

## Personality Dimension to University Campus Cult Membership

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**KEYWORDS** Cultism. University Campus. Psychological Dimension. Behavioural Patterns. Students

**ABSTRACT** In this paper, the definition of cultism in its different perspectives was given. The anthropological, sociological and psychological dimensions were explored. The paper highlighted specifically the various characteristics of a cult. A vivid description of the milling around and the intermingling of life on a University campus were espoused. Such interpersonal social relationship like this was implicated as being capable of giving vent to the building block of virile personality profile that characterizes behavioural patterns among students. In order to make a case for why students join cults, the chapter explores various personality problems, defense mechanisms and complexes. The chapter concluded by providing a rehabilitative model for cult members who have abandoned cultism.

### INTRODUCTION

In the ordinary sense of the word, a cult denotes something of an esoteric nature, something that the mind construes with fear. This feeling is rarely informed by concrete and evidential experience, but because of its amorphous nature and the shroud of secrecy that covers the activities, which the word "cult" describes, the human mind passes it auto-matically into the realm of the unknown. The unknown naturally activates fear in the human mind.

Anthropologists and sociologists have paid more than a passing attention to cult membership and its phenomenological social implications. For this reason, they have both variously advanced definitions (of cult) that came in line with the focus of the two related but clearly distinctive disciplines.

Some anthropologists define 'cult' as the totality of the religious institutions as are obtainable, particularly, in preliterate societies. This view is represented by the works of such British Anthropologists like J.G. Frazer, R.R. Marett and A Lang (1951). To most anthropologists, however, a cult is understood as a body of religious beliefs and practices associated with a particular god or a set of gods, constituting a specialized part of the religious institution of a society (Gould and Kolb, 1964). This latter view represents a modification of the earlier view, which limited the operations of a cult to the various religious institutions in preliterate societies. This view reflects the evolution of Anthropology itself as a discipline that is more objective in outlook and accommodating in scope.

Hence, the reason why it now sees the existence, operation and implication of a cult as extending beyond just the preliterate society to the modern society. This modified and better informed view has therefore made a successful attempt at conceiving of a cult as the sum total of organized belief and rituals concerned with a specific spirit or spirits, generally associated with particular objects and places. This embracing picture does not leave out both adherents and the ritual worship itself. This anthropological viewpoint about a cult extends to historic cultures and civilizations that once existed in places such as Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, where various kinds of cults, such as the solar cults created by Pharaoh Iknaton, sun cults, and mystery cults existed (Gould and Kolb, 1964 p.570).

Nearer home are the views of sociologists about cults. These views conceptualize a cult as:

- I. An almost structureless, individual-centered minority religious group whose characteristics are determined by the isolation and alienation of its members from the structure of the larger society and from its formalized religious institutions (Becker, 1982);
- II. a rather very loose form of religious organization that is characteristic of a rapidly secularizing society or one which is atomistic and disorganized (Yinger, 1957);
- III. The most ephemeral of all types of religious structures which can be located at the extreme of personal non-institutionalized religious experience (Durham, 1946).

In describing its structure further, Becker (1932) reflects that cult members are those who have been isolated and alienated from the larger

social structure to such a degree that they are concerned only about their own religious experience and the relief from the stress and meaninglessness, which it may bring. Hence, a cult is seen as highly individualistic, loosely organized, mystical and led by a charismatic leader. The goal of the adherent, according to Becker, is that of a purely personal, ecstatic experience, salvation, comfort and mental or physical healing. In his (Becker's) opinion, only a highly atomized and essentially secular, social order gives rise to extensive cult belief.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A CULT

A cult can pass for a group, just like any other group because it is identified by:

- i. An identity shared only by group members: this may be represented by specialized insignia or emblem, codified salutations, differentiating uniforms or other such paraphernalia that would make their identity quite unmistakable to trained eyes or the initiated even in a crowd.
- ii. A leader who is essentially charismatic and never tires of directing and coordinating the affairs of the groups;
- iii. An assigned role mandatory for every member of the group to carry out to the letters.
- iv. An unalloyed allegiance to the group course;
- v. A common goal and a set of objectives adopted by every member of the group

