

The Mass Media in the Fight Against Cultism in Selected Secondary Schools in Abakaliki Urban of Ebonyi State

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Abstract: This study “Mass Media in the Fight against Cultism in selected Secondary Schools in Abakaliki Urban of Ebonyi State, examined the role(s) the mass media can play in the fight against cultism. It also looked at the factors that motivate students into joining secret cults. The study was anchored on the Broad Theory of Learning propounded by Edwin Southerland (1983-1950). The survey research was used. Three Hundred and Sixty-seven (367) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to five (5) selected secondary schools in Abakaliki Urban. The findings of the study revealed that the mass media with their report and campaign can stem the tide of cultism in secondary schools. Also, it was discovered that most parents are less concerned about the activities of their children in schools based on these it was recommended that proper orientation and awareness programme must be conducted frequently by the media such programmes must bother on the negative impact of cultism. Parents should desist from luring their children into cults. They should pay attention to their children and know their friends and activities at all times.

Key words: Mass Media • Cultism • Secondary Schools • Abakaliki and Ebonyi

INTRODUCTION

Dating back to history, the word cult was seen as a term for religious practices that entails the performance of ritual rites to lesser gods or the practice of idolatry. Cults vary tremendously and such disagreement surrounds the definition of a cult and which groups should be classified as cults [1]. The word “Cultism” originated from the latin word “occulere” which denotes something hidden, occultism, concealed, enigmatic, mysterious, mystical etc. Cultism is the deadly engagement in ritual practices. Subscribing to the opinion, Adewale [2] notes that “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 religious body that uses secret signs, oaths, rites or symbols:

- Whose meeting or other activities are held in secret; and

- Whose members are under oath, obligations 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.

Some factors responsible for students’ involvement in cult activities as identified by Ajakaye [3] are recognition, peer pressure, curiosity/adventure, toughness, parental involvement, security, influencing the opposite sex, bulldozing their way through school, criminal tendencies, inferiority complex and (Fake) promises. Others are weak spiritual foundation, material/luxury pursuit and acquisition. The issue of cultism and the admission of more members in our tertiary institution have spread to the secondary schools. This has been a major concern to well-meaning Nigerians. Hardly can an academic year pass by without scores of students being expelled or reprimanded for involvement in cultism.

Reliable sources reveal that no less than 53 cult groups exist in the Nigerian educational system today.

Such groups include: air Lord, Black Axe, Black Baret Fraternity, Black Bra, Black Cats, Black Mamba, Buccaneers, CappaVendetto, West End, Vipers, The Amazon and a host of others [4]. It is disheartening to note that the secret cult activities which started as a display of youthful exuberance in the academic institution about five decade ago, has now assumed a monstrous dimension. This threatens and shakes the foundation of the educational sector. The future of the younger generation appears to be bleak and uncertain.

The mass media are responsible for disseminating information in a context that is meaningful. The public is able to change the basic conditions that amount to crime and violence with information the media provide in context. The media enhance discussion on violence and its remedies “and encourage views currently outside the dominant ideology that sees the causes of crime as individually located and the solutions in terms of punishment instead of preventing” by reporting on inherent courses and social factors. This study therefore, looks at the strategies employed by the media to fight through their coverage and reportage, cultism in secondary schools in Abakaliki Urban of Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem: The evil which the existence of secret cult has done on our institutions of higher learning and its widespread in our secondary schools, has no doubt, called for a rethink. The dimension and magnitude of this problems caused by secret cult activities has become the talk of everybody at tea table, the church and even in government circles. School authorities have employed measures ranging from rustication, expulsion; suspension and severe punishment to stem the tide of cultism, yet the ugly trend continue to spread like wide fire in our secondary schools. What strategies can the mass media employ in the fight against cultism in our schools with particular reference to selected secondary schools in Abakaliki urban secondary schools in Ebonyi State? That is the major concern of this study.

Objectives of the Study: The main purpose of this study is to find out the strategies of using the mass media in the fight against cultism in secondary schools in Abakaliki Urban. Specifically, the study will find out:

- To ascertain the role of the mass media in the fight against cultism
- To determine the impact of secret cult activities on the academic performance of students in Abakaliki Urban.

- To determine the ways of improving the media messages for best result in waging war against cultism.

