AI-DRIVEN EARLY DETECTION AND PREVENTION OF YOUTH CULT RECRUITMENT IN AWKA METROPOLIS

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven systems for the early detection and prevention of youth cult recruitment within Awka Metropolis, addressing the interplay between physical and digital recruitment tactics. Employing a qualitative methodology that incorporates primary and secondary data collection, the research utilizes ethnographic and digital content analysis to investigate the socio-cultural and technological dimensions of cult recruitment. Grounded in Routine Activity Theory (RAT), the study posits that cult groups exploit both local physical interactions and digital platforms to groom, recruit, and sustain members. These dual strategies leverage societal vulnerabilities, peer influence, and the widespread use of social media among youths. A notable gap in existing scholarship is the lack of AI-based frameworks designed to address this dual recruitment model, particularly within the Nigerian context. Findings reveal that digital platforms, such as social media and encrypted messaging apps, complement traditional physical recruitment methods, creating a multifaceted challenge for stakeholders. To mitigate this, the study recommends deploying AI systems to monitor digital communication patterns, alongside grassroots education campaigns targeting at-risk youth. Furthermore, stimulating collaboration among local authorities, technology companies, and community leaders is essential to developing an adaptive, culturally sensitive approach to curbing cult activities. This holistic strategy offers a pathway to protecting youth and strengthening community resilience.

Keywords: AI-Driven, Youth, Cult Recruitment, Early, Detection, Prevention.

Introduction

Youth involvement in cultism has increasingly shifted towards digital platforms, particularly social media, which has become a powerful tool for recruitment and initiation. Globally and in Nigeria, with a focus on Awka Metropolis in Anambra State, cult groups exploit the vast reach and anonymity of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram to lure unsuspecting individuals, especially impressionable youths. These groups craft appealing

narratives, using flashy lifestyles, promises of power, and a sense of belonging to attract their targets. They employ private chats, encrypted messaging, and targeted advertisements to engage potential recruits while concealing their identities. O. Nwoye, I. Edeh, and M. Onwe (personal communication, December 11th, 2024) observe that in Awka central hub, where public tricycle and shuttle transport services alongside academic institutions abound, cult groups leverage the high internet penetration among transit workers and students, who are their dominant targets, to spread their influence, often masking their recruitment campaigns as exclusive clubs or associations. The digital initiation process frequently involves sharing coded rituals, virtual swearing of oaths, and monitoring recruits through constant online communication, enabling cults to bypass physical barriers and evade law enforcement.

Sequel to the aforementioned observations, Global Data (2024), registers that cults have effectively leveraged the digital space, particularly social media, as a potent tool for sensitization and recruitment, exploiting its interactive and isolating nature to reach vulnerable individuals. The case of the Twin Flames Universe (TFU), highlighted in Netflix's 2023 documentary Escaping Twin Flames, exemplifies how cults use platforms to prey on those experiencing distress or isolation, a trend exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The board avers that between 1993 and 2023, the number of cults in the United States doubled from 5,000 to 10,000, a growth facilitated by social media's ability to simulate community through echo chambers and targeted content. Vulnerable individuals often encounter cult messaging while scrolling through personalized feeds, leading them into environments of manipulation disguised as virtual communities. This strategy, according to the council, aligns with panoramic waves of unregulated online interactions, where governments have struggled to impose accountability on platforms for harmful or exploitative content. Consequently, cults thrive in this digital town square, exploiting the intersection of human vulnerability, algorithmic targeting, and the under-regulated nature of online spaces to consolidate power and expand their reach.

Dasser (2024) argues that social media platforms, driven by profit motives and engagement metrics, have become fertile ground for projecting extremist ideologies and cult-like communities, particularly in the alt-right. She elucidates that through algorithmic manipulation, platforms like TikTok prioritize sensationalist and polarizing content, ensuring prolonged user interaction while inadvertently nurturing radicalization pathways. Unlike the alt-left, which leans toward academic discourse and quieter collaboration, the alt-right leverages click-bait, derogatory humor, and emotionally charged rhetoric to attract and manipulate younger audiences. This dynamic, fueled by the platforms' pursuit of return on investment, facilitates a self-reinforcing cycle of radicalization, where users are drawn deeper into ideologically toxic echo chambers. Hassan (2022) compares social media tactics to cult-like techniques, highlighting how platforms manipulate behavior, thoughts, and emotions to maintain user engagement for profit.

