

**THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON
INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN
UMUARIAGA COMMUNITY**

Samuel Mba Onwuka PhD

Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy,
Faculty of Humanities, Abia State University, Uturu
+2348062584440 Samuel.mba@absu.edu.ng

and

Nnabuko, Samuel Chibueze

Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy
Faculty of Humanities, Abia State University, Uturu.
+2349066472629 revsammnnabuko@gmail.com

Abstract

Globalization, characterized by the increasing inter connectedness of societies through economic, cultural, technological and political exchange, has profoundly influenced religious system across the world. This work examines the impact of globalization on indigenous religious practices in Umuariaga community. The work focuses on how global flows of ideas, media, migration and technology reshaped traditional beliefs, rituals, rooted religious traditions across historical and contemporary contexts. This research work will use historical analysis, individual oral interview and personal witness to carry out this research. It will source materials

from documented and online sources in doing this work. The findings show that globalization has deeply influenced indigenous religious beliefs, practices doctrines, rituals and institutions positively and negatively. The work also discovered that indigenous religious practices are not merely eroded but are also transformed, adapted, reformed and sometimes revitalized within global contexts. The indigenous worship styles, language of religious expression were altered. Despite that, the local communities have continued to assert cultural relevance by blending global elements with indigenous values. This research will add value to the academic community. It is therefore recommended for all scholars, researchers, church leaders, church planters, missionaries, theologians, young school leavers, institutions of higher learning and individuals who will want to enrich their knowledge on the subject matter. The paper concludes that globalization provides complex interaction between continuity and change in indigenous religious life. It therefore requires a balanced understanding of both its disruptive and integrative effects.

Key words; impact, globalization, indigenous, religious practices

Introduction

Globalization has become one of the most influential forces shaping societies and social life across the world, and Umuariaga community is not left out of this wide reaching transformation. It refers to the intensification of global interconnectedness through trade, communication

technologies, migration, and cultural exchange. Religions which has historically been deeply rooted in local cultures and traditions, has increasingly come into contact with external influences brought about by globalization. This influence and transformation extends beyond economic and political spheres into cultural and religious domains. Indigenous religious practices defined as rituals, belief and customs specific to particular communities are now exposed to external influences.

In Umuariaga community where religion plays a central role in shaping identity, morality and communal life, these global forces have created new patterns of religious expressions and interactions. These interactions have led to both the transformation and contestation of religious identities.

Historically, religions have played a crucial role in shaping moral values, social norms and cultural identity. However, globalization introduces new dynamics such as religious pluralism, secular ideologies and hybrid cultural forms. As a result indigenous religious practices are undergoing significant changes, including adaptation, resistance, and reinterpretation.

The People of Umuariage Community

The Umuariage community is wonderful and very unique people with rich cultural and religious heritage. The Umuariage community is located in awom Na-Ebo autonomous community in ancient Obori kingdom in ikwuano LGA, Abia State Nigeria.

They are predominantly Christians but has deep rich cultural and religious practices even before Christianity came like church Afoukwu, IGA Abu NWA, iriji, igbaekpe, ofufenro, olili (second burial) etc. They are also rich in primary business and produce cocoa, gari and palm oil in lunch quantity. Yes, some of these religious and cultural practices as still being practiced today, but the impact and the influence Of globalization has water down their forms of practices especially, the iriji (new yam festival, igbaekpe and olili (second burial).

For instance, the iri ji (new yam festival) in the olden days m, the most elderly ones gather to make some sacrifices to the deity called Ahia Njoku (that is the deity responsible for yam production).

Before the production before the celebration new yam festival and that made Christians to stay away from such celebration. Due to the impact of globalization many communities in Igbo land including Umuariaga community will now first take their new yam to the church for the priest to pray over it before celebration will take place so as to attract so many people to join the celebration.

Research has shown that there are significant scholarly wide research, studies comma and soul many publications on globalization, it's impact on local religious practices.