Research Questions: The study was guided by the following research questions

- What role do the mass media play in the fight against cultism?
- What is the impact of secret cult activities on the academic performance of students in Abakaliki Urban?
- In what ways of improving the media messages for best result in waging war against cultism?

Significance of the Study: The result of the study will be of immense benefit to school authorities and policies makers in the fight against cultism in our schools. The findings on the role of the media will also help media practitioners and establishments to understanding the proper method of disseminating information in the fight against cultism to achieve maximum impact. The government will also see the need to enact laws that will adequately punish secrets cult members as well as mapping out strategies of bringing them to book. Future researchers on similar topics on cultism will find this study very beneficial since it will serve as a source of information needed by them.

Conceptual Review: The issue of cultism, admission of more members on our campuses is fast spreading to secondary schools. Cultism can be seen from either a traditional perspective institutional cultism is represented in the educational institution in Nigeria presently and its activities are spread within and outside the campuses. Many victims of such cut activities which are violent in nature are the cult members themselves. They have consistently had premature deaths. They maim, kill with acids, charms, axe, gun etc whenever they strike. The first secret cult in tertiary institution started at the University Collage, Ibadan in 1953 when a group of seven students led by professor Wole Soyinka, Olumuyiwa, Awe, Ralf Opara, Ikephare Aigimou khuede, Sylvester U Egbuche, Nathaniel Oyelola and Pius Olegbe founded the seadogs Confraternity (a.k.a) pyrate. It’s to hospitals to save lives, presentation of gifts to orphanages and assisted the helpless in the society.

The society today has abused the objectives of the founding fathers of cultism. They have accepted what [5] called open display of power and use of violence as a

convenient means of conflict resolution. Assassins now stalk the law like law enforcement agents, armed robbers have also become public heroes. The mass media are channels through which ideas, experience, values or messages sought are shared with or related to a large/mass heterogeneous, scattered audience [6]. Define them as “Devices for moving message across distance or time to accomplish mass communication”. The expression “mass media” have also been used to refer to technical devices through which mass communication is achieved [7]. They fall within two major categories-print (Newspaper, magazines, books etc) and electronic (Radio, television) media. They make communication possible from a source to an infinite number of persons.

The basic functions of the mass media in the society are generally viewed to include information, education and entertainment. To these, have been added other related functions either to broaden the perspective or for the sake of specifics. Persuasion has been included in these functions, where the media are seen as virile tools for using persuasive efforts to influence people’s actions towards a particular direction. The mass media furnish the public with the necessary information to achieve development or change goals. They have the capacity and capabilities to reach, manipulate, sensitize and mobilize people through information dissemination [8]. No matter the perception from which their functions are viewed, the mass media are central to the existence of any modern society that is inclined towards meaningful development at any level. What remains is to properly utilize them in achieving any goal in any society.

Theoretical Framework: This work is guided by the work of Edwin Sutherland, (1888 - 1950), Broad Theory of learning. He said that persons specialized in a socially disorganized neighborhood are likely to have association that will increase criminal adaptation. He also noted that those individuals from socially organized neighborhood are more likely to experience non-criminal association. To Sutherland, all behavior, criminal and non-criminal are learned in the same ways. Sutherland is of the opinion that criminal tendencies are learned by associating with criminals. He identified the following principles of differential association:

- Criminal behavior is learned and not inherited
- Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in process of communication.
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University, Abakaliki. That is principles part of learning of criminal behaviour occurs with intimate personal.

- That learning includes:
- Techniques of committing the crime which sometimes are very complicated and at other time very simple.
- The specific direction of the motives is learned from the definition of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable.
- The specific direction of the motives derives rationalization and attitude.
- A person becomes a criminal because of excess of definition favorable to law violation over definitions unfavorable to violation.
- The process of learning criminal’s behavior by associating with criminal and anti-criminals pattern involves all the mechanism that is involved in any other learning.
- While criminal behaviour is an expression of general need and values, these general needs and values do not explain it since non-criminal behavior is an expression of the same need and value

This story holds that crime is not in born but learned by interaction with the outside stimuli, there is no secret cult member that was born a secret cult member, rather, joined as a result of external factors. Such external factors are: the parents, peer group and the society at large. Most students join by learning from others thus, when you associate with friends that are members, you will likely join either by persuasion or by force.

Review of Empirical Studies: Studies show that several scholars and researchers have written so much on the negative impact of secret cult activities and how the media can be used to forestall further spread of these deadly activities.

