed for better communication and understanding of various subjects. It has contributed also to the modernization of Nigeria by introducing new technologies, systems, and ideologies. This has led to advancements in various sectors, including healthcare, infrastructure, and commerce.

The introduction of Western education has had a profound impact on Nigerian culture. Traditional customs and practices have been challenged, and new cultural elements have been adopted from the West.

Rise of Modern Cultism in Nigeria

Modern cultism in Nigeria refers to secret societies and organizations that often engage in criminal activities, violence, and other forms of social disruption. The rise of modern cultism can be attributed to several factors:

- Socioeconomic Factors
- Peer Pressure
- Breakdown of Values
- Political Manipulation

Socioeconomic Factors

Many young Nigerians turn to cults due to economic hardships, unemployment, and lack of opportunities. Cults offer a sense of belonging and financial support¹⁷.

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure and the desire to fit in with certain groups can lead individuals to join cults. These groups promise protection and power¹⁸.

Breakdown of Values

The erosion of traditional values due to Western education's influence has left a void that modern cults exploit by offering their own set of beliefs and values.

Political Manipulation

Some politicians and influential figures have used cults as tools for their own gain, further perpetuating their existence¹⁹.

Western education has undoubtedly brought many positive changes to Nigeria, but it has also inadvertently contributed to the rise of modern cultism²⁰. It is essential to address the root causes of cultism, such as socioeconomic challenges and the breakdown of traditional values, to mitigate its negative impact and create a more stable and prosperous society.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the historical background of cultism in Nigeria is marked by a complex interplay of historical, social, political, and cultural factors. It has evolved from its initial roots in student activism and regional movements into a nationwide problem characterized by violence, criminality, and a profound influence on Nigerian youth culture. Addressing cultism in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach, including education, community engagement, law enforcement, and a commitment to eradicating its underlying causes.

ENDNOTES

1. Abiodun, J.O. (1967) Urban Hierarchy in a Developing Country, *Economic Geography*, 43(4): 347-67.
2. Adejuyigbe, O. (1990) The Issue of Relevance in Geographic Research with Reference to Nigeria, in B. Ayeni. and A. Faniran (1990), *Geographical Perspectives on Nigeria's Development*, Nigerian Geographical Association, 238-256.
3. Barbour, G.M. (1990), *Geography in Nigeria* in B. Ayeni and A.
4. Bennett, R.J. (1985) Quantification and Relevance, in R. J. Johnston (ed.) *The Future Of Geography*, New York & London: Methuen.
5. Faniran, A. (1990) Concern for Geography, in B. Ayeni & A.
6. Onokerhoraye, A.G. (1984) *An Introduction to the History of Geographic Thought*, Benin City: Department of Geography, University of Benin.
7. Ajila C.O (2005). *Cultism And Its Socio-Psychological Implications On Students In Tertiary Institutions In Nigeria*. *Ejsr*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1-7.
8. Alumona, I. M. & Amusan, L. (2019). Youth Cultism, Crime and Lethal Violence in Nigerian Cities. *African Renaissance*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 11-29. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2516-5305/2019/v16n2a1>.
9. Aprebo, F.C.Y. & Achonwa, U. O. (2020). Unguided Societal Vices From Childhood Development Effects On Students' Pedagogical Accomplishment: An Empirical Study Of

Selected Public Schools In Bwari, FCT, Abuja. *International Journal of Innovative Psychology & Social Development*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 70-76.

10. Asiyai, R. I. (2012). Moral values in Nigerian schools in the 21st Century and National Development. *Journal of Pedagogical Thought*, Vol. 8, 91-100.

11. Assibong, P. A. (2002). A Comparative Analysis of Cultism and The Nigerian Phenomenon. *International Journal of Social Science and Public Policy*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 175-190.

12. Eche, G. A. & Amakiri, M. E. (2017). The Role of Moral Education in Curbing Cultism in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. *Journal of Moral Education in Africa*, Vol. 3, 261-272

13. Ayittey, George B. N. 2010. "Traditional Institutions and the State of Accountability in Africa." *Social Research*. Vol. 77, No. 4.

14. Mazama, Ama. 2009. "Ogboni Society." *Encyclopedia of African Religion*. Edited by Ama Mazama and Molefi Kete Asante. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publication.

15. E.O James "Ogboni: The Secret Cult of the Yoruba"

16. Rosalind I.J. Hackett. (1987) "The Secret Cults of Africa: The Anthropological and Psychological Significance of Initiations and Ceremonies in African and African-American Secret Societies"

17. Onodarho H. (2010). *The dangers of cultism*. Benin: Ella Press Ltd.

18. Onuogha A. (1998). *Cultism and violence. Ways of checking them*, Champion 27th June.

19. Onyehalu S. A. (1986). *Secret cult in Nigeria institutions*.

20. Oyemwinmina C.and Abieyi S. (2015). Cultism: A destructive concept in educational development of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, An International Multidisciplinary Journal, September 2015, 221 -236.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEO BLACK MOVEMENT IN BENIN CITY

Introduction

Cult groups in Nigeria refer to secretive and often controversial organizations that have gained notoriety for their activities. Some prominent cult groups include the Eiyé Confraternity, Pyrates Confraternity (also known as the National Association of Seadogs), and others. Originally, these groups were founded to promote brotherhood, resist oppression, and address social issues. However, over the years, many have been linked to violence, criminal activities, and political influence. Cult groups like these often have multiple factions, each with its own values and practices, resulting in a complex and diverse landscape of organizations with both positive and negative aspects. This chapter explores some of the popular cult groups while focusing on the Black Axe confraternity.

Pirates Cult Group

The Pyrates Confraternity, often referred to as the National Association of Seadogs, is a notable Nigerian confraternity with a rich history dating back to 1952¹. It holds the distinction of being considered the pioneering confraternity in Nigeria. Founded at the University of Ibadan, the Pyrates Confraternity was initially established with a vision of fighting societal injustices, such as corruption and oppression, and promoting brotherhood among its members. Unlike some of its counterparts, the Pyrates Confraternity is known for its intellectual and non-violent approach to addressing these issues. Over the years, it has retained a reputation for its commitment to social justice and its unique blend of camaraderie and intellectualism. While the

group has evolved and faced challenges, it continues to have a significant presence in Nigerian society, exemplifying the complex nature of confraternities in the country.

