ERADICATING CULT AND CULTISM FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF
THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
That education is a crucial factor in the socioeconomic, political and technology development of a nation is not in doubt. The paper strongly believe that the greatest asset to any nation is her citizens and their potentialities. These latent abilities can be developed through quality education. Unfortunately, despite all concerted efforts by the federal and state governments to provide its citizenry with quality education, a few have chosen to toe the line that leads to destruction through voluntary intuition into different cults. This is apart from other cancerous problems that beset the sector. Undoubtedly, one of such social vices confronting Nigerian tertiary institutions down to primary schools today is cultism. Therefore, this paper examines the causes of cultism and its effects to the society. The aims, purposes and significance of the paper are clearly stated in the study. Finally, there are suggested counseling principles on the way forward towards eradicating cultism and some major recommendations are clearly shown. The paper also examines the importance of millennium development goals introduced to the nation, all in effort to eradicate poverty which has contributed cultism.

The educational institutions in contemporary Nigeria has been experiencing a lot of crises. They rage from examination malpractice, HIV/AIDS, Cultism, strikes, armed robbery, murder, sexual abuse and its consequence. Above all, cult and cultism have spread from institutions of higher learning to primary schools level. Ali (2009).

Cult and cultism practices are counter productive in terms of human resource development. Lives of the society’s future leaders have been and still been ruining day-in-day out in the country’s educational institutions and the society in general is in danger of fratricide. Education is in ruin, people live in phobia even in their resident and general development is hampered.

Consequently, upon these activities, government – federal, state and local tiers have made fruitless attempt to curb it, but to no avail. Even individuals of meaningful intention have made fruitless efforts to reduce it still the problem persists. It is against this background that this paper is written and presented.
The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of cults and cultism in an attempt to offer solutions as an antidote to this ever-unending evil that is ravaging our schools. The aims of the study are as follows:

1) Ascertaining the cause of the cult and cultism in educational settings
2) Identifying the effects of secret societies on the individual cultists.
3) Identifying counseling strategies that can reduce cult practices in Nigerian society.
4) Recommending possible remedies to the government, educational stakeholders and meaningful citizenry.

The significance of the study aimed at solving problems arising from cult and cultism activities as it affects the governments, parents, teachers, counselors, students, and even the victims themselves. To remove the thorns from the state and national flesh will be tremendously significant to all meaningful Nigerians.

Meaning of Cult

The question has often been asked by various groups and people: what is secret cult? Secret cult could therefore be defined as a set of practices, beliefs, systems or ideas whose essence is known only to the inner member of an excessively admired and defended even to the point of laying down one’s life Atayi (2000). The acronym is traced to Latin word “cultus” which denotes with emotions, feelings, liturgy and altitude. According Ali (2009) it was originally devoted to a system of religious worship, practice, ritual of single deity and he finally concluded that cultism is the adherence to doctrines which points vague things that is contradictory or orthodox sources. A good number of scholars have defined cultism and various ways. Cultism according to Dapo (2010) is an activity of hidden phenomena that takes place mostly in the dark. According to him, it has direct affinity to an evil spirit, magic and Satanism. Secret cult therefore is a derivation of the cult whose activities are carried out in secret and mysterious ways.

Cult and cultism according to Owoicho (2006) as cited in Ali (2009) is the act of initiation and practice of ill culture that is detrimental to the societal well being and that of the members. According to him it renders the perspective cultist useless, helpless, hopeless and vulnerable to committing crimes and attack to the member of his society. Adegbite (2004) sees cult and cultism as a practice that leads the adherents to become idiots, insignificant and vagabond capable of causing chaos, violence and security risk at any point in time.

It is therefore, absolutely true that cult activities has reached an epidemic proportion in Nigerian schools and it is the wish of this study to draw the attention of all concerned to join hands in fighting this ugly societal leprosy which is ravaging our tertiary institutions – university, polytechnics and colleges of educations, down to the secondary schools and the primary schools all over the nation.
The Origin of Cultism

The origin of this monster in campuses is traced back to 1952 when Professor Wole Soyinka led seven other students like Aig Imuokuede, Pius Oleghe, Raph Okpara, Nat Oyelola and Prof. Muyiwa Awe to form the pirate confraternity at the University of Ibadan. Alhassan (2000). The main ideas according to him at the initial formation were Humanistic. According to Atayi (2000) it used to cater for weak students, rehabilitation of the memoirs and security for the entire cultism. According to him, between 1952 and 1997 the secret cultism spread like wildfire or tear gas to almost all the campuses of higher institutions in Nigeria. The mode of formation, purpose and objectives changed from the original pirates to the destructive and dangerous tendencies in the members of today.