A cult, however, is classified as an antisocial group because:

- (a) Its activities are shrouded in secrecy;
- (b) Its goals are selfish, and always attended by self – centered operations.
- (c) It is characterized by a small size and membership is usually highly restricted while initiation ceremonies are so hectic and arduous as to discourage just any comer and establish commitment.
- (d) It searches for a mystical experience;
- (e) It lacks a proper organizational structure that is capable of allowing for any semblance of fair play in line with a democratic tradition.
- (f) Its operations reflect traces of sociopathy and psychopathy.
- (g) Members are characterized by a heavy dosage of agoraphobia; hence, their collective tendency to regress to the cave era of the early beginnings of man.

- (h) Authority flow is characterized by autocratic eccentricities.

Sociological Description of Life on A University Campus and Cult Recruitment Procedures

The university is a microcosm of the larger society. For this reasons, it has its own share of the combined vices and virtues that make up the society. The Advanced Learner's dictionary (Third Edition) describes the university as an institution for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge, conferring degrees; and engaging in academic research. In the Nigerian society, the university represents the tertiary and terminal level of formal education. In the ordinary sense, the university can be likened to a manufacturing industry where raw materials are processed only to be turned into a refined, finished product. In this analogy, the University as a manufacturing industry, absorbs students raw from the secondary school educational level into a more sophisticated cosmopolitan environment (the university) where new ideas are planted into the fertile soil of the new students' mind. When successfully planted, the outcome is a socially competent literate and a knowledgeable (refined product) individual. When haphazardly planted, however, the effort is one of a miscarriage and the result becomes more lethal than whatever effects a badly processed raw material could indeed have on an industrial setting. And it could be said categorically that several ideas and the way they are imparted and imbibed, do often miscarry in the university setting.

On admission, the perception of new intakes about the University and what it stands for differs as widely as the new students' background and cultural upbringing. The point of convergence however remains that academic pursuit becomes for the new students the rallying force that mandates interaction and goal setting within the milieu of the University. Indeed, by the time he is finished with the University and vice versa, he is never same again. For this reason, therefore, the individual comes in prepared for change. Within the university setting, there abound several change agents, working in both positive and negative directions. Like the parable of the sower, a new intake may fall in with either a good or a bad change agent. Academic instruction remains a single unique change agent, which the university has been noted for and has been proud of using to mould the scholar's outlook on life.

Coming closely at the heels of this is the social environment that obtains within the University setting. This social environment is sub-divisible into two, namely; the human and the physical environment. Both environmental dimensions leave a lasting impression on the already impressionable minds of the new intakes. The human environment of the University parades a horde of sophisticated human elements, the likes of whom the new students probably have never had the opportunity of encountering in their social space prior to their University experience. Contact naturally demystifies a lot of myths. The human environment of the university is a mystery to a good number of the new intakes. For example, several would be seeing a Professor at close quarters for the first time. Also, there are big public names that would be taking on human shapes for the first time. This creates the opportunity for series of new experiences, which the new intake would not find easy to arrange neatly in his cognitive repertoire.

The physical environment adds to the impactfulness of the University on the new intake. He probably would associate the elegant buildings, green lawns and beautiful hedges all around with a status level that surpasses his previous aggregate social experiences. He is, in one sense, overwhelmed by what and who he sees around him; and at the same time, he feels important for being a part of the whole outfit.

It is this period of ambivalence and the milling around of the new intakes that the "*cult masters*" choose to go on a foray for their victims, that is, the new, unsuspecting students. The psychological method used by the "*cult masters*" include brainwashing, cajoling, appealing to the human sense of vanity that is fed by the need for prestige, status etc. At times, the instruments of fear can also influence the situation.

From observation, it has become evident that "*cult-masters*" do not just go for any willing student. Certain criteria are set which new intakes must satisfy before they are considered for membership.