Eiye Cult Group

The Eiye Confraternity, founded in the 1960s at the University of Ibadan, is one of the prominent Nigerian confraternities. The Eiye Confraternity was initially established with the aim of combating oppression, fostering brotherhood, and promoting the welfare of its members. It was founded as a response to the socio-political challenges and inequalities faced by Nigerian students at the time. The Eiye Confraternity employs symbols and signs inspired by the imagery of the "Airlords" and is often associated with bird imagery, such as eagles and hawks.

Over the years, some factions of the Eiye Confraternity have been associated with campus clashes, violence, and criminal activities, similar to other Nigerian confraternities². However, some branches have maintained a focus on community development, social responsibility, and promoting positive change in society.

The Buccaneers Cult Group

The Buccaneers Confraternity, established in 1972 at the University of Ibadan, is one of Nigeria's notable confraternities. This group has a complex history and structure, with some branches focusing on positive activities and others having been associated with violence and criminal behavior. Like many Nigerian confraternities, the Buccaneers Confraternity has both a positive and negative side, with some members working towards community development and social responsibility, while others have engaged in violent clashes and criminal activities. It exemplifies the diverse and multifaceted nature of confraternities in Nigeria.

The Vikings Cult Group

The Vikings Confraternity, also known as the Norsemen, is a Nigerian secret society that originated in 1984 at the University of Port Harcourt. This confraternity is part of a larger phenomenon of student fraternities and secret societies in Nigeria, which often have complex and varied characteristics. The Vikings Confraternity was founded with an initial focus on providing a social and academic support network for its members. Like many other confraternities, it sought to create a sense of brotherhood among students who faced the challenges of university life. During its early years, it was relatively non-violent and emphasized community service and intellectual growth.

The Vikings Confraternity uses Norse mythology and imagery as a source of inspiration for its symbolism, drawing from Viking lore. This includes the use of Norse gods and warrior figures in their symbolism and practices.

Over time, the Vikings Confraternity, like some other Nigerian confraternities, has faced controversy and transformation. Some factions have been accused of engaging in violent clashes, criminal activities, and even political manipulation. These controversial activities have led to bans and legal actions against the group in some regions.

The Neo Black Movement

The Neo Black Movement of Africa (NBM), also known as the Black Axe Confraternity cult, was established in 1977 at the University of Benin in Nigeria. It originated from the vision of a group of nine undergraduate students led by Nicholas Idemudia, known as IbnGodidi the Saddest. Their concern was the plight of the Black Man, and they founded the Black Axe Confraternity as a response to the extreme actions of the Pyrates confraternity cult.

Inspired by the ideals of the Black Panthers, the Black Axe Confraternity adopted a philosophy centered on Blackism, confrontation, and taking action. This ideology guided the activities of the cult group. The primary goal of the Black Axe Confraternity was to monitor and counter the actions of the Pyrate confraternity, which they considered a significant rival on campus. Additionally, they aimed to contribute to the empowerment and protection of people of African descent.

In 1994, former members of the Black Axe Confraternity, who were often referred to as "the Lord," decided to relocate the activities of the cult group away from university campuses. This decision came about because of the escalating violence between the Black Axe cult and rival groups on Southern Nigerian university campuses. As a result, they made a significant change - they altered the name of the Black Axe Confraternity to the Neo Black Movement of Africa. This new identity gained prominence and began operating in numerous Nigerian universities during the late 1980s. This shift was driven by a desire to distance themselves from the violence associated with their previous name and to establish a different image and presence.

About twenty years ago, the Black Axe Confraternity was active on the University of Benin campuses. They faced allegations of being behind violent conflicts that erupted not only at the University of Benin but also at other universities in Southern Nigeria. Additionally, they were accused of engaging in activities such as kidnapping, drug trafficking, carrying out hired killings, participating in election manipulation, and displaying political aggression in Edo state as well as other states in the South-South and South-East regions of Nigeria.

Symbol and Trends Of Black Axe Confraternity Cult

Numerous reports in Nigerian newspapers have linked a series of shootings and killings, both on and off university campuses, to the Black Axe Cult group. One particularly tragic incident occurred in 1999 at Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, where students were brutally murdered. This event prompted former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to issue a stern ultimatum to the university authorities, giving them six months to find a lasting solution to the issue of cult groups. For quite some time, the Black Axe has been known for its involvement in intense conflicts with other confraternities across many universities. Their reputation has been marred by these clashes, which have had a negative impact on the academic environment and the safety of students³. Most members of the Black Axe Confraternity cult predominantly hail from the two major tribes in Southern Nigeria, which are the Yoruba and Igbo⁴. Besides its place of origin, the University of Benin, this cult has expanded its presence and activities to universities like Ambrose Ali University in Ekpoma, Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile Ife, University of Lagos, University of Ibadan, and University of Nigeria Nsukka, among others. The symbol of the Black Axe cult group is an upright axe with a broad blade attached to a short handle. Their motto is "Aye! Axemen." Notably, this cult group has adopted a policy of violent confrontation as its official approach. Each individual member within the cult is referred to as the "Axe-neb" or the "butcher." The primary goal of each cult member is their willingness to incite violence on campus, which has unfortunately become a defining characteristic of the group.

The Black Axe confraternity cult underwent several name changes over time. It started as Black Baraccans, then became the Brotherhood of the Baraccans, and later transformed into the Black Axe Confraternity. Eventually, it adopted the name Neo Black Movement of Africa (NBM). With this change in name came a new symbol - the axe, which became the emblem of

the Neo Black Movement of Africa. The attire worn by cult members includes white shirts, black trousers, a yellow tie, and a cap adorned with a yellow ribbon. The white represents purity and a clean mind, black symbolizes solidarity with the black race, boosting self-esteem, and the yellow color signifies the intelligence of the members. These changes reflect how the group evolved and rebranded itself over time while emphasizing certain values and ideals through their symbolism and attire⁵.

