Globalization and Culture: The Nigerian Experience

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Abstract: This research article examines the impact of globalization on Nigeria’s culture. Globalization is a phenomenon that has changed the ways individuals across the globe interact. The study adopted the qualitative research methodology in sourcing for secondary data. Findings from the paper show that globalization has both negative and positive impacts. The paper found that globalization has caused the erosion of Nigeria’s indigenous culture, especially among young people. The mode of dressing, talking, and even eating is influenced by western media. This trend is leading to cultural homogeneity; a situation where different cultures in the world are looking similar to western culture, especially American Culture. Scholars have termed this Americanization of culture. The positive sides of globalization as exemplified in the study include cultural integration, speedy access to culture and digitization. The paper concludes that Nigeria needs to wake up to the daring problems of globalization. There is a need for a huge cultural reawakening among stakeholders so as to save our culture from going into extinction.

Keywords: Culture, Globalization, Media & Technology.

1. INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies have created the emergence of global culture. Communication gadgets have eroded national cultural boundaries. Duru-Ford, (2002), submits that the world entertainment companies shape the understanding and aspirations of ordinary citizens wherever they reside. The local culture is inevitably falling prey to global “consumer” culture. For instance, English Language, as observed by Tukus-Dubrow (2002), is gradually but steadily eradicating the traditional mother tongue while consumer values according to Duru-Ford (2002) are overwhelming individuals’ sense of community and social solidarity. For example, globalization has constantly knitted the world, creating unity out of great diversity. Jeans (2002) argues Multinationals like that Coca-Cola, Disney and McDonald typify the process, including Sony Corporation Shell, and International Business Machine (IBM) influence global consumer’s lifestyles. There goods and services known and consumed all over the world. Besides, these companies drive globalization, creating new laws, novel ways of doing business, and they also decide what the world’s citizens consume. Fridah (2002) argues that there are optimists and pessimists, who have contradicting views. The scholar states that optimists look forward to global village linked altogether by the internet, and benefiting from over-increasing material wellbeing. However, the pessimists see dangerous corporate imperialism, destroying the world and its culture, and eroding all that is good and meaningful for human existence. Maybe this is why Willien (2002), used the word deterritorialization, which he describes as the death of geographical barriers and the end of nations sovereignty. Africans have always been weary of the benefits of globalization generally, and most commentators on the globalization of African extract posit that the continent has
not benefited from the process of globalization and that it has exacerbated the problem of poverty in the continent (Ugbam, Chukwu, and Ogbo, 2014, p.62). This paper, therefore, explores the concept of globalization and culture as well as the impact of globalization on the culture.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Globalization

According to Amiuwu, 2004, Scholte, 2002, as cited in (Ugbam, Chukwu, and Ogbo, 2014), the word globalization was coined in the second half of the twentieth century; globalization started between the periods of 1450 to1500 AD. A period referred to as the mercantilists’ period, and it is characterized by the development of trade in the desire for commercial empires to widen their markets. Ugbam et al, (2014, p.62) further argue that “since then, propelled by incredible advancements in transportation and information technology, globalization has practically shrunk the world to one global village. Before now, globalization was viewed as an economic phenomenon, and in fact, some economists still define it from a wholly economic perspective. However, it is now clear that although it was caused by economic motives, it has far-reaching effects in every aspect of life especially in the areas of politics, culture, technology and the environment”. Ogohi (2014) asserts that emergence of globalization can be dated back to the era colonialism. The search for new markets and source of wealth polished by the industrial revolution led to the creation of international commodity markets and mercantilist trade. According to Ogohi, after the Second World War, the world has become more inter-connected through innovations and advancement in sciences, travel and transportation, communication along with information and technology; hence rapid globalization occurred.

Globalization is a foremost word, and it is frequently used by people today. Globalization is the increasing interaction of the national economy with that of the developed world, which ultimately targets the creation a state of frictionless capitalism (Yusuf, n.d). Orunmoluyi (2002) believes that globalization is a process of establishing a one world market where all nations are compelled to partake. The process of globalisation means that there is the interconnection of sovereign countries via trade and capital flows; harmonization of economy rules that regulates relations among these sovereign nations; establishing structures to help and facilitate interdependent and creating a global marketplace. Nsibami (2001, p.1) gives a clear definition of globalization thus: Globalization is a process of advancement and increases in the interaction among the world’s countries and people facilitated by progressive technological changes in locomotion, communication, political and military power, knowledge and skills, as well as interfacing of cultural values, systems, and practices. Globalization is not a value-free, innocent, self-determining process. It is an international, socio-politico-economic and private cultural corporations, international agencies, and civil society organisations.

