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## Female Students' Involvement in Cult Related Activities in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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### Abstract

Cultism as a social vice has become a way of life, especially among young people, many of whom do not realize or appreciate the true nature and implications of what they are engaged in. Cultism is a social crime despite becoming a common practice in secondary and tertiary schools. This social ill, which is not limited to schools, has led to the loss of lives, property, resources, values and societal harmony. In particular, the involvement of female students in cult related activities has also become a serious threat to the entire Nigerian nation and its education system.

The noble intention for the establishment of these groups has been eroded by rivalry between and among these various groups leading to violent activities. The establishment of the female cult group is to register the presence of feminine touch in order to checkmate male dominance and show of solidarity. However, the activities of the female group differ quite significantly from the operations of the male group, though there are things they have in common.

This paper therefore extorts the historical development of cultism, causes of female cultism, their initiation, recruitment and activities with the hope of suggesting measures to curb their activities.

**Keywords:** Cultism, Female Cultism, Cult Activities

## Introduction

Over the years, higher institutions of learning in Nigeria are faced with lots of social vices and disorder. These vices inhibit or limit the smooth running of the academic calendar and hinder the overall achievements of academic goals. Among the social vices is cultism.

Cultism has been defined by many specialists in education. It is a small group of people who have extreme religion beliefs and who are not part of any established religion. It is an organization whose activities are kept away from the knowledge of others. Olowe (2002) wrote that cultism is a word used to refer to group whose activities are characterized by secrecy, rituals which often involve blood of human, and animals, violence and incessant murder. A cult group sets itself up as the supreme authority between God and man (Lifton, 2013). Members of such group have an exclusive of distinct ideology and ritual practices centered on sacred symbols.

Cultism has become a way of life, especially among young people, many of whom do not realize or appreciate the true nature and implications of what they are engaged in. Cultism is a social crime despite becoming a common practice in primary-, secondary and tertiary schools. This social ill, which is not limited to schools, has led to the loss of lives, property, resources. values and societal harmony. It has also become a serious threat to the entire Nigerian nation and its education system. Reports from various formal institutions of learning have shown that most public schools today have become arenas for cult activities (Amacle, 2013). The American Family foundation as quoted in Adegbenro and Olabisi (2012) defined cultism 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 leader to the actual or possible detriment of members, their families or the communities (11.119-120.) Aguda as explained in Adesina et al (2012) opined that "these activities are essentially covert, disguised and are usually carried out behind closed doors". Cults are groups of people joined together by common interest.

Cultism is essentially an imbalance of power and control, between two or any number of social actors. The imbalance can be created and maintained by the threat of physical force, numerous variations of mind control processes, or a combination of both. A mind control or thought reform program can be understood to contain three elements- the first is, the inculcation of a system of beliefs which contain ultimate truths about the nature of self and reality. The second element, which is also part of the inculcation of the belief system, is what we might refer to as "cultic processes". These are primarily processes which include debilitation, closure, control and hostility. It's the combination of ultimate beliefs about the nature of reality (which are often delusional and always destructive) which justify and give legitimacy to the cultic processes. This in turn gives rise to the third element the activation of behavior that is destructive to the well being of oneself, family, friends or perceived enemies.

There are various secret cults now in our institutions of higher learning. They are called different names depending on the institution. There are those cults mostly meant for male students while there are some mostly for the female students. These various cults are usually in conflicts with one another during which many of their lives including those of the innocent non-members are

lost. The intent of this paper is to examine cult activities in general and examine female involvement in such activities.