Initiation Ceremony

The initiation ceremony, which the cult members refer to as "Blending," occurs outside the university campuses where the Black Axe Confraternity cult is active. The gathering of new recruits for this initiation is informally called "Jolly or Jollification." This allows undergraduate members to become familiar with the cult's activities.

Originally, the Black Axe cult group aimed to promote awareness among Black people, fight against neo-colonialism, and uphold human dignity. However, these early ideals have deteriorated into self-centered and intensely violent behavior. Violence has now become the cult's official policy. During initiation ceremonies, new members undergo demanding tasks that involve physical exercises and endurance tests, referred to as the "FM or Football Match." These tasks include being whipped, having parts of their bodies cut, drinking human blood and other concoctions, and pledging allegiance to the group's sanctified deities. During the ceremony, members circumambulate around a bonfire in the bush, reciting incantations and other invocations known only to cult members. Most of these initiation ceremonies take place at night and in secret locations, away from public knowledge⁶.

Oath Taking and Violent Activities

Newly initiated cult members take a solemn oath of secrecy that binds them to the group. In this pledge, they promise never to disclose the cult's secrets to outsiders, commit to following the cult's rules and regulations, and vow to unquestioningly obey the cult leaders. This oath holds immense importance for the cult members and influences their actions and behavior within the group. It's a fundamental commitment that shapes their involvement in cult activities⁷.

The Black Axe Confraternity and other campus cult groups actively engage in political wrongdoing and acts of civil disobedience. This behavior has had a significant impact on Nigerian society, leading to election rigging, hooliganism, and violence. With the advent of democracy in Nigeria, the country witnessed a surge in political violence, not only at the national level but also at the local and state levels.

Some politicians have aligned themselves with criminal elements, including corrupt law enforcement agents, who are easily influenced by money. Unfortunately, the Nigerian police and other security agencies have earned a reputation for widespread corruption, with dishonest officers using their positions to support the illicit activities of certain political figures.

Additionally, a select few Nigerian politicians and student cult members have been linked to violent activities in the country. Over the past two decades, these cult members have thrived, thanks in large part to support from influential politicians, particularly state governors and senators, who use them as a means to settle political scores and achieve their objectives. This troubling association between politics and cult violence has had a detrimental effect on the nation's political landscape⁸. The federal ministry of education in conjunction with the National University Commission (NUC) highlighted that there has been an increase of cult related violence in many Nigerian Universities. Many of these violence erupted between the Black Axe

Confraternity cult and other rival cult groups on the campus⁹. Several Nigerian newspapers have documented the severity of violence in major universities in Southern Nigeria: On May 7, 2009, the Daily Trust newspaper reported a violent clash between members of the Black Axe Confraternity and the Vikings cult at the University of Abuja. This confrontation resulted in fatalities and numerous injuries among students¹⁰.

Similarly, on March 15, 2010, This Day newspaper covered a bloody clash between the Black Axe cult and the Markvites cult, leading to the deaths of nine cult members¹¹. In the same year, on October 22, the Vanguard Newspaper reported a deadly clash between the Black Axe cult and the Maphites confraternity cult at Ambrose Alli University in Ekpoma. This altercation resulted in the deaths of seven cult members and several other students being injured, including innocent bystanders¹². These newspaper reports underscore the recurring and concerning incidents of violence involving different cult groups in various universities in Southern Nigeria. Likewise, on October 27, 2011, The Leadership newspaper highlighted the concerning level of activity associated with the Black Axe Confraternity cult at Delta State University. This led to frequent conflicts between the Black Axe Confraternity and other rival cults, occurring almost daily on the university campus¹³.

For instance, on August 11, 2011, the Vanguard Newspaper reported a clash between the Black Axe cult group and the Mafia cult group, resulting in the tragic loss of students' lives at the university¹⁴. These incidents underscore the persistent and troubling violence linked to the activities of various cult groups within the university setting. Furthermore, there were frequent violent clashes between the Black Axe Confraternity and their main rival, the Eiyé Confraternity. For example, on March 12, 2009, This Day newspaper reported an incident where suspected Black Axe cult members kidnapped the son of a local government council member in Edo state¹⁵.

The boy was released after a substantial ransom was paid. Similarly, on May 26, 2011, the Vanguard newspaper disclosed that eighteen individuals lost their lives in cult-related violence between the Black Axe cult and the Eiye Confraternity at the University of Benin. Likewise, on August 7, 2012, PM News reported a conflict between members of the Black Axe cult and the Vikings Confraternity cult at Ambrose Alli University in Ekpoma, resulting in the brutal murder of two cult members. These incidents illustrate the frequent and deadly confrontations between these rival cult groups¹⁶. Likewise, on July 7, 2011, the Daily Trust newspaper reported a conflict between the Black Axe cult and the Aiye Confraternity at Ekiti State University. This confrontation resulted in thirteen students sustaining injuries¹⁷. Similarly, on March 19, 2012, the Vanguard newspaper covered a violent cult war between the Black Axe cult and the Aiye Confraternity in the areas of Ijanikin and Ikorodu in Lagos State¹⁸.

Additionally, on June 17, 2013, the Vanguard newspaper noted that a minimum of twenty individuals, including cult members, were affected in various parts of Benin City due to the ongoing cult war between the Black Axe cult and the Aiye Confraternity¹⁹. These events illustrate the persistent and destructive conflicts between these rival cult groups in various locations.

Negative Impact Of Black Axe Confraternity

The activities of the Black Axe Confraternity cult have had a severe impact on the Nigerian university system, particularly in the southern region. Here are some of the consequences:

- Disruption of Academic Calendar
- Living in Bondage
- Expulsion

- Life-Threatening Situations

Disruption of Academic Calendar

The university's academic schedule has been constantly disrupted due to ongoing violence between the Black Axe cult and rival groups, both on and off campus. This violence has significantly hindered the progress of higher education in the country. Academic activities have often been halted or postponed, leading to extended academic calendars, which can be frustrating for innocent students.