Uzoigwe et al (2024) highlights the pervasive issue of cultism in Nigeria's digitalized society, emphasizing how cultists leverage social media platforms for recruitment, communication, and the dissemination of propaganda, thereby expanding their influence. The author underscores that the integration of digital tools has amplified the challenges of combating cultism by facilitating

anonymous networking and the normalization of cult-related activities among youth. Suanu et al (2023) in their study found that social media usage, specifically platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, significantly influences the tendency toward cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The data indicated that these platforms independently accounted for 63.5% of the variation in students' involvement in cultism activities. This highlights the role of social media in potentially facilitating antisocial behaviors, such as cultism, among adolescents, suggesting a need for targeted interventions to guide students in using these platforms responsibly.

Oladujoye et al (2016) in their investigation, reveals that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has significantly contributed to demystifying cultism on campuses. Through providing accessible information about cult groups, ICT empowers students to make informed decisions, reducing forced recruitment and enhancing transparency. The authors stress that the ease of monitoring cult activities through digital tools has triggered improved communication between staff and students, contributing to a more peaceful campus environment. Their findings highlight ICT's transformative role in reducing conflict, promoting awareness, and offering innovative strategies for mitigating cultism in higher institutions. Obayuwana et al (2023) in their inquiry identified that social media campaigns against cultism at the University of Benin were highly effective, with 67.4% of respondents affirming their use to raise awareness. The authors enlighten that WhatsApp (30.7%) and Facebook (21.2%) were the most utilized platforms, demonstrating their effectiveness in engaging the target audience. They delineate that a significant portion (78%) of participants perceived the campaigns' influence as positive, and 30.17% rated them as very effective. These findings align with the uses and gratifications theory, as students actively sought and engaged with preferred platforms, and the technological determinism theory, as social media shaped attitudes and behaviors towards cultism. This underscores social media's potential as a powerful tool for addressing social issues.

These already acknowledged shifts highlights the urgent need for digital literacy campaigns and robust monitoring of online activities to curb the proliferation of cultism among youth. Evidently, since cultists exploit digital platforms for recruitment; and since digital platforms have been verified to be effective in combating digital youth cult recruitment: Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers the most effective and preeminent countermeasure through detection, monitoring, and intervention. Hence, this study focuses on leveraging AI-driven systems to detect and prevent youth cult recruitment in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State, Nigeria. It addresses the interplay of physical and digital tactics used in recruitment. The research employs a qualitative methodology, integrating primary and secondary data collection methods. It utilizes ethnographic approaches and digital content analysis to explore the socio-cultural and technological dimensions of cult recruitment. The study is anchored in the theoretical framework of Routine Activity Theory (RAT).

Data-Driven Investigations

The menace of secret cultism among youth in Awka Metropolis in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria; poses a significant socio-security challenge, manifesting in acts

of vandalization and alarming incidences of cult-related killings. This subculture thrives in Awka urban settings, fueled by peer pressure, a quest for social identity, and the lure of perceived protection and influence. Cult groups often engage in destructive activities, such as defacing public and private properties, thereby disrupting the urban aesthetic and causing financial losses. More troubling are the violent rivalries between these groups, leading to frequent clashes and the loss of young lives, destabilizing families and Awka urban-center. The normalization of fear and lawlessness further undermines the efforts of law enforcement, perpetuating a cycle of violence and distrust.

Afunugo (2023) enunciates that the menace of cultism in Awka Metropolis, particularly in Okpuno and Awka town, has led to rampant killings and widespread destruction of properties in contemporary times. Factors contributing to this crisis include the lack of parental closeness and love, the transmission of negative behavioral patterns from parents to children, societal influences, and the failure of parents to instill godly principles in their children. Additionally, wealthy adult sponsors within secret cult groups exacerbate the problem by funding these activities. The author accentuates that these dynamics create an environment conducive to cultism, resulting in significant harm to lives and properties in the region. Afunugo underscores the urgent need for targeted solutions to address these challenges.