This is evidence in previous study studied literature. Previous research offers inside for information about the impact of global globalization and local religious practices. However, none has particularly written on this subject matter has it concerns Umuariage community in Awom La Ebo autonomous community in Ikwuano local government area of Abia state. The majority of studies that are now available take a national, international, or continental view point, oral testimonies from some members of the community, online sources, historical analysis and literatures have all been used sparingly to close this gap in this subject matter, hence this research on the impact of globalization on local religious practices in Umuaruaga community.

Globalization as Cultural Transformation in Umuariaga Community

Globalization is often understood as a process that reshapes cultures by introducing new values and practices. It is the process by which ideas, values and practices are exchanged and integrated across borders, reshaping local identities and creating a deeply interconnected world. This phenomenon drives profound shifts in everyday life, acting as a dynamic catalyst for both worldwide standardization and unique cultural blending.

According to (Onuoha and Odeka 48), globalization promotes modernism, emphasizing change, freedom, and innovation, often at the expense of traditional religious values. This shift has contributed to the emergence of

secular cultures that challenge established religious norms in Umuariage community.

Similarly, (Steger 70-85) highlights the cultural dimension of globalization, noting that global cultural flows create hybrid identities that blend local tradition with foreign influences as it is in Umuariage community. In this context, religion becomes one of many competing cultural options rather than a dominant social force.

According to AI definition, impact generally refers to a forceful contact between objects or a strong effect and influence. It is a powerful or noticeable effect that a person, event, or ideas has on a situation. It means to have a direct, strong influence on something.

Globalization is the ongoing process by which economics societies and cultures become increasingly integrated and interconnected worldwide.

Indigenous religious practices refer to the traditional, nature-centric spiritual practices and world-views native to specific ethnic groups or religions. They are religious beliefs and rituals rooted in specific cultural and community traditions within a particular society.

Socialization vs Religious Resurgence in Umuariage

One debate in the literature concerns whether globalization leads to secularization or religious revival while modernization and globalization promote individualism and institutional decline in some regions. They simultaneously spark religious backlashes and revivals in others. Together they demonstrate that the

global role of religion is transforming rather than simply disappearing. Secularization theorists argue that modernization reduces religious influence in society. However, empirical studies suggest a more complex picture.

Research indicates that while modernization may reduce religious participation in contexts, it can also strengthen religious conservatism among committed believers. This suggests globalization does not uniformly diminish religion but may instead polarize religious engagement as it is the case in Umuriaga community.

Impact on Indigenous and Traditional Religion in Umuariaga Community

Several studies have focused on how globalization affects indigenous religious practices. Research shows that globalization can lead to the erosion of traditional beliefs due to cultural homogenization and external influences. For example, studies on African and Native American religions review that globalization can disrupt traditional practices and weaken cultural continuity.

However, the same studies also highlight resilience and adaptation. The community often reinterprets their traditions in response to global influences, leading to the revitalization of certain change.

Technology, Media and Digital Religion

The rise of digital technology, media has significantly impacted religious practices in Umuariaga community. The internet and social media enable the rapid

dissemination of religious ideas, creating virtual religious communities. In Christian and Islamic contexts, cyberspace has become a major source of religious education, influencing younger generations more than traditional authorities.

Digital media has indeed transformed religions by making religious content widely accessible beyond physical spaces (Razaaq, 121). Online sermons, social media platforms and mobile applications now serve as key tools for religious engagement in Nigeria. (Sugiardi and Aslan, 1134-1142). And this is very clear in Umuariaga community.

This digital shift has altered how believers even participate in worship and how authority is constructed (Millar et al, 163-169). Religious influence increasingly depends on online visibility and digital literacy (Anita et al, 166-172).

While digital religion increase access, it also raises concerns about superficial engagement and misinformation (Razaaq, 20). Competing interpretation circulate freely online, sometimes weakening doctrinal consistency.

Migration and Diaspora communities

Migration has become powerful global forces shaping religious practices as people carry their beliefs across borders (Millaetal, 65). The Umuariaga Diaspora communities plays significant role in transmitting global religious ideas back home through remittances, visits and digital communication. These connections influence

worship styles, doctrinal emphasis, and organizational models within the community. As a result, religion becomes a shared trans-community or transnational experience rather than a purely local one.