These criteria include those in-built mechanisms, which underlie the essential elements of the need for survival, such as the background of the individual "*victim*", his standard of living and his hunger for vanity. Victims must come from a fairly high socio-economic background with preferably a parent that has distinguished himself professionally. In this dispensation,

children of retired or serving Judges, of Professors and notable Lecturers currently serving in the given University, and of famous business tycoons are always favourable targets. The political implication of this pre-requisite is tied to the requirement for power wielding should they (the cult association) ever fall in disfavour with the authorities at a future time. Because of the secrecy that attends cult operations; prospective members hardly ever apply for membership but are rather contacted after having been observed at close quarters without their knowledge. This method has its merits. Part of this is that a new student who probably is ignorant of the full operations of the association he is invited to join would feel flattered by the approach: and, understandably, with some token of promises of alluring privileges thrown in, he is bound to want to explore further.

The moment the individual's curiosity is aroused and he shows willingness to explore, he is as good as being captured, because by the time he advances to the initiation stage, he will never be allowed to back out, at least not without a fight. An attempt to back out at this stage may be a good explanation for the savagery often seen visited on victims.

### HUMAN PERSONALITY PROFILE

Personality may be conceptually defined as a conglomeration of behaviour patterns that are relatively permanent in an individual. These relatively permanent traits are often manifested in such characteristics like emotional adjustment, social relations, and the motivation aspects of human behaviour. These traits cover other measures such as attributes like assertion, submission, introversion, and self-sufficiency.

Human personality is a construct that has attracted the attention of renowned psychologists such as Freud (1928) who preferred to interpret human personality as a function of libidinal energy flow. The concentration of this intense, pleasure energy is presented as having the ability to localize at different areas of the body at specific human growth periods. For example, this libidinal energy is believed to be located in the mouth area of the child immediately after birth till about age two. This is manifested in the infant's desire for oral gratification, the quantitative or insufficient supply of which is believed to have the capacity to influence, in either positive

or negative direction, the future personality of the individual. The oral stage is followed by anal, oedipal/phallic and genital stages. All these stages of growth have the libidinal energy located in the areas whose names they bear.

While Freud chose psychosexualism as a viewpoint through which he analyses human personality, Erickson (1968) adopts a psychosocial viewpoint. Along this line, he proposes that there are psychosocial stages of ego development in which children establish a series of orientations to themselves and their social world. These stages, eight in all, spread over the developmental years of the human organism, that is, from infancy to old age. At infancy, the child's development is assumed to be a function of the level of feelings of trust versus mistrust, which his nurturers arouse in him. Where the negative feeling is aroused, development is said to run into difficulties. Other stages include autonomy versus doubt (2-3 years); identity versus guilt (3-5 years); industry versus inferiority (6-11 years); identity versus role confusion (12-18 years); intimacy versus isolation (young adulthood); generativity versus self absorption (middle age); and integrity versus despair (old age)/.

Another famous psychologist, Piaget (1950) looked at personality development from the point of view of cognitive changes. Piaget believes that as children assimilate (imbibe) and accommodate (adjusts) their conceptions of objects and experiences, they establish organized patterns of behaviour and thought, which Piaget refers to as schemes. In short, organization, adaptation, assimilation, accommodation and equilibration are the underlying principles of the Piagetian theory. Piaget concludes that in as much as children do not just suddenly jump from one stage to the next, their cognitive development must follow a definite pattern. For this reason, he proposes four basic stages of intellectual growth in the human organism. These stages are the sensorimotor state (0-2 years); the preoperational stage (2-7 years); the concrete operational stage (7-11 years); and the formal operational stage (11 years...)

There is also the learning theory of development proposed by a good number of American psychologists who base their conclusions and observations on overt behaviour and the establishment of principles through controlled experimentation, which very often involves simple and uncomplicated behaviours (Biehler,

1983). The works of Sears (Sears et al., 1957) would be taken as representative sample of this group. He considers the development of a child as significantly influenced by the type of child rearing methods used by his parents. Sears opined that since children identify with their parent's behaviours, mothers and fathers hold the key to a balanced personality advantage for their children depending on whether they behave in a way that they would like their children to emulate. He proposes four stages of development, which are: parenting style shapes the initial responses of the child (0-2 years); the child identifies with and imitates selected adults and peers (6-12) and identification with and imitation of admired peers (adolescence).