Aborishade (2002) argues that globalization is western imperialism, specifically American imperialism that seeks to impose its hegemony on other subjugated and exploited nations’ threat of economic, political or military coercion. To him, globalization does not only deepen inequality between the core and the periphery nations, but it also seeks to wage unprecedented attacks on the right and welfare of the emerging nations. Nwana (2004) writes that the current phase of globalization has witnessed the birth of international global organisations and institutions such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Union, African Union, World Trade Organization, and the G8 etc. Sawyer (1998) believes that the present wave of globalisation is a desperate attempt by international capitalists to regain lost territories due to ideological shifts towards alternative paradigms which African countries adopted since independence especially with the demise of the Soviet Union and the unchallenged hegemony of capitalism and neo-liberal ideology. Scholte (2000) elaborates that the following factors have helped shaped and facilitate globalization:

a. The emergence of global consciousness.

b. Development in capitalism with respect to the organisation of production, marketing, accumulation and transfer of capital.

c. Trans-national production, a massive movement of financial assets across borders, the concentration of capital in few countries and internationalisation of production by institutions, marketing and consumption.
d. A good regulatory framework especially through supranational institutions such as World Trade Organization, World Bank, amongst others.

2.2 Culture: An Overview

The term culture is credited to Sir Edward Taylor. Taylor (as cited in Danbello and Dakogol, 2015) asserts that culture is a complex phenomenon which includes the following: knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom and any other capabilities and characters acquired by man as a member of a given society. Adeleke (2003) is of the view that culture is a communal property as it mirrors the being of an individual in its totality. Culture thus gives a group of people its peculiar identity. The concept of culture encompasses the values the members of a group hold, the norms they follow, and the material goods they establish. Culture means the ways of life of the individual member of groups within society; how they dress, their religious beliefs and leisure attachment (Oni, 2005). Adeleke submits that culture is both tangible and intangible. Tangible culture entails the physical material we can touch and feel. For instance clothes, food, artefacts, etc. while the intangible or untouchable cultures are the norms and value of a people or a society. From the foregoing explanation, it can be deduced that culture is a vast concept; it affects almost every facet of human life. According to Ogbo and Chukwu (2014), culture is paramount for several reasons:

a. It is view as defining peoples’ identity and consequently, it has been argued that a people without culture are a people without identity. By defining peoples’ identity, culture helps to differentiate between or among peoples of different societies of communities.

b. Secondly, culture is seen to be very important in ensuring the survival and development of a community.

c. Culture plays an essential role in ensuring continuity in any given society by helping to transmit values, beliefs, rituals, etc. from one generation to the other.

2.3 Globalization and Nigeria’s Culture: the Threats

From the culture point of view, Castells (1997), writes that globalization is the process that erodes differences in culture and producing a seamless global system of culture and economic values. Similarly, David (2002) argues that globalization is the process of harmonizing different culture and beliefs. According to (Oni 2005), significant critics of globalization from Africa have argued that globalization is destructive to African culture and development. From a cultural angel, most Africans see globalization as merely another form of imperialism or colonialism (Ogbo and Chukwu, 2014).

