

Cultural Imperialism and Identity Crisis: Influence of Western Civilization on Youth in South-South, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of Western Civilization on Youths in South-South Nigeria, with a particular focus on Cultural Imperialism, Identity crisis, and the preservation of indigenous cultural values. The study was guided by the following objectives: to identify the dominant channels through which Western cultural influence is transmitted; to examine the positive and negative effects of Western Civilization on Youths; to determine how cultural imperialism contributed to identity crisis; and to assess the implications of Western cultural dominance on indigenous cultural preservation. The study was anchored on Herbert Schiller Cultural Imperialism Theory and John Tomlinson Globalization Theory. A quantitative research approach and descriptive survey design were adopted for the study. The population of this study is 9 million youths, which comprises youths in South-South Nigeria, while a sample size of 400 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula, out of which 394 questionnaires were successfully retrieved, representing a 98.59% response rate. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed using arithmetic mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution, and percentages. Findings revealed that social media, satellite television, internet streaming platforms, peer groups, radio, newspapers, and magazines significantly serve as channels of Western cultural transmission with a grand mean of 3.85. The study also found that Western Civilization exerts positive effects such as improved education, technological advancement, creativity, and global awareness (Grand Mean=4.09). Also, it has contributed to moral decline, materialism, risky behaviours, and erosion of indigenous values (Grand Mean=3.77). Furthermore, that cultural imperialism significantly contributes to identity crisis among Youths (Grand Mean=3.98). That Western cultural dominance poses serious threats to indigenous cultural preservation (Grand Mean=4.07). The study concluded that Western Civilization has both developmental and disruptive impacts on Youths in South-South Nigeria. The study therefore recommended media literacy education, promotion of indigenous cultural studies, value re-orientation programmes, and stronger cultural preservation policies.

INTRODUCTION

The influx of Westernization into African nations seems to have some kinds of effects on the people. In various regions of Nigeria, youths seem to always encounter a cultural challenge where Westernisation is accessible and misconceived as modernity. This situation seems to have supported some kinds of shifts in behaviour, values, and perception, sometimes creating doubts and tensions between traditional and imported cultural ideals. One may argue that the influence of Western civilization in Nigeria commenced during the colonial period, when European powers introduced missionary religion, political administration, and formal education as mechanisms of transformation. These processes illustrate the procedure in which Westernisation was linked with development.

These days, the processes have been improved by international economic networks, globalization, and digital media, which make Western culture more available to younger people (Adebayo & Ojo, 2021; Okorie & Olorunfemi, 2022). In this context, westernisation can involve political and institutional factors. These factors may encompass democracy, governance, and modern education. Others include the cultural and intellectual traditions rooted in scientific inquiry, the Enlightenment, and individual values. While the acceptance of

westernisation among people can enhance modernization, it can also lead to the suppression of indigenous culture. This divergence may put the younger ones in a state of dilemma, as they attempt to navigate between Nigerian culture and Western culture. (Eze, 2023, Bhambra, 2021).

It could be understood that cultural imperialism explains how the dominant cultural norms imposed by influential societies lead to the relegation of indigenous cultures. In Nigeria, Western cultures could influence the younger ones to follow a culture that may be at odds with their tradition. These influences are particularly noticeable in developed areas, where exposure to international media and consumer culture is high, often quickening the erosion of traditional cultural markers and contributing to identity issues among young people (Schiller, 1969; Adeeko, 2020).

Besides, the interface between Western civilization and African culture has been a transformative historical process determining modern social lives across the continent (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Rodney, 1972). In Nigeria, the encounter with Western civilization began in an organized and far-reaching manner during the colonial period and has continued through post-colonial globalization, international media flows, and transnational economic networks (Osterhammel & Peterson, 2020). This encounter has influenced political institutions, educational systems, religious practices, language use, and patterns of social life (Bhambra, 2021; Diamond & Plattner, 2021). These reflect broader historical patterns through which Western culture was introduced into African societies during colonial rule and subsequently reinforced through globalization and modern communication systems (Appadurai, 2022; Inglehart, 2018).

Scholars agree that Western civilization had enormous effects in Nigeria and other African societies, which are multilayered, creating modernization and institutional development in areas such as education, governance, and economic organization, while generating tensions surrounding cultural continuity, identity formation, and social values (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Rodney, 1972; Inglehart, 2018). Similarly, scholars have argued that the spread of Western cultural norms through various platforms has contributed to the emergence of hybrid identities and cultural transformations in postcolonial societies, often creating tensions between traditional culture and foreign culture (Diamond & Plattner, 2021; Nwakamma, 2021). The effect of these relationships may be considered obvious among young people (Adebayo & Ojo, 2021; Okorie & Olorunfemi, 2022).

Meanwhile, Western civilization in Africa has continued to spread through various channels, including missionary activities, colonial administration, international trade, and Western-style education. Colonial governments had administrative structures based on European legal and political systems, while Christian missionaries had schools that became the earliest institutions of formal education in various parts of Nigeria. These institutions served as mechanisms for sharing religious beliefs, Western knowledge, language, and social values. Scholars had noted that colonial education systems often prioritized Westernisation, thereby marginalizing the indigenous culture (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Rodney, 1972). This created a scenario in which Westernisation became associated with progress.

Previously, Western civilization was perceived as a complicated tradition that developed historically in Europe and North America and later spread to the entire world. From the views of Bhambra (2021), Western civilization came from the historical intersection of various traditions, such as the Greco-Roman political ideas, Judeo-Christian traditions, and Enlightenment ideals such as liberty, rational inquiry, governance, and development in the sciences. These assisted in the formation of Western institutions. Similarly, Osterhammel and Peterson (2020) argue that Western civilization should be understood as an advancing process rather than a permanent object. They emphasize that Westernisation had multiplied through several factors, including technology, education, and culture.

Scholars continue to pinpoint the institutional angles of Western civilization. Diamond and Plattner (2021) note that democracy, governance, rule of law, and protection of individual rights are considered the philosophies of Western ideologies. These philosophies appear as reference points and have informed contexts in many postcolonial countries, including Nigeria. However, while these philosophies may have contributed to governance reforms and democratic aspirations, their representation in different cultures seems to generate some debates.