All the four theories about personality development cited above reflect individually different angles from which human personality development can be viewed. This however, does not imply that there are still not several other perspectives that have not been explored. But the four shall suffice to explain that there are several viewpoints from which human personality can be examined. The important thing however is that human beings rather than give in to a flat growth pattern through life, undergo varieties of growth phases. Each phase possesses myriads of variables that range from environmental, through hereditary, sociological, inter-personal parenting style to situation-specific factors that exert their influence on the individual and impose upon him the personality label he would eventually be identified with.

#### **VARIOUS PERSONALITY PROBLEMS, DEFENSE MECHANISMS AND COMPLEXES**

I have chosen to use personality problems instead of personality disorder because personality disorder denotes those behavioural problems that are more deep seated and destructive of the person rather than the society within which he operates. Such personality disorders as these are classifiable under two broad outlines; neurosis and psychosis. The essence of these personality disorders for whatever they represent inevitably does not belong within the scope of this discourse. Of paramount interest here are those personality problems classifiable as anti-social personality disorders. This, according to Rathus (1993), is the diagnosis given

a person who is in frequent conflict with society, yet who is undeterred by punishment, and experiences neither little guilt nor any anxiety. An antisocial personality disorder, rather than destroy the individual and make him an isolate within the society, causes distress to society. When the disorder is unchecked, it tends to imbue the victim with the attributes of a psychopath. Psychopaths are individuals with low-level ability to express anxiety. They fail to acquire an appropriate amount of internal code of values, are not able to feel remorse or guilt, unable to tolerate delayed gratification and respond to others only superficially (Baron et al., 1977). It is understood in the same vein that a less endowed psychopath can easily find crime an attractive pastime and a means to whatever end he desires. A true psychopath commits murder, engages in rape and theft without compunction, all this owing to the fact that he is deficient in moral values, genuine feeling for others and deficient also in the feeling of guilt or sorrow that ordinarily could have deterred him.

Of interest is the fact that cognitive psychologists agree on the fact that the thinking patterns of adolescents who are given to anti-social behaviour is characterized by the attribute of interpreting social information in a way that encourages their misdeeds.

They are most often given to seeing people's behaviour as threatening even when it is not (Dodge, 1985; Lochman, 1987; Rathus, 1993). It was further suggested that family and community experiences might have contributed immensely to the antisocial individual's cynical outlook on human nature (Jurkovic, 1980).

### DEFENSE MECHANISMS

In Freudian's psychoanalytic theory, Freud proposes that three levels exist in the human conscious feeling system. These are the id, the ego and the superego. The ego mediates between the antisocial desires of the id and the conscientious morality of the superego. Nevertheless, there are occasions when the primitive impulse that originates from the id would overwhelm the ego to the extent of being given outlet. The result is often that the individual would revert naturally to the use of defense mechanisms that would enable him to explain away his anti-social behaviour.

There are seven prominent defense mecha-

nisms. These are:

- a. *Sublimation*: This is a defense mechanism which transforms the aggressive energies and sexual impulses of the id to motives that are more socially acceptable and profitable. An example is when a failed surgeon becomes a respectable butcher.
- b. *Regression*: This is when the individual backs away from painful realities of the present and seeks refuge in pleasurable memories and feelings of the past. He banishes the present to his subconscious and unearths the care-laden memories of the past. This is the case when a neglected wife feigns frequent sickness to attract the attention, care and sympathy of her husband.
- c. *Rationalization*: This occurs when an individual explains his failures away as a good thing because if he had succeeded, the end-result would not have profited him anyway.
- d. *Reaction Formation*: This describes the behaviour of an individual who justifies his inadequacies, probably in an examination or any competition by the fact that he could have performed better if he had cheated, or had been sinful in nature. But that he would not cheat or become a sinner for any reason.
- e. *Projection*: when an individual condemns his innate weakness in other people, he is projecting. For example, when two individuals compete for the love of a maiden and one eventually succeeds, the unsuccessful one may explain this away as a fortunate thing to happen, as this new development will make his rival become less jealous of him.
- f. *Identification*: This is the case when the unsuccessful individual identifies with individuals who are successful where he has failed. An example is when somebody who is not very rich winds most of his stories around his wealthy brother, powerful friend or well-connected relatives.
- g. *Compensation and Attention Getting*: When the unsuccessful person has failed, probably, in academics, he now becomes a footballer. He does not just stop at being a footballer but sensationalizes whatever he does on the pitch so as to attract attention.

