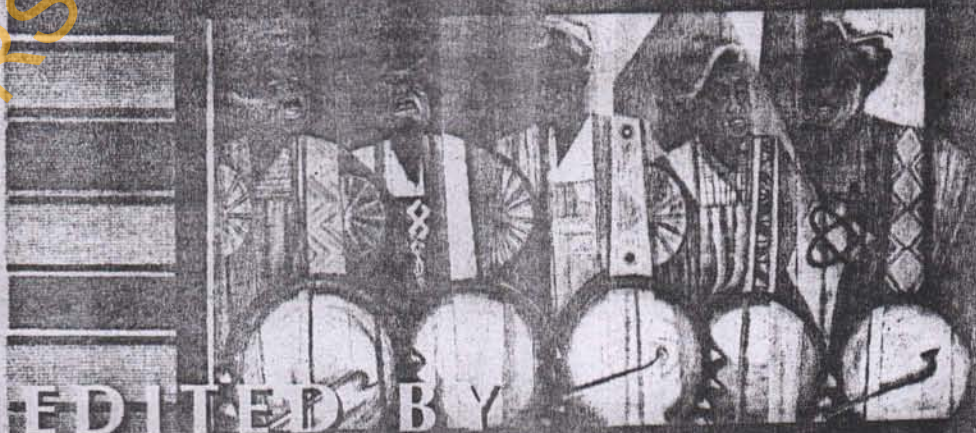
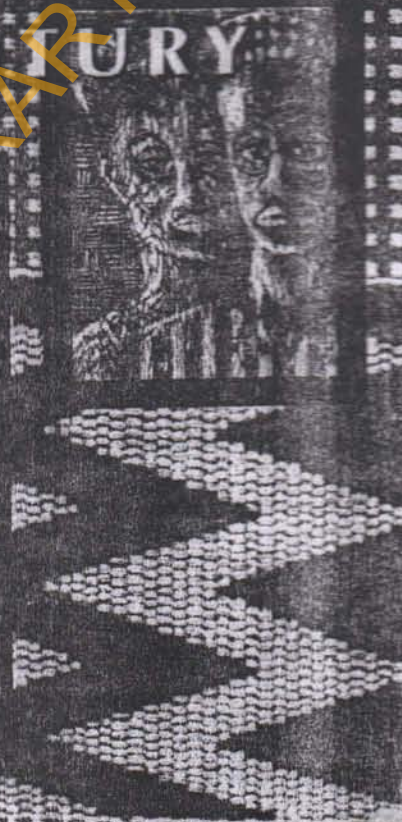


11

# NIGERIA

IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



EDITED BY  
TOYIN FATOLA

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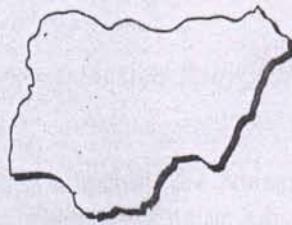
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## CULTISM AND YOUTH IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

OLUYEMISI ADEFUNKE BAMGBBOSE

"Youth remain a key point for social and political anxiety"  
Angela McRobbie<sup>1</sup>

Youth, from the socio-psychological point of view, is a very significant stage in human development, with production and manifestation of peculiar emotional characteristics that are often in conflict with the more mature adults.<sup>2</sup> However, if properly directed, youths may become assets to the community.

A phenomenon that is now prevalent among the youths in Nigeria is cultism—a form of secret society. A "cult" is similar to what is considered in America as a "gang". The genesis of secret cults in Nigeria is not a recent thing. Cultism is as old as society itself, and it dates back to the days of leadership struggle.<sup>3</sup> However, cultism now has engulfed many institutions in Nigeria, starting from the elementary school. It is now a "dreaded monster" that has acquired such a phenomenal dimension that the Nigerian government and even the university administration cannot resist being alarmed. Cultism crept into the institutions in Nigeria because of the lack of knowledge of the administration and the society at large of the magnitude of the dangers associated with the group.

The media exposure on cult issues involving mass homicide and suicide does not help the situation. However, far more prevalent are the smaller groups now scattered within the institution of higher learning and equally dangerous. Their activities are destroying individual lives and causing fear on the campuses.

