

THE RESURGENCE OF SECRET CULT: FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SOCIETAL IMPETUS

Aniekan Edet Esuong, (Ph.D) and Vincent I. Ekpang

Abstract

The study was carried out to ascertain the effect of family structure and societal attitudes toward students' secret cult involvement tendency. The study utilized ex-post facto research design since the incident studied has already taken place. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used in drawing up year three students' from the two institutions, the sample of two hundred and thirty (University of Calabar 140 from faculty of Sciences, while Cross River University of Technology Calabar 90 from faculty of Management sciences) was used in the study. A well validated and reliable instrument which consisted of 28 items with four points Likert scale type was used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used in testing null hypotheses 1 & 2 while contingency chi-square was used in testing hypothesis 3 at .05 alpha significant levels. These results emerged; a significant relationship between separated families and students' tendency to involve in secret cult activities, there is a significant relationship between intact families and students' tendency to involve in secret cult activities, and recommendation on the way forward were made based on the findings.

The emergence of secret cults in educational institutions which threaten both staff and students' appears to be the last straw in the crisis of problems to be contended with by school administrators. With the use of

intimidation and creation of confusion and anarchy, cult members commit all sorts of acts of indiscipline and crime including blackmailing teachers to pass them in examinations in which they performed very poorly.

Secret cult is a source of worry to the Nigerian society, in spite of the effort made by various school authorities and the successive government and non-governmental bodies. Indeed, the resurgence of secret cults' activities has reached such alarming proportions that university administrators and parents are having sleepless nights over the maintenance of law and order on the campuses; and everybody, including government and the national economy, is counting their losses. Coupled with the recent upsurge of events in our body polity which comes with obvious challenges that threaten the unity of the country, as the relentless violent attacks, mindless and unwanted killings of Nigerians of both divides by the Boko Haram sect which has assumed a disgusting dimension. The sad reality is that government of the day has failed grossly in contending with the growth of this sect and like the campus cult, its activities have now turned the country into unexpected death zone, where suicide bombing and bomb explosions have now become daily occurrences like rituals. Taken together, the negative effects of all these secret cults (Boko Haram and Campus secret cult) are monumental. The extent of damage done to the psyche of the students, parents, the Nigerian population as a whole and national productivity is thus presented in this paper for the world to appreciate the trauma that

the Nigerian nation has been experiencing on account of the presence of secret cults within and outside her educational institutions.

A secret cult within an educational institution may be seen as a group of students bound together with an oath of secrecy to invite strange, supernatural and mysterious powers to guide, guard and protect them (Igborgbor, 2006).

The American Family Foundation(2008) defined cults as "a group or movement exhibiting great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing, and employing unethical manipulative or coercive techniques of persuasion and control (e.g. isolation from former friends and family, debilitation, use of special methods to heighten suggestibility and subservience, powerful group pressures, information management, suspension of individuality or critical judgment, promotion of total dependency on the group and fear of leaving it), designed to advance the goals of the group's leaders, to the actual or possible detriment of members, their families and or community."

Family structure refers to the nature of the child's family which impinges on students' tendencies to join secret cult group, whether nuclear /intact family or divorced /separated or remarried. The family structure consisting principally of the father, mother and children forms the union, which is universally accepted family type.

The collapse of the family institution is also a strong contributing factor to the current upsurge in the menace of campus secret cults. In the words of Abati (1994) many children no longer have parents they can look up to for inspiration. The existing family only sets standard that many students who join campus cults probably have parents who belong to one secret cult group or the other. Such children grow up with the awareness that their parents

have a special room, which no one else is permitted to enter. These rooms are filled with all sorts of emblems and effigies, which nobody can touch. Such parents are also discovered to go out at night often times to attend meetings that are never discussed at home.

The Daily Times of March 22, 1994 in its editorial comment also put the blame on the rise in cultism on parents. According to the editorial "the reign of secret cults and their mind-rending activities are a manifestation of decay in modern day families". Due to the ferocity (race) for material aggrandizement, parents have abandoned their traditional moral responsibilities. This has consequently brought about little concern for proper upbringing of the child by parents who in share escapism transfer this burden to the child's teachers.

Ademola (1990) states that family is the closest social institution to which every human being belongs; even an animal too comes from a family of pedigree. The family is the primary agent of socialization; social beliefs and behavioural expectations are introduced to a child first within the family circle. According to him, the family is the foundation upon which the life of a child is built, if the foundation is solid, firm and devoid of rancor, the child is supposed to succeed in life. But if the life of the child is built on broken home, parental negligence, lack of moral training and negative influence of cult members, the child is bound without doom saying for the crises of life.

