



## Curbing Cultism In Nigerian Tertiary Institutions: The Mass Media Imperative

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### ABSTRACT

*Higher institutions all over the world are supposed to be citadel of learning in Academics an Character. However the individuals that are involved in this learning process are usually involved in this evil act of cultism. It is common in Nigerian Higher institutions and the Nigerian government have tired to stop the menace this paper focus on the attributes of cultists, cult groups, strategies to curb cultism and the rule of mass communication to eradicate or reduce the tide to the barest minimum The paper concluded by making recommendations on curbing cultism in Nigeria tertiary institutions.*

**Keywords:** *Curbing, Cultism, Nigeria, Tertiary, Institutions*

### INTRODUCTION

Cultism may be viewed as a system of beliefs binding together people of the same interest for the purpose of promoting and defending the common pursuit. The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Section 318(4) bans a secret society defined as a society or an association not being solely, a cultural or religions body that uses secret signs, oaths, rites or symbols" (i) Whose meeting or other activities are held in secret; and (ii) Whose members are under oath obligation or other threat to promote the interest of its members or to aid one another under all circumstances without due regard to merit, fair play or justice, to the detriment of the legitimate expectation of those who are not members (Ajakaiye, 2002).

Cult is a term for religious practices that involve the performance of ritual rites to lesser gods or the practice of idolatry. Cult is a lay term for a group perceived as a requiring unwavering devotion to a set of beliefs and practices which are considered deviant outside the norms of society. Such groups are typically perceived as being led by a charismatic leader who tightly controls its members (Wikipedia).

It is in some contexts a pejorative term, also used for new religious movements and other social groups which are defined by their unusual religious, spiritual or philosophical beliefs and rituals, or their common interest in a particular person, object or goal. It is a deadly engagement in ritual practices. Cults of today in Nigeria tertiary institutions have polluted the nation's wellbeing with their negative influence and dastardly act. Activities such as unhidden evil-robbery, murder, rape, thuggery, and all manners of malady characterized their satanic signature.



## INITIATION

The conventional procedures adopted by cult groups in undertaking their evils and of course, recruitment of new members are as follows:

- Cultists cleverly take advantage of individual financial status, family background and physical appearance in luring people/students into the cult. According to Eberendu (1999), avenues for their general recruitment are general discussions and persuasions, threat and intimidation, invitation to parties and picnics, deceptions, freewill, blackmail and sudden friendliness.

New members are thereafter interviewed and subsequently prepared for initiation ceremony. During the initiation ceremony, old cult members celebrate with eating, drinking and dancing in dreadful outfits. The new members are made to undergo fiery and dangerous initiation drills that include rolling on the floor, serious beatings so as to enable them endure hardness. They go as far as extracting the blood of their new members for swearing an oath purpose. This sealed a covenant.

Eberendu (Ibid) outlines the attributes of cultists as follows:

- They are extravagant
- They are usually reserved
- They lack focus
- They live in Colonies instead of on campus
- They engage in regular immoral/indecent activities
- They are arrogant
- They are aggressive
- They have signs that are peculiar to them.
- They are harsh, loud and noisy
- They have colours that are peculiar to them. For instance, the colors of the Pirates are Red. The Maphites are known with black and yellow.
- They identify with slogans that are peculiar to their cult.

Buccaneers has "Na Pain No Gain" as their slogan. Vikings slogan is kill fast, report later while that of Black Axe is Eye for an eye.

## CULT GROUPS

Over 53 cult groups actually exist in Nigerian tertiary institutions today, according to reliable sources. Such groups include:

White Angels, West End, VI queens, Vipers, Trojan Horse, Third Eye Confraternity, The Walrus, The Vikings, The Soires Fraternity, The Himalayas, The Lynx, The Dragons, The Frigates, The Amazons, The Apostles, The Barragudas, The Canary, Air Lord, Black Axe, Black Beret, Black Bra, Black cats, Black Mamba, Buccaneers, CappaVendetto, Daughters of Jezebel, Eiye Confraternity, Green Beret Fraternity, Hard Candies, Jurst, KKK Confraternity, Knight Cadet, King Codara, Lucoter Knights, Mafians, MaphitisisMgbaMgba Brothers, Musketeers Fraternity, Red Berets, Red Sea Horses, Royal Queens, Sea Dogs, Soko, Sun men, Temple of Eden Fraternity, Panana, Ten Angels and a host of others.