The Editorial of This Day Live (2024) stipulates that the menace of cultism in Awka Metropolis presents a grave threat to social stability and the security of lives and property, fueled by the pursuit of supremacy, territorial dominance, and acts of violence. This pervasive issue undermines the future of youth and disrupts societal progress, demanding urgent and decisive intervention. Eleke (2024) reports that a tragic mass shooting, suspected to be linked to cult activities, occurred in Nibo, a suburb of Awka, during the *Onwa Asaa* festival, claiming at least 16 lives and leaving the community in mourning. The attack, reportedly carried out by assailants arriving in a black Lexus SUV, targeted an eatery and a location near the Eke Nibo market, both close to the Governor's Lodge. Witnesses described the scene as chaotic, with indiscriminate gunfire causing significant casualties, primarily among youths celebrating the festival. The Editorial Board relates that the local police, attributing the violence to cult-related clashes, confirmed the incident and emphasized ongoing investigations, while urging witnesses to provide information to aid in identifying the perpetrators. The community, devastated by the violence, has called on authorities to prioritize peace and security to prevent further tragedies.

Eleweke (2024) articulates that a surge in cult-related violence in Awka urban-center has resulted in over 34 deaths within three weeks, with high-profile incidents including the killing of a tricycle revenue collector at Aroma junction and a judiciary staff member near Eke Awka market during the Easter period of 2024. Notable hotspots such as Ifite, Okpuno, and UNIZIK junction have witnessed multiple attacks at regular intervals. The columnist details that stakeholders like lawmakers Henry Mbachu and Victor Umeh, along with Ozo Ndu Nwakalor and Mrs. Ogechukwu Ekwuozor, attribute the crisis to declining moral values and ineffective community actions. Despite interventions, including 54 gates, vigilant groups, and anti-cult laws, fear and community

shielding of culprits hinder progress, as noted by SP Tochukwu Ikenga. Governor Charles Soludo has pledged to address the menace, urging collaborative action to restore safety.

Ugwu (2024) Chronicles that Ezinano Community in Awka conurbation has responded to already reckoned deadly attack that occurred on 20 October 2024 during the *Onwa Asaa* festival in neighboring Nibo Community. The attack, which the police attributed to a cult-related clash, equally claimed victims from Ezinano, prompting the community leader, Jeff Nweke, to announce a N10 million bounty for information leading to the perpetrators' capture during the Ezinano Day cultural celebration on 1 November 2024. Ugwu elucidates that Mr. Nweke condemned the violence and declared a zero-tolerance stance on cultism, urging residents to collaborate with security agencies. Ndife (2024) relates that the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), Anambra North Zone, has launched GOTRUHUB, a web application developed by Hon. Abuchi Nduba, to address issues such as child abuse, trafficking, cultism, and inefficiency in schools and the public sector. The initiative, unveiled on December 14, 2024, at the Oyi Council Headquarters in Nteje, was supported by stakeholders from seven local government areas and praised by leaders including Comr. Peter Maurice Nnekwe and Amb. Innocent Nduanya. This study posits that digital security in Anambra State as a whole will be significantly advanced by Integrating Artificial intelligence (AI) into GOTRUHUB, enabling enhanced monitoring of student records, employee performance, and community safety to relative effect, while also tackling cultism in Awka Metropolis.

Afunugo (2025, n.p) eventually streamlines that in recent years, the proliferation of digital platforms has transformed the operations of youth cults in Awka, intensifying their reach and impact. These groups exploit social media and encrypted messaging apps to recruit new members, often appealing to youthful desires for belonging and status through targeted, persuasive content. Furthermore, they utilize these platforms to monitor, manipulate, and identify vulnerable individuals, orchestrating violent acts with alarming precision. The author delineates that the victims are lured into premeditated traps under the guise of social or academic engagements, underscoring how technology amplifies the cults' ability to perpetrate and conceal their atrocities. This trend necessitates urgent intervention to address the nexus between technology and youth cultism, emphasizing digital literacy and robust surveillance.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study adopts the Routine Activity Theory (RAT) in reinforcing its ideas. According to Cohen et al (1979), Fernando (2014), Kitteringham (2020) and Perera (2024), Routine Activity Theory, introduced by Marcus Felson and Lawrence E. Cohen, emerged as a significant subfield of crime opportunity theory to explain shifts in crime rates in the United States between 1947 and 1974. Distinguished from theories focused on criminality, it reconceptualizes crime as an event influenced by environmental factors, emphasizing its ecological processes. Central to the theory is the convergence of three elements necessary for criminal activity: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. This framework underscores the impact of routine

activities of both potential victims and offenders on crime rates, redirecting scholarly focus toward situational dynamics and the availability, proximity, and exposure of targets.