Edwin [9] studied that Pyrate Confraternity which was founded in (1952). He expected that secret cults should operate within the rules and regulations that govern the activities of campus societies club or organization. He said that it is the responsibility of school authorities to curb the activities of secret cults by all means. Unfortunately, those who are expected to enforce relevant rules and regulations on campuses have their hands tied. He was of the view that secret cult membership should be made illegal, not on paper but in action. He said that the reasons for the reasons for the formation and the activities of the secret cults should be well identified and investigated. In this regard, an

advisory committee for the chief executive of the institution concerned should be set up to include representative of the institution teachers and administration, the student's union and possibly, parents and guardians. The committee should also include medical experts, psychologists and educationists. The main concern apart from those already discussed, will be to counsel students on the evil and implication of membership of secret cults.

Ekegbeleye [10] carried out a research on the Epidemiology of Secret Cult among Secondary School in Ebonyi State. Using questionnaire as his instrument, the population of this study was about 400 respondents. He identified among others, the following causes of the widespread of secret cult among Secondary School Students.

- An individual may be attracted to the particular individuals who are members of the group.
- An individual may feel the goal of the group is reasonable and worth pursuing.
- An individual may also join a group in order to obtain desirable secondary goals.

Ekeje [11] in their study on "The Media and Cultism in Nigerian Higher Institution of Learning", A study of Coverage, Treatment and Relevance, said that as a means of addressing the issue of cultism, various institution have mounted some form of publicity which does not seem to be enough as it has been channeled to a specific audience of only those who visit the institutions. Also, newspapers report about cultism, but this is only when they wreak havoc and the newspaper is carrying it only as news. Like watchdogs or newshounds active collectors and disseminators of information, they continued, journalists offer public service. The public service ideal is seen as a mighty component of journalism's ideology. It is said to be an ideal that journalist aspire to and use to legitimize aggressive or increasingly interpretative styles of reporting.

Cultism: An Overview: It has been noted that the trend towards cult violence begin in the early 1980s. The nation delayed its decision to rise up to the challenge and deal with the problems associated with campus violence, the decision came up not until it was over 15 years since the inception of campus violence and nine years since the Pyrates confraternity called the nation's attention to the trend of campus violence. The history of cultism in Africa is being associated with African culture and religion

based on the existence of many gods in African Traditional Religion, the adherents of these gods as well as subsequent events that led to small religious cults.

Cultism can be seen from either a traditional perspective or an institutional perspective, Institutional cultism is represented in the educational institutions in Nigeria presently and its activities are spread within and outside the campuses. Many victims of such cult activities which are violent in nature and the cult members themselves have constantly had premature deaths. Cult members themselves cause a lot of havoc on Nigerian campuses as they main and kill with acids, charms, machetes, knives, guns etc. whenever they strike [12] highlights this thus:

Until very recently, enlightened or educated youths would have little or nothing to do with 'Cult' except for academic research purpose since it was considered as some ritual ceremonies performed secretly in the bush or in some dark places by some primitive and barbaric group of people. Youths now regard membership of secret cult as mark of pride, recognition and acceptance among their peer groups, especially in the tertiary institutions of learning, now spreading into the secondary and even primary schools.

Cults of today in Nigeria campuses in line with their unhidden evil's robbery, murder, rape, thug activities and all manner of malpractices and the roles of their members in the mainstream of the economy and politics, have polluted the nation's wellbeing with their negative influence and image. It is therefore, worthy to note that peace and safety are major determinants of any meaningful pursuit of social, political, economic, religious or educational development activities in our universities in particular and in the country in general [13].

The conventional procedure(s) adopted by virtually all cult groups in undertaking their activities include: recruitment of new members and initiation. Under recruitment, cultists take advantages of an individual's financial status, family background, physical appearance etc in luring him/her to the cult. Fawole [14] outlines some of the avenues via which recruitment is made and they are: general discussions and persuasions, threat and intimidation, invitation to parties and picnics, deceit, freewill, blackmail and sudden friendliness. Once recruitment has taken place, new members are interviewed orally before they are prepared for the initiation ceremony.

During this ceremony, the old cult members celebrate with eating, drinking and dancing in frightful appearances. The new members undergo initiation drills that include rolling on the floor, receiving all manner of beating so as

to enable them endure hardness (Of heart). This initiation ceremony varies from one cult group to another. Some cult groups go as far as extracting the blood of their new members for the purpose of swearing to an oath. The other members of the cult a signal that oath/covenant has been sealed, drink the blood. Sometimes, new members are asked to bear strange names.

