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**SECRET CULTS IN TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: CON-
SEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

Tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria are more and more becoming unrest. Violence, rape, arson, victimization and murder among others are the recent reports due largely to the activities of secret cults. Parents are blamed for their nonchalant attitudes and indiscipline as the principal cause of the upsurge in cultism among other factors. Therefore, parental role, the role of schools, religious organizations and government can help to curb the menace in our learning establishments. However, the fear is that campus cult can be temporarily halted but regeneration is possible.

INTRODUCTION

As human society becomes ever more complex and civilized but unrest with intense disorder, a good education takes on greater importance. However, a good educate cannot be achieved in a violent environment. Schools will soon be described as war zones, houses of fear and intimidation, instead of havens of enlightenment and a place of knowledge (Anon, 1995).

Today, most tertiary educational institutions in Nigerian which used to be renowned centres of academic excellence like Ahmadu Bello University, University of Ife, University of Nigeria Nsukka, University of Lagos, etc. also experience the activities of cultism. The common secret cults include Black Axe, KKK, Buccaneers and Eiyé Confraternity, etc. They cause crime, violence, sexual immorality, religious crisis and political instability that constitute crises nation wide in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions. Anon (1996) reported that in recent times, relaxation joints in universities have become meeting places for secret - cult where all sort of nocturnal activities take place. In other countries of the world school violence has created a crisis for schools. In Canada, Toronto's *Globe and Mail* carried the headline: "Schools are turning into danger zones" (Anon, 1995).

In Nigeria, there is no Newspaper without carrying information on campus cultism as many times as the crisis occur. Instead of improving, the frequency of occurrence increases.

The problem of cultism on campuses of learning has become very alarming and one is not sure if there is any tertiary institution in Nigeria without on form of cult or the other.

However, the problem originates in the community and the schools simply reflect the problems already planted in the society. It is believed to have started by some of our prominent early Nationalists who used the opportunity to achieve nation building by defend-

ing the cause of the nation. Today occultism is academic disaster in our learning environment. Therefore, this paper focuses on its causes, consequences and implications in our learning establishments. Possible solutions are also highlighted.

CAUSES OF CAMPUS CULTISM

Why students engage themselves in campus cultism is far beyond common knowledge. However, some possible factors are considered to lure student to participate in campus cultism. Among them are:-

Parental Factors: The family normally provides a child with his first experience in life. They can consciously set themselves up as advisors and the child may approach them for advice on a wide range of matters including education. The Bible says 'pampering young ones leads to disaster' (Proverbs 29:21). In the pearly stages of development, the family may be the child's only reference group and as such it will have an important influence on the formation of his motivational traits and behavioural styles (Hayes and Hopson, 1972).

Some parents are cult members and their children imitate and emulate them while they are in the schools. In this case the role of the parents is seen as disservice to nation building.

Ayeyalemi (1977) has already blamed parents for their nonchalant attitudes and indiscipline as the principal cause of the upsurge in cultism in tertiary institutions.

Influence of Peer Group: Morrish (1982) observed that peer group relationships are common in school. Peer group can improve the life of an individual and can equally worsen the state of an individual. Students feel happy when working with their companions or mates, and gradually transfer some of the feelings of attachment they worked at home to their friends. Apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:33 that "bad associations spoil useful habits".

This situation reflects that a student can diffuse the concept and practice of cultism to his peer group easily through conviction and deceit.

Influence of Hard Drugs: Youths of now a days have higher rate of drug abuse (Anwana, 1997). The influence of hard drugs can lead to criminal behaviour. They usually pretend to be highly disciplined and live honourable lives at their place of worship but actually live a double life style. There is no doubt that influence of drug can ruin one's personality and capable of inducing a student to join any devastating society such as campus cults.

Broken Homes: Child abuse and neglect may mean the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, maltreatment and these may induce the child to join secret societies perhaps due to lack of parental care. Sometimes because of the breakdown in family life there are many today who may be referred to as fatherless boys or motherless children. The probability of indiscipline among such children is high and hence can easily form or join campus cult. **Availability of Arms:** Many youths in schools carry arms. Gun according to youths should not be idle, must be put to use. The use can be for self defence or committing violence. With the possession or ownership of gun, some of the students are interested to identify themselves with the campus cult members. Several reports on the murders of students by fellow student using daggers or guns is rampant especially during cult - cult battle. In other countries of the world, possession of arms is not uncommon. According to University of Michigan study, it is estimated that students in the United States of America carry some 270,000 gun, not counting other arms to school every day (Anon, 1995).

The Use of Force in Attaining Ends: The present generation's acceptance of the use of force in attaining ends is alarming. Some students join campus cult to enable them threaten some lecturers to pass them during examinations. Ubani (1994) maintains that cult on campus offers one an opportunity of passing examinations without reading for it; even if it means harassing and intimidating lecturers at gun point generously award precious marks. In addition youths decided to join campus cult to victimize his fellow students for refusing to cooperate with them. This victimization is high between male and

female students particularly when female students show no slightest interest in the demand for love. In the name of campus cult such female students are always raped and stabbed even to death.

Gross Social Moral Decadence:

Most youths show no respect to rules of law and respect for parents and elders. The society is corrupt to wider dimension. Moral decadence is the order of the day, honest people are now suffering, children delinquencies are in the increase and immoral values made the youths to believe that joining of campus cult is not an offence or out of place from what is obtained in the society since there is nothing to write home about the national moral standard.