The word "cult" is derived from the Latin word "cultus", meaning worship. Langone<sup>4</sup> defines cult as a group or movement that to a significant degree:

- Exhibits great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea or thing;
- Uses a thought reform program to persuade, control, and socialize members to integrate them into the groups unique pattern of relationships, beliefs, values, and practices;
- Systematically induces state and psychological dependency in members;
- Exploits members to advance the leadership goals and;
- Causes psychological harm to members, their family, and community.

More than the definition above, cultism among students in institutions of higher learning has resulted in horror unleashed on innocent members of the academic environment which include maiming, butchering, killing, rape, and generally tales of woe, destruction and unnecessary grief, wailing and tribulation to many Nigerian families. The effect of cultism on the academic community and the academic performance and general well-being of Nigerian youths is frightening. Cultism on campus now qualifies as a social problem that convulses the entire fabric of the society and is a threat to peace in the society. Since all facets of the society are affected by the activities of cult members on campus, there is the need for an antidote.

## EVOLUTION OF CULTS

The idea of cults is not new; the term "cult" has been a subject of debate.<sup>5</sup> A study of the theory of gangs and the principles of causation of crime and delinquency shows that gangs develop into cults, fraternities, and other organizations in certain cases. Like gangs, cults are known to meet the needs of its members where other avenues failed to supply them with excitement, adventure, recognized skills, promise of security, and protection. Gangs were not necessarily evil, as some have in them potential for good; however, when not properly directed, or neglected or unwisely handled, gangs may acquire antisocial behavior and engage in demoralizing activities ranging from rowdiness and vandalism to the most outrageous crimes.<sup>6</sup> Cultism is not peculiar to a particular region of the world, and it is not a recent phenomenon.

In China, secret cults have always played an important role in the lives of the Chinese and have had great influence on politics, religion, commerce, trade unions, and the criminal underworld.<sup>7</sup> Their activities included the organization of opposition to the government and the formation of a self-protective unit against robbery, among other things. Singer,<sup>8</sup> while working on cults in the United States, said that the recent upsurge of cults in the United States began in the late 1960's and became a highly visible social phenomenon by the mid 1970's. In Nigeria, the existence of secret cults was associated with the making of legislation and administration. Colonization and modernization deprived it of its political functions and now it exists only for its social function and cultural interest.<sup>9</sup>

## CULTS IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

For a very long time, the existence of activities and consequences of campus cults was underestimated in Nigeria. Cultism among students in higher institutions in Nigeria started in the early 1950's. The pioneer cult was the National Association of Seadogs (Pirate Confraternity) that was established as a socio cultural club. This club, started by a few members in 1952 in the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, was formed to achieve three main objectives.<sup>10</sup> The first objective was: "To fight what was termed colonial mentality in the University of Ibadan." During the period that the cult was established, members opposed certain conventions and fought against what was termed "Moribund Convention." The second objective was: "To fight humanistic ideals through reviving the soul life on Campuses and to establish a system of discipline and ordinances." The third objective was: "To fight against corruption and tribalism." A founding member of the Pirate Confraternity said that: "The Pirate Confraternity was full of humanistic ideals of comradeship and chivalry. It was an idealistic youthful pressure group."<sup>11</sup> Ogunbameru,<sup>12</sup> while commenting on the activities of the first cult group, said members of the Pirate Confraternity were involved in philanthropic activities such as blood donation and other student activities such as the 'rag day.' From these comments on the first cult group on campus, it is evident that the cult group was not established to be destructive and violent but positively constructive toward societal peace and growth.

## CULTISM ON CAMPUS: THE PRESENT TREND

In the last two decades, cultism has assumed an extensive dimension in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria and, like an implacable cankerworm, is eating deeper into campus life. The rapid growth of sinister cult groups in higher institutions all over the world is alarming. The practices of the cults are becoming increasingly dangerous; students and lecturers have been shot, wounded, and killed. Intermittent clashes between rival cult groups have resulted in the loss of innocent lives and property, and the whole structure of the educational system, especially in Nigeria, is being undermined.

Cult members have definitely perverted the original ideals by pursuing selfish and evil objectives. The activities of the cult groups have not been controlled or have been neglected or unwisely handled, and cults on campus have engaged in antisocial behavior, and demoralizing and dangerous activities.