There are three main objectives for the formation of campus cult by Wole Soyinka and his other mates, these are (1) to abolish convention, (2) to revive the age chivalry and (3) to end tribalism and elitism.

The big question is why did students decided to form such a group? The idea of the students then was to respond to the demands of time, enhance cultural nationalism and fight tribalism of politics which was given boost by the Richards constitution of 1946. It is noteworthy that the group was not to harm, kill and destroy as their cohesiveness and absolute allegiance to rules made it become an elite club only for cleanest, brightest and the politically conscious. Their existence was well known by students and was not associated with weird, horrorful and spiteful character of latter-day confraternities.

Over the years, according to Atayi, due to doctrinal differences and inability of intending members to meet required standards of the pirate confraternity, protestant one started emerging in all our campuses throughout the nation.

Types of Cults and Cultism Today

The early nineties witnessed a boom in the spread of cultism in the universities and other higher institutions of learning. The schools were ploughed with cult explosion such as the Black Axe, Black cats, Trojan Horse, Black Panthers, the Twelve Disciplines, Mgba – Mgba Brothers, Eiye, Maphites, Black Beret, Dreaded Friends of friends, national Association of Adventurers, Black Scorpions, Eagle Club, Termites, red Sea Horses, Knight Cadets, Sonmen. However, the above have shown that there are many types of cults and cultism caused by leadership tussle and disagreement resulting in grievance among members. Aggrieved confraternity after their expulsion by the original members form theirs with various brand names only identifiable by them.

What astonishes one is that all these secret societies have common characteristics Ali (2009). For examples, criminal intensions of revenging, orientation, initiating, choice of
membership, identification, mode of operation and hierarchical structures. They all have motivation for membership. Membership here cuts across male and female students in the institutions of higher learning students of secondary schools, and pupils of primary schools. Some prominent lecturers in many higher institutions are known to be their patrons. Powerful politicians according to Ali and some good members of the society including members of the reputable professions are members and also lawyers offer patronage. However, recent investigation shows that women have decided to come under an umbrella and form their own campus cult to counter maltreatment from the male cults. Notable among the female cults are Temple of Eden, Eve Confraternity, Drillers, Star Revolution, Black and Deadly Amazons among others Al-hassan (2000).

Effects of Cultism

The cults constituted themselves into a protection group that fought and advanced privileges and rights of their members including to pass examinations, getting upper hand with girls, accommodation on campus, etc. The possible effects of cultism on the learning process can not be exhausted as both intra and inter-cult clashes negatively affect students in stupendous proportion. Atayi (2000) observed that cult clashes lead to an outburst of violence on the campus which leaves many students wounded, maimed, or killed as the case may be, it may sometimes lead to the rustication or expulsion of both innocent and guilty students. There is no gainsaying that whenever any of the aforementioned happened, the learning process, the psyche of the students and the peace of the campus is adversely affected. According to Atayi, in cases of closure, hospitalization, suspension, the resultant effect is that learning is suspended for some period of time. Whoever that have witnessed some cult clashes that are very bloody and catastrophe will agree with this study that there are great loss of infrastructure and other resources which were estimated at colossal millions of naira and eventually, the funds that would have been expended on the provision of other infrastructures on campus will be used in replacing the damaged ones.

The solid existence of cult group within the university community and other institutions of higher learning down to the secondary and primary schools have made life unsafe and meaningless for both the staff and the students. To support this statement was the activities of two rival cult groups Black Axe and Eiye Confraternity struck at the University of Ado Ekiti. No fewer then 12 innocent students were injured as they fell into disused sanitary pit while scampering to safety when the cultist were shooting sporadically in the night. According to Bolu-olu Esho in an article titled “Cultist Shutdown Ekiti Varsity in the Daily Sun newspapers of 5th July, 2011, the students and staff of the university of Ado-Ekiti were thrown into confusion due to gun shuts that rented the air forcing students
residing in the area to lie under their beds till day break.

Daily Trust of Wednesday June 29th, 2011 published a column with title “Suspended cultist kill 3 persons in Cross River”. This according Eyo Charles, they were killed in Iboku and Atim Edem street in Calabar. Two rival cultist group “Jovial Boys” and “Idang Boys” clashed as a result of lingering misunderstanding over superiority and over some girls. The most intriguing thing was that councilors in Calabar South L.G.A were hobnobbing with the cultist and this boasted their ego.

In a nutshell, nothing good comes out of the effects of the cultism as it revolves round killing, maiming, destruction of lives and properties, and becoming a threat to the entire society in which they lived. Furthermore, it ruins lives and future of the leaders of this country.