Living In Bondage

Living in a cult often means surrendering your freedom. When members take their secretive oaths during initiation, they essentially give up their rights to the cult and become completely devoted to the leaders. This means they have no say in their own lives and must follow the orders of the cult leaders without question. Any disobedience comes with serious consequences.

Expulsion

Cult members' education suffers because they skip classes and exams, ultimately leading to academic failure and expulsion from the university. Unfortunately, many cult members end up getting kicked out of school due to poor performance and cheating. These dismissed students often become dropouts and may turn to criminal activities like robbery, kidnapping, or even hired violence to make a living. Some of them even retaliate against teachers who failed them or students who exposed their wrongdoing, using dangerous weapons like guns, knives, axes, or acids.

Life-Threatening Situations

The violent clashes between the Black Axe Confraternity and rival cults on campuses have resulted in the loss of lives and damage to university property worth millions of Nigerian Naira. Many cult members, as well as innocent students, have tragically lost their lives. These conflicts can erupt suddenly and escalate, potentially spreading beyond the campus. Cult members, no matter where they are, live in constant fear and insecurity.

In conclusion, the Black Axe cult's actions have messed up the university schedule, causing delays in students' education. These clashes have also led to loss of life and destruction of property, creating an environment of fear and uncertainty for everyone involved.

ENDNOTES

1. Adewale, R. 2005. Violence in the citadel: The menace of secrete cult in the Nigerian universities. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 14 (1):79-98.
2. Ajayi, I. A. et al. 2010. Menace of cultism in Nigeria tertiary institution: The way out. Isaacabiiodun@yahoo.com. Haastrup2006@yahoo.com (Retrieved 16/02/2015).
3. Fasanmi, J. I. 2006. Management of cultism in Nigerian institutions of higher learning. In: A. A. Owoseni, W. B. Ajayi, S. Ajiboye, B. O. Omoyajowo (eds.), *A Book of Readings on Cultism and Its Attendant Effects on Nigerian Institutions of Higher Learning*, pp. 115-123. A Publication of the College of Education: Ikere-Ekiti.
4. Offiong, D. A. 2003. *Secret Cults in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions*. Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd.: Enugu, Nigeria.
5. Ibeh, A. E. 2005. The psycho-sociological imperatives of cultism in Nigeria institutions of higher learning. Being a paper presented at a seminar in *Cultism and its Effects on Nigeria Institutions of Higher Learning*, November 23 and 24, 2005
6. Jekayinkfa, A. 2008. *Cult Activities in the Nigerian Institutions of Higher Learning*. File: /E/Co/Cult Activities in the Nigerian Institutions of Higher Learning. (Accessed 13/2/2015)
7. Ogidefa, I. 2008. Cultism in educational institutions in Nigeria: Causes, possible solutions and counselling implications. www.devifinder.com (Retrieved on 19/02/2010).
8. Omoegun, M and F. F. Akanle 2007. Perceived causes and effects of cultism in Nigerian universities: Prevention and solution with counselling implications. *Journal of Sociology and Education in Africa*, 6 (1):79-97.

9. Ogunbameru, O. A. 1997. The sociology of campus secret cult. In: Ogunbameru (ed.), Reading on Campus Secret Cults. Ile-Ife Publishing House.
10. Daily Trust (Abuja), 7 May 2009. Abubakar Sadiq Isah. "Uniabuja Expels Five Over Cult Activities." (Factiva)
11. Daily Independent (Lagos), 18 March 2010. Wisdom Patrick, Onoja Auduand Segun Adeleye. "Thirteen Killed in Fresh Jos Violence-Cult Clash Claims Sixin Sagamu." (Factiva).
12. Leadership (Abuja), 27 October 2011. Kola Niyi-Eke. "Battling Cultism inDelta."(Factiva).
13. Daily Independent (Lagos), 27August 2012. Anolu Vincent and Bassey Inyang."Gunmen Kill Ex-CBN Director, Nwosu, in Owerri." <<http://dailyindependentnig.com/2012/08/gunmen-kill-ex-cbn-director-nwosu-in-owerri/> (Accessed 26 Nov. 2012).
14. Daily Independent (Lagos), 1 August 2011. Emmanuel Nzomiwuand Femi Ogbonnikan. "Ten Die, Houses Razed in Enugu Tanker Explosion." (Factiva).
15. Daily Trust (Abuja), 3 May 2012. Nurudeen Oyewole. "21Cult Groups Infiltrate Secondary Schools'." (Factiva)
16. Daily Trust (Abuja), 20 September 2011. Hir Joseph. "State Security Services Raid Cultists Hideouts, Arrests 28 Suspects". (Factiva).
17. Daily Trust (Abuja), 7 July 2011. Doyin Adebusuyi. "Pandemoniumat Ekiti Varsityas Cultists Exchange Gunfire." (Factiva).
18. Leadership (Abuja), 21 February 2011. Kola Niyi-Eke."Cultists Kill Pregnant Women, 6 Others." (Factiva).

19. Leadership (Abuja), 27 July 2012. Patrick Ochoga. "Six Feared Killed in Renewed Cult War in Edo." (Factiva).
20. Ogunsanya, 2012. Impact of campus secret cult organizations on university administrator. A case study of university of Ibadan, Nigeria. In: LebeanYann and Ogwanya Mobolaji, The Dilemma of Post-Colonial Universities (eds.), pp. 75-92. Ibadan IFRA and African Book Builders.
21. Opaluwah, A. B. 2009. Cultism and Nigerian campuses: The way out. [http://www.gamji.com/article4000/News_4512: htm](http://www.gamji.com/article4000/News_4512.htm) (Retrieved on February 20, 2009)
22. Ogunbameru, O. A. 2004. Personality dimensions to cultism in Nigeria tertiary institutions: A socio-biological perspective. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 16 (2):91-98.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLICIES AND STRATEGIES FOR COMBATTING CULTISM IN BENIN CITY, NIGERIA

Introduction

Cultism, a pervasive social issue, has entrenched itself as a formidable challenge in Benin City, Nigeria. This phenomenon, characterized by clandestine and often violent activities of organized groups, poses a significant threat to the social fabric, security, and well-being of the community.¹ In response to this escalating concern, various policies and strategies have been implemented to curb the proliferation of cultism and its associated societal ills. Benin City, with its rich cultural heritage, has faced the adverse effects of cultism on multiple fronts, including education, community safety, and economic development.² This chapter will critically analyze existing policies and strategies employed by government agencies, law enforcement, educational institutions, and community organizations to combat cultism. It will also look at the effects cultism has on students, the nation and society at large.