Routine Activity Theory (RAT) is significantly appropriate for this study as it offers a robust structure for understanding the dynamics of crime in the Awka metropolis by focusing on the convergence of three key elements: motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians. Unlike other criminological theories that delve into the offender's psychological or sociological background, RAT emphasizes the situational and environmental conditions that facilitate criminal activities, making it especially relevant for studies exploring crime patterns within Awka's urban and peri-urban settings. Its emphasis on routine activities and their role in shaping opportunities for crime provides a clear lens through which to analyze how everyday behaviors, urbanization, technological advancements, and societal shifts in Awka contribute to increased vulnerability or deterrence. Additionally, RAT's applicability in both micro and macro-level analyses enables researchers to identify crime trends within Awka and develop targeted intervention strategies that address the root situational factors, thus enhancing the study's practical implications for local policy and prevention efforts. A significant observation reveals that some Awka indigenous parents rarely advise or monitor their youths, enabling unchecked adventurous tendencies that nurture cult involvement. Additionally, a notable proportion remains unemployable and jobless, underscoring this theory's relevance to the study.

Digital Recruitment Strategies of Cult Groups in Awka Metropolis

In the course of this research, it was discovered that cult groups in Awka Metropolis leverage digital platforms for recruitment, using strategies that appeal to the youth and exploit the anonymity of the online world. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok are central to their operations. These groups use targeted messaging, sharing motivational posts, promises of protection, and images of power and affluence to attract followers, especially youngsters of 15 years and above. Closed groups or invite-only pages allow them to groom potential recruits while using trending hashtags to make their content relatable and appealing. Messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram also play a critical role. These apps facilitate private communication, forming secret groups where discussions, planning, and initiation processes are carried out securely. Encrypted chats on platforms like Telegram provide additional privacy, making it difficult for law enforcement to track their activities.

E. Udeh, M. Ezeaka, I. Udensi and C. Okoye (personal communication, December 10th, 2024) intimates that cult groups in Awka suburbs exploit popular culture to reach young audiences. Through music videos, catchy slang, and lyrics, they embed their ideologies into entertainment, making their message seem fashionable and aspirational. They assert that cult groups also enlist influencers or figures associated with cultism who subtly promote group affiliations through their lifestyle or social media presence. They enlighten that another strategy involves gamification, where online games, contests, and reward systems are used to attract recruits. Winners of these activities are often drawn into the cult under the guise of camaraderie or belonging. According to observation, peer pressure and coercion are also common tactics. Cultists create fake profiles to

connect with vulnerable individuals, especially those seeking friendship, financial help, or mentorship. They may use cyberbullying or online threats to coerce individuals into joining. Educational settings are another fertile ground for recruitment, with cultists infiltrating online forums and WhatsApp groups created for students. They pose as helpful peers, offering academic materials or assistance with admission processes, only to manipulate the unsuspecting individuals.

E. Uyawune, J. Nwana, O. Uwaeme, and K. Ezennia (personal communication, December 10th, 2024) elucidate that the exploitation of socioeconomic challenges is another major strategy. Cult groups use online platforms to offer loans, business opportunities, or quick wealth schemes, targeting youngsters struggling with unemployment or poverty. They also pose as philanthropists, providing aid to vulnerable youth who may then feel indebted to join. Additionally, false promises of employment or scholarships are used to lure unsuspecting victims. These fake job postings or networking events often lead recruits to indoctrination meetings under the pretense of professional opportunities. Observations also portray that the use of video content and memes further extends their reach. Platforms like YouTube and TikTok are filled with videos showcasing the supposed benefits of cult membership, such as financial gain, unity, and social influence. Live streams of members celebrating their affiliations subtly encourage viewers to aspire to join. Viral content, including memes and short clips, is crafted to spread cult ideologies in an engaging and non-threatening way, significantly to attract secondary school students. These strategies reflect the adaptability of cult groups in Awka Metropolis, as they exploit the digital age to dilate their recruitment base while evading detection.