### **Historical Development of Cults in Brief**

In 1952, the Pirates Confraternity (also known as Seadogs) was formed at the University of Ibadan as a protest student group. According to Adigwu in Jekayinfa (2008) noted that the students' protests were against the coat and attitude of sigma. The Pirate, being the first known social club in any Nigerian University, saw their mode of dressing as typical example of colonial mentality and therefore adopted a motto "sworn enemies of convention" a position which portrayed them as a radical students' group. The group also acted as a corrective organ of students' union. In this regard, being disciplinary in nature, they fought against all forms of injustice perpetuated either by the University authority or by the students' union government. To show the importance of the Pirates then, the University of Ibadan registered the Confraternity as a student Confraternity. In 1960, a group known as the "Eiye" Fraternity emerged in the University of Ibadan and was subsequently registered by the authority as a cultural association. In the 60s and 70s, the Pirate and "Eiye" Confraternities were not noted for violence. They socialize freely with their fellow students. The members were intelligent and easy going. They were brilliant youths who professed their faith with Extreme eagerness without trampling on the fundamental rights of their colleagues and members of the public. They never displayed the level of crudity and barbarity that has become the vogue among the cultists of the present day Nigeria. The Buccaneers was also founded. Adigwu as stated in Jekayinfa (2008) noted that the Founders of the Buccaneers are all PhD holders. He further stated that the Confraternity has about twenty four PhD holders, two hundred and fifty Masters degree holders and about seven hundred and ninety First Degree holders with about 78 Lawyers. The University of Ibadan saw the Confraternities as part of the University tradition. For example, the University provided the Confraternities with trucks and some amount of money for their drinks. They actually made the Rag days "colourful" (Jekayinfa, 2008).

Eiye came to promote a balance for physical and mental development with emphasis on sports and academic excellence. Neo-Black was formed with determination to hold and restore the culture, dignity and pride of the black man. They established a newspaper called "the black axe" (named euphemistically as the axe with which to cut the white man and those keeping the black man bondage) this name is today the synonym of the movement but not the goals. Vikings and The Mafia were believed to have been created by the government during the regime of General Babangida for the purpose of fighting student unionism and of the self succession program of Gen. Babangida and that of late Gen. Sani Abacha; the truths of this claims though not confirmed. Some identified female cult groups are , Black Berets, Woman Brassier (brave), Daughters of Jezebel, Pink Lady, Amazons, White Angels, Lady of Rose, Sisterhood of Darkness, Golden Daughters, The Ten wonderful Girls, White Ladies, The Royal Queens, Daughters of the Knight, Viqueens, White Pants, The Amazons and The Knights of the Aristos. The sorority groups were formed as female responses to their male counterparts' activities, imitations, and most interestingly these females are girlfriends of the members of the male cult groups. They act as spies to their male counterparts, prostitution syndicates, agents of set-ups, e.t.c.

Today these groups have clearly lost the virtues of their founders as recruiters no longer go for scholars with great potentials but for the criminally minded, they are today known for violence and all manner of indecent characters like smoking, robbery, rape, intimidation etc. The best decision of any student has been to stay away from such groups and their activities

#### Causes of Female Cultism

Amaele (2013) have advanced three theories to explain the causes of cultism in society: the political economy theory, the opportunities theory and the sub-culture theory. The political economy theory argues that any society that is unequal has inherent problems in it. These problems include corruption, robbery, cultism and such other vices. The opportunities theory holds that when certain conditions are created within a society, the people within that society are predisposed to various kinds of behaviour. Hence, the present atmosphere and conditions in our universities or tertiary institutions where facilities are over stretched, academic culture is poor and there is little regard for rules and regulations creates opportunities for the emergence and survival of cultism and other antisocial behaviours. According to the sub-culture theory, wherever a subculture is allowed to develop, eradicating it becomes extremely difficult because it becomes rooted in some way in every new generation. The Nigerian experience suggests that these three theories are indicative of the causes of cultism.

The only issue of concern with respect to the political economy theory is the notion of equality in society. The theory seems to suggest that without equality, which itself means different things to different people, cultism will always exist. Despite the need to continue to work towards greater equality, we would beg to question whether it will ever truly be achieved. At the same time, there may be aspects of equality that can be achieved and that could less the appeal of cultism. These include equal rights and access to educational opportunities and equality in political participation. Some progress towards these goals has been made in the developing world and yet much still remains to be accomplished.

The opportunities theory offers some important insights into the upsurge of criminal cultism in society at large and our tertiary institutions in particular. The dearth of human and material resources as well as the intimidating school atmosphere, can prompt even the most devoted to consider a deviant path. This may be the reason why those who were committed to their education before they enrolled in schools end up choosing a life of cults and crime. The third theory suggests that wherever a subculture is allowed to develop, eradicating it becomes extremely difficult. Cultism, corruption, and other vices have seeped into our institutions of higher learning and today form a significant part of the subculture in these places. Once engrained in student subculture, they resist efforts aimed at their elimination. While discouraging, this does not mean that cultism cannot be minimized and/or controlled if coordinated and sincere action is put forward from all quarters of the society.