The Negative Impacts of Secret Cult Activities on the Academic Performance of Students: The academic and personality development of the students is no longer encouraging. The frequent poor academic performance of students in both internal and external examination is because cult activities have been taken the time of most of our students in schools. Students can no longer read their books. All we experience now is brain-drain among our students. Human beings develop their personalities and intelligence as they engage in give and take interaction with fellow men in the society. Anybody who gets so socialized, his/her personality and intelligent traits must develop. Evidence of this lies in the fact that there is no society where deviants are not found.

The biosocial and biological (Including psychological) needs of man are nurtured in the society as he develops. The genius, the prodigy, the fool and all have to be socialized alike in the same society, yet, all grow up top show diverse personality structure, Idowu [15]. The great pyramid of Gizeh today stands as a world wonder with details about its mathematics, architects and craftsman lost to the world. Pythagoras Theorems in mathematics are available to us today because they had to focus on their studies secretly until the society was ripe to receive them openly. People like Francis Bacon, William Shakespeare are being celebrated today because their personality and intelligence trait was developed. Isaak [16] outlined below are the negative attributes that characterize the members of cult:

- They are extravagant
- They lack focus
- They live in colonies instead of a campus
- They engage in regular immoral/indecent acts (activities)
- They are arrogant
- They are aggressive
- They have signs that are peculiar to them
- They are harsh, loud and noisy
- They have colors, which are peculiar to them. For instance, the color of the pirates is red. Mephitis are known with black and yellow.

- They identify with slogans that are peculiar to their cult. The slogan of the Buccaneer is “No pain, no gain” that of the Vikings is “Kill first report later”. That of the Black Axe is “Eye(s) for an Eye”.

There have been several cases of students’ and teacher’s untimely death in the 90s and presently as a result of cultism. However, owing to its despicable lawlessness, it has become a precedent issue which needed combative measures to serve as a panacea [17, 18] goes ahead to say that cultism has:

- Stopped innocent students from studying at late hours in the classrooms
- Made prospective undergraduates develop cold feet and decide in anticipation to join, if persistently disturbed.
- Made some affluent parents to send their wards to study overseas despite the dwindling economy.
- Increased perpetrators of violence, rape, strike action /school closure etc.

Professor Wole Soyinka and Olumuyiwa Awe (1987) founded the Pyrates Confraternity in 1958 at the University of Ibadan with the objectives of:

- To abolish convention
- To revive the age chivalry and
- To end tribalism and elitism

The pyrates confraternity has spread to all campuses of the country. Their original intentions are noble and through these, they have developed their personalities to be what they are today. Awe (1987) wonders whether the present members of these groups are still faithful to the original beliefs of the founders. Many students today are violent in nature no more ready to develop their personality and intelligence trait.

The Motivational Factors That Encourage Students to Join Secret Cult: The crucial question always asked is, why secret cult in secondary schools? What are the reasons for student’s involvement in such act? According to Obada-Obieh [19] and Obasanjo and Mabogunje [20] students who have suffered any form of frustration towards achieving academic, social and political objectives often work for opportunity to revenge or vent it out on what they suspect or known to be the cause of their frustration.

Okoro [21] emphasized on Cooley's work which argued that human beings have no whole of which they are members. Essentially Cooley's position is that man is an active member of a society which can be viewed as a group. The group may be small or large, loosely or rigidly defiled. One thing that is obtainable in a group is which each member of such group is aware of. Each member of such group is also influenced by each member of other groups. Social psychologists have always been interested in the formation and development of groups. Crucial to this interest is the identification of the reason why people decide to join or choice. The most basic reason is that an individual joins a group because he perceives that such group will satisfy some needs which may be quite different from those of the formal group.

The following are some of the reasons:

- The individual may be attracted to the particular individuals who are members of the group.
- The individual may feel that the goal of the group is reasonable and worth pursuing.
- The need may be for social interaction where the group itself serves as the object of need.
- The activities of the group may be the source of attraction to the individual.
- An individual may join a group in order to obtain desirable secondary goal.

