



## Influence Of Cultism And Its Reportage In EGI Communities Of Ogba Tribe, Rivers State

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### Abstract

This study investigated the, “Influence of Cultism and its reportage in Egi communities of Ogba tribe, Rivers State: Survey method was adopted for the study. Both primary and secondary data were obtained for the study. A total of 400 respondents were selected as the sample size using purposive non-probability sampling technique. The sample size is determined based on the prescription of Wimmer and Dominick. Questionnaire research instrument was used to gather data from the respondents. The study was based on social relationship theory of mass media. The findings showed that cultism have weakened the mechanisms of Ogba social system, thereby leading to their social disintegration and mass exodus of the people to Port-Harcourt for safety. The result of this study also shows that the youths of Ogba tribe and their friends are the members of these cult gangs. They belong to different cult groups with their names for identification. The result of the study reveals that their motive of operation is for supremacy over the people. The finding of this study also reveals that several factors are the causes of cultism in this tribe and not a single factor. Furthermore, the study shows that the extent of cult activities was tense and destructive. This is to a very greater extent. Finally, interpersonal communication gave detail coverage of this problem than the mass media. The study amongst others recommended adequate socialization and re-socialization of Ogba children by their parents. Secondly, the creation of job opportunities for their unemployed graduate youths and the establishment of a rural based media station for the people by the government and the foreign firms in this tribe.

**Keywords:** Cultism, Reportage, Ogba tribe, Ogbogu community, OSPAC

### Introduction

Cultism is a social problem threatening the social organization of Egi communities in Ogba tribe of Rivers State. The activities of this cult gangs are truly a challenging situation in this tribe and it has reached an alarming state in the recent time. Over the past years and now, there has being series of major attacks and

killings on innocent citizens of this tribe by these hoodlums. Their lives and properties are not safe in the hands of these alleged criminals. According to P.N.J (2019) of Umu-Ikrogboo family they are local terrorists, a deadly secret organization found in every villages and towns of Ogba tribe. It is right now in our community. They are having powerful communication networks with their political agents enabling them to spread from one community to another in achieving their ends. Adewole (2005) asserts that cultism with its attendant violence, torture, suppression and unwarranted intimidation perpetrated by cult groups has spread beyond institutions of higher learning to secondary schools in Nigeria. Rotimi (2005) asserted that the secret phenomena is not new in Africa, citing Aguda (1997) observed that activities of secret cults like "Human Leopards" and "Human crocodiles" have been recorded in central Africa. Further more in citing Thomas (2002) stated cult groups enjoy subtle support and patronage from both government and school authorities. Cultist members were sometimes used by politicians for revenge and settling personal scores. He went on to state that in some cases past members who had migrated to foreign countries sometimes remitted money to support their former cult groups.

According to Opaluwah (2000) what is known as campus cult today can be traced to Prof. Wole Soyinka the first captain "Blood" of the pirates fraternity formed at university of Ibadan in 1952, this idea started with the formation of the Eagles. Campus magazines devoted to fighting colonial regressive as represented by the Bug, a journal committed to promoting ideals of the white supremacy at the same time reducing the grandeur of Africanism.

But it was late Hopeson Ugwuezi of Obagi community who originated cultism and kidnapping for ransom in Egi-clan. Since then this has become a major social problem in this part of Rivers state. Late Don-Wanney was their supreme leader in this tribe, a name people fears to hear says Gospel (2019), (former member of Ogbogu CDC). The operations of these cultists and its true coverage needed to be understood. The question is who is telling the fact of this story in this tribe? Is it the media or the people? It is supposed to be both for societal awareness and solution. The media are responsible in supplying the information needs of the society as a social institution. They are supposed to inform the public the in-depth of this problem for solution but not so. The traditional media reportage gave the real picture of this crisis. As a matter of fact, the activities of these cult gangs are scantily reported by the urban media institutions for true sympathy on the affected communities. According to Olukotun (2002) as cited in Safiyyah (2018) the media have an urban elite centered bias and an almost cynical neglect of the rural areas. The situation is made worse by the fact that most newspapers and broadcasting stations do not have reporters in the rural areas. Such is the case in this tribe. Word of mouth seems to be doing something tangible on this problem but then they are not heard due to their limitations. The people's report on cultism is really sympathetic but the state government did not take it as serious. That alone led to the long duration of this event if not OSPAC intervention. Hence, the knowledge concerning the true coverage of cultism in Ogba tribe is a matter of interest in this study.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Cult groups have paralyzed the social system of Egi-communities in Ogba tribe of Rivers State. This oil and gas producing communities is witnessing social disintegration in the hands of their cultist's children and friends. Who are wasting human life through "Point and Kill" as one of their methods of killing.