Diaspora communities often adopt practices and reintroduced them at home. It could be a practice copied from other communities, cities or even from other countries. For example worship formats developed in Europe often influence Nigerian churches and mosques.

Thus, migration reshapes indigenous religious practice by expanding its cultural boundaries.

Trade, Education, and Culture

Trade and education has long facilitated cultural and religious interaction across Societies (Sugiard & Aslan1133). Educational exchange exposes Nigerian, Umuariaga students to global religious ideas that influence belief ant practice upon return. Trade networks also encourage interaction among diverse religious communities to promoting shared values and ethical norms. These interactions gradually reshape local religious perspectives in Umuariaga.

However, global education sometimes promotes secular worldviews that challenge traditional religious authority (sugiard & Aslen, 1114). This tension is evident among the youth who balance cultural exposure with inherited beliefs. Therefore, trade and education function as subtle yet powerful forces shaping how religion is understood and practiced in Umuariaga.

Globalization and Interfaith Interaction

Globalization has made the world a “global village,” breaking down geographic and cultural barriers. This unprecedented interconnectivity forces diverse religious community into closer proximity, which fosters both cultural exchange and polarization. As a result, interfaith dialogue has become an essential tool for social cohesion, mutual understanding and global peace building. It is Worthy to note that globalization has also increased interaction between different religious groups. Interfaith dialogue has become an important mechanism for promoting peace and understanding in a globalized world. Studies show that such dialogue can reduce religious tension and foster cooperation across communities.

The Impact of Globalization on Indigenous Religious Practices

Globalization has a profound impact on indigenous religious practices, acting as both a force of erosion and engine for revitalization. While international media and dominant global religions dilute and commercialize traditional beliefs, increased digital connectivity allows indigenous communities to share their spiritual heritage globally

1. Cultural homogenization and loss of tradition

One of the most significant impacts of globalization is cultural homogenization – the process by which local cultures becomes more similar due to global influences.

This often leads to the decline of traditional religious practices. Global media and western cultural values have influenced local communities, leading to the adoption of new life styles that may conflict with traditional religious norms. For example:

- * Traditional rituals may be simplified or abandoned
- * Religious languages and symbols may lose their significance
- * Indigenous belief systems may be replaced by global religions

Religious Hybridization

Religious hybridization (or syncretism) is the blending of distinct religious beliefs, rituals or philosophies into a new, unique belief system. Driven by migration, colonization, and globalization, it allows cultures and individuals to adapt their spirituality to meet unmet social, emotional, or cultural needs. Rather than complete erosion, globalization often leads to hybridization – the blending of indigenous, local and global religious elements. This can be seen in:

- a. The incorporation of modern music and media into religious worship.
- b. The adaptation of rituals to appeal the global audiences.

c. The emergence of new religious movements that combine different traditions. This hybridization reflects the dynamic nature of religion in a globalized world.

2 Commercialization of Religion

Globalization has also contributed to the commercialization of religious practices are sometimes transformed into communities for tourism and entertainment. For instance:

- * Festival may be marked to attract international tourists
- * Religious artifacts may be sold as cultural products.
- * Sacred rituals may be adapted for public display.

Influence on Beliefs and Doctrines

Globalization has significantly reshaped religious beliefs and doctrines by exposing indigenous faith communities to diverse interpretations and global theological debates (Sugraddan and Asian, 17). In Nigeria and in Umuaruaga community, religious teachings are no longer firmed solely by global religious movements, international conferences and online sermons. This exposure has led to shifts in how believers understand doctrines such as salvation, morality and spiritual authority (Arnita 31). While some scholars argue that globalization enriches belief systems by encouraging openness and moderation others point out that it can also create doctrinal confusion among adherents (Millar et al, 15).

However, rather than disappearing, many local beliefs systems have responded by reframing doctrines to emphasis cultural identify and moral relevance (Razzaq, 35). This implies foreign beliefs but creates a space where doctrines are debated, adjusted, and sometimes strengthened through engagement (Millar et al, 43-46).