In addition to these three theories, a number of institutional and/or environmental factors can help to explain the recent rise in cultism. These include:

- (i) A general atmosphere of frustration, deprivation, hopelessness, hardship. and injustice brought upon the people by the socio-economic system. This has been further aggravated by years of military rule and civilian autocracy, characterized by a climate of jungle law and brutality.



- (ii) Admission of unqualified persons into tertiary institutions, who cannot cope with the intellectual demands of the academic system.
- (iii) Uncoordinated university administrations which make it possible for non-students and expelled students to co-exist with bonafide students.
- (iv) The employment of cult members by some institutional administrators and politicians to combat their perceived enemies within and outside the school system.
- (v) Lack of committed teaching and learning, as well as a scarcity of infrastructural resources, which has led to overcrowding in classrooms, residences, libraries and so on.
- (vi) The decay of national morality and social values.
- (vii) Poor upbringings as most homes have lost the required peace as divorce, separation, large family size and financial hardship have become the orders of the day.

### **Recruitment and Initiation of Female Cultists**

A very important element in the mode of operation of secret cults is recruitment. Like any other social organization, recruitment must occur so that membership which might be lost through graduation, rustication, or even death, must be replenished. Recruitment exercise is closely tied to the willingness of students to become members of secret cults. Prospective cult members must demonstrate the ability to use weapons, while ability to consume alcohol and use drugs are added advantages. New recruits must also demonstrate some stoic abilities, especially, ability to bear pain.

For the prospective female cultists, wearing of provocative dresses that accentuate natural curves and contours is almost a must. They must also be able to display unusual bravado during altercations with uninitiated female students. A prospective female cultist must be a smoker of marijuana and all brands of cigarettes, she must be able to consume all kinds of alcohol, she must be familiar with and, if possible, possess a pistol or an axe. She must also be rich, bold and have very "big" men friends. To guarantee her acceptance, she must pass the torture test. Being a lesbian is an added advantage. She must also cultivate the habit of wearing jeans. She must possess a wardrobe of weird attires that can make heads turn whenever she passes by Students who are Sought after by secret cults vary in social backgrounds. They might be children of professors, judges, politicians, senior police officers and so on. The status of their parents in society guarantees them some protection from the claws of law enforcement agents in the event that they get into trouble. Initiation naturally follows recruitment (The Nation, 2013). The initiation process is the same for both male and female. The process commences immediately after new recruits have been thoroughly screened. During an initiation ceremony, the eyes of the initiate are expected to be closed while sonic incantations are recited. New entrants are subjected to thorough beating as a means of toughening them up and testing their endurance of pain. The new entrants are made to drink some concoctions mixed with blood. Sometimes they are given some tough assignments like raping a very popular female student or a Female member of the university staff. For the female cultists, their initiation may include being forced to engage in some immoral activities. Among the Jezebels and Amazons for example, new entrants may be made to undergo six rounds of rigorous intercourse in quick successions. They may also be made to fight with other girls or strong boys. They may also be Subjected to thorough flogging. New

entrants are expected to move around in groups of four or five as a means of protecting themselves against possible sexual harassment. During the initiation new members are taught to communicate with other members in coded language. Having been recruited and initiated, cult members are expected to engage in many activities, which form parts of the group norm (The Nation, 2013).

### **Activities of the Female Cult Group**

Cult related activities have taken the lives of not less than 2000 students in two decades across the nation's higher institutions of learning and more than five percent of students who joined were killed either before or at graduation. In the late 1990s, all-female confraternities began to be formed. These include the Black Brazier (Bra Bra), Daughters of Jezebel, etc. Female confraternities have supplied spies for allied male confraternities as well as acting as prostitution syndicates. (Wikipedia, 2013). The operations of the female cult groups are significantly different from that of their male counterpart although they have some similarities.