Obviously, cultists within Awka megalopolis increasingly exploit digital spaces for sensitization and recruitment of youngsters, leveraging social media, forums, and other online platforms to target vulnerable individuals: Artificial Intelligence provides an effective solution to counter this by enabling real-time monitoring, content analysis, and predictive modeling to detect and disrupt recruitment activities. Through AI-driven algorithms, authorities can identify harmful patterns, flag extremist content, and prevent the spread of cult ideologies, ensuring proactive and efficient intervention in the digital space.

Application of Routine Activity Theory in Early Detection and Prevention of Youth Cult Recruitment in Awka Metropolis

Routine Activity Theory is particularly suitable for studying the prevention of youth cult recruitment in Awka Metropolis due to its focus on the interplay between motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians. Its principles help identify and mitigate vulnerabilities in minors' daily routines that expose them to recruitment by cult groups. For example, unsupervised internet access and unstructured free time create opportunities for recruiters to exploit their social and emotional needs. Leveraging AI-driven tools allows adults and community leaders to act as "capable guardians", monitoring and redirecting minors' online activities to protect them from engaging with harmful content or associations. The emphasis on environmental and situational factors ensures practical interventions that disrupt pathways leading to youth involvement in cultism.

The importance of addressing the technological dimensions of youth behavior in Awka suburb, particularly through mobile phones and social media, cannot be overstated. Cult recruiters often exploit these platforms to lure vulnerable individuals with promises of belonging, financial gain, or protection. AI tools can analyze communication patterns, flag suspicious interactions, and provide alerts to parents, guardians, or authorities. Censoring minors' handsets becomes a method of reducing their suitability as targets, making it harder for recruiters to succeed. Additionally, advanced technology enables adults to guide healthier peer relationships by identifying and intervening in behaviors that signal exposure to antisocial influences. These data-driven responses ensure a proactive approach to youth vulnerability. Focusing on the role of capable guardianship reinforces communal responsibility in curbing cult recruitment in Awka megacity. Vigilance is crucial, particularly within educational institutions, religious organizations, and family settings. AI-driven interventions equip stakeholders with real-time insights into behavioral patterns and potential risks. This reshapes the routines of minors to emphasize positive engagements while minimizing opportunities for harmful interactions. Integrating this approach with technology offers an effective mechanism for early detection and prevention, creating a safer and more structured environment for youth within Awka Metropolis.

This theory also assists in detecting youth cult recruitment in Awka Metropolis through a focus on both local and digital community dynamics. Understanding how recruiters exploit socio-economic challenges, peer influence, and online platforms enables targeted interventions. Community engagement programs and surveillance within schools can identify at-risk individuals, while monitoring online interactions and social media groups reveals digital recruitment strategies. Collaboration between educational institutions and digital experts enhances awareness campaigns and employs AI tools to flag recruitment patterns, enabling proactive measures to disrupt initiation processes.

Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Early Detection and Prevention of Youth Cult Recruitment in Awka Metropolis

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can play a transformative role in the early detection and prevention of youth cult recruitment in Awka Metropolis through its ability to analyze data, detect patterns, and offer predictive insights. One of the most effective applications of AI is in monitoring social media and online platforms. AI tools utilizing Natural Language Processing (NLP) can analyze social media posts, chat rooms, and forums to identify keywords, phrases, or patterns associated with cult recruitment activities. Sentiment analysis can detect vulnerable youth expressing frustration, isolation, or interest in cult-related activities based on their online behavior. Additionally, network analysis can identify links between recruiters and potential recruits by mapping communication patterns, giving authorities and community leaders the information they need to take action.

In schools, AI can be used to establish early warning systems that monitor students for signs of potential cult involvement. Behavioral monitoring tools powered by AI can analyze attendance records, academic performance, and behavioral changes to flag students at risk of being targeted by cult recruiters. Anonymous reporting apps can also be integrated into the system, offering

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students a secure platform to report suspicious activities. AI can analyze these reports to identify recruitment hotspots within the school environment, helping to prevent recruitment before it escalates. AI can also support community and public awareness campaigns tailored to the specific vulnerabilities of Awka's youth population. AI-driven campaigns can personalize content based on data insights, ensuring that the message resonates with those most at risk. In addition, AI-powered chatbots can be deployed to provide anonymous guidance and support to youth at risk of recruitment or those already seeking help, offering a discreet and immediate way to address concerns. The use of AI for crime pattern prediction can significantly enhance efforts to prevent cult activities. Through predictive analytics, AI can analyze historical data on cult activities and identify trends or patterns that help predict where future recruitment efforts are likely to occur within Awka borough. This allows law enforcement and community leaders to take preventive measures before recruitment strategies are put into action, making interventions more proactive in the burg.