In Ogbogu community, the life is the same. They were communicating through gesture language in order not to be heard by these cultists. According to the respondents the leader of Egi-Marine Asland, late Cyprian Ojiwiri alias Seaporous, boy to Late Arrow-Service was a great terror in this community. At a point had proclaimed round the community passing obnoxious law that every Ogbogu landlord must pay tenancy rent to him else, be killed. According to their young musicians Pope Obu junior and D.J. S.O.N, Ogba people are on the run to escape Point and Kill elimination from the cultists. Both musicians had advised EPA to seek for peace and forgive one another in Egi-land.

These cultists are into fighting for supremacy, stealing, raping people's wife and daughters, to control the CDC and youths affairs, kidnapping for ransom, victim's heads as sign post, camping in nearby farmlands, taking away boiling pot of soup and rice from women, on military attire with A-K 47 and appearing on occasions with demands or be killed.

The death of Mr. Hopeson Edward Dike, a promising gentleman who was to start work with Total after years of unemployment was shot dead few days to his duty resumption. It was annoying to the people. He was not a cultist but was gun down right in his room before the wife. His killing was master minded by someone, God will avenge for his death says the respondents with tears on their cheeks. Today, Ogbogu people are living in exile as refugees feeding from their sons and daughters in the garden city of Port-Harcourt and elsewhere due to cultism. According to Ukpe (2019), (the acting Ochi-Oha) of Ogbogu community, they are our children, who know what would have happen to us, if not the intervention of "OSPAC", by late Maxwell Ahiake of the blessed memory. He took the bull by the horn. His anti-crime command is the people's savior and not the government.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to explore the true impact of cultism and the reporters of this crisis in Ogba tribe of Rivers state. Other specific objectives is to:

1. Identify the membership of these cult gangs in Ogbogu community.
2. Ascertain the motive of their activities in this community.
3. Identify the actual causes of cultism in this community.
4. Examine the true impact of cultism in Ogbogu community.
5. Examine the extent of cult operations in Ogbogu community.
6. Identify the media covering this crisis in this community.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The present study is anchored on social relationship effect theory of mass media. This theory holds that interpersonal interactions takes place before, during and after getting exposed to mass media. That interaction is very important in determining individual's reactions to the media message. Therefore, that during their face to face communication that member of a group are able to influence one another and which helps to determine the effect of mass media messages on the people. They are of the view that informal relationship do play a significant role in modifying the manner in which a given individual and group will reach to a message. This theory was based on a research study conducted by Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1958 as to find out the effect of mass communication campaigns via television, newspaper and radio on the voters. The result of that study was a review of the inter-relationships people have and the ability of these relationships to change attitude and modify behaviour. It was based on this theory that Lazarsfeld propounded the two-step flow concept of mass communication. On the whole, this theory is applicable to this study because these cult youths in Ogba tribe Rivers State are always influencing one another through their social interactions with members and the innocent initiated new members and which changes their minds and behaviours for criminal activities in their communities. A message has been passed forcefully for acceptance that is the cultism in this tribe.

## **Media Coverage on Cultism**

Who tells the activities of the cult groups in Ogba tribe? It is the mass media, social media, members of this tribe and their neighboring tribes. In this study, Cultists reporting are the institutions and persons who are reporting the activities of the cult gangs in this part of Rivers State through print, electronic and word of mouth media. Bratic(2008) appreciates the difficulties media practitioners face in collecting data for reportage during crisis situations but that the journalists should set aside preformed sentiments and beliefs and view situation objectively as third party.