Student cults in their present form are a radical departure from the concept at their inception in the 1950's. Student cults that began as a display of youthful existence some decades ago have assumed monstrous dimensions threatening and shaking the foundation of the education sector. Cults among students are now the latest and most daring of the social conflicts in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria and are now spreading to secondary schools. The situation has reached a crisis dimension and is a matter of concern for the government, the institutions, parents, the student bodies, and all well-meaning Nigerians. Student cults are no longer an agent of social control but an agent of confusion and destruction reaching deep into campus life. Noticeably, cult groups have proliferated on the different campuses, compared to the 1950s when there was only one. The proliferation arose because of rancor and dispute among cult-members of the original, resulting in frequent clashes between members of rival cults.

Another significant departure from its initial form is the genderization of secret cults among students. The first student cult group started as an all-male group with no female members. Presently, several all-female groups exist in the higher institutions. Such groups identified are: Daughters of Jezebel; Black Queen; and Black Brassier.<sup>13</sup> It is not common to see cult groups with a mixture of female and male members. The location of cults in institutions is not restricted to the institutions of higher learning. Cult activities are now spreading to secondary schools and pre-secondary schools. With this startling revelation, the school authorities have caught many students at this level of schooling.<sup>14</sup> (also, Atabo, 2001)<sup>15</sup>

## FEATURES AND ACTIVITIES

In a review of recent sociological contributions to the study of cults Robbins<sup>16</sup> identified four definitional perspectives, among which is the fact that cults are dangerous and authoritarian. In the light of Robbins' findings, the activities of secret cults among the students are discussed. There is an indication of the growth of sinister cult groups on the campus. The activities are becoming more dangerous and cults are no longer social or cultural groups but terrorist groups. Their activities are clandestine and there are elements of struggle for power dominance. In a *National Intelligence Document*, the statement reproduced below was made about student cults:

Students operate like bandits killing each other and posing serious threat to the university community and society at large. Splinter groups have emerged which engage one another for supremacy and move into campuses leaving in their trail bloodshed and extreme destruction, rape, oppression, intimidation and general reign of terror.<sup>17</sup>

For the purpose of clarity, the features and activities are itemized under the following headings.

## CULT NAMES

The word "cult" is dreaded in the society and associated with sinister practices. The names of the different cults that are known to exist in higher institutions confirm the fear associated with cults. The names sound ferocious and dangerous and depict some clandestine and sinister practices.<sup>18</sup> Cults that have been identified in various higher institutions in Nigeria include the following:

Black Cat	Mafia
Black Cobra	Blood Suckers
Black Axe	Red Devil

Black Night	The Blood Spot
Black Beret	Executioners
Vikings	Termites
Hawks	Daughters of Jezebel
Dragons	Black Queen
Black Brassier <sup>19</sup>	

### ***INITIATION PROCESS***

The initiation process of student cults is a proof of full membership. The ceremonies are usually meant to be a painfully excruciating trial of physical endurance in which the new members' ability to absorb pain is tested. According to a report, the initiation process may include, among other things, oath taking, drug taking, and drinking of blood.<sup>20</sup>

### ***FETISHISTIC OCCULTIST PRACTICES***

Occultist and fetishistic practices are features of the cult meetings. Some of these practices include running over fire or broken bottles barefooted, lying in a coffin, drinking blood mixed with drugs, taking an oath of secrecy, and indoctrination of divine restitution for divulging the secrets of the cult.

### ***ELEMENT OF SECRECY***

Most of the information on student cults are from ex-cult members. This reveals the element of secrecy in the cults. Contrary to the ideals of the cult at its inception, the element of secrecy makes the activities of the group more sinister. The membership of present day cults is not made known to the public, and meetings are nocturnal. On the element of secrecy, one of the seven pioneering members of the Pyrate Confraternity had this to say:

Nothing we did was in the dark. Pyrates held seminars at the Arts Theatre from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and it was done on routine basis. The university knew who the Pyrates were at the time. We had a directory showing names of members, field of study and addresses.<sup>21</sup>

Contrary to a report that members of the then-Pyrate Confraternity had discussions with the Vice-Chancellor and other principal members of the university, the present position is that cults have been banned from all institutions in Nigeria and therefore are illegal and cannot hold discussions with the institutional authorities.