Some inherent similarities as highlighted by Lifton in (Doughten, 2013) are control of human communication, the follower is convinced of the higher purpose within the special group, that the world is sharply divided into absolute good and the absolute evil, personal boundaries are destroyed and every thought, feeling, or action that does not conform to the rules of the group must be confessed, the group advances the idea that the cult's laws, rules and regulations are absolute and, therefore, to be followed automatically and without question, no alternative viewpoint is allowed, loaded language invokes fear or other thought-stopping techniques, Controlling the words used to communicate helps to control thoughts, the value of individuals is insignificant when compared to the value of the group, group belief supersedes individual conscience and integrity, the group decides who has a right to exist and who does not and harassment of non members.

The basic activities undertaken by the female cult group as significantly different from that of the male are:

- (i) Sexual atrocities with opposite sex
- (ii) Agent of set-up
- (iii) Sexual perverseness/Lesbianism
- (iv) Prostitution syndicate
- (v) Alcoholism/smoking/drug abuse
- (vi) Harassment of non members

Sexual Atrocities With Opposite Sex and Prostitution Syndicate: Peer pressure is everywhere. In campuses, female cult members are referred to as "the bad girls". The bad girls willingly embraced prostitution, because of their insatiable need for the good things in life. New members are lured into the confraternity by various subtle means and empty promises. Recruits are enticed by the prospect of having access to money and employment opportunities. They gradually coopt the more conservative ones. If one person has 3 cell phones, another wants to do the same. If one student has flashy clothes, the other wants it. For those who are probably not from the very rich families, (they are forced to start looking for ways to make up and in many cases; they end up being lured into sleeping with men with promising offers (Uzokwe, 2008).

Majority of students are lovers of pleasure especially the female cult members. They are not satisfied with one mate. Partying, relationship and sex is the ideal thing and many students paid less or no attention to their studies. Examination malpractices, cultism, drug abuse, violence, indecent dressings, and sexual promiscuity rule their lives. The main duty of female cult members was high class prostitution. They are highly connected and had plenty of "aristoes" that patronized them. Aristoes as they were popularly called are well made men who came from outside to chase young campus girls. They were seen as traitors to the young male students who they oppressed and took their girls from them with money and power. They made huge money to buy expensive cloths, jewelries, shoes and latest mobile phones. Some were lucky to get cars as presents from aristoes. In campus, the girls were recognized by their expensive outlook and carriage. They had power to do whatever pleased them without fear due to the connection they had through the aristoes and back up from male cult groups. They were like pets to the male cult members and offered them sex and money which they make from prostitution (Vision, 2009).

### **Agent of Set-Up**

In a report by vanguard newspaper on march 7, 2014 was the case of a female cultist by name Miss Mary Awolola, who set up her friend to be raped in Ilorin, a female student of the College of Technology, Offa, in kwara state. She was paraded in I lorin by the by the Kwara State

Commissioner of Police, Ambrose Aisabor, for allegedly luring her friend to be gang-raped by five of her cult members. She confessed at the Police headquarters in Ilorin that she was also gang-raped much earlier by four boys before she was initiated into the cult group. She said she lured her friend to be raped by her cultist friends because she refused to join them in spite of the pressure mounted on her. She later regretted her action after realizing that she has not gained anything since she joined the group. Rape set-up among the female cult group is a way of building their ego and could be criteria to move up in the hierarchical ladder in the group. The set-up could be in terms of rape, drug trafficking, prostitution syndicate etc.

Sexual Perverseness/Lesbianism and Harassment of Non Members:

Street Journal' publication dated May 12, 2011 reveal that lesbianism, which is the female version of homosexuality, has taken root in almost all tertiary institutions. The act, which many believe is alien to African culture, has become so acceptable to those involved in it that they flaunt their lesbian partners. The male-female relationship seems to be going out of vogue in many Nigerian schools. this Journal also found out that these girls have ways of protecting themselves in case some of them run into trouble. It was found out that a good number of them belong to female cult groups like the Jezebels, Black Bras, Red Roses and Pink Ladies. At times, lesbian relationships are legalized for members of the group. Some are also known to have links with male cult groups just to ensure that they are well secured on campus.

In a recent report by the pulse news magazine on 20th April, 2015, a 17 year old female student of Niger Delta University is recuperating from the attacks of female cult group members who are into lesbianism. Her refusal to join the group spurred the attack on her life and was equally injected with harmful substances and for days, she was in a state of craziness. She was tied to a chair, severely beaten by four girls and her hair attachment was forceful removed.