Campus Popularity: Ubani (1994) agrees that students want cheap popularity. They decide to join secret cult to meet this aim. To them committing brutality and murder create popularity and greatness among the members.

CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS OF CAMPUS CULT-ISM

There are bitter consequences and implications of the cult activities in schools. It affects the member at the long run and also affects the schools and society. Some of the consequences and implications are:

- Violence, rape, arson, victimisation and murder;
- It is a threat to national security
- It has future implications: By breeding armed robbers. Assassins will be in the increase and the expelled students will be a nuisance to the society;
- Democracy will suffer while there would be gross disrespect to authorities and parents;
- Standard of education will be worsen as teachers will be forced to award marks at gun points. Thus, it is anti-academic activity;
- The educational goals are defeated as youths are no longer responsible and instruments for national building;
- Schools will soon be turned into war zones;

- Many students are already discouraged for residing in the school hostels since nightare no longer safe;
- Students population in the schools with frequent report of violence due to occult activities will be relatively low as parents will discourage their children from attending such schools.
- Forced closure of schools due to the activities of secret cults prolong the years of students programmes. The general economy is therefore affected adversely;
- Time and money are spent by government to control the menace because of its effects. Such money should be spent in developmental projects;
- Life is unsafe and uncertain.

SOLUTIONS

For a long time now parents and guardians of students in tertiary educational institutions have called on the Federal Government to take drastic security measures to curb secret cult activities in tertiary institutions. While it is true that various measures have over the years been taken by the government and school authorities to tackle the problem, it appears as if nothing has been done about it. The following suggestions will be useful to curb the menace in higher institutions of learning.

Parental Role: Parents should imply parental care and live exemplary life by being diligent, honest, hard-working and disciplined. Parents should know that intellectual skills originate in the home and remain important forces during school years (Gronbach 1966). They should know about their children's schools, aims and attitude toward the values and beliefs they hold. The role of parents to curb secret cults also include:

- Should become acquainted with their children's teachers and try to build a good

- working relationship with them;
- Should control what children watch on televisions and how much they watch;
- Should try to help children choose wholesome friends and they should be their children best friend;
- Should advise their children not to join secret cult due to the consequences, and also advise their children not to involve themselves in taking hard drugs.

The Role of Government: Government should urgently mastermind the activities of various organisations, tertiary Institutions in order to identify loopholes that are exploited by secret cult suspects to escape identification, arrest, prosecution and convictions. Secret cult suspects bail should be extremely difficult such that a similar case of armed robbery should be applied.

The Role of Schools: Schools should be vigilant over cult activities on the campus. Enlightenment of students and dialoguing with students over their grievances are known to reduce the cultic problems in University of Lagos for the past one year (Ajeyalemi 1997). Executive management should have frequent meeting with the parents concerning the problem of cultism on campus. Compulsory checking of cult marks on the student body is long overdue. The schools like colleges of education were poised to uplift the standard of teachers education in the country and to deal decisively with cult activities (Odumosa 1997). This aim must be maintained.

Anti cult Organisation: Schools, and government should establish anti secret cult organisation to report daily to the authority on matters of campus secret cult. This organisation should help to identify the cult members while their activities should also remain as 'Secret' as Secret cult. The law enforcement unit of secret cult should be established. They should work fast when they are alerted of cult activities.

The Role of Non-cult Members: It is believed that students know

themselves but they find it difficult and risky to report cult suspects to the school authority. They should individually leak information to the authority through the information box since they are the targets when ever the crisis sets in.

The Role of Religious Leaders: Church should develop variety of activities and instill fear in the youths concerning the membership of secret cult. Children should be involved in moral instruction according to bible (Ephesus 6 : 1 - 8). Religious leaders should preach and do by examples of discipline, selflessness, charity and honesty.

FUTURE HOPE

It is my hope that the more efforts are rendered to bring campus cult to a standstill the more strategies are designed by the cult members to escape suspicion and arrest, because it is difficult to know who controls who.

There is hope that senior cult members may likely plant the seeds of their cultism even at secondary school levels, hence campus cultism can be temporarily halted but regeneration is possible.

Increase in the number of broken homes care free children is not uncommon in our society today. These children lack parental influence and control. Parental care helps children think before impulsively acting, bearing in mind that actions have consequences.

As armed robbers are not completely phased out in our society despite the death sentence by firing squad; so may campus cultism. It would be difficult for cult members to withdraw after long term of experience in cult activities for any reason of fear. Remember 'habit is easy to form but hard to break'.

There are other social vices in Nigeria schools (example marketing of Examination Scores, sexual harassment, favouritism and exploitation using handouts as scapegoat). Just like cultism they have negative role to play in academic environment, yet serious measures have not been taken to discourage them. Therefore, the cult members may

believe that to stop their activities is 'robbing Peter to pay Paul'.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of cultism in Universities and other allied institutions by unscrupulous students has compounded the existing social vices in our society.

It's control is not a task of a single organisation either police or military but it should be

'our task that must be done' for we cannot 'spare the rod and spoil the child'.

There is need again for schools to become places of learning, discipline, training of the minds and character.

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