Effect of Cultism On Students

Being part of a cult seriously damages one reputation in society.³ People often make negative comments and disrespectful remarks when they hear someone is a cult member. If a student involved in a cult starts using charms or dabbling in occult practices to aid their cult activities, it's a path that can lead to a ruined life.⁴ There's a real risk of losing one's sanity or even facing death for not following the strict rules associated with these occult charms.⁵

Cult members can bring turmoil to their families, and their actions might even lead to their parents or close relatives experiencing high blood pressure (hypertension), which could result in premature death.⁶ This means that their involvement in cults doesn't just affect them but can have devastating consequences for their loved ones as well. The disruption caused by cult activities doesn't stop at the individual level; it extends to the emotional and physical well-being of their family members. Parents and close relatives can be deeply affected, both emotionally and physically, when they learn that their loved one is involved in a cult. The stress and worry brought on by this revelation can contribute to the development of high blood pressure (hypertension), a serious health condition. In severe cases, the strain can lead to premature death, compounding the tragic consequences of cult involvement on the entire family. There has been a significant rise in violent crimes targeting individuals, including armed robbery, involvement in prostitution, students dropping out of school, murders during late-night activities, possession of illegal firearms, drug abuse, cases of rape, threats, and other cruel behaviors. This increase in criminal activities is a concerning trend that affects society as a whole. Also, if a person involved in a cult commits a crime, they can be found guilty and have a criminal record. This label as an ex-convict can greatly hinder their chances of finding a good job or holding a responsible position in the future. It makes it very difficult for them to secure meaningful employment or appointments down the line.

Furthermore, having a criminal record as an ex-convict casts a long shadow over a cultist's future prospects. It's not just about finding a job or getting appointed to positions; it can also impact various aspects of life. This label can affect their relationships, reputation, and overall quality of life. So, the consequences of cult involvement go beyond the present, making it challenging for them to build a successful and fulfilling future.

Effect of Cultism on National Development

The impact of cultism on national development is significant and they include:

- Human Capital Development
- Preservation of Human Life
- Erosion of Moral Values
- Adverse Impact on Nigeria's Education System

Human Capital Development

Cult activities have led to the loss of many young lives and valuable property, particularly among the youth population. These secret societies often consist of students aged between 20 to 35 years.⁷ Such losses have adverse effects on a country's economic and social progress. To put this in perspective, it was reported that from 1996 to 1999, over three hundred and fifty Nigerian students lost their lives due to power struggles among secret cult groups in tertiary institutions. Many others were seriously injured or left with life-altering injuries as a result of cult-related violence. This not only robs the nation of its young talents but also hampers its overall development.

Preservation of Human Life

When individuals are brutally killed in the name of cultism, it's as if human beings are being treated like animals. This is a stark reminder that there needs to be a fundamental reconsideration of the situation within educational institutions. It's truly distressing that some cult members take pride in the number of lives they've ended. Such actions raise serious questions

about human values and morality, and they represent a significant loss to the progress and development of the nation.

Erosion of Moral Values

Cultism is linked to a range of unethical behaviors such as rape, extortion, physical harm, theft, bribery, and cheating – all of which go against the moral standards expected in higher education institutions. Cultists are the type of students who disrupt university exams, bring weapons or dangerous substances into exam halls, and intimidate teachers to get higher grades. This behavior not only undermines the integrity of Nigeria's education system but also casts doubt on the credibility of Nigerian certificates on the global stage. It's a stain on the nation's reputation.⁸

Adverse Impact on Nigeria's Education System

Cultism has severely harmed our education system. It disrupts the academic calendar due to clashes and often forces universities to suspend their programs. This disruption raises doubts about the credibility and reliability of our education system.⁹ Cult Involvement Wastes the Investments in Students: The significant investments made by parents and society in these students yield no positive returns when they get involved in cults.¹⁰ Instead, their engagement leads to decreased productivity, hinders national development, and fosters a culture of violence, fear, and insecurity. This means all the resources put into their education go to waste, and the consequences are detrimental to the nation as a whole.¹¹

Parental Role in Fighting Cultism in Nigerian

Cultism is a significant problem plaguing our higher education institutions and society today. Completely eliminating cultism is a challenging task, but there are steps that can be taken to significantly reduce its negative impact on our universities and society as a whole. Eradicating secret cults requires a coordinated effort involving the government, educational institutions, parents, religious organizations, and all aspects of our social structure. This strategy for control should focus on several key areas: the home environment, the educational system, religious institutions, government policies, and society as a whole. By addressing cultism comprehensively and involving all these elements, we can make meaningful progress in curbing this issue.

Firstly, Parents should avoid involvement in secret cults themselves and actively discourage their children from joining such groups. They should also lead by example, instill strong moral values, and encourage their children to have a sense of morality and a reverence for God. Secondly, Parents should engage in counseling, closely monitor their children's academic and social lives, and collaborate with the school to address any negative behaviors or traits in their children.¹² They must also establish a close partnership with the school authorities to collectively find lasting solutions to the issue of cultism. This teamwork is essential for effective intervention.¹³

Strategies To Combat Cultism In Nigerian Universities

Cultism is a significant social problem affecting our higher education institutions and society today. Completely wiping out cultism is a challenging goal, but we can take steps to significantly reduce its harmful impact on our universities and society as a whole.¹⁴ To eliminate

secret cults, we need a collective effort involving the government, educational institutions, parents, religious organizations, and all parts of our social structure.¹⁵

This control strategy should target several key areas: the family environment, the educational system, religious groups, government policies, and society at large. By addressing cultism comprehensively and involving all these elements, we can make substantial progress in tackling this issue.