A publication by church Arisen in Vol. 8 No 6 (2005), reported that a minna-based organization (INCRESE), boldly admitted to luring girls into lesbianism with material trappings. INCRESE in particular organizes the Igonet, periodic female-only sexual rumps at Abuja with the attendance of young girls from various campuses all over the country sponsored. They sought help from campus cultists to further help speed up recruitments.

### **Alcoholism/Smoking/Drug Abuse**

Osayomi in Essien (2010) noted that from ancient times, the use of drugs has always been an inseparable part of occultism and the youth in tertiary institutions are deeply involved in this practice. There are two aspects of danger associated with drugs; the risk of addiction and adverse health and behavioral consequences. the abuse of various mood-altering substances has been reported to be prevalent among Nigerian youths. This was credited to Lambo as stated in Essien (2010). Researchers also pointed out that some substances alter the mind, changed the user's feeling, perception and behavior when they are used because they exert action on the brain. Also, Obot as stated in Essien (2010) reported that the rates of smoking among the teenagers especially students are high and seem to be increasing. He further pointed out that cigarette smoking and alcohol are responsible for more death and sickness than illicit drug use. This is a common feature of the cult groups. Odejide as explained in Essien (2010) also stated that many years ago, alcohol used to be the preserve of adult males, but recent studies show that alcohol is now abused by the young ones and also the females. Alcohol is in the composition of many beverages and varies greatly in their nature and strength. Some have from 3-20% while some contain up to 50% alcohol. When this alcohol is taken in excess, it has a deadly effect on the body in terms of reasoning and behavioural tendencies. Apart from alcohol and tobacco, other substances with several appellations which are sources of great concern to the government are the narcotics. These are the hard drugs and are the most dangerous. They form the habit of consuming hard drugs such as marijuana and cocaine, among others (Amaele, 2013). These drugs help to repress fears and make their actions more brutal. Others are morphine and paregoric methadone. These factors form the pursuit of criminality in the minds of these groups of girls.

### **Kidnapping/Ransoming**

Kidnapping/Ransoming is the act of forcefully taking someone hostage or custody usually through the use of arms of weapons for purpose of ransom. Recently, this criminal act has become wide spread among cult members in the educational institution and very frequent as a result of the monetary inducement of the process.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Although internal and external measures have been adopted to fight or control cultism in general and female cultism in particular in Nigeria such as decree 47 of 1989, the establishment of vigilante groups, and the expulsion and imprisonment of culprits. there seem to be few tangible results so far. In reality, rather than curbing this menace, these measures appear to aggravate it. Cultism is not a child's play. It is a hydra-headed monster that has to be tackled with a multi-dimensional approach. The cooperation of everyone. both within and outside the school system is needed. Hence, the following measures are suggested:

The education system should be geared towards social and personal needs to create awareness in the recipients, such awareness the promotes rational thinking. Thus, the philosophy of education at all levels should be aimed at promoting habits of discipline, hardworking and thoroughness as a means of improving standard of living in the country.

1. Parents themselves must not become involved with cults so that they are able to give their children proper and adequate awareness and moral education at home.
2. Admission into any tertiary institution should be based on both academic and moral merits and on these merits alone. Money or political influence should not be factors in admission.
3. School administrations must eliminate all academic and non-academic staff that belong to any known cult group. This will make their fight against cults more transparent.
4. Orientation of new students should be more comprehensive, rather than the mere formalities that are observed today. Serious counseling must be given to all new students and student affairs officers in tertiary institutions should look beyond the allocation of halls of residences and scholarship arrangements. Their roles must include personal identification and the counseling of students and female students in particular.
5. Citizenship/moral education should be intensified in both theory and in practice. It should be made compulsory in tertiary institutions and should be taught by those that are qualified in knowledge and practice.
6. Regular and unannounced checks should be embarked upon in the rooms of suspected cult members to look for incriminating signs so as to clear them out of the system.
7. School authorities should organize open forums for students to discuss their problems and make suggestions for improving living conditions. Authorities, however, should not interfere, unnecessarily, in student union elections to avoid imposing leadership on the students or show favouritism in dealing with student matters.

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