Denga (1998) asserted that: "The way parents bring up their children can influence their adult behaviours including tendency to joint cult groups. Children who are not shown love by their parents show no love to other people's children from families that place a high premium on aggression may perceive aggressive tendencies as the societal norms. They may think of violence as the status quo and one of the ways they can impress their parents who encourage aggressiveness. Children who have never

enjoyed freedom at home may even be afraid of freedom which tertiary educational institutions offer. Children who came from hostile and uncaring families are more ready to join the secret cults than those who came from loving and caring homes. He concluded that divorce, polygamy, frequent fighting, argument and quarreling in the homes destabilize the children and lead them into deviant action like delinquency and secret cult tendencies”.

Fawole 1994 in Ogunbameru (1997) maintained that, among the crises of life is the decision to join a secret society. A child who comes from a broken home would be exposed to parental negligence; the parents may not necessarily be separated but may be living a cat and a mouse life that is a life full of quarrels and arguments. A child who grows up under that environment cannot be expected to be morally educated. Moral training to him may be a nightmare, merely because he comes from a divided home. This child must have been watching the type of life that his parents are living and honestly before he could know it, he must have been imbued with that unenviable culture. For that child to have grown up under that environment is another pre-requisite for him to live loose and reckless life. He is ready to go haywire in any new environment he finds himself because of his family background. Such students are the ones who champion the course of secret societies on campus. They are ready to give their lives to the development of that society on campus.

Gecas and Schalbe (1998) conducted a survey follow-up research to investigate the relationship between home influence and adolescent social adjustment. They tested the influence of parental behavior and adolescent self-esteem and came out with a significant result. Their samples comprised 128 families each comprising a mother, father and at least

one adolescent child (aged between 17-19). The items on the instrument comprised mostly items that were tested on the face validity from commonly used measures of parental behavior. The result of this study proved that adolescent self-esteem is more positively related to adolescent perception of parental behavior and home influence. It is the researcher’s assumption therefore, that parental model and home influence induce students’ involvement in secret cult activities.

Nnweke (2002) explained that the issue of step parents contributed to unhealthy association in our youth’s world. According to him, poor relationship between the child and a step parent could lead to or be characterized by deprivation, insecurity, fear, hostility and lack of sympathy and love. Where such youth finds stifling and unbearable family relationships, they take to secret cults as place of escape and solace.

The researchers are of the view that, the collapse of family relationship, paves way for frequent disputes between parents, broken homes, separation and divorce which leads to children’s tendency to join secret cult.

It has been noted that the Nigerian society has wittingly or unwittingly provided an enabling environment for all forms of crises and crimes among which is the problem of campus secret cults. Scholars and authors like Abati (1994), Okeowo (1994) and many others agreed that there is in Nigeria a general state of anomie or normlessness. The argument of this paper is that the Nigerian society has replaced honour with dishonor as a standard attitude; vanity has become a popular commodity. Those who therefore get involved in various forms of criminal behaviours have accepted the societal goal of success but since the opportunity to achieve the goal by legitimate or institutional means is not easily accessible to all, they yield to the urge to achieve the goal by the use of

illegitimate means like secrete cult and Boko Haram.

Another way by which the society has contributed to the growth and activities of secret cults is the open display of power and the use of violence (Abati 1994). Today, the Nigeria's society has adopted violence as a convenient means of conflict resolution. Assassins now stalk the land like enforcement agents, armed robbers have also become public heroes. Our youth who watch all these acts would also result to violence in order to achieve their goals.

Elebeleye in Ogunbameru (1997) blamed the kind of stereotype the society parades, members of these secret cults wield considerable public power. The power includes political, economic, social and religious influences. These influences and power are definitely not lost on the younger generation, who hardly wait till any length of time to launch their own secret cults particularly as early as the opportunity avails itself.

Fagbemi (1991) observed that, the *laissez faire* attitude of the Nigerian society breed's individuals who would not want to respect constituted authorities. As such, governance is by violence and our polity is such that opponents are harassed by thugs and sometimes assassinated without qualms. The other aspect is the fact that our society gives credence and confers certain privileges and influences in social and political circles on membership of secret organizations. This gives effrontery to our youth who are aspiring to be leaders of tomorrow to get enrolled in campus secret cults in order to have their interest defended and protected.

Problem of the Study

Cult involvement or tendency to involve in cult activities represents significant challenges to the school administrators,

teachers, students, parents, mental health practitioner and entire Nigerian society in general. Observation over the years showed that secret cult activities in institutions of higher learning remain one of the most serious problems facing the educational system today. Secret cult activities include stealing, rape, burglary, thuggery, bullying of other students, drug abuse, rioting, murder, truancy, looting, lying, assault, destroying of school and public property, examination mal-practice and disobeying school rules and regulations and many others.