Opubor [22] in his contribution on campus secret cult reflect that cult members are those who have been isolated and alienated from the larger social structure to such a degree that they are concerned about their own religious experience and the relief from 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 Osuala [23] is that of personal ecstatic experience, comfort, salvation and mental or physical healing. Some factors responsible for student's involvement in cult activities as identified by Oyedipe [24] are recognition, peer pressure, curiosity, adventure, toughness, parental involvement, security, influencing the opposite sex, bulldozing their way through school, criminal tendencies, inferiority complex and fake promises. Others are weak spiritual foundation, materials/luxury pursuit and acquisition.

Individuals who are motivated by the need for power have been identified 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 that status of a fugitive whose identity should not be known particularly be people in authority hence, the need for power could not have been the motivating factor for joining cult association.

Influencing of Parents in Students Joining Secret Cult:

The collapse of the family institution is a contributing factor to the current upsurge in the menace of secret cult [25]. In the words of Abati, many children no longer have parents they can look up to for inspiration. The existing family only set standards that encourage disorientation. He further argued that many students who join secret cults, probably, have parents who belong to one secret cult or the other. Such children grow up with the awareness that their parents have a special room which no one else is permitted to enter. These rooms are filled with all sorts of emblems and effigies which nobody can touch. These parents are discovered to go out at night, often times to attend meetings that are never discussed at home.

Uyo [26] identified another category of members of secret cults that were imposed on them by their parents. He argued that those parents have derived certain benefits from being members of secret cults. Apart from benefits, these parents must also have inherited the cults from their grandparents and in order not to allow the secret society from ending at their children whether the children like it or not, their parents would force them. These parents have method of imposition. They can choose the symbols of the cults to threaten their children. The children on their part would not want to float the order of the order of the imposition and willy-nilly, they would succumb to the order of their parents. What further could serve as an aid to thies imposition order is that these children must have been initially initiated into those cults their parents, come from the families of secret societies.

Akinfeleye [4] the Daily Times of March 22, 1994 in its editorial put the blames of the rise in cultism on parent. According the editorial, the reign of secret cults and their mind rendering activities are a manifestation of decay in modern day families. Due to the fervid race for material aggrandizement, parents have abandoned their traditional moral responsibilities. This has consequently brought about scent concern for proper upbringing of the child by the parents who in share escapism, transfer their burden on their child's school teacher.

Ways of Improving the Mass Media for the Result in Waging War Against Cultism in Secondary School:

Various communication scholars and political gladiators have offered various definitions of the mass media. However, there is a general agreement that the “media” refers to the print and electronic media. To Eberendu [8] “The mass media refer to the print media, that is, the newspapers, magazines, newsletters etc. It will also refer to cinematography and film”. Edwin [9] on the other hand, defines the mass media as the engine of mass communication”. Obada-Obieh [19] in a piece entitled “The Mass Media in Democracy” equally said “Mass Media refer to any agency, modern or traditional that operates for the articulation and dissemination of ideas and information generally with the intent to influence or control an audience or the institutions that constitute legalized power and authority.

The mass media therefore, should be seen as the various avenues through which the public could be reached at any point in time through a complex mechanical device whether print or electronic. It should be noted that cultism in our constitutions of learning especially in the secondary schools, is one of the biggest challenges in history of humanity. There have been several cases of students and teacher’s untimely death. These cult members in bid to meet up with the dues of the members resort to stealing. Some of them have turned to high way robbers just because they want to belong. Also, rape and other atrocities are being committed by these cultists all in bid to feel “Big” and belong to such groups.

Against the above background, what are the strategies the media should employ in order to fight cultism in our secondary schools. As Okoro [21] would have it, the media are responsible for disseminating information in a context that is meaningful. This has been acknowledged since the responsibilities of the press were outlined by the Hutchins commission in 1947. The public is able to change the basic conditions that amount to crime and violence with the information that the media provider in context. The media enhance discussion on violence and its remedies “And encourage views currently outside the dominant ideology that seeks the causes of crimes as individually located and the solutions in terms of punishment instead of prevention” by reporting on inherent causes and social factors. The Nigeria mass media should take the lead in the war against cultism. The Nigeria civil society today is bedeviled and the mass media should. Therefore, help in the fight to rid our secondary schools of cultism. To do, his, they should let the public know the latest about cultism. As Akinfeleye [4] pointed out. The basic goal of

the media is fact finding and fact finding. That is the function of news operation: determining what is and saying that it is and saying publicity.