Changes in Rituals, Worship and Festivals

Globalization has transformed religious rituals and worship, styles, languages, and Symbolic expressions into local Settings (Razzaq, 18). In Umuariaga worship service increasingly reflect global influence through music genres, media technology, and dress codes inspired by international religious cultures. Traditional mode of worship that relied heavily on local languages and symbols now coexist with global forms that priorities English and digital expression. This Shift has altered how religious experience are performed and understood within communities (Armita et al, 10). Religious festivals have also been reshaped by globalization as global calendars and international celebrations gain prominence (Razzaq, 25). Christian events such as Christmas and Easter are now celebrated with global ethics, sometimes overshadowing local religious festivals (Sugiardi and Aslan, 113).

However, local communities like Umuariaga as a clear example, often resist complete homogenization by blending global elements with indigenous rituals (Sugiardi & Aslan, 113). Nigerian churches and mosques frequently incorporate local music, dance and storytelling into globally inspired worship formats

(Razzaq, 21). This blending suggests that rituals remain dynamic rather than static, shaped by negotiation between tradition and modern influence (Millar et al, 66-67). Therefore, changes in rituals reflect adaptation rather than loss, highlighting the resilience of local religious expression (Armita et al, 163).

Religious Conflict and Polarization

Religious conflict and polarization occur when the deferring

Faith-based beliefs, secular worldviews and political ideologies intersect. This divide often fuels discrimination, stalls civic progress, and escalates into horizontal, communal violence.

Addressing this complex rifts requires systematic reforms, inclusive policies, and localized interfaith peace building to dismantle stereotypes in Umuaruaga community.

While globalization promotes interactions, it can also intensify religious conflict. The spread of extremist Ideologies and increased competition between religious groups can lead to tensions and violence.

Effects on Religious Institution and Leadership

Globalization has altered the structure and authority of religious institutions by expanding their reach beyond local boundaries (Millar et al, 82).

Leadership is increasingly measured by visibility and media presence rather than solely by moral standing or traditional legitimacy (Armita et al, 160-161).

Global religious networks have also reshaped leadership training and accountability (Millar et al, 51). Clerics and pastors often receive education abroad or through online platforms, exposing them to global theological perspectives. While this can enhance intellectual depth, it can also distance leaders from local realities (Razza, 20). In some cases, imported leadership styles clash with communal expectations rooted in Nigerian culture. This is what affects every community including my community Umuariaga. Despite these tensions, globalization has enabled religious institutions to address global issues such as peace social justice, and interfaith dialogue (Millar et al, 81). Religious leaders increasingly frame sermons around global moral concerns, reflecting a broader sense of responsibility (Sugiardi & Aslan, 1136). Based on this understanding, globalization has both empowered and challenged religious leadership, forcing institutions to rethink authority in a connected world (Razzaq, 18-21). Some churches and mosques even traditional institutions are now heavily influenced by borrowed cultures as a result of globalization.

Responses of Indigenous Religious Communities

The Umuariaga community obviously respond to globalization through a spectrum of strategies, ranging from active adaptation and the revitalization of sacred traditions like “iri ji” (new yam festival), "ekpe" festival, the "Ekwemgba" festival (traditional wrestling), which is

also seen from the neighboring communities, to intense resistance.

Digital documentation: The Umuariaga community currently utilizes digital media and the internet to document and transmit endangered rituals, languages and myths to younger generations.

Revitalization and cultural resistance: Fearing the loss of cultural identity due to cultural homogenization, the Umuariaga people consciously revitalize their ancestral religions. In fact, this is a general problem in the whole of the Southeast region

While global forces like digital media, western consumerism, and migration can threaten local belief systems, they also provide platforms for Umuariaga people to assert their identities and protect their heritage through: Adaptation - Then Umuariaga people synthesize traditional beliefs with global influences to maintain relevance in a changing world.

Conclusion

This study examined impact of globalization on indigenous religious practices by exploring historical development, contemporary influences, and community responses in Umuariaga. It showed globalization is not a recent phenomenon but a long process that has continually shape religious beliefs, rituals, institution and identities. The Umuariaga experience demonstrates that religion remains deeply rooted a social despite increasing global connections. Rather than eliminating indigenous religious practices, globalization has created

a complex space where adaptations, resistance and transformation occurs simultaneously.

