



## GLOBALIZATION AS UNIFICATION: EFFECTS ON CLOTHING

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**Abstract:** *Globalization is the process of advancing to a more interconnected world. With the outcome of globalization, coupled with civilisation and modern fashion that have engulfed the world over; cultural attire especially that of the Igbo people of Nigeria has been neglected. It is believed that people's dressing code is one of their identities. Globalization with its unifying effects on culture has made it almost impossible to identify people through their traditional attire among people of different cultural backgrounds. The pride of the Igbo is therefore relegated to the background. This paper examines the decline in the use of Igbo traditional attire as globalisation has tended to harmonise people all over the world with a common type of clothing. The aim of this study is to bring to the limelight the role of traditional attire in promoting peoples identity. The study adopts a historical research approach. Data for the study were collected through observational method, and personal experience. Findings show that globalization and civilisation are the major reason for unified attire which is the cause of decline in cultural identities, especially that of the Igbo. The study recommends a sense of value for the Igbo traditional attire, and a sense of consciousness to Igbo identity. The onus is therefore, on the families and general public to collectively ensure that Igbo identity is restored through revitalization of Igbo traditional attire.*

**Key Words:** Globalization, Unification and Clothing

### **Introduction**

Globalization has virtually affected all spheres of life. It has not spared media and communication, technological advancement, culture and environmental changes. What makes a group of people to adopt both individually or collectively towards making a particular choice or agree to take a particular action is the determinant of their cultural values, what they regard as been significance and how they interpretations their world. Tomlinson (2007) states that, "in modern times, choices and actions are tending



towards one. Societies and cultures have imagined the world as a single place, their own culture at the centre of it”. It is likely therefore that globalization is making the world’s culture similar’ this unconscious move may tend towards unification.

Globalization, therefore, refers to the rapidly developing and ever increasing network of interconnections and interdependencies that characterize material, social, economic, and cultural life in the modern world. According to Ritzer and Stepnisky (2014), it is an accelerating set of processes involving flows that encompass ever-greater numbers of the world’s spaces, which lead to increasing integration and interconnectivity among those spaces. Our everyday lives including the clothes we wear have been affected by the wave of the ongoing integrations. There is an increasing perception of trans-cultural orders in our lives. Global culture industries circulate at unprecedented levels. There is an increase in the number of transitional agreements, patterned way of behaving (Ritzer and Stepnisky, 2014). Mostly speaking, conformity to cultural identity is been denied in the recent times. Clothing being one of the major aspects of cultural identity is striving to survive. African societies, (Igbo culture of eastern Nigeria inclusive) have a kind of clothing they are known for; and that has been affected drastically by globalization and civilisation. The role of clothing in speaking a lot about people’s heritage cannot be overemphasized. Research findings have revealed that clothing act as a mark of identity and a way of non-verbal communication. Traditionally, clothing serves as a language. It can give evidence of people’s marital status, religion, occupation, age and gender. Generally speaking, clothing as part of cultural identity is under severe justification as one could not differentiate the Western from Africans, (more especially Igbo people) through their clothing.

### **Meaning of Globalization**

Globalization is the increase speed of actions and connections (of human beings, goods, and services, capital, technologies or cultural practices) all over the globe. It advances and enhances exchanges among different counties and populations around the world. Globalization can mean the dissemination of technology, values, and practices that have a worldwide impact on many people’s lives. Globalization can be a process that is driven by different needs and purposes. It increases the flow and exchange of culture, information, people, money, services, and goods across geographical borders. (Smith, 2021).



It is clear that globalization has affected every aspect of human endeavour. It has brought a total change in all spheres of life. Generally speaking, the main objective of globalization is to create conditions whereby the rest of the world, that is the developing world, is again brought back into bondage of economic slavery. Globalization as it is currently envisioned by imperialism is actually a blueprint for the economic re-colonization of the developing world. It has wide ranging impact on everything else connected with our lives. It impacts our entire culture or the entire value system, on the milieu in which we are living. (Wani, 2011). Certainly the worst hit and the most influenced by globalization is the people's culture. Culture is the people's way of life. Culture includes language, type of clothing, type of food, music, dance, houses, arts and craft, technologies, values, norms, belief system etc. From the foregoing, all these areas of culture have been affected by globalization, both consciously and unconsciously.