It could be a fundamental contribution of the mass media to human progress if they perceive cult activities as a” war against humanity, which must be decisively fought and won at all cost. As trustees of the public and the fourth Estate of the Realm, the mass media remain one of the best avenues through which the “war against cultism could be fought.

Thus, the media should intervene positively by feeding the campaign against further spread of cult activities to our primary schools and some other secondary schools that are yet to be affected through news analysis, features, editorial, cartoons, documentary and news commentary. This explains why the mass media are reputed to be agenda-setting institution. Reflecting on this, Coleman [7] stresses that studies have indicated that the news media perform an Agenda- setting function” pointing out that “Those topics given the most coverage by the news media tend to be the topics the audience identifies as the most pressing issues of the day”. Thus, if the media see the campaign as important and consequently reflect it in their news stories, editorials or commentaries, features etc, the society will see it as such, hence the mass media wield enormous power when it comes to campaign for attitudinal or behavioral change. Ascribing to this view, Ekeje [11] says: it has become fashionable to argue that most important agents of socialization in today’s world are the mass media themselves. Almost irresistible is the notion that as children spend more time watching television and less time interacting with their parents, television becomes the main source of values.

Summary of Review: Secret cult activities have negative impact on the academic performance of the student. It was established in the literature that the academic and personality development of students today is no longer encouraging. The frequent poor academic performance of students in both external and internal examinations is as a result of cult activities which have taken the time of most students in the school. It was also established that human beings develop their personalities and intelligent as they engage in give and take interaction with fellow men in society. Anybody who gets socialized, his/her own personality and intelligent traits must develop. Again the collapse of the family institution is a contributing factor to the upsurge in the menace of cultism. Many children no longer have parents they can look up to for inspiration.

The mass media have a lot of roles to play in the war against cultism in secondary schools. Through news analysis, features editorials, cartoons, documentary, the media can help in spreading news about cult activities and its dangers. The mass media wield enormous power when it comes to attitudinal/behavioral change. They are therefore effective tools in the hands of journalists in the fight against cultism.

Research Design: The survey research design was employed in the study. This method involves the use of the questionnaire to gather data from a specific sample selected for the study. Fawole [14] defines survey method as an “Attempt to determine the incidence distribution and interrelatedness among sociological and physiological variable”. The benefit of this study as stated by Adewale [2] is that it will serve as a process of gathering data from a target population through the questionnaire and subjecting such data to statistical analysis for the purpose of reaching conclusions on the subject matter of study and proving solutions to identified research problems.

Area of the Study: This study looked at the roles the mass media can play in the fight against cultism. It was carried out in five secondary schools in Abakaliki Urban of Ebonyi State.

Population of the Study: The population of the study is made of five selected secondary schools in Abakaliki Urban of Ebonyi State. The secondary schools and their population are listed below.

Table 1

S/N	Name of School	Population
1.	Abakaliki High School	1350
2.	Fountain of Knowledge Intl, Secondary School	988
3.	Ginger Secondary School	1200
4.	Urban Secondary School	450
5.	Nnodo Boys Secondary School	500
Total Population		4488

The total of the secondary selected for this study is 4488 from which the sample was drawn.

Determination of Sample Size: The total population under study is 4488. From this population, the sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane Formula. Idowu [15] states the formula thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where n = desired sample size

$$N = \text{population size under study}$$

$$e = \text{level of significance of error limit of tolerable error assumed to be 5\% or 0.05}$$

$$1 = \text{unity (Always constant in values).}$$

$$N = 4488$$

$$1 + 4488 (0.05)^2$$

$$= 400$$

$$1 + 4488 (0.0025)$$

$$= 400$$

$$1 + 11.22$$

$$= 400$$

$$12.22$$

$$= 367.266$$

$$= 367$$

The sample size therefore is 367

Sample and Sampling Techniques: Using simple random sampling techniques, the students were sampled from each of the selected secondary schools as shown below.

Table 2:

S/N	Name of School	Population
1.	Abakaliki High School	75
2.	Fountain of Knowledge Intl, Secondary School	73
3.	Ginger Secondary School	73
4.	Urban Secondary School	73
5.	Nnodo Boys Secondary School	73
Total Sample		367

Method of Data Collection: Researchers administered the questionnaire to the selected students. The students answered according to their will and returned to the researchers immediately.