*Other strategies of combat cultism in Nigeria include:*

- Using body language to identify cultists
- Security operatives frequently curbing black out areas.



- Combating surveillance of institution's security outfits with other law enforcement agents
- Improving funding for universities
- Improving recreational academic facilities
- Emerging active students with activities
- Curtailing the present culture of violence in society.

Cultism has always been a serious issue of national significance. It has permeated the country at an alarming rate, especially the country's tertiary institutions. Disregard for merit and ethnic favouritism, adolescent vulnerability of youth to insecurity, absence of employment opportunities are major reasons why the youth plunge into cultism as a means of their survival.

## MASS MEDIA

Mass media is a watchdog of society, constantly broadcasting crime related issues. It is a platform for community engagement and education on crimes. Mass media refers to the various medians need to communicate with the general public and serve as a source of communication for a large audience. This induces newspapers, books, magazines, maps, bill boards, posters, radio, television, mobile phones and the internet. These channels are fundamental means of communication throughout the world. Mass Media is compartmentalized into three main categories; The Publishing media, Broadcasting media and electronic media. Responsibility of mass media is in two (2) folds; self-regulation and professionalization. The media in Nigeria have an abiding potential for initiating, inducing and exacerbating conflict in Nigerian society. Aside performing the role of agenda setting, government watch dog and sensitization, it informs, entertains, persuades, strengthens people's convictions and decreases/raises the level of conflicts (Laswell, 1972). Mass media, (electronic and Print) in its social responsibilities remain one of, it not the most effective and powerful means of disseminating information the world over Media professionals address the issue responsibly and objectively. There is an indisputed fact the media professionals have the capacity to mould public opinion. This awareness is derivative of their roles inform and educate as a major agent of social change reorientation and reformation. Mass media select and interpret information about the environment. It adequately supply facts and data and provide detained analysis on information already relayed. Apart from providing information and significance of prominent events, interpretation, commentaries and opinion functions are adequately performed by mass media trough articles, editorials, features and cartoons as well. These are done to shed more light on issues and discussion on radio and television about political, economic and social events. In other word, media serves a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism of common carrier, especially in the reaction of public discussions.

According to Daramola (2007), this are equally done to add to the reporters of knowledge of readers, listeners and views and further explain why events occurred and what facts meant. Information in the print media is devoted to interpretation with compact clarification, explanation and fact placement in a meaningful content. In another vein, mass media transmits cultural heritage from one generation of cultural heritage from the generation to the next. Media has the ability to communicate norms, rules and values of a society. It provides cultural guidelines and help teach the citizens of a society, how to live, how to behave and what is expected of them. Society uses mass media to pass social heritage and bring cultural change. As much as the existing order challenged through communication, change is meritable as well as maintenance of status quo. Media performs



a socialization friction where individual adapts the behavior and values of a group. Mass media presents portrayal of society via watching, listening and reading. Media learn how people are supposed to act and what values are important and permissive to the society. Mass media transact and reinforce social norms. Media does not only ensure acceptable values are highlighted and upheld but also clarifies goals and values.

In the area of entertainment, mass media has the ability to present messages that provide escapism and relaxation. It serves the purpose of which the story tellers of and jesters of yester years perform. For instance, motion pictures, sound recording are denoted primarily to entertainment. In the same vein newspapers, including comics, word puzzles, games, gossip, humour and general entertainment feature to convince readers and to task the brain of readers to solve puzzles. Television ranks the highest in terms of entertainment media. It entertains viewers with drama, play, films, all of which are able to relax the tension of the day. Though entertainment, the media creates folk heroes. Apart from possessing powerful appeal, entertainment provides the relief to enable human beings face demand of life in general. As much as people need to relax, television is a vital medium of escape. It offers a safety value for “pautry aggressions and aberrant impulses”.

### **Mass media role in curbing cultism:**

The media plays an important role in curbing cultism in Nigeria by using education, information, socialization and mobilization to curb the menace of cultism on campuses. Scholars in the media like Tobechukwu, E. (2007), Siegel (2006), Tierney (2010), Peter & Ojedokun (2019), Paranjape (2019), Sayyed (2021), Sani et al (2024) Fitzpatrick (2018) and Kendall (2011) have decisively channeled their articles on crime and of which the paper painstakingly explore. Mass media is an important preventive catalyst in today’s digital world. It helps connect people from different parts of the world and plays significant role in crime prevention of which cultism is among. Mass media is adequately used to sensitize people against engaging in criminal activities like cultism. Apparently, without mass media, people would be unaware of what is happening in their immediate environment.