Ogba people and their neighboring tribes are the true reporters of this event. They are on a daily basis seeing, hearing and reporting the atrocities of their cultist youths and friends within themselves and outsiders through face to face communication. Truly, the people's report on cultism is really sympathetic if heard. But the state government did not take them for serious. That is while the problem of cultism continues to linger about in this tribe, if not "OSPAC" intervention.

## **Review of Related Studies**

Bawa (2008) conducted a study on four South-Western Universities in Nigerian society. These universities were university of Lagos (UNILAG), university of Ibadan, Obafemi University, Ile Ife, and Lagos State University (LASU). The investigation was to find out the causes of campus cultism in Nigerian Universities. The sample comprised of four hundred (400) students and one hundred (100) lecturers randomly selected from these universities. It was based on purposive sampling random technique of data collection. Questionnaire technique of data collection was used as the research tool in obtaining relevant information from the respondents. The major findings in this study was that the causes of cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions were to secure girls friends, seek financial assistance, easy access to high grades in examinations, sheer curiosity, power and inordinate ambitions, parents and counselor must internalize these causes and guide their wards properly to avoid the social problem associated with cultism in Nigerian tertiary institution says the researcher.

Okere (2003) carried, out the socio-economic status and student's cultism in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). A total of two hundred and fifty (250) students (male and female) were randomly drawn from the faculties of engineering, law and education were used for the study. The findings of this study show that some big men in the corridors of power supply guns to their sons and daughters who are cult members and that police cannot take actions because of the positions of their parents. Secondly, it was also found that the guns, knives, axes and other destructive weapons cult students in this university are using in their hits were supplied by members who have graduated before them. More also, that they are usually the children of persons in society who are highly connected. This goes to prove that even some parents are the causes of the social problem arising from cultism in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Arubayi (2008) conducted an investigation on the effective cultism management technique as perceived by academic staff, non-academic staff and students in higher education in Nigeria. It was a case study on federal College of Education in Nigeria. This study was based on five hypotheses using an instrument known as the Effective Cultism Management Technique questionnaire (ECMTQ). The findings show that coercion, persuasion, public renunciation, public awareness campaign and school disciplinary measures which are instruments of public relation were found to be effective technique in the management of cultism.

Ekpiteta (1997) carried out a study on secondary schools in Sapele town of Delta State. The purpose was on the management of secret cult activities in secondary schools. The secondary schools students starting from junior secondary class III, senior secondary classes 1, II and III formed the targeted population. Five schools were selected out of the schools in Sapele town through simple random sampling technique of data collection. The number of these schools was not indicated in avoiding the validity of this

work. A total of three hundred (300) respondents were administered with questionnaire. The result shows that students expected much from their guidance counselor who is expected to provide adequate information and guidance to students on the social problems associated with cult in tertiary institution. Based on the findings about public relations in this work, we can come to the conclusion that no other department can best organize the crusade against cultism in tertiary institution order than the public department of an institution.

Abidoye (2017) conducted a study on Taisolarin University of Education. It was a study on the power of Public Relations as a tool for curbing cultism in Nigeria tertiary institutions. Survey research method was adopted for this study. The study population consists of 18, 712 students out of which 396 respondents were selected as the sample of this study. Questionnaire instrument was personally administered on the respondents. One of the aims of this study is to determine the level of information on cultism among students of Taisolarin University of Education. The findings of this study shows that the awareness of students about the existence of cultism is very high since almost every students is aware of cultism, regarding what professional public relations officer should look out for the best way to curb a social vices by knowing if people are really aware of that social vices. The limitation of this study is that the role of public relations in curbing cultism in this university was not mentioned in the findings of this study. To avoid this problem in this university that students should present a sworn affidavit never to join secret cult throughout their stay in the university the researcher recommended.

Therefore, cultism is characterized with secret memberships, killing, deadly initiation, selfish motive and criminal tendency. On the whole, the present study is different from the above stated empirical studies in terms of their objectives and applications. However, they have contributed to the theoretical and methodological development of this study.