### **Origin of Clothing**

The urge to cover man's nudity started in the distance past. The materials used to sow clothes range from leaves to animal skin until man graduated into using cotton and other fabrics to cover his nakedness. Olaoye (2011: 107) affirms that "Dress or clothing is a kind of garment worn by people of all cultures since pre-historical times". Different peoples of the world have their unique dress culture. In most part of the world, the materials for clothing are cotton, silk fabric, flax fabric, rubber and so on. In most cases, it is what is in the people's environment that determines their raw material for clothing. For this reason, societies all over the world have different kinds of clothes they wear because of difference in culture. Utoh-Ezeajugh (2011: 22) asserts that "In different parts of Africa, different dress cultures are associated with the people of different localities and these cultures are the distinguishing hallmark of each ethnic group." However, there are different theories as to why man begins to wear cloth. One of these theories is Modesty or shame theory which was held around 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was based on the account of biblical story of Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God; and noticed that they were naked "Then the eyes of the two were opened, and they know, that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons." (Gen. 3:7) They ate the apple which God forbid them to eat or touch, after that their eyes opened and they have the knowledge of good and bad; and so noticed that they were naked and became ashamed of themselves. In line with this theory, it is clear that most people put on clothing just to cover their body. Ejiofor (1984:136) states that "Our innate feelings of guilt and shame resulting from exposure of particular part of the body date all



the way back to Adam and Eve.” Ejiofor was of the opinion that “Modesty alone does not explain the clothing habits of man.” He based his argument on the fact that covering certain parts of the body is not universal to all mankind. Many instances could be provided for the above reason, but the fact remains that when people’s world view tends to be non-religious, a lot of people will begin to argue and also to doubt the modesty theory of clothing.

Protective and Egocentric theories of clothing emanate as a result of doubts about modesty theory. Theory of protection states that clothing came into being as results of man's need to safeguard him from the environment. Ejiofor (1984:135) classified modesty and protective theory as utilitarian theories. He states that garments are “Essentially contrived as protection, because man is not equipped with a natural protective coat like most animals.” In the environment, weathers and seasons abound, so in line with the theory of protection, clothes are made to suit different seasons and weather conditions. It also serves the need for various occasions. There are winter and summer clothes, clothes for hot and cold weathers, sports, office, industrial clothes among others. Argument also arises, as to whether protection alone could be an only reason for clothing. This was based on the fact that, certain clothes are painful and harmful to the user, for instance, very tight clothes, shoes, belts, trousers, shorts, pants, among others. People still wear them despite the risk and discomfort.

Adornment theory was later adopted by most people as reasons why cloths are worn. Ego or adornment theory states that people wear clothes in other to decorate themselves. Individuals use different ornament to beautify themselves. Evidence from anthropologist and archaeologist has shown that people have started decorating themselves with tattoos, paints and different types of ornaments before pre-history. In line with these theories, Horn (1968:6-12) added a theory of self, and summarises the theory of clothing as follows:

- a. Clothing as an expression of modesty is not common in humans. It is cultural determinant, learned by individual and not essential in nature.
- b. Clothing serves the purpose of satisfying the need to protect man from the physical environment; and totally based on cultural standards.
- c. Clothing for adornment is general in humans, and serves the purpose for search for



beauty.

- d. The role of clothing is to signify man's position in life, and so try to achieve approval, respect, and identification for a person.
- e. The role of clothing is to broaden the impression of self -outside the corporal limits of the body, lending improvement to the exciting superiority that the wearer required.

From the forgoing, it is obvious that clothing serves various purposes such as modesty, safety, and beautification and for self -recognition. Different societies of the world have different types of clothing depending on how they perceived their reason for clothing and what surrounds their reason like the environmental conditions.