While globalization has introduced challenges such as cultural homogenization, circularization, and commercialization, it has also created opportunity for religious exchange, innovation and revitalization. Presently indigenous religious practices adapt to global influences while maintaining core elements of their identity.

This dynamic interplay highlights the resilience of religion in the face of global change. Ultimately, the future of indigenous religious practices depends on their ability of community to balance tradition and modernity, preserving their cultural heritage while engaging with the globalized world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

a. that the older generations in our community should do well to pass the history of our local relationships, rituals and practices to the younger generation who are more at home with the GnnZ lifestyle

B. That the globalization and local religious beliefs and practices should go vice versa and in hard, since global

Global flows of idea, media, migration and technology reshare traditional beliefs, rituals, and institutions bring about a balance.

c. That's the positive. Dimensions of globalization in influence or on local religious practices should be impressed by the local communities, hence the will not lose better with the spread of religious ideas, interfaith dialogue, and cultural homogenization.

d. That since globalization produces a complex interaction between continuity and change in religious life, the local community will require a balance understanding of both it disruptive and integrating effects for proper blending

Work Cited

- Ahmed, E Mahmaddhassan. M. Abuzar, M. & Riszul, SM (2025). The Role of Religiosity in the Face of Globalization A Cross-Cultural examination. Bulletin of Islamic Research 3 (3) 471-498.
- Amita P. Yusuf, M., &Maulana, M.Z (2025) Religious Moderation amid Globalization: The Challenges of TatarufTakfir, and Ta'asub. Al-klasatayah: journal of Religious Moderation, 4(1), 163-181.
- Bekeh, U. J., Aboh, F.1, &Omang, C.1 (2025). Globalization Its Effect On Socio-Cultural Practices in Nigeria Global Journal of Pure and Applied Sciences, 31 (2) 445- 449.
- Bhagwati, J. (2004). In defence of global of globalization oxford University press.
- Fox, J. (2020). *Globalization and Religious Resurgence*.
- Gidens, A (2020). Runaway world: How globalization is reshaping our lives. Routledge.

- Grassie, T. (2025). Cross Cultural Dialogue between Religion and Philosophy: The Clash and integration of Traditional and modern Alues in the Context of Globalization. *Studies of Religion and Philosophy*, 101), 9-24.
- Jamich A. 1. B & Firmansyah, E. (2025). Embracing Diversity i Navigating Religions identity is multi-25. *Online Journal of Research in Cultural Societies*. - Islamic studies 12(1), 37-60.
- Millar, C., Chahda, L. Carey, L. B., Ly, A., McLaren, P.O Drakopoulos, E., & Bshopti, A. (2024). Globalist Citizenship, Cultural, Religious and Spiritual-An Exploratory Scoping Review.
- Ogbuehi, F. I. (2021). *Globalization and Christian in Nigeria*. International Journal of African and Asian Studies.
- Onuoha, I. O., & Odeke, F. C. (2020). *Globalization and Religion: Analysing the Impact*. East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion.
- Razzaq, N. (2023). Language, Globalization, and Faith; now world Religions Communicate in a Postmodern Era. *Al-Milal. Journal of Religion and Thought*, 5(2), 1-21.
- Ronad, I. (2023). *Changing Aspects of Indian Culture: A Sociological Perspective*.
- Siahaya, J., et al. (2023). *Interfaith Dialogue in the Context of Globalization*. International Journal of Science and Society.
- Singer, P. (2016). One world: The ethics of globalization (2nded.) Yale University press.
- Steger, M. B. (2023). *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*.

- Stiglitz, J.E (2002). Globalization and its discontents.
W.W. Norton & company.
- Sugiardi, S., &Aslan, A. (2025). Crossroads of Faith,
Adaptation of J Local Religious Tra9809pditions
was in the flow of Glob Globalization Water
International Journal of Society Reviews, 3(6),
1131-1140.
- United Nations Educational scientific and cultural
organization (UNESCO), (2022). Cultural and
globalization report UNESCO.
- Walters, S. D. (2015). *Globalization and Indigenous
Spiritual Practices*. (as cited in)
- Zakaria, G. A. N. (2022). *Islamic Education and
Cyberspace*.