Validation of the Instrument: The instruments of data collection passed through a face validation by facilitators of Nigerian Teacher’s Institute (NTI) EBSU Study Center. The facilitators went through the instrument and made some corrections in order to validate it.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument of collection of data for this study is a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered through personal contact by the researcher and two research assistants. The questionnaire items are formulated based on the 4 point Likert scale type. The response categories for all the sections are:

- Strongly Agreed (SA) - 4 Points
- Agree (A) - 3 Points
- Disagreed (D) - 2 Points
- Strongly Disagree (SD) - 1 Point.

Method of Data Analysis: The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using frequency tables and mean. The responses were tallied and presented on frequency tables. The mean statistics was used to answer the research question. Based on a Four Points Likert Scale, lower real limit of mean 2.50 and above were accepted.

Presentation of Results and Findings: The presentation of result and findings made from this study. A total of 367 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the sample students to the selected secondary school in Abakaliki Urban. The questionnaire had a hundred percent return. The research questions were taken one after the other as can be seen from the presentation below.

Question 1: What roles can the media play in the fight against cultism?

Table 3: Mean responses on the role the media can play in the fight against cultism.

S/NO	Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	RMKS
A	Allowing the public know the latest about cult activities	200	150	9	8	3.48	Accepted
B	Perceive cult activities a “war” against humanity which must be fought	300	60	7	-	3.79	Accepted
C	Leading the campaign against further spread of cult activities through their reports in editorials, cartoons, commentaries etc.	350	10	5	2	3.92	Accepted

From the table above, the respondents agreed on three items of the questionnaire. It follows that the items have recorded mean score rating above the cut off mark of 2.50. This indicates that all the items presented in the table constitute the roles the media play in the fight against cultism in secondary schools.

Question 2: What factors motivate students to join secret cults?

Table 4: Mean responses on the motivational factors that encourage students to join cults

S/NO	Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	RMKS
A	Most of their schoolmates join secret cult because they receive help from their senior cult members	108	100	100	59	2.70	Accepted
B	The less school activities make most students to be idle and hence, the need to keep busy	200	80	80	7	3.28	Accepted
C	Most students want to belong to the happening group	300	50	6	11	3.74	Accepted
D	The notion that the group will help them make better result at the end.	267	50	25	25	3.52	Accepted
E	They are deformed in one area and want to recover up	50	50	200	67	2.21	Accepted
F	They are forced by others, they need to belong and be protected by the group.	300	57	10	-	3.79	Accepted

The result shows that the respondents agreed on five items of the questionnaire. One item was rejected since it fell below the cut off mark of 2.50.

Question 3: What are the negative impacts of secret cult activities on the academic performance of the students?

Table 5: Mean responses on the negative impact of secret cult activities on the academic performance of students

S/NO	Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	RMKS
A	Irregular attendance of the students	200	100	30	37	3.26	Accepted
B	Poor performance of the students	350	10	2	5	3.92	Accepted
C	Withdrawal from the school due to fear and threat	189	111	40	27	3.71	Accepted
D	Stopped innocent students from studying late hours in the school	300	50	5	12	4.28	Accepted
E	Made students develop cold feet and decided to join due to prolonged persuasion	300	67	-	-	3.81	Accepted
F	Made some rich parents send their wards to study overseas despite the dwindling economy.	200	100	40	2.7	3.28	Accepted
G	Increased perpetrators of violence, rape, strike action	200	50	50	67	3.04	Accepted
H	Leads to school closure, disturbance in lessons and above all, untimely death of both students and teachers	249	100	10	8	3.60	Accepted

Table 5 above shows that the respondents agreed on all the items listed in the questionnaire. It follows that secret cult activities have negative impact on the academic performance of the students in secondary schools in Afikpo North Local Government Area. The Mean scores are above 2.50 which is the maximum basis for rejection.

Question 4: What are the influence of parents in the students joining secret cult?

Table 6: Mean response on the influence of parents in their children joining secret cult

S/NO	Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	RMKS
A	Some parents are secret cult members and may want their children to replace them	288	50	19	10	3.67	Accepted
B	Some students join because of fear that their parents may kill them	200	100	40	27	3.28	Accepted
C	Lack of proper upbringing from the home	250	98	10	9	3.60	Accepted
D	Parents not paying attention to their children's activities and performances in school	250	100	10	7	4.1	Accepted
E	Children from rich homes join because they feel they are above the law	180	150	20	17	3.34	Accepted
F	Students from broken homes most of the time join secret cults.	100	150	60	57	2.79	Accepted

From the responses elicited from the respondent, it can be said that the parents have a lot of influence in their children decision to join secret cults or not. No wonder, the respondent agreed on all the item listed in the questionnaire as parental influence in the joining of secret cults by their children. All the items were accepted, hence the passed the maximum mark of rejection that is 2.50.