Family Role

The battle against cultism begins within the family, and parents have a crucial role to play. They should take the following responsibilities seriously: Parents should refrain from being involved in secret cults themselves and actively discourage their children from joining such groups. Setting a positive example and instilling strong moral values and a sense of reverence for God in their children. Engaging in regular counseling, closely monitoring their children's academic and social lives, and collaborating with the school to address any negative behaviors in their children. Parents must establish a close working relationship with the school authorities to collectively find a lasting solution to the issue of cultism. This teamwork is essential for effective intervention and prevention.

School Role

To combat cultism within the university setting, certain measures should be taken. Firstly, Admission should be granted based on both academic achievements and moral character. Additionally, the institution should establish an effective administrative system that can address students' academic, social, and welfare needs.¹⁶ It's essential to also conduct a thorough orientation program for all incoming students, where they are informed about the recruitment

tactics used by cults and made aware of the harmful consequences of cultism on campus. This helps educate students about the dangers and implications of getting involved in such groups.

Moreso, the school authorities should prioritize maintaining discipline on campus and ensure that students have access to essential facilities and services that cater to their well-being. Creating a conducive environment for studying is crucial.¹⁷ Lecturers should serve as role models for their students. They should set a good example by starting classes on time and imparting moral values that align with societal norms. Any staff member, whether academic or non-academic, who is found to be involved in cult activities should face appropriate disciplinary action.¹⁸ It's important to also conduct regular surprise searches of rooms that are suspected to belong to cult members.

Lastly, the campus Security Department should be strengthened with proper training, equipment, and funding to effectively police the campus and maintain security. This is vital for the safety and well-being of the university community.

Government's Role

In addressing cultism, the government has a significant part to play. Firstly, Politicians and those in government positions should restrain their desire for personal wealth and prioritize the well-being of Nigeria over their own interests. They should lead by setting positive examples.¹⁹ Government policies should go beyond symbolic gestures and focus on practical measures to tackle issues like unemployment, corruption, poverty, and illiteracy.

Government officials and educational authorities should refrain from using cult groups to advance their personal agendas. The strict enforcement of Decree 47 of 1989 is essential.

Government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and the media should launch comprehensive campaigns against secret cults and their destructive influence. Raising awareness about the dangers of cultism is crucial in combating this problem. The government and school authorities should establish effective anti-cult groups to combat cultism on campuses.²⁰

Each tertiary institution in Nigeria should have guidance and counseling services specifically for students and staff. These counselors should have a responsibility to systematically report any suspicious or unjustified advances made by students towards teachers or vice versa. It's crucial for the government to enforce the law impartially, regardless of a person's background. Anyone found guilty of cultism, whether from a wealthy or modest family, should face appropriate consequences. This will deter those considering joining secret cults or those already involved. The government should work to reduce the high cost of education in Nigeria, making it more accessible to everyone. This would help alleviate some of the factors that push students towards cultism due to financial pressures.²¹

Society's Role

Society encompasses various elements like homes, schools, religious groups, businesses, and government. Children grow up in homes, receive education in schools, and eventually become part of the larger society. The responsibilities of society in reducing cultism in higher education are numerous.

Firstly, Society should value and respect hardworking, honest, and morally upright individuals instead of idolizing those with wealth. Religious organizations should refrain from honoring fraudsters simply because they are rich.

Secondly, Leaders should embrace a sense of morality and cease excessive pursuit of material wealth at the expense of the less fortunate. Also, Communities where universities are located should support these institutions by providing reliable information about individuals and groups engaged in questionable activities.²² Landlords should be encouraged to thoroughly vet students or tenants moving into areas with a high student population. All such reports should be shared with school authorities or law enforcement agencies. This collaborative effort helps maintain a safe environment.

Policy Recommendations

Addressing the increasing menace of cultism in Nigerian tertiary education and its detrimental effects on both academic institutions and society requires a multifaceted approach. Firstly, efforts should be directed towards enhancing learning environments on campuses. This involves improving facilities and living conditions to minimize perceived social strain, a key factor contributing to the allure of cultism among students. In tandem with this, there is a pressing need for an institutional overhaul. Educational institutions should undergo comprehensive restructuring to ensure they can provide for all students and address any injustices through peaceful and lawful means. This ensures a fair and supportive academic environment.

Parents play a crucial role in preventing their children from succumbing to cultism. Emphasis should be placed on instilling a solid moral foundation in early formative years. Teachers at primary and secondary levels should further build on this foundation, fostering a global perspective that emphasizes rationality as a distinguishing factor from lower animals.

Regular evaluation of students' academic performance, practical skills, and behavior by parents is essential. Positive changes in these aspects indicate that the transformative goals of education are being achieved. The fight against cultism should not be confined to educational institutions alone but should begin at the broader societal level. Government intervention is necessary to outlaw all secret cults, including influential ones, with citizens engaging in mass actions against these groups. Strengthening campus security units is crucial for effective monitoring and prevention of unwholesome situations.

Introducing capital punishment for individuals involved in cult activities can serve as a strong deterrent. To ensure effective enforcement, a well-structured institution needs to be in place, capable of swift and decisive actions against offenders. Students themselves need to exercise caution in their social interactions. Choosing friends wisely and avoiding associations with cultists is paramount to prevent attracting the wrath of rival cults. Being vigilant about social gatherings and observing roommates for unusual signs or slogans is crucial for personal safety. Encouraging campus publications to expose cult activities can play a significant role in raising awareness among students and staff. This exposure serves to ridicule the activities of these groups, acting as a deterrent for individuals considering joining their ranks.