**Methodology**

Survey method is adopted for this study. It is a current problem affecting the people of Ogba tribe. The main purpose of this study is to explore the true impact of cultism and the reporters of this crisis in this tribe. A total of 400 respondents were selected as the sample size through purposive non-probability sampling technique. The sample size is determined using the prescription of Wimmer and Dominick (2000) adjudging of sample size as follows: 50= very poor, 100= poor, 200=fair, 300=good, 500=very good and 1,000=excellent. The researchers decided to use the sample size of 400 which is above the average of ‘good’. The respondents were selected through simple random sampling technique. They were individually approached in their houses, market, play - grounds, business places and streets within Ogbogu community for the data collection using questionnaire. In most cases native language ‘Ogba’ was used for quicker responds. Both primary as well as secondary data were obtained for this study. The field observations were interesting. On 29/7/2019, a good number of these cultists surrendered themselves willingly before ONELGA chairman and OSPAC at Obite district headquarters, the last Amnesty granted to them by Governor Nysom Wike of Rivers State.

**Data Presentation and Analysis:**

Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire distributed only 395 copies were filled properly and returned back. The rest 5 questionnaire were treated as missing. This represents a high rate of 98.75%. The data were presented and analyzed using percentages.

**Table 1:, Responses on the cult membership and their names in Ogbogu community**

| OPTIONS | Respondents | Total | % |
|---------|-------------|-------|---|
|---------|-------------|-------|---|

|                                       | Male | Female |     |      |
|---------------------------------------|------|--------|-----|------|
| Ogbogu youths and neighboring friends | 270  | 125    | 395 | 100  |
| <b>Total =</b>                        | 270  | 125    | 395 | 100% |

Table 1: shows that the highest percentage of the respondents stated they are the ‘‘youths of Ogbogu community and neighboring friends as answer.

**Table: 2, Responses on the motives of this cult gangs**

| OPTIONS   | Respondents |        | Total | %       |
|---|-------------|--------|-------|---------|
|   | Male        | Female |       |         |
| Supremacy and the control of their economic and political affairs | 90          | 65     | 155   | 39.24   |
| Recognition, respect and to fear them                             | 40          | 10     | 50    | 12.10   |
| Both  | 100         | 90     | 190   | 48.10   |
| <b>Total =</b>  | 230         | 165    | 395   | 100.00% |

Table 2: shows that the highest percentage of the respondents who responded by stating it is ‘‘ both’’ as answer.

**Table 3: Responses on the actual causes of cultism in this community**

| OPTIONS   | Respondents |        | Total | %       |
|---|-------------|--------|-------|---------|
|   | Male        | Female |       |         |
| Bad associations, poverty, death of either parent, unemployment, control of the people’s affairs and political abandonment. | 22          | 8      | 30    | 7.59    |
| School dropout, illiteracy, poor knowledge of God and group affiliation.  | 3           | -      | 3     | 1.31    |
| Negative media exposure, Lack of parental hood, and poor socialization.   | 15          | 2      | 17    | 4.30    |
| All the above   | 250         | 95     | 345   | 87.56   |
| <b>Total =</b>  | 290         | 105    | 395   | 100.00% |

From table 3: The highest percentage of the respondents responded by stating, all the above as answer followed by those who stated what is on the above table as answers.

**TABLE 4: Responses on the true impact of cultism on this community**

| OPTIONS | Respondents | Total | % |
|---------|-------------|-------|---|
|---------|-------------|-------|---|

|   | Male | Female |     |         |
|---|------|--------|-----|---------|
| Social disintegration, death of many people, EPA in control of their envelop money, mass exodus of the people to Port-Harcourt for safety, people sleeping in churches, arrival of OSPAC, cultists camping in farm lands and community as ghost town. | 55   | 32     | 87  | 22.03   |
| Kidnapping for ransom, raping of mothers and daughters, destruction of properties, camping in people’s houses, stealing and looting of people’s properties.   | 10   | 20     | 30  | 7.59    |
| Unconcerned attitudes of Total E and P, NIG PLC and the opportunity of employing outsiders unchecked.   | 5    | 3      | 8   | 2.03    |
| All the above   | 220  | 50     | 270 | 68.35   |
| <b>Total =</b>  | 290  | 105    | 395 | 100.00% |

Table 4 : shows that the highest percentage of the respondents stated all the above as answer.