A lot of measures have been adopted to curb this ugly situation. For example in 1989 the military government promulgated Decree No. 47 (prohibiting secret cult activities/practices in schools) in order to stem the tide of campus secret cults. In spite of the Decree and its accompanying stiff penalty, members of campus secret cults still make mockery of it in some Universities by openly displaying posters urging other students to join them. In spite of the various steps to check or stop the problem of secret cults in institutions of higher learning, it has continued to rear its ugly head and has persisted. It is on this basis that the researchers still deem it expedient to critically examine the influence of family structure and the societal impetus on the resurgent's secret on campuses.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at establishing a relationship between family structure and students, tendency to involve in secret cults and investigate students' opinions on how the Nigerian society fuels the resurgence of secret cult activities.

Research Questions

The following research questions were put forward to guide this study;
Does family structure relate with students' tendency toward secret cult involvement

How does the Nigerian society give impetus to the resurgence of secret cult activities?

Research Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses were stated in order to answer the above research questions, these are; There is no significant relationship between separated families and students' secret cult involvement tendency.

Students' from intact families do not significantly relate with students' tendency towards involvement in secret cult activities.

There is no significant gender relationship in the students' opinion on Nigerian societal attitudes toward the resurgence of secret cult activities both within and outside the campuses.

Methodology

The study was carried out to ascertain the effect family structure and societal attitudes on students' tendency to involve in secret cult activities. The study utilized ex-post facto research design since the incident studied has already taken place, University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology Calabar students constituted the population of the study. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used in drawing up year three students' from the two institutions, the sample of two hundred and thirty (UNICAL 140 from faculty of Sciences, while CRUTECH 90 from faculty of Management sciences) was used in the study. The only measuring instrument used for the data collection was called College Students Club Tendency Questionnaire (CSCTQ). It was designed by the researchers and sent to test and measurement experts in the faculty of education for validation. A pilot test was also conducted to establish the reliability of the instrument using test retest reliability estimate in two randomly selected departments in Cross River State College of Education Akamkpa, this validated and reliable instrument which consisted of 28 items with four points

Likert scale type was used in gathering data for the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used in testing null hypotheses 1a &b while contingency chi-square was used in testing hypothesis 2 at .05 alpha significant levels.

Result

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between separated families and students' secret cult involvement tendency. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used in testing the above hypothesis.

Table 1
Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between Separated Families and Students' Secret Cult Tendency N=105

Variables		Σx	Σx^2	Σxy	r
Separated families	x	2698	13490	14374	
Secretarial tendency	y	3012	15060		.9985*

Significant at .05 alpha, while critical r =.1946, and DF=103

The result from table 1 revealed a significant relationship between separated families and students' tendency to involve in secret cult activities, in that the calculated r value of .9985 is greater than the critical r value of .1946, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected based on that premise.

Hypothesis 2

Students' from intact families do not significantly relate with students' tendency towards involvement in secret cult activities. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was used in testing the above hypothesis.

Table 2
Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between Intact Families And Students' Secret Cult Tendency N=125

Variables		$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum xy$	rt
		$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$		
Intact families	X	2536	12135	12825	.9946*
Secret cult tendency	Y	2729	13046		

Significant at .05alpha level with degree of freedom 123 and r critical value of .1946

The result from table 2 revealed a significant relationship between intact families and students' tendency to involve in secret cult activities, in that the calculated r value of .9946 is greater than the critical r value of .1946, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected based on that premise.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant gender relationship in the students' opinion on Nigerian societal attitudes toward the resurgence of secret cult activities both within and outside the campuses. Contingency Chi-square Analysis was used in testing the above hypothesis

Table 3
Contingency Chi-square Analysis on the Gender Relationship in the Students' Opinion on Nigerian Societal Attitudes Toward the Resurgence of Secret Cult Activities N=230

	Negative attitude	Positive negative	Total	DF	Calculated X ²	Critical X ²
Male	3738 3596.3	1937 2078.8	5675	1	35.31*	3.84
Female	2599 2740.7	1726 1584	4325			
Total	6337	1726	10000			

Significant at .05alpha level with degree of freedom 1 and X² critical value of 3.84

Note the bold face represent the observed frequency while the roman type represent expected frequency.

The data analysis from hypothesis 3 clearly shows a significant gender relationship in the students' opinion on Nigerian societal attitudes toward the resurgence of secret cult activities both within and outside the campuses in that the calculated value of X² equal to 35.31 which is greater than the X² critical value of 3.84, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The result of data analyzed from hypotheses one and two indicated a significant relationship between family structure and students' tendency towards involvement in secret cult activities. This showed that the family each child came from played a dominate role in the life of such children therefore affirming what the previous researchers found years ago, for instance Abati (1994), Ademola (1990), Denga (1998) and others attributed the current upsurge in the menace of secret cults to the collapse of the family institution. In their words many children no longer have parents they can look up to for inspiration and the existing family structure set too weak standards that provide a fertile ground for their wards to join secret cult groups, such children grow up with the awareness that their parents have a special room, which no one else is permitted to enter. These rooms are filled with all sorts of emblems and effigies, which nobody can touch. Such parents are also discovered to go out at night often times to attend meetings that are never discussed at home. Also Ogunbameru (1997), and Newspaper editorial blames the reign of secret cults and their mind-rending activities on "manifestation of decay in modern day families". Due to the race for material aggrandizement, parents have abandoned their traditional moral responsibilities. This has consequently brought about little concern for proper upbringing of the

child by parents who in shared escapism transfer this burden to the child's teachers.