Surveillance and intelligence gathering can also be improved with AI. Facial recognition technology and AI-powered CCTV analysis can monitor public spaces like schools, recreational centers, and streets for suspicious gatherings or known cult recruiters. Additionally, speech recognition tools can process audio recordings from public places to detect phrases commonly linked to cult recruitment strategies, providing authorities with actionable intelligence apposite to Awka exurb. AI can also assist in providing psychological support systems to address the emotional and psychological triggers that make youth susceptible to cult recruitment. AI-powered counseling platforms can offer virtual mental health support, guiding youth through their emotional struggles in a confidential and accessible manner. Risk assessment tools can analyze socioeconomic, familial, and behavioral data to assess an individual's likelihood of being recruited, enabling interventions that are timely and targeted.

Collaboration with authorities is essential for AI systems to be most effective. Integrated databases can be created, where schools, community leaders, and law enforcement located within Awka municipality share data on cult activities. This centralized system would enable better communication and coordinated responses to prevent recruitment efforts. Real-time alerts can also be sent to law enforcement when AI systems detect potential recruitment activities, ensuring a swift and targeted response. However, there are challenges associated with the use of AI in this context, including ethical concerns. It is crucial to ensure data privacy and prevent the misuse of surveillance systems, making ethical considerations a top priority. AI should complement, not replace, human intervention, and community involvement is essential to effectively address the issue. Local leaders and educators must remain actively engaged in the process. Additionally, continuous training of AI models is necessary to adapt to evolving cult strategies and linguistic changes, ensuring that the systems remain effective in identifying and preventing recruitment activities. Through the strategic integration of AI with strong community partnerships, Awka Metropolis can take proactive measures to address the threat of youth cult recruitment, creating a safer environment for the youth.

Conclusion

This research highlights the significant potential of Artificial Intelligence in addressing the growing concern of youth involvement in cult activities in Awka metropolis. Leveraging AI's capabilities in pattern recognition and data analysis underscores how early detection systems can proactively identify at-risk youths, potentially halting recruitment efforts before they escalate. Implementing such technology could be instrumental in developing targeted intervention strategies, empowering local authorities, community leaders, and social organizations to act more swiftly and effectively in combating the influence of cult groups considering that they have evolved into recruitment via digital space.

Despite its promise, this study faces several limitations. The reliance on data collection from various sources introduces the challenge of ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the data germane to Awka cosmopolis. Furthermore, AI systems are susceptible to biases inherent in the training datasets, which could lead to false positives or missed identification of individuals at risk. Another challenge lies in the integration of AI solutions into existing local law enforcement and community structures, requiring significant investment in both infrastructure and training. The study acknowledges that AI, while promising, cannot fully replace human involvement in understanding the complex social and psychological factors contributing to youth recruitment into cults.

While the study offers valuable insights, it does not claim to be exhaustive in its exploration of AI's potential role in preventing youth cult recruitment in Awka metropolis. Further research is needed to evaluate the long-term impact of AI-driven interventions on community dynamics and the mental health of individuals involved. Future studies should also explore the ethical implications of using AI for surveillance and data collection, particularly in relation to privacy and consent. An interdisciplinary approach combining AI with psychological and sociological insights could enhance the effectiveness of prevention strategies, projecting a more holistic understanding of youth vulnerability to cult recruitment in Awka urban-center.

Recommendations

This study proffers the following recommendations apropos to its explorations:

1. The government of Anambra State should take decisive action to proscribe and sanction any manifestations of cult group presence, both in physical spaces and online platforms, as these behaviors undermine societal cohesion and public safety. The proliferation of such groups is often signaled through specific dress codes, coded greetings, and deliberate online content, all of which serve as a means of reinforcing identity and exerting influence over vulnerable populations. These symbolic markers, though seemingly benign, represent an implicit endorsement of violence, intimidation, and illicit activities. To combat this growing threat, the government must implement a robust regulatory framework that targets not only physical displays but also digital manifestations of cult culture. This should include strict surveillance of online spaces, penalizing the dissemination of content that promotes or glorifies cult-related practices. Additionally, enforcing laws that prohibit cult-related attire and greetings in public spaces will create a visible deterrent, signaling a firm

stance against the normalization of such groups. Such a comprehensive approach would serve both as a preventative measure and as a punitive action against those who attempt to infiltrate and destabilize the social fabric of Awka.