In conclusion, by adopting a comprehensive and collaborative approach encompassing various aspects of campus life, societal norms, and legislative measures, we can work towards curbing the menace of cultism in Nigerian tertiary education.

ENDNOTES

1. Atuoma U. O., Nwosu F. I (2015). Cultism in Nigeria tertiary institutions and its effects on National development, *Journal of Research and Development*, 22 (2), 1 - 8.
2. Obamwonyi, S. E. (2004). Evaluation of security activities in tertiary institution in Nigeria: A case study of university of Benin. (Project paper Unpublished): Pp. 53-58
3. Obadere T. O. (2007). Eradication of cultism and examination malpractice in our society and Institutions of learning. Udoh V. C and Ikezu U. J. (2015).
4. Causes, Effects and Strategies for eradicating cultism among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria: A case study of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra state Nigeria, *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6 (22). 22 –28.
5. Ufuoma, E. O. (2007). *The Confession of a master Cultist*. Benin: Uniben Press. Pp. 16-36.
6. Orakwe E. (2000) *Secret Societies Activities in Nigeria* Enugu: Wisdom Publishers Ltd.
7. Adeyanju A. (2000), *Cultism and Survival of the Nigerian education system*, *Journal of Education Development*, 3: 1-5
8. Onuogha A. (1998). *Cultism and violence. Ways of checking them*, *Champion*
9. Okwu, J. (2006). A critique of students vice and effect on quality of graduates of Nigeria tertiary institutions, *Journal of Social Science*: 12 (3)193-198.
10. Omoegun M. M. and Akale, F. F. (2007). Perceived causes and effects of cultism in Nigeria universities: Prevention and solution with counselling, implications, *Journal of sociology and Education in African*, 6 (i), pp. 79 –92.

11. Ogidefa I. (2008). Cultism in educational institution in Nigeria. Causes, possible solutions and counselling implications www.derifider.com Retrieved on 19/02/2010
- 12 Rischler 2002
13. Opuluwah 2000
14. Offiong D.A. (1999). Secret cults in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company
15. Gimba A. (2002). Notebook B.Sc [Violence] MA. Cultism Nigeria Tribune 21 October.
16. Odidefa I. (2008). Cultism in Educational Institutions in Nigeria: Causes, Possible Solutions and Counseling Implications. [w.w.w. devifinder. com](http://w.w.w.devifinder.com)
17. Ogunbamem, O. A. (1979). Personality dimensions to cultism in Nigeria tertiary institutions. A Socio-biological perspective, *Journal of Human Ecology*. 16(2): 91 -98
18. Oguntuase, B. (1999) Violence and Cultism in Tertiary Institution: The way out. Paper delivered at stNas Annual Conference on 21 August.
19. Onyehalu S. A. (1986). Secret cult in Nigeria institutions
20. Onodarho H. (2010). The dangers of cultism. Benin: Ella Press Ltd.
21. Oyemwinmina C.and Abieyi S. (2015). Cultism: A destructive concept in educational development of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, *An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, September 2015, 221 -236.
22. Ogunade, R. (2002). Secret Societies and Cultism activities in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions in *Leading Issues in General studies*, University of Ilorin Press.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This work examined cultism and national insecurity in Benin city, Nigeria. The research problem is a complex social phenomenon that is caused by factors that are considered diverse and multifaceted. The study reveals that cultism is truly a dangerous seed that has taken its root in the heart of various schools and universities and furthermore has also caused a lot of damages to the nation, taking the lives of students, causing destruction of properties, causing pain, fear and panic in the heart of parents and also turning bright youths into nonsensical people, to say the least. The study also looked at the intricate relationship between social values and cultism in Nigeria is a critical concern for the nation's social fabric and security. Traditional values, including respect for elders and communal living, face challenges from the rise of cultism, particularly in educational institutions. Cults, deviating from conventional notions, have evolved into violent criminal entities, attracting marginalized individuals seeking identity and belonging. This clash between traditional values and cult ideals threatens Nigeria's stability, leading to violence, injuries, and disruptions in communities and educational settings. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach: education campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of cultism, fostering support systems in schools and communities, and active law enforcement to dismantle these criminal groups.

In pre-colonial Nigeria, secret cults played a pivotal role in various ethnic communities, maintaining order, settling disputes, and preserving traditions. Examples include the Ogboni among the Yoruba, the Ekpe among the Efik and Ibibio, the Nze-na-Ozo among the Igbo, Abiku associated with the Yoruba, and Mami Wata across ethnic groups. Despite their disappearance or evolution, these cults significantly influenced religious, social, and political life, contributing to

the historical tapestry of Nigeria. Western education, introduced by colonial powers, has brought positive changes such as improved literacy and technological advancements to Nigeria. However, unintended consequences include the rise of modern cultism. Economic hardships, peer pressure, the erosion of traditional values, and political manipulation contribute to the growth of these secret societies. Addressing the root causes, including socioeconomic challenges and value breakdowns, is essential to mitigate the negative impact of modern cultism and ensure a stable and prosperous society.

This paper also examined that the Cult groups in Nigerian universities have become a notable and intricate aspect of student life, each with its own unique history, values, and societal impact. This report delves into the dynamics of several prominent cults, highlighting their evolution, purposes, and consequences. The Black Axe Confraternity's symbol, an upright axe, symbolizes its commitment to violent confrontation. Over time, the group underwent name changes, reflecting its evolution and attempts to establish a different image. The initiation ceremony, known as "Blending," involves physical tests and pledges. Originally focused on promoting awareness and fighting neo-colonialism, the Black Axe's early ideals have given way to self-centered and violent behavior. New members take a solemn oath of secrecy, binding them to the group's rules. The Black Axe Confraternity, like other campus cults, has been implicated in political wrongdoing, contributing to election rigging, hooliganism, and violence.