Finally, analysis from the third hypothesis also revealed a significant gender relationship in the students' opinion on Nigerian societal attitudes toward the resurgence of secret cult activities both within and outside the campuses. The implication of this result is that students learned from the happening in the micro society and put same into practice any where they are. This result is in consonance with the earlier findings from Scholars and authors like Abati (1994), Okeowo (1994), Elebeleye in Ogunbameru (1997 and many others blame the kind of i. stereotype the society parades, members of secret cults the openly display of power and the use of violence they wield in public offices, and that the Nigerian society has replaced honour with dishonor as a standard attitude in that vanity has become a popular commodity. Those involved in various forms of criminal behaviours become kingmakers in Nigeria. Also the laissez faire attitude of the Nigerian ii. society breed individuals who do not respect constituted authorities. As such, governance is by violence and our polity is such that opponents are harassed by thugs and sometimes assassinated without qualms. The other aspect is the fact that, our society gives credence and confer certain privileges and influences in social and political circles on membership of iii. secret organizations. This gives effrontery to our youths who are aspiring to be leaders of tomorrow to get enrolled in secret cults in order to have their interest defended and protected.

Conclusion

The conclusion reached after examining the results of the study is that the resurgence of secret cult activities in our educational institutions be trace from poor parental supervision of their children's

activities both in schools and outside the school setting, therefore family structure is a strong determinant of student's tendency to involve in secret cult activities. That students brought up by single parentage were more prone to cult practices than those brought up by both parents. And that the Nigerian society must be blamed for abating crimes of all sundry types and the non challant attitudes towards the eradication of secret cult activities in the nation's school system.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made:

All students associations should be encouraged to register, with copies of their constitutions attached to their registration forms. University authorities should hold executive members of such registered associations responsible for any suspected cases for criminal activities so that they will co-operate to fish out culprits in their midst.

Parents should also be more alert to their social obligations by inculcating in their children good morals. Parents' spend time with children and should also be requested to sign letters of undertaking on behalf of their wards, at the point of entry into institutions of higher learning.

Government officials should make sincere efforts to publicly denounce cults in categorical terms and caution parents whose children are found guilty of the offence as well as practically and punish publicly all offenders.

References

- Abati, (1994, 4, March). The cults, the kids, the occult. *The Guardian Newspaper*. 19
- Ademola, A. (1990, November). "20 Questions with Adetokunbo Ademola" in *Classique*, Lagos.
- Daily Times*, 1994, 23, January & 22, March). Nigeria Lagos.
- Denga, D. I. (1982). *Student Counselling: A major solution to campus unrest*. Lagos Orit Egwa Limited.
- Denga, D. I. & Ali, A. (1998). (3rd Ed). *An introduction to research methods and statistics in education and social science*, Calabar Rapid Educational Publishers.
- Elegbeleye, O. S. (1991). *Fostering social competence in adolescents through cognitive self modeling and participant modeling strategies*. A doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Ibadan.
- Fagbemi, S. (1991). Secret cults in our campuses. *The Tales Publication* 3(19).28.
- Fawole, L. (1994). *Secret cults violence*. In A. Ogunbameru (Ed.). *Sociology of Campus Secret Cults*. University of Ilorin Press.
- Grecas, V. & Schalbe, M. L. (1998). Parental behaviour and adolescent self-esteem. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 2(2),79-90.
- Igborgbor, F.O. (2006). "Cultism and its impact on the learning process." Paper read at a workshop on cultism for principals of secondary schools in Delta State of Nigeria, organized by the State Post-Primary Education Board, Asaba, Nigeria, November 1 and 2, 2006.
- Nnamani, N. P. (1990). *Social maladjustment and academic achievement*. Unpublished Research Project Research University of Calabar.
- Ogunbameru, O. (1997). *The sociology of campus secret cults*, University of Ilorin Press.
- Okeowo, S. (1994, 5, April). Campus cults: Manifestation of national decadence. *Nigerian Tribune*, 15,
- The American Family Foundation (2008). <http://www.schaler.net/fifthcultbusting.html>

Aniekan Edet Esuong, (Ph.D)
Department of Educational Foundations
Guidance and Counselling,
Faculty of Education,
University of Calabar.
Calabar.

And

Vincent I. Ekpang
Department of Educational Foundations,
Guidance and Counselling,
University of Calabar.
Calabar.