In Daily Trust of July 13, 2011 page 2 with the caption “Cultism COE student beheaded in Edo”, Vincent Egunyanga from Benin Reported the brutal killing of an unknown student who was beheaded and his body deposited in front of the school gate. The above incident happened at the college of education Ekiadolor. The slain student was believed to have been killed in a gruesome manner during a renewed war between rival cult groups in the institution. The most annoying situation is that the management of our nations higher institutions – the universities, the polytechnics and colleges of education down to the secondary and primary schools are aware of the existence of these cult groups and failed to address it. This is so because most of them are the patrons of these cult groups and those who are not patrons risk -their lives and that of their family members who stand the risk of been killed the moment the head of the institution makes move to curb their activities on campus.

The Importance of the Millennium Development Goals and the Need to Eradicate Cultism and Poverty in our Society

Since the millennium development declaration in 2010, the MDG’s have become important tool of monitoring human progress across nations. The eight time bound goals are aimed at achieving the following by 2015 – Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global partnership for development.

To achieve the aims and objectives of the millennium development goals terrorism in the form of cults and cultism must be eradicated in the society. This will pave way for the smooth running of the programme without human molestation of any kind. The terrible thing about terrorism which is also associated with cultist activities is that ultimately it destroys those who practice it, slowly but surely, as they try to extinguish life in others, the light within them dies. In support of the
assertion by Jerry Waite in the Daily Sun of June 28, 2011 was the recent bombing of the Nigerian Police Headquarters Abuja by suicide bombers. Many people lost their lives including some police officers and the bombers themselves.

One major effect of the cultism is that it has developed into serious terrorism that has engulfed the nation.

They are in various forms now, in form of militants in the riverine areas of the country, ethnic militants in the eastern and western parts of the country as Mossob Movement for the Sovereign Survival of Biafra, the (OPC) Odua Peoples Congress in Yorubaland and the religious movement in the recent time in the Northern parts of Nigeria popularly called the Boko Haram. The activities of the Boko Haram especially in Maiduguri, Bauchi, Kaduna among others in regular bombings which characterize killing of innocent human beings and destruction of properties worth billions of naira and the insecurity in the nation at large cannot in anywhere allow the MDG to achieve its maximum goals whereby extreme poverty and hunger with the introduction of free universal primary education and medical care will reach the lower cadre of the society.

Kidnapping which has been one of the major problems in the nation today is also part and parcel of cults and cultism. This is so because the kidnappers are men of the underworld who belong only to their world and are not known by the society. Their activities originated from their days in the school – primary, secondary and the university education. They developed into being kidnappers in the pretence that they had no jobs, they graduated in knowing nothing but killing and kidnapping members of the society in which they live.

In a situation like this, the M.D.G programme can not strive well if nothing is done to stop the inhuman activities of this cultist who had recently change their mode of operation attached ethnic, religious and political undertone to justified the acts.

**Conclusion**

The issue of cults and cultism is a national one like the HIV/AIDS. Therefore all adults and meaningful members of the society must show interest in curbing this “leprosy” called cults and cultism and its effects on the society. Anybody patronizing this “leprosy” in the society should also be aware of the fact that their children are their future – they have to care for them what legacy are they living for them?

The paper concludes that every body whether infected in cults and cultism must identify, and owe their obligations to themselves, families, society and above all their creator. Since the behaviour is learned and can be unlearned, there must be a change in the cultist and their perpetrators, knowing fully well that there is a reward for every human activity. Cults and its effects are adverse, and inimical to life, desist from it in order to live a healthy life in the society.

And the eradication of cults and cultism will help the nation in her MDG programmes which are geared in alleviating the peoples problem for a better
life and understanding. People in surrounding environment will no longer live in fears for the unknown action of the cultist living around them.

**Recommendation**
1) Parents, religious leaders should take the issue of cultism seriously
2) Educational administrators should device best means of reducing it
3) Counselling units of the schools must take their work serious
4) The inadequacy of trained counselors should be a challenge to the government, higher institutions and schools. To encourage people to be trained as counselors for the task that is already on the ground is recommended. Government on its own part should give study leave with pay to the teachers and provide funds for the establishment of functional counseling units and clinics in the educational institutions and urban centers to cater for the yearnings of the people.

Government should look to the ugly phenomenon as an emerging challenge and should proffer immediate solutions to it. Parents should be aware of their responsibilities as custodians of good morals and ethics of the society. They should as a matter fact show good examples for the children to emulate, prominent lecturers in many higher institutions who are known to be their patrons should stop that immediately so that they will train and graduate better leaders of tomorrow. Also power politicians and some members of the society including members of the reputable profession who are their members and offer patronage should stop it forthwith. Parents must stop being patrons to this deadly group.

**References**