2. It is crucial for parents and guardian's resident within Awka Metropolis to exercise a proactive role in monitoring their children's digital activities, as the pervasive influence of the internet exposes them to various potential risks. Regularly censoring and reviewing children's phones not only ensures that they are engaging with appropriate content, but also enables parents to identify and address irregular behaviors or communication patterns that may signal exposure to harmful influences, such as online predators, cyber-bullying, or inappropriate peer interactions. Furthermore, this oversight incubates a safe digital environment, allowing for timely intervention and correction, thus empowering guardians to provide guidance on navigating the complexities of online spaces while reinforcing the importance of responsible digital citizenship.

3. The pervasive menace of cultism in Awka Metropolis warrants consistent exposure in digital spaces; as such visibility serves to instill fear, awareness, and a profound aversion to the futile allure of joining cult groups among the younger generation. Via shedding light on the violent and destructive outcomes associated with cult activities, including loss of life, personal freedom, and societal harmony, digital platforms can become a powerful tool for educating youth on the devastating consequences of such affiliations. This digital dissemination of gory details not only raises awareness but also cultivates a critical consciousness, prompting young individuals to reject the false sense of power and belonging that cultism falsely promises. Furthermore, it aids in dismantling the normalization of such practices, thereby cultivating a culture of resilience and moral fortitude in the face of peer pressure and societal influences that may otherwise encourage such hazardous behaviors.

4. In Awka Metropolis, the issue of limiting the number of children per family warrants a comprehensive discourse among government officials, religious leaders, and key stakeholders, given the socio-economic challenges that many households face in providing for their children. The argument in favor of limiting family sizes emphasizes the responsibility of parents to ensure they can adequately care for, educate, and sustain their children. With the increasing strain on resources and the inability of many families to meet basic needs, children are left vulnerable and more likely to rely on external, often detrimental, influences for survival, such as criminal organizations or cultism. Therefore, it becomes essential for policymakers to adopt measures that not only regulate family sizes but also encourage programs that empower families to meet the growing demands of nurturing and training their children. Religious leaders can play a pivotal role in creating awareness and promoting responsible parenthood, while stakeholders must collaborate to provide support systems that minimize societal vulnerabilities and deter the rise of harmful alternatives for survival.

5. The Nigerian government must prioritize the full integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the nation's digital infrastructure, educational systems, and social institutions to address critical societal challenges, such as youth cult recruitment in the country. Leveraging AI-driven mechanisms, such as predictive analytics, natural language processing, and real-time monitoring systems, enables authorities to identify patterns and behaviors indicative of cult activities, facilitating proactive intervention. Integrating AI into educational institutions not only stimulates digital literacy among students but also creates a secure academic environment where recruitment tactics are flagged and countered. Embedding AI into comprehensive social systems ensures a coordinated approach to combating this menace through actionable insights for law enforcement and community stakeholders. Such a strategic adoption of AI technology underscores the government's commitment to safeguarding the youth and promoting a culture of peace and academic excellence in the country.

6. Miller (2020) argument that fears of AI surpassing human intelligence and taking over society are unfounded, as AI lacks the capacity for independent thought, self-awareness, and complex linguistic understanding is worth reflecting pertinent to contemporary ambivalence towards AI integration into every aspect of human endeavors alongside social institutions. The author enunciates that unlike humans, whose cognitive processes are shaped by experiences, desires, and dynamic thought patterns, AI relies solely on preprogrammed algorithms and lacks the ability to comprehend or generate consciousness. While AI has advanced significantly in assisting with tasks, its inability to externalize thoughts or interpret sophisticated language ensures that it cannot autonomously outsmart or control humans, making a technological "singularity" implausible with current developments. Consequently, the Nigerian government should embrace AI's transformative potential, recognizing its inability to surpass human autonomy, and leverage its numerous advantages to enhance efficiency, innovation, and development across all sectors, ensuring its full integration into social and institutional structures for national progress.

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