These seven types of defense mechanisms are repressive in the sense that they prevent the individual from giving free rein and undisguised expression to his impulses (Lindsey et al., 1988).



*Complexes:* These are unconscious feelings of inferiority or superiority about oneself in comparison with others. Complex may either be the way up or way down. When it is the way down, it is labeled; inferiority complex and when it is the way up, it is known as superiority complex. Inferiority complex occurs when you feel you are different negatively while those who feel they are different positively are classifiable as belonging to the superiority complex group.

*Inferiority Complex:* This could be caused by:

- a. Excessive negative comparison of oneself with others. An individual who possesses this feeling hardly gives himself credit for his good points and tends to exaggerate little virtues in other people;
- b. Excessive self-centredness (egocentricism), which induces in the individual a feeling of inferiority complex when he discovers he could not acquire everything nor have things his own way all times.
- c. Physical or organic disability, which in effect brings about a feeling of inferiority in individual victims. When one is abnormal in a particular way, he tends to generalize this abnormality to other domains that are otherwise normal;
- d. Social attitude towards the recognition that is accorded to the individual by the society. That is, the way society assesses and accepts or rejects an individual. For example, there are some cultures that regard some people as outcasts right from birth. (The *Osu* caste system in Igboland is an example);
- e. Continuous failure: This produces a snowballing effect. This is a situation whereby failure in one thing is generalized to other things including social participation. This may manifest in telling psychological lies to boost one's ego.

The tendency to be over-sensitive to things and issues rides high among the symptoms of inferiority complex. When one is over-sensitive, he tends to over-react to issues. Other symptoms of inferiority complex include escapism, which is the tendency in the individual to avoid a group of people either because he sees them as being richer, or are always discussing him.

*Superiority Complex:* is an unconscious feeling of seeing oneself as being superior, relative to other people. This type of complex is often given impetus by such factors as:

- a. Royal blood syndrome, which occurs when the individual attaches so much importance to his status as having royal blood flowing in his veins.
  - b. The feeling that one is the first to achieve or obtain something that is highly treasured in the society and among his peers. Superiority complex has always been the personality disease of pioneer achievers.
  - c. Having an individual experience of a continuous, unbroken chain of success.
  - d. A situation in which an individual is over-praised by the society, and is idolized as a semi-god by all those who surround him.
- Syndromes of Superiority Complex Include:
- i. Avoidance of association with ordinary people. Instead, one prefers the company of "people of substance";
  - ii. Putting on of airs of superiority through the way one walks, looks and talks;
  - iii. The tendency to buy, wear or desire costly things;
  - iv. The desire to be different from others, always;
  - v. Enjoying looking down on people of little means;
  - vi. Being rather egotistic and at times given to feelings of narcissism.

### **Cultism as a Function of Personality Impairment**

Having enumerated the causative factors leading to personality malfunctioning, the symptoms and how they are explained to conform with acceptable social standards through various types of defense mechanisms, one suspects the possibility of an underlying linkage between the tendency in an individual to operate in secrecy and a malfunctioning personality profile. A university, for all practical purposes, is established to impart knowledge, teach social comportment and strive to help solve countless numbers of human problems. It is paradoxical to construe a scenario where some of the individuals recruited for scholastic training, like cancerous cells, decide to complement such noble ideal with regression to cult activism, for no prosocial reason other than to terrorize law-abiding co-learners for selfish gains.