**Table 5: Reponses on the extent of cult activities in Ogbogu community**

| OPTIONS              | Respondents |        | Total | %       |
|----------------------|-------------|--------|-------|---------|
|                      | Male        | Female |       |         |
| Very greater extent. | 270         | 103    | 373   | 94.43   |
| Lesser extent.       | 20          | 2      | 22    | 5.57    |
| <b>Total =</b>       | 290         | 105    | 395   | 100.00% |

The above table 5: shows that the highest percentage of the respondents responded by stating ‘‘very greater extent’’ as answer.

**Table 6: Responses on the media covering the exact stories of cultism in Ogbogu community**

| OPTIONS  | Respondents |        | Total | %       |
|--|-------------|--------|-------|---------|
|  | Male        | Female |       |         |
| The people, visitors and neighboring tribes (Interpersonal communication).       | 265         | 99     | 364   | 92.15   |
| Nigeria Tide, RSTV, Wazobia FM, Social media and NTA Port-Harcourt (Mass Media). | 25          | 6      | 31    | 7.85    |
| <b>Total =</b>   | 290         | 105    | 395   | 100.00% |

Table 6: shows that the highest percentage of the respondents responded by stating’’ it is the people, visitors, and neighboring tribes’’ as answer.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are based on the data obtained from the respondents. The task in research objectives table 1: was to discover the membership of these cult gangs and their names in Ogbogu community. The result shows that, majority, 395 (100%) of the respondents agree that they are Ogbogu youths and their neighboring cultist friends. They are belonging to different cult groups such as Vicals, Greenland (Dagbam and Dawell Asland), Egi-marine Asland, Egi-ye-Ogba Asland as their names. Each of these cult groups are headed by different leaders. Late Don-Wanney (Ejima) of Aligwu community is the leader of Asland. He was always on military attire as a general. Late Arrow-service of Obukegi was the leader of Egi- marine Asland and Tompolo of Oboburu community the leader of Greenland. Late Cyprian Ojiwiri alias Sea-porous was the leader of Egi- marine Asland of Ogbogu branch. This means that these cultists are Ogbogu sons and daughters with their fellow neighboring cultist friends, invited to worsen situations in their community, which of course they may not do on their own. This is in agreement with Ukpe, the acting Ochi- Oha of this community.

Table 2: was designed to find out the motive of their operations in this community. The result shows that majority, 190 (48.10%) of the respondents maintained that it was for supremacy, control of economic and political affairs, recognition, respect and to fear them in this community. This is somewhat different from that of Bawa (2008) study.

Table 3: was designed to find out the actual causes of cultism in Ogbogu community. The finding indicates that majority, 345 (87%) of the respondents agree that it was due to bad associations, poverty, death of either parents, unemployment, leadership ambition, political abandonment, school dropout, illiteracy, poor knowledge of God, poor socialization, to-belong and negative media exposure. This is to some extent in line with Okere(2018) and that of Bawa (2008).

Table 4 : was pattern to find out the true impact of cultism in Ogbogu community. The finding shows that majority, 270(68.35%) of the respondents agree that it leads to social disintegration, EPA in control of their envelope money, arrival of OSPAC, community as a ghost town, death of people and some others as stated on the table above.

Table 5: was arranged to determine the extent of cult operations in this community. The result indicates that majority, 335 (84.81%) of the respondents also agree that the activities of these cultist gangs are serious and damaging on the people. This means that it is tense and destructive to a very greater extent. The people are in trouble expecting a savior. This happened to be OSPAC.