Generally speaking, clothing is a feature that has been adopted by all human societies. It is a fibre and textile material worn on the body depending on the gender, age, social and geographical locations. Research has shown that the earliest fabric was made of leather and non -fabrics rather than of cloth and has identified clothing historians to have traced the development of dressing by studying various sources, such as magazines, catalogues, paintings, photographs, hats, and shoes among others.

### **Clothing changes with time**

All societies have their peculiar way of dressing that speaks a lot about their culture. These fashions are good at particular period of time in the history of any society. People have followed a particular style of clothing until it gives way to another style. Recently, most people follow one kind of fashion which automatically phase out after a short period of time. For instance, modern women will not like to wear the kind of clothing worn by their grandparents. People will regard such attire as being out fashioned. In view of this, clothing continues to change as people continue to embrace new fashion in the name of civilisation. A reliable source identified the basic attire for ancient Egyptian workers as a simple loin cloth. Men of upper class wore a wrapped skirt called shenti. One time in the history, it was knee length and later a kalasirs, which extended to the ankles held by one or two straps over the shoulders. Men among the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria according to Basden (1983) cover their bodies around their waist and leave the rest of their bodies bare in the olden days. They use cloth to tie their waist and pass it between their thighs (*īwa ogo*). Igbo women in the olden days tie wrappers on their chest to cover from their breast down the knees and beyond. But today, men could cover their bodies with shirts, put on trousers, they can put on suits or flowing gowns. Women can as well put on blouse to cover the chest and shoulders downwards put on skirt or wrappers. It should be noted that



trousers were not from inception associated with men but was introduced by the ancient Persians to protect the body from cold weather. However, in European cultures, trousers were used to associate men. Today, trousers have become the clothing of all and sundry and tend to suppress people's identity.

Identity is a dynamic process, and there are multiple ways of being indigenous. Some people may say that it is neither speaking an indigenous language nor wearing native clothing is required. Kottak (2009:397) asserts that "Identities are asserted at particular times and places by particular individuals and groups and after various kinds of negotiations, indigenous identity co-exists with and must be managed in the context of, other identify components," These components could be gender, religious beliefs, age, occasion, social status, for instance, findings have indicated that as far back as 500BC a man's status in China was apparent in the type of hat that he wore. Members of upper class wear long robes. Male and female peasants wore jacket and trousers. However, as time goes on, men of lower class began to wear the styles of their superiors. Research findings show that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, traditional clothing has begun to give way to styles that combined elements of Asian and Western dress. Also, the indigenous peoples of Central and South America had an elaborate clothing culture before the European conquest. Then, after the European colonization, European clothing replaced and modified indigenous style.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that as time goes on the type of clothing worn by people also changes. The fact remains that; societies must adopt the change in such a way that the change will not mar their cultural identity. This is evident because, it is clothing that was used to communicate regional identity and marital status of most cultures in the world. It is therefore, disheartening that some societies have neglected the role which clothing can perform in sustaining people's identity. The influence of globalization and civilisation has aided cultural diversity on society's clothing, thereby relegating to the background the power of clothing in fostering cultural identity.

### **Clothing among Igbo People**

There is an argument whether the Igbo in the distance past go about in total nakedness. This conception could not be totally true because the Igbo in the early times had the knowledge of weaving. Igbo (2012:161) affirms that the "Dress sense and habits of the Igbo of the early times, in a collective manner, consisted of a scanty calico, loin cloth and threadbare." He continues, "The people were not actually nude in a general sense of the word, but what became of it was that the heat of the tropics



made heavy clothing unnecessary, and during the rains and the cold harmattan nights, people heated their houses.” The aim of clothing among the Igbo in the early times is to cover the private parts, serve the purpose of farming, which is the type of occupation for the intense weather of the area. Women wore cloths to cover their breast areas, although older women cover their waist down to the ankle leaving their breast bare. Young girls tie short wrappers around their waist, men were known for tying loin cloths around their waist and in between their thighs fastened at their backs. This is referred to as “*īwa ogo*do,” young girls also tie beads around their waist. In those days, men and women also decorate themselves with “*uli*” to make patterns of design on their bodies.