In the present day Nigerian Universities, a cursory survey would reveal that there are six prominent cult groups. These are the Vikings, the KKK, the Red Devils, the Blood Spot, the

Black Axe and the Buccaneers. Most Nigerian University campuses parade one or more of these secret cults. An historical observation reveals that the original intention that justifies the existence of secret cults manifested in the form of a patriotic, confrontationist squad that antagonized colonialism in the stormy days of late 1959 and early 1960 when the agitation for self-government in Nigeria was at its peak. The need to operate effectively behind the scene led to a consequential inauguration of the Pyrate Confraternity at the University of Ibadan in 1952. Since this initial objective has been accomplished, cultic objectives have wavered between sheer egocentricism and inter cult rivalries over mundane and unacademic issues. Prominent among these anti social objectives (located under the egocentric categorization) is the desire to consort with beautiful girls unchallenged, through the use of brawn rather than through appeal or force of reason. Lately, this objective has shifted to accommodate hard drug use and direct drug trafficking. Cult activities are usually organized and performed in the deep recesses of caves or the nearby jungles where members have unfettered freedom to get high on drugs and try their hands on fetishism. They operate surreptitiously on campus to deal with any member of a rival cult gang who they consider a threat to their nefarious activities or who probably may have "snatched" a girl friend belonging to a member of their own cult gang. Times there were when the fancy catches them and causes them to inflict serious injuries on students or lecturers whose parallel lawful activities are likely to obstruct the realization of their socially undesirable pastimes.

Surprisingly, cult activities have rarely been directed at achieving any enviable academic goal nor have members ever been organized in the manner of a pressure group for hijacking power at the level of student union politics. The curiosity provoked by this lack of interest in what ordinarily would interest normal groups is a testimony to the anti social nature and personality impairment of cult members.

The major focus of cult activities appears rather pedestrian and totally removed from any claim to altruistic virtues. In keeping with these observations, the following descriptions given by Vaughan et al. (1990) becomes pertinent and in a way provides a clue to where to look for the

analysis of the problem and grope for possible solution. He opined inter alia that;

Vulnerable teenagers . . . with low self-esteem, who are depressed, lonely, uncertain, and/or with dependent personalities; who have strong needs for affection; and who are searching for answers to society's problems, as well as to their own... (p.321)

Parents and the society cannot entirely be absolved from blames for encouraging cult membership; parenting styles have changed from one of authoritative to permissive superintendence. Since the achievement of life goals, particularly those that border on self esteem, now take a little longer to achieve than before (owing to population explosion and change in value orientation), parents' attention is now divided between pursuing their life goals and actually helping the adolescent son or daughter to chart a realistic path through life. Hence, joining a cult according to Vaughan et al. (1990) is one reaction to the pressure on late adolescents to commit themselves simultaneously, in Eriksonian parlance, to physical intimacy, to definitive occupational choice, to energetic competition and to psychosocial self-definition.

The society has its share of the blame in the kind of stereotypes it parades. The Nigerian society has its own share of secret cults. Members of these secret cults wield considerable public power. The power includes political, economic, social and religious influences. These influences and powers are definitely not lost on the younger generations, who hardly can wait to launch their own secret cults so as to corner for themselves whatever perquisites they imagine are accruable to the influential adults who are also prominent cult members.

A rather contemporary issue capable of supporting the growth of cultism is the style of governance in Nigeria. The Nigerian politics has always been dogged by the albatross of Mafia – like gangsterism. There is always the feeling that a hidden power or authority that is more effective and more pervasive than the ordinary run - of - the mill one exists, even though unknown to many people. The historically significant arbitrary cancellation of the popular June 12, 1993 election by the military government changed the status of this evidence from mere feeling to something of a stark unpleasant reality. The seed of a palpable emotion of anger and distrust was sowed in the

political psyche of the country. The public (including the youth and the adolescents) became disenchanted and were riddled with the justified feeling that things could be organized differently and in a better way. When this feeling could not change things, it turned to impotent fury and eventually to frustration. Obviously, when a normal personality is frustrated, particularly at an impressionistic age (like that of the adolescent and the youth), one's mentality begins to accommodate a - not - altogether - ethical scheming, among which cult membership consideration is prominent.

A research conducted by Adebayo (1992), based on McClelland's (1953) motivation model, found that human beings motivated by any of three need classifications suggested by McClelland (need for achievement, need for affiliations and need for power) are rarely distracted by clandestine activities that can undermine rather than support their set goals.