Table 6: was patterned to examine the media covering the exact stories of this problem in Ogbogu community for solution. The result shows that majority, 265 (92.15%) of the respondents agree that it is interpersonal communication and not mass media. This means that the crisis was covered by the members of this community, visitors and their neighboring tribes as well as the Nigerian Tide, Rivers state television (RSTV), Wazobia FM station, Social media and Nigerian television Authority (NTA), respectively. But that of face to face coverage attracted human sympathy than the mass media. It carries life story of this event with tears thereby wining the heart of late Ahiakwo. This is in support with Lazarsfeld theory, Olukotun study as cited in Safiyyah study, respectively. Therefore, the people are the true rural journalists on this event and not the mass media.



## Conclusion

In this team of research investigation, it was discovered that cult activities have weakened the mechanisms of Ogba tribe social system, thereby leading to their social disintegration and mass exodus of the people to Port-Harcourt for safety. The youths of this community and their friends are the members of these cult gangs. They belong to different cult groups such as Vicals, Greenland, Dagbam, Dawell, Asland, Egi-marine Asland and Egi-ye-Ogbogu Asland, They are bearing personal names such as Don-wenney, Arrow-service, Seaporous, Shineshine and stainless. Secondly, their motive of operations is for supremacy, control of their economic and political affairs, recognition, respect and to be feared. Thirdly, several factors are the actual causes of cultism in this tribe and not a single factor. They are socio-religious, economic, education; mass media and political factors. Amongst these factors were bad associations, poverty, death of either parents, poor socialization, unemployment, to-belong, political abandonment and transfer of aggression, school dropout, illiteracy, control of community's affairs, negative media exposure, lack of parental-hood, poor knowledge and fear of God, wasting of life through 'Point and Kill'. The worst of it all is that Egi people's Assembly (EPA) the cabal in the system have hijacked the clan's traditional stool (Eze-Egi), royalty (Envelope money), scholarships and projects meant for Egi people from Total E and P, Nig Plc. to their advantage.

Fourthly, the activities of these cultists are serious and destructive to a very greater extent on this community. Finally, both the mass media and interpersonal communication were the media covering this event. However, the members of this community, their visitors and neighboring tribes are the true reporters of this event in this tribe and not the mass media. The stories of this crisis are better told by the people and its witnesses than the RSTV, NTA, Nigerian Tide and the Social media. This was scantily reported by the mass media for solution. Based on observations, Ogba/ Egbema/ Ndoni security planning and anti-crime command 'OSPAC' the people's savior is falling apart in their objectives. To this fact, they are facing internal divisions without salary, stealing cases, chasing of girls, wife and the killing of one another. The question is who will save these people tomorrow now that their earthly protector is sowing the seed of their untimely departure. On 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, 2021 there was serious gun battle between OSPAC at Ahiahu, their ancestral home leading to the death of their Egi OSPAC leader, late Mbechi O. George of Ogbogu community. This sad news and others are first told by the people for help before the press as news. Again, another evil activity that will soon besiege this tribe shall be Yahoo-Boys money rituals, if care is not taken. This is the outcome of this investigation carried out in Ogbogu community of Ogba tribe in Rivers state.

## Recommendations

1. Government, Agip Company and Total E & P Nig Plc, should provide job opportunities for the unemployed graduate youths of this tribe in order to avoid getting initiated into cult life. They should pay OSPAC certain amount of money for their up-keep for the security of this tribe.
2. Parents should give adequate socialization and re-socialization of their children as good citizens. They should also monitor them as against bad company.
3. The State media should endeavor to go to this tribe for effective reporting rather than waiting for second-hand information.
4. Scientific-Traditional and political approaches should be adopted in solving this problem. First, there should be open dialogue for proper rehabilitations of these cultists. Secondly, the gods of the land should be administered on any repentant cultists in order to avoid future occurrence. Thirdly, Politicians and their agents in this local government should stop using people to gain advantage.

5. Interpersonal communication reporting should be recognized as a powerful village media in solving an affecting problem. It goes with sympathy if heard than the mass media that favors the government in their news as against their profession.

6. The chairman of Ogba/Egbema/ Ndoni local government area should encourage the existence of a rural base Onelga media for adequate and free flow of information on events within and outside them.

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