### ***EXPLOITATIVE RECRUITMENT PROCESS***

The recruitment process adopted by cult members in the various institutions is highly sophisticated and exploitative. New members are lured into the cult through exploitative means: brainwashing, undue influence, deceit, persuasion, and seduction. Students, most especially freshers in the institutions who have been identified and noticed to be anxious, depressed, confused, and lonely, or with personal problems, are approached with the promise of transformation, hope, and security and in some cases such is provided. This is in return for total obedience and allegiance to cult commands.<sup>22</sup>

## FREQUENT CLASHES AND VIOLENCE

In response to one of the cult clashes in one of the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, an editorial report stated that:

The sport of killing and maiming by the cults in our higher institutions have reached a level whereby no parent can anymore be sure of the safety of the child in any of these institutions as long as the cult activists are left to operate.<sup>23</sup>

The statement above captures the scene of the cults during the clashes with other cults.

One of the most bloody clashes happened on July 20, 2000, in one of the oldest universities in Nigeria. Members of a cult unleashed terror on the whole university, especially against the student union leaders, killing about five students and injuring many others.

The issue of violence and the inter-cult clashes are linked to the fight for power. Leadership within the cult is determined, among other things, by the ability to engage in daring and awe-inspiring assignments.<sup>24</sup> The escalating rates of the death toll from campus cultism is alarming and frightening. Many lives have been lost: innocent students, members of staff, and even the cult members. In one such cases cult members killed the Registrar of one of the southern universities and his wife in their residence. There were other incidences of students who have been killed, raped, or maimed. The spate of violence on campuses in Nigeria in recent times leaves one in doubt of the breed of future leaders in Nigeria in the twenty-first century.

It is pathetic that institutions of learning in Nigeria are now concentration camps for gangsters instead of character molding and intellectual development centers. Ojo<sup>25</sup> in his book on student unrest in Nigeria stated that:

There is the need to curb excesses of their confraternity which had become a hydra headed monster that is almost destroying the very fabric of civilized behavior on the campuses.

Tekena Tamuno, a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, summarized the activities of the cults as follows:

The secret organizers of these cults and the followers defies regular reported attempts by agents of the federal and state government to discourage their spread and their influences on University and similar campuses. Hence the secret cults in teaching institutions failed to disappear instead through attractiveness to neophyte remained. The cult activities have regrettably assumed a current level of sophistication that the authority lacked the capacity to fight back.<sup>26</sup>

## CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

The continued presence of cults on the different campuses is the cause of criminal activities on campuses. Cult activities have resulted in grievous harm, murder, rapes and maiming among other serious offenses. This fact debunks the earlier philosophy of a Pirate being an outstanding fellow. The cruelties with which these activities are carried out are linked with the taking of drugs and confirm Robbins' theory on cults as being "dangerous and authoritarian."

## REASONS FOR THE PRESENT STATE OF CAMPUS CULTS

Activities of cults on campus are a sort of derailment from course. What started as a forum to awaken the socio-cultural consciousness of the elite to fight oppression, racism, and color discrimination has been bastardized.<sup>27</sup> Several reasons have been given for the radical departure from the original concept. The present situation of campus cults is a reflection of the larger Nigerian society. The various cults of the larger society are being reflected in our institutions. Okigbo<sup>28</sup> opined that universities everywhere in the world reflect and mirror the dominant values in the society in which they are situated. He further stated that universities in Nigeria are no exception. This statement points out the true fact that Nigerian universities are not alone in this problem of student cults. This problem is a global one to which individual societies are trying to find a solution. The Nigerian society has provided an enabling environment for the activities of student cults. Nigeria under the military government was in a state of normlessness.<sup>29</sup> Violence is generally accepted in Nigeria as a means of conflict resolution and many of the youths who closely observe the happenings resort to violence in order to achieve their goals.<sup>30</sup>

The traditional family setting in Nigeria is a closely knitted unit. This family institution has declined.<sup>31</sup> Many young people no longer have parents or members they can look up to for motivation. The race for material things has resulted in many parents abandoning their traditional and moral responsibilities.<sup>32</sup> It is said that the collapsing family structure in Nigeria sets a standard that encourages disorientation.<sup>33</sup>

The external support given to the campus cults by influential members of the society who are either ex-cult members or who are using these cult members for political or selfish reasons has made it more difficult for the campus administrators to deal with the problem of cultism on campus. Similar to the "Mafia Group," the external backing has made the cults so entrenched and financially comfortable that it is difficult to dislodge them from their institution.