Nigerian Press involvement in the fight against cultism in tertiary institutions of learning has been a tremendous significance. The print media, notably, the Punch and The guardian often appeal to the elite/ruling class and the general public/masses. Mass media owes it a duty to be responsive and responsible to the society it serves (Akinfeleye, 2001). They are accountable to the society as a whole and not a section of the society. Mass media operators try to scrutinizes other social institutions and provide objective, accurate news report as it is expected of a responsive media to provide a full, truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day’s event in a context which gives them receiving (McQuil, 2005).

The role of mass media in curbing cultism is essential for fostering a safer community. Mass media performs surveillance role for correlation, linkage, transmission of values, social mobilization in the society. This surveillance function is basically known as the news and information friction of the media. It has to do with the provision of information about events and conditions in the society. It has to do with informing society about crime waves, types of crime, how they are carried out and even the times of the day when particular crimes are more likely to occur (Sayyed, 2021).

Surveillance function is the news and information functions of the press. It has to do with provision of information about events and conditions in the society. As much as news is regarded to be at the centre of human existence, it owes a duty to be responsible and responsive. These are two types of surveillance identified by Dominick (1993). Warning or beware surveillance and instrumental surveillance. Warning occurs when the media informs



the society about threats from hurricanes, erupting volcanoes, depressed economic conditions, increasing inflation, or nullity attack, instrumental surveillance has to do with transmission of information that is useful and helpful in everyday life.

Mass media has been of great influence with their deposition and role in monitoring and curbing crimes especially cultism.

Surveillance function of mass media plays a significant role in curbing cultism in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some of its activities involve monitoring and interpreting societal movements. This aspect is central to reinforcing conformity, fighting cultism and other social vices. The media ability to provide information to a society is essential for molding attitudes and relating news and various happenings to individual lives and society (McQuail, 2000). Jingles and promotional messages against violence and conflict are broadcasted daily on most television channels and radio stations in Nigeria (Nwabueze and Ebeze, 2013). Street journalism plays a significant role in utilizing and exploring mass media to prevent and control cultism and other crimes in the society. This has to do with the collection, analysis, reporting and distribution of information on cultism and other social vices. Effective use of the mass media helps in exposing and curbing cultism and sensitizing members of the society against cultism and other criminal activities. Mass media tools of combating cultism and other social vices in society comprise of cartoons, editorials, features, interpretative articles, news stories, pictures and other crime/corruption - related contents.

Under neutral newspaper slant, cultism is presented as a natural occurrence in society and emphasis is not only made on the violence involved but also on the negative implications of cultism. Issues of cultism and related content are mostly reported with in-depth analysis and interpretation.

## CONCLUSION

Cultism is a cankerworm that has permeated Nigerian society at an alarming rate. Its havoc in the country's tertiary institution is quite devastating. Recognition, peer pressure, curiosity, adventure, parental involvement, security, influencing the opposite sex, criminal tendencies, weak spiritual foundation and luxury pursuit are attributes or factors for students involvement in cultism. The problem has been escalated beyond control in Nigerian tertiary institutions as cultism unleashed both lecturers and students with their dastardly act.

Significantly, government intervention has been laudable in reduction of the epidemic, that mass media remains a powerful force in its social responsibilities to address the issue objectively and responsibly. Mass media as the most potent force and most effective means of disseminating information all over the world engage in responsible journalism to disseminate topical national issues as cultism. Mass media tailored their efforts towards eliminating the social vice; cultism. This effort helps not only in building favorable corporate image but also reputation for the Nigerian press as a renowned socially responsible arm.

In spite of the mass media proactive measures in curbing cultism, it is highly believed that much still need to be done to reduce the scourge. Nigerian press still need room for improvement in handling cultism. Little courage has been found to be given to cultism unlike other cult-related issues in editorials, features stories and in interpretation articles. Government under President Obasanjo initiated and issued an anti-cult bill. Up till now, the bill has not been the light of the day. More of collaboration between the government and the mass media will help in eliminating cultism.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The federal government of Nigeria should tap the knowledge of mass communicators to enlightening students on the effects of cultism on academic performance and society in general
- Governing councils of Higher institutions should organize seminars for new intakes every year on cultism.
- Parents of students should be made to sign under takings for their wards during admissions
- Nigerian media should be encouraged to promote anticultism programs.

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