The activities of the Black Axe Confraternity have disrupted academic calendars, leading to extended schedules and frustration for innocent students. Living in the cult often means surrendering freedom, with disobedience carrying serious consequences. Expulsion from universities, life-threatening situations, and involvement in criminal activities are unfortunate outcomes for many cult members. To put in a conclusive note, the presence of cult groups in

Nigerian universities presents a complex and multifaceted landscape. While some strive for positive change, others have been linked to violence and criminality. The impact on academic schedules and the lives of students is significant, emphasizing the need for comprehensive measures to address the root causes and consequences of cult activities in the Nigerian educational system.

Having looked at the black axe confraternity group, this paper also went on to examine the consequences of cultism on its victims and we were able to look at some of the problems it caused including, Social Reputation Damage, Life Ruin Through Occult Practices, Family Turmoil and Health Issues, Rise in Violent Crimes and many more. This study further shows that the problem of cultism doesn't just end on the cultist individuals alone but rather goes on ahead to affect the nation as well. We were able further to see that the negative Effects of Cultism on National Development had severe consequences as well. One of these problems we looked at included, Human Capital Loss where we saw that Cult activities lead to the loss of young lives, hindering economic and social progress and furthermore, the Instances of violence and power struggles among cults contribute to significant casualties. We also saw that Cultism is linked to unethical behaviors, disrupting exams, bringing weapons into halls, and undermining the integrity of Nigeria's education and that their activities disrupt academic calendars, raise doubts about the credibility of the education system, and waste societal investments in students.

This paper has also been able to conclude that in terms of strategies of combatting cultism in Benin City as well as the nation, Nigeria, parents have a major role to play. In a nutshell, not just the parents but also the schools, the church, the government and also society in general. Firstly, Parents play a crucial role by refraining from cult involvement, instilling moral values, counseling, and collaborating with schools to address negative behaviors. Parents should

lead by example, instill moral values, engage in counseling, and establish a close working relationship with school authorities. Admission based on academic and moral criteria, orientation programs, maintaining discipline, and conducting regular surprise searches are essential. In respect to the Government, they should prioritize national well-being over personal interests, enforce practical policies, launch anti-cult campaigns, and establish effective anti-cult groups on campuses. Society should value honesty, support institutions in reporting suspicious activities, and discourage the excessive pursuit of wealth at the expense of morality. Addressing cultism requires a comprehensive, collective effort involving families, educational institutions, government, and society at large. Prioritizing moral values, enforcing laws impartially, and raising awareness are crucial in curbing this pervasive issue.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

List of Informant

Name	Relationship with the research	Place of interview	Date of interview
Mr dele ibrahim	Sociologist and anthropologist	Benin city	7/9/23
Mr joseph nwokoro	Police officer	Benin city	17/9/23
Mr femi segun	Police officer	Benin city	11/10/23
Mr kingsley osazee	Former cult member	Benin city	16/10/23
Mr martins ishokhare	Former cult member	Benin city	28/10/23

Secondary sources

Textbooks

Adewale, R., Violence in the Citadel: The Menace of Secret Cult in the Nigerian Universities. 2005

Fasanmi, J. I., Management of Cultism in Nigerian Institutions of Higher Learning. 2006

Ibeh, A. E., The Psycho-sociological Imperatives of Cultism in Nigeria Institutions of Higher Learning. 2005

Jekayinkfa, A., Cult Activities in the Nigerian Institutions of Higher Learning. 2008
Ogunbameru, O. A., The Sociology of Campus Secret Cult. 1997

Ogunbameru, O. A., Personality Dimensions to Cultism in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions: A Sociobiological Perspective. 2004

Ogunsanya., Impact of Campus Secret Cult Organizations on University Administrator: A Case Study of University of Ibadan, Nigeria. 2012

Omoegun, M. and F. F. Akanle., Perceived Causes and Effects of Cultism in Nigerian Universities: Prevention and Solution with Counseling Implications. 2007

Offiong, D. A., Secret Cults in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions. 2003

Articles

Adewale, Rotimi., Violence in Citadel: The Menace of Secret Cults in Nigeria Universities," Nordic Journal of African Studies. 2005

Ajol, D., Nigeria Cultism on Campus and Judiciary Due Process. 2002

Atayi, B., Violence and Culture in Nigeria Institution. 2002

Atuoma, U. O., Nwosu, F. I., Cultism in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions and Its Effects on National Development, Journal of Research and Development. 2015

Ekeanyanwu, N. T. & Igbinoba, A., The Media and Cultism in Nigerian Higher Institutions of Learning: A Study of Coverage, Treatment, and Relevance," International Journal of Communication. 2007

Ibeh, A. E. The Psycho-sociological Imperatives of Cultism in Nigeria Institution of Higher Learning, Seminar in Cultism and Its Effects on Nigeria Institutions of Higher Learning. 2005

Ogunade, R., Secret Societies and Cultism Activities in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions, Leading Issues in General Studies. 2002

Okwe, J. 'As Black Brad Rule Unlimited," In Adewale, R. *Violence in the Citadel: The Menace of Secret Cults in the Nigerian Universities. 2002

Ufuoma, E. O. . "The Confession of a Master Cultist." Benin: Uniben Press. 2007

Udoh, V. C., & Ikezu, U. J. "Causes, Effects, and Strategies for Eradicating Cultism among

Students in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria: A Case Study of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State," Journal of Education and Practice. 2015

Online Sources

Ajayi, I. A. et al. Menace of cultism in Nigeria tertiary institution: The way out. Isaacabiodun@yahoo.com. Haastrup2006@yahoo.com (Retrieved 16/02/2015).

Daily Independent (Lagos), 27 August 2012. Anolu Vincent and Bassey Inyang."Gunmen Kill Ex-CBN Director, Nwosu, in Owerri." <<http://dailyindependentnig.com/2012/08/>.

Ogidefa, I. Cultism in educational institutions in Nigeria: Causes, possible solutions and counselling implications. www.devifinder.com (Retrieved on 19/02/2010). 2008

Opaluwah, A. B. Cultism and Nigerian campuses: The way out.

[http://www.gamji.com/article4000/News4512: htm](http://www.gamji.com/article4000/News4512.htm) (Retrieved on February 20, 2009)