Apart from these external supports, there is an internal support, which makes the issue more complex. A former leader of the Pyrate Confraternity in a press briefing stated that one of the causes of violence in institutions in Nigeria by cult members is the deep-rooted corruption in the University system where school administrators use cult members to settle personal scores.<sup>34</sup> Cult members are therefore employed as watchdogs.<sup>35</sup>

The unsolicited interference of the military government into the autonomy of the institutions in Nigeria is identified as an external root, encouraging the growth of cultism among students. Institutional heads were appointed by the then military administration for the universities' actions which were purely political, and the effect was a credibility crisis evolved. The students especially lost confidence in the system, which was viewed as an incursion extension of the military domination into the institutions of learning. The feeling of insecurity at this time was said to have resulted in some students resorting to their own means of address of the security issue.<sup>36</sup> The deserved security is one of the "benefits" derived from cultism.<sup>37</sup>

Socio-economically, there is a large gap between the rich and the poor.<sup>38</sup> Studies have shown that members of cults are often from middle and upper class families and are of above average intelligence.<sup>39</sup> The reasons for this are outside the ambit of this discussion. The recruitment technique adopted by the cults make economically deprived students in institutions of learning in Nigeria easy targets of wealthier cult members who hold the promise of financing their education in exchange for joining the cult. The development of cult is linked with the lust for power. In search of power, respect, recognition, protection, wealth, and the domination of law-abiding contemporaries, many youths join campus cults. In the same vein, advantage has been taken of the psychological conditions of targeted members. The frustrated, troubled, timid, and insecure are easy targets for recruitment.<sup>40</sup> The active involvement in recreation has been identified as a part-time activity that engaged the interest and time of students. It was also a good avenue to dissipate tension. These facilities that hitherto occupied the extra time of students, coupled with extra-curricular activities including debates and film shows are now absent, inadequate, or

completely broken down in the various institutions.<sup>41</sup> The present state has been attributed to inadequate funding of the institutions by the government.

## THE EFFECTS OF CULTISM

From the late 1980's, the activities of cults in the institutions in Nigeria assumed a crisis and dangerous dimension. The effects will be viewed from the havoc so far and the dangers ahead. Clashes of cult members and the harmful initiation process have often resulted in death. The death toll of innocent students, faculty members, and cult members is escalating and may go higher if urgent steps are not taken. The incident of July 2000 is one out of hundreds of cases of the killing of innocent victims. Clashes have led to large-scale destruction of property: "The destruction of our universities and federal government property as a way of displaying anger will no longer be tolerated. Unwanted destruction of property in the name of cultism. The nation had lost millions of lives in the orgy of inordinate students' violence."<sup>42</sup> These were the words of the Minister of State in Nigeria while addressing students who paid a courtesy visit to his office. In the name of secret cults, buildings, cars, and other property have been objects of attack, deliberately or otherwise. In many instances students have had the misfortune of having to pay for properties destroyed during such clashes.<sup>43</sup>

Regular academic sessions are disrupted. The academic calendar of the different institutions has in the recent years been disrupted due to the activities of the cults. The effect of closure is that students spend more years than they bargained for in their studies. Many times, students involved in cult activities who are caught are either suspended, rusticated, or expelled from the institutions. This has affected the academic performance of many cult members. Other effects of cultism on student members are low grades, prolonged stay on campus due to suspension, and premature graduation due to expulsion.<sup>44</sup> In Nigeria, many factors have led to the frequent closures of the various institutions of higher learning. The frequent strikes by academic and non-academic staff members and the activities of cult members are some of the factors leading to the closure of institutions. To calm situations after a horrifying clash and to prevent further clashes, university administrators and even the government have had to order the closure of different institutions.

The police have had cause to intervene in issues connected with cultism, especially where cult activities result in violence or death, or where a crime against the laws of the land is committed. Student cult members have had to face the consequences of their acts by appearing before the court of law and serving terms of imprisonment as punishment for criminal acts linked to cultism.

In addition to the havoc already recorded from the activities of cult members, there are dangers ahead for cult members, members of their families, and the society at large. These have both short and long term effects. Psychologically, there are many cult-related emotional problems that members cope with during their membership in the society. Indecisiveness, uncritical passivity, fear of damnation for leaving the cult, guilt of past misdeeds while in the cult, and depression are some of the problems that cultists face.