DISCUSSION

At the end of the study, the four research questions were answered. Research Question 1 sought to know the roles the mass media can play in the fight against cultism in secondary schools in Abakaliki Urban. It was discovered that the mass media can fight cultism by leading the campaign against further spread of cults activities in editorials, cartoons, commentaries etc. again by perceiving cult activities as ‘war’ against humanity which must be fought and allowing the public to know the latest about cult activities and what the media can do to help fight cultism.

This finding is in line with Idowu [15] submission that the news media perform agenda setting functions. Thus, those topics given the most coverage by the media tend to be the topic the audience identifies as the most pressing issue of the day. Edwin [9] agrees to this when he says that if the mass media see the campaign as important and reflect it in their news stories, cartoons etc. the society will see it as such. The mass media he continues to say, wield enormous power in attitudinal/behavioral change. This study also discovered that many factors motivate students to join secret cults. Some students are forced by their colleagues. There is also the need to belong and be protected by the group. Also some students are deceived by the notion that the group will help them make better results at the end. Most students indulge in cult activities because they feel they will receive help from their senior cult members. Above all, the less school activities of students make

most of them to be idle and the need to keep busy, make them to join secret cults. These findings corroborate the observation of Abati and Okeowa [1] who identified recognition, peer pressure, curiosity, adventure, toughness, security and so on as factors responsible for students’ involvement in cult activities.

On the negative impact of cult activities which forms the third research question, it was found that cult activities have stopped innocent students from studying late hours in the school. Also, most students have withdrawn from school as a result of cultism. Some rich parents have sent their students to study outside the country despite the dwindling economy of the country among others. These finding are in line with Ekegbeleye [10] view about cultism. To him, cult activities have made prospective undergraduates develop cold feet, stopped students from studying late in the night, made some affluent parents send their wards to study overseas despite the dwindling economy.

Lastly it was discovered the parents have a lot of influence on their children belonging to secret cults. Due to the quest for wealth, parents have abandoned their traditional moral responsibilities. This has consequently brought about scent concern for proper upbringing of the child by parents, who in share escapism transfer their burden to their children’s school teachers.

Implications:

The principal finding is that:

- The mass media with their report and campaign can stem the tide of cultism in secondary schools.
- Most secret cult members withdraw from school because of poor academic performance.
- Some students join secret cult because they want to belong to the happening group.
- Most parents are less concerned about the activities of their children in school.

Recommendations: To fight cultism in our secondary schools, the following recommendations were made:

- Proper orientation or awareness programmes must be conducted frequently by the mass media. It should bother most on the negative impact of cultism.
- The school curriculum should be loaded with the activities to keep the students busy.
- Parents should resist from forcing their children to join secret cults.
- The activities of secret cult members should be sanctioned and abolished completely.
- Government and the law enforcement agent must do their work properly by bringing any students caught involving in cult activities to book.

Suggestions for Further Studies: The researcher recommends the following topics for further studies.

- Secret cult activities in Secondary Schools and the fate of the educational sector.
- Impact of cult activities on the academic performance of students
- Role of parents in the fight against cultism in Secondary Schools.
- Students involvement in cultism: Rational and Implication

Summary: The result of the data analyzed underscores the fact that the media have a lot of role to play in the fight against cultism in secondary schools in Afipko North Government Area of Ebonyi State. The role ranges from allowing the public know the latest about cult activities to seeing cult activities as ‘war’ against humanity which must be fought at all cost. Also, the factors responsible for students joining cults are peer pressure, curiosity/adventure, security, toughness, parental influence and so on.

CONCLUSION

The study has examined the role of the mass media in the fight against cultism, the negative impacts of cult activities, the motivational factors that encourage them to join and the influence of parents on their children joining secret cults. Cultism has done a lot of harm than good to our Educational System. There is irregular

attendance to classes by students. It has increased the spate of violence, rape and strike action. It has brought about school closure, disturbance on lesson and above all, the untimely death of both students and teachers.

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