Achievement oriented personalities have been known to be characterized by the tendency to tackle problems alone, so that success in such tasks would be theirs alone (Andy, 1986). This is because they hardly would want to share successes with anybody. They like to be seen and at the same time commended for what they have been able to achieve. These qualities would not exactly qualify one to belong to a cult association where activities are conducted with marked deference to the leader and only him can determine what is success and what is not, and by extension, to whom the accolade inspired by success will be given.

Similarly, the need for affiliation cannot find a harbor within the confines of cult organizations, because it has been discovered that an affiliative personality craves for the opportunity to associate, help and interact with others (Elegbeleye, 1991). These are qualities, which definitely do not qualify one to want to operate in isolation of other social groups, as it is the wont of cult associations to enforce on their members to do.

Individuals who are motivated by the need for power have been identified (Starke et al., 1997) as possessing disarming qualities, preferring to be in the good book of people that wield power and are fast at coming up with alternatives. Cult activities attract to members a fugi-tive status whose identity should not be known, particularly by people in authority. Hence, the need for power

could not have been the motivational factor for joining cult associations.

Having gone through these three positive motivation indices, it becomes evident that cult members are motivated by something beyond a healthy human need. Hence, the secrecy and unfocused ambivalent objectives that characterize their activities.

### REHABILITATIVE PROGRAMME FOR CULT MEMBERS

To combat cultism in Nigerian University campuses or any similarly constituted University campuses the world over, I have chosen the word "*rehabilitative*" rather than the confrontational but insincere stance of people in authority who are often heard using such words as "*eradicating*", "*stamping out*", and "*outlawing*", cult membership on campuses. Terminologies like "*eradicating*" and "*stamping out*" are more relevant in medicine when a dangerous disease is the target of attack. "*Outlawing*" is just another cliché often used by those in authority when they obviously have no immediate solution to a particular problem. There has never been a time that cultism is statutorily allowed on campuses. It has always been outlawed. Yet, it still flourishes.

'Rehabilitative' is a word that connotes a gradual process and it is often used to describe individuals that have been sick, not necessarily physiologically but rather neurologically as it is the case in this context. Since it has been established that cultism evolved through malfunctioning personality, whatever palliative measures are taken to curb its existence on campuses must be intensive, conscientious, but gradual.

First, it should be seen by those who could do something about it (educational planners, educational policy makers, the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) the government, parents, various university councils and senates, etc.) as something that did not just evolve overnight, hence, solution to it should be as elastic as its evolution.

Secondly, cult associations parade members that are not classifiable as normal personality types. Hence, the particular agoraphobic trait in them that gives impetus to the desire to operate clandestinely need be located and attacked.

Thirdly, the Federal Government of Nigeria



should work closely with Guidance Counselors and Psychologists to reassess the value status of formal education in the Nigerian society. The question should be asked why formal education is no longer seriously valued by trainees and trainers and even by the government that sponsors it? In this vein, elaborate preparations should be made to have counseling units on campuses that would be manned by trained Guidance Counselors and School Psychologists who will attend to socio - educational, personal and vocational needs of students.

Fourthly, University authorities should not frequently use threats of expulsion against cult members. Instead, effective means should be devised to draw out and register cult organizations so that their activities would be made more open and easy to monitor. It is also psychologically defeating to expel students from an institution of learning, particularly for behavioural deficiencies, such as exercising one's right of association wrongly. When a human organism is expelled from an establishment whose sole objective is to train and change behaviour from crude to polished, then to which unit of the society would such establishment delegate the duty of redesigning an appropriate personality profile for the rusticated student to?

Fifthly, University security network should be reactivated in a manner that would enable it to effectively monitor the movement of students at odd hours of the night and undue access to a labyrinthine privacy that would make cult gatherings thrive must be blocked and made more difficult.

Lastly, and most importantly, the Nigerian society should aspire to evolve a robust democratic culture that would allow for the development of individual talents in various spheres of life. When this is coupled with a stable government of the people, by the people and for the people, one hopes that, as the day follows the night so would economic prosperity be a future target that would spur Nigerian youths to put up behaviours that are less clandestine but are more altruistic and self-fulfilling.

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