## TACKLING THE PROBLEMS OF CULTISM: THE STEPS SO FAR

No real solution has been found to tackle the menace caused by the activities of student cults in Nigeria. The reoccurrence of the clashes caused by various cult groups in respect to tough measures adopted by the university administration and the government is most frustrating. Measures adopted so far have proved ineffective and inappropriate. This has been attributed to the ineffectiveness of the institutions administration in fully appreciating the magnitude of the problem and faculty diagnoses of the real problem.<sup>45</sup>

The problem of cultism among students is being tackled from a multidimensional angle in Nigeria. The different institutions—the government, the student bodies, religious organizations, and non-governmental organizations—are all involved in tackling the problem of cultism. The steps taken by these groups are briefly discussed below.

All institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have rules that regulate the conduct of students and describe measures to control misconduct. This is in order to provide a substantial environment where the objective for establishing the universities and higher institutions of learning can be fully realized. Relating to cult activities, restrictions or outright bans now have been placed on the activities of secret cults in all institutions. This was not the case before the incessant violence of the cults. Until the early 1980's, some cult groups were officially recognized and registered in certain universities. At that time, the University of Ibadan, Nigeria for example, had the name of certain cults listed under social, cultural, or political associations. It was in the mid 1980's that the university proscribed all cult groups.<sup>46</sup> In the wake of the cult violence in July 2000, the President and Commander-in-Chief in Nigeria called all the institution administrators and gave a deadline to them to ensure that cult activities are eradicated in all institutions. The outcome of this meeting was that the administrators went into action and launched an anti-cultism committee. Some of the strategies which the various committees came up with to eradicate cultism are highlighted below.

- (i) *Rallies*: At such anti-cult rallies, appeals were made to students not to join cult groups and to cult members to renounce their membership. Such rallies have proved effective, as members of cult groups have publicly renounced membership.<sup>47</sup>
- (ii) *Orientation Programs*: The program is aimed especially at freshman students in the institutions and it is organized usually in the first few weeks of a new academic year, alerting freshman students about cult groups,<sup>48</sup> tactics of recruitment,<sup>49</sup> and the dangers of cultism.<sup>50</sup>
- (iii) *Adoption of Enlightenment and Awareness Strategies*: In a bid to eradicate cultism on campus the higher institutions in Nigeria have made posters, stickers, and banners informing the university community and the public in general about the illegality, the dangers, and evils of cultism. At the university of Ibadan a giant billboard at the main gate of the university reads: "Avoid cultism: Support the crusade against social menace". A few meters after this is another one which reads: "University of Ibadan says: Cultism puts you in bondage, renounce and denounce it so that you can enjoy freedom. Cultism is evil and destructive, do not be part of it".

Signing a legal paper of non-membership in a cult is another strategy adopted by the institutions to eradicate cultism on campus. The authorities make it mandatory for all students to swear to an affidavit of undertaking at the high court of justice that they will never join any cult group or, if they are members, that they are renouncing their membership. The student unions of all the institutions have joined the university administrators in the effort to put a stop to campus cults. Student bodies have erected billboards and organized rallies condemning cultism.

The government, too, has taken some steps to kill cults. There is a constitutional provision against secret cults in Nigeria. Section 35(4) of the 1999 Constitution<sup>51</sup> provides for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and does not cover anyone belonging to a secret society. The idea behind this provision is to minimize and eventually eliminate the evil effects of secret societies. In 1989, when the situation of campus cults reached an alarming state, the federal government in Nigeria passed a law to curb the excesses of student cultism done under the guise of student unionism.<sup>52</sup> At different times, the government through its representatives has addressed student bodies warning them about the dangers of cultism and the position of the government to such group.<sup>53</sup>

Members of the public have not been left out in the anti-cult campaign. Religious bodies now discuss the dangers of cultism at religious gatherings, warning youths and parents alike to be vigilant. In



particular, a religious group regularly hosts revival services at selected campuses in a bid to fight cultism. Such services have yielded results as some cult members have publicly renounced their membership in cults. The fraternity groups are also involved in the campaign. In an article, it was reported that certain leaders of some existing fraternities have formed a body known as the National Inter-Fraternity Council (NIFC), aimed at closing the sad chapter of fraternity related violence in higher institutions.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike the position in the United States of America, where organizations such as The American Family Foundation (AFF) is established to deal with cult problem, there are no NGO's dealing only with cult problems. However, there are organizations such as the Center for Youth, Family and the Law and some other groups that deal with problems of cultism in addition to other issues. Programs in these organizations include seminars and counseling. In some of the institutions of higher learning, groups of people have come together to form organizations aimed at protecting individuals having problems with campus life and the problem of cultism.