Empirically, there have been glaring changes in Nigeria’s indigenous culture. Ogunjimi and Na’Allah (2005, p.36) submit that the peculiar Nigerian cultural values, like languages, are being eroded by the pop culture brought about by globalization. Greeting norms, food, clothing, custom, occupations, religion, and cultural components are giving way to acculturation “the suppression and subjugation of African culture,” a tragic phenomenon that is fast destroying the original cultural complexion of not only the young generation but even the adults. Oni (2005) observes that the negative impact of globalization is conspicuous among Nigerian youths. The scholar argues that youth are rapidly losing touch with cultural values and that this evident in the foreign culture which they portray; their dress sense, dancing, and languages amongst others which invariably affect other aspects of their social life. The younger generations are supposed to be the custodians and guardians of our culture, which is not the situation today. Bello and Adesemoye (2012), submit that young people are important segments of the society who could be instrumental in promoting African cultures. However, unfortunately, the mentality and lifestyle of the teenagers in African societies have been negatively affected by exposure to western films to a large degree that rather than promoting African cultures, they have become hardened acolytes and promoters of western culture. Akande (2002) blames globalization for the extinction of 22,000 indigenous cultures in the last decades and predicts that approximately 90 percent of the world’s languages will go into extinction in the next century as a result of globalization. In Nigeria, the indigenous languages are rendered meaningless because the English Language is the official language of the country. Globalization has made the English language a predator language (Yusuf, n.d). This informs James (1997) to assert that the English language is a “killer” language. The English language has run rampant all over Nigeria. People want to speak the English language because
it is the language of advertising, blockbuster, movies and pop music, as well as a crucial tool for success. The English language has become certainly the most successful lingua franca we have ever seen (Yusuf, n.d).

It is pertinent to point out that globalization controls the international market. The US dollar is the world’s currency for trading. The prices of goods and services are determined by the US dollar. Individual nations cannot independently use their currency without quantifying it to the US dollar. These western nations determine the prices of essential commodities like gold, crude oil, cocoa, and diamond in the “global market.” The question is what a global market is? Do all nations of the world have equal opportunity to participate in the “global market”? The answer is no. Third World countries do not have the technologies that will enable them to participate in the “global market.” They service the developed countries with raw materials for producing finished goods. For instance, in the case of Nigeria, the country spends millions of dollars to refine crude oil abroad but even pays higher to import fuel and other components of crude oil.

The trend of globalization suggests cultural homogenization. Ogbo and Chukwu (2014) describe cultural homogenization as a situation where all the peoples have just a culture. This is coupled with the fear that this one culture that will emerge will ultimately be the American culture, hence Americanization. Elaigwu (1997) argues that from coca-colonization of the world, we have gotten to CNNization of the globe. Ogbo and Chukwu (2014, p.67) opine that “as a consequence of this cultural migration, Africa’s rich culture is being demeaned, and is perceived as inferior by others and that globalization is in practice homogenizing popular culture by inculcating western beliefs, mainly American cultural industry, which also has roots in Britain and western Europe”.

2.4 Globalization: the Positive sides

Ogbo and Chukwu (2014, p.67) capture some positive sides of globalization. The scholars specifically dwell on acculturation. Through the processes of acculturation, African cultures and traditions generally and Nigerian cultures, in particular, have been redefined because of the contact with the western world.” From the above quote, it could be argued that globalization has its good sides. It has made life less stressful and meaningful as well. Similarly, Nwegbu, Eze, and Asogwa (2011) identify three positive impacts of globalization:

a. Integration of Nigerian Culture: The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has caused the integration of on the web. By this, globalization would integrate Nigeria culture and allow each cultural community to view the other’s culture on the World Wide Web.
b. Speedy Access: As Marshall McLuhan submits that the world is a global village. With this, Nigerian cultures could be viewed online anytime or anywhere. Cultural access via the internet can be localized. Localization connotes a process by which alien cultures are seen in the satellite television system or on the internet. This can be practiced in Nigerian or any other environment.
c. Digitization: Digital communication devices can be used to gather information. Moreover, this cultural information can be stored in diverse digital formats.

3. CONCLUSION

This paper has established that globalization is a necessary evil; it has its good and bad sides. Particularly on the culture of the people, globalization has eroded Nigeria’s cherished ways of life. The emergence of communication technologies has aided the rapid wave of globalization across the African continent, and Nigeria is no exception. Like other countries in the continent, Nigeria is a mere consumer of media contents from developed countries, especially the United States. Quantitatively, the country does not produce or disseminate enough contents in order to counter the massive beaming of western contents into its airwaves by the developed nations. Despite the demerits of globalization, it has facilitated easier communication in the continent. Globalization has also aided in putting to a stop some obnoxious cultural beliefs of the past. Nigeria needs to wake up to the daring problems of globalization. There is a need for a substantial cultural reawakening among stakeholders to save our culture from going into extinction.
4. REFERENCES


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