## **FUTURE STRATEGIES AND CONCLUSION**

The cult problem has affected many areas of humanity. Tackling the problem must therefore be directed to these areas. This same approach must be adopted to prevent the spread of the activities of cult members. A few recommendations, which are not exhaustive, are discussed below:

### **(I) FAMILY FOCUS**

There is an adage in the Yoruba culture in Nigeria, which says: "Ile ni a tin mu eso ro ode." Literally interpreted, the adage means "it is from within the family/home, that a person brings the wealth that is displayed to the public." Traditionally, Nigerians are known to have close family ties. The family is a powerful agent of social control that exerts an important influence in the society, especially the development of the child. There is no doubt that a strong, effective, and viable family system continues to be the strongest bulwark against the problem of delinquency of which cultism is identified as one.<sup>55</sup> Parents and guardians should show more interest in the youths. Proper monitoring of their activities and their peers is essential to the development of a strong character. It also ensures the early detection of delinquent behavior, which can easily be nipped in the bud. The family also has a role to play in integrating an ex-cultist back into the family, as in the "prodigal son." Families should learn to accept, forgive, and love an ex-cultist.<sup>56</sup>

### **(II) RELIGIOUS TEACHING**

At present, there is no conclusive statistical evidence regarding the effect of religion on delinquent acts of which cultism is one. However, religion may exert a powerful influence for social control with the reverence for good. Social norms should be strengthened if given the support of religion through regular teaching of religious principles.<sup>57</sup> With such teachings, certain acts regarded as wicked, as seen from the activities of the cults, may become abhorrent, condemned by deep religious conviction. Religion can then create a strong resistance to cultist influence and desires. This may account for the public renunciation by cultists at religious gatherings, which are now organized in some institutions in Nigeria. It is apt to mention that in many institutions in Nigeria, the leaders of the various religious groups are cooped as members of the anti-cult campaign and they are encouraged to talk about the evils of cultism at major religious gatherings.

### **(III) EXTENSION OF ANTI-CULT LEGISLATION TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

It is evident that cult activities have spread to the secondary schools. The legislation prohibiting cultism in higher institutions should be extended to secondary schools. In California, there is a statute enacted by the state that regulates secret societies in public schools.

### **(IV) PROPER SCREENING OF STUDENTS**

There is a trend in many of the higher institutions in Nigeria, toward the mass transfer of students from one institution to another. There must be a check on the transfer policies as it is subject to abuse. It is therefore suggested that there must be proper screening of inter-institutional transfer in order to prevent undesirable students, who have been rusticated, suspended, or expelled, from crossing to other institutions. University administrators should also publish in a national newspaper the names of cult members who have been suspended, expelled, or rusticated for the information of parents, other institutions, and the public.

### **(V) IMPROVEMENT OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES ON CAMPUS**

Involvement in sport activities and other recreational and extracurricular activities are known to engage the free time of students. Unfortunately, many of these facilities have disappeared from most campuses. It is suggested that these activities should be reactivated.

### **(VI) FASTER DISPENSATION OF JUSTICE**

Delay is one of the problems of the criminal justice system in Nigeria. With the alarming role at which cultism is spreading in the institutions, there is the need for the courts to quickly dispense with cases involving cultism. This is necessary so that students who are found guilty can be punished, and the university administrators can take necessary actions to rid the campuses of cultism.

### **(VII) IMPROVEMENT OF REHABILITATIVE PROGRAMS FOR EX-CULTISTS**

After the experience of being involved in cultism, ex-cultists or those intending to leave may find it difficult to adjust to normal living fearing threats from the cult, and insecurity. There is the need to have programs or psychotherapy for such people to enable them to cope with cult-related problems during their reentry into the society. With the magnitude of cultism in Nigeria, such specialized programs or facilities must be ongoing. The above suggestions are by no means exhaustive. A multifaceted approach has to be adopted in curbing or eradicating cultism in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.<sup>58</sup>

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