It is obvious that the Igbo have had the knowledge of textile industry since the pre-history. Studies made in different parts of Igbo land testify a weaving technology among the Igbo as far back as 900AD. Isidienu (2014:178) asserts that “Local cotton is used to manufacture textile materials in pre-colonial Igbo society.” Ofoegbu (1975) referring to the work done by Shaw on Igbo-Ukwu (Vols. 1&11: 240-244) exposed about twenty-two textile specimens; and other artefacts which were discovered in the area. According to Okeke (1976), among the earliest form of textile materials used by the Igbo was the ‘*aji*’ cloth, which was obtained by beating the cork of the ‘*aji*’ tree into soft matted pieces and used as cloth. Evidence from museums was emphatic that the Igbo had knowledge of cotton spinning and weaving before the advent of colonialism. Igbo (2012:161) confirms the presence of cloth among the “Igbo-Ukwu finds” as thought by Afigbo (1984-59/60) shows that textile weaving is a very long established craft in Igbo land.

Cloth weaving is women's job, especially in Akwaete. Girls use to start early in life to learn this act. The weaving of cloth has no special place; a corner in a room is enough to house the trade. In the same line of thought, Onwuka (2008:62) confirms that,

Textile production was a typical home craft with a very flexible organisational principle. There was no fixed production time, and the loom could be located and worked in any part of the family compound or home. The five main productions stages-ginning, carding, spinning, dyeing, and weaving were vertically integrated.





Most women use weaving to supplement other occupations and household chores. Edwards (1967:4) states that “when women are not employed with men in village, their usual occupation is spinning and weaving cotton, which they afterwards dye and make into garments.” Some women however engage in weaving after farm work or at the harvest period, when much work is not needed in the farm. Igbo (2012:163) notes that “Textile making was an ancient craft in Igbo land. In Olauda Equiano’s narrative, he described the mid-eighteenth century Igbo women as not being employed with the men in tillage, but engaged in spinning and weaving cotton, which they afterwards dyed and made garments. Spencer (1879:242) found that the inhabitants of the west Niger town, Ubulu Ukwu are very industrious; they weave cloth of every description, some of which are nearly equal to civilised making in texture. In the past, Igbo women use different materials found in the environment such as animal skin, leaf and plant fibres for weaving. Shaw (1970:240-244) affirms that Igboukwu ‘finds’ also include textiles of two different types-one of grass or leaf fibres and other similar to cotton. Basden (1966:327) discovers that,

Fresh green palm leaves furnish a fibre almost as fine as a spun silk...It is the finest texture of fibre used for weaving...one example of fine weaving may be mentioned and this, again comes from western (Igbo) side. Beneath the bark of young branches of the “ufa” tree species of down is found. This is gathered and spun similarly to cotton.

From the anthropological and archaeological reports, the best known areas for textile production in Igbo land are Igboukwu, Nri, Nsukka, Abakiliki, Udi, Akwaete and Aro. Ejiofor (1994:140-141) reports that,

Oral information collected from Obeledu in Anambra state confirms that spinning ‘itu owu’ was a household and mobile industry. On their way to the market, and on friendly and other visits, local women, equipped with simple spindles, ‘mkpoko’ and cotton lint, span long thick threads of cotton by rubbing the spindle on their thighs or lower abdomen into high-speed circular motion, during which they deftly pull the cotton lint into thread. The evidence from Obeledu is





interesting, for it situated about mid-way between the historical town of Nri and Igbo-Ukwu, where (Igbo-Ukwu), professor Thurnstan Shaw's archaeological findings have shown that the Igbo man, as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century made use of cloth.

Evidence has shown that there are textile industries in Igbo land. Akwaete weaving is at the centre point, from where it spread to other parts of Igbo land. The local available material found in the environment serves the need of clothing in pre-colonial Igbo society. It is around 19<sup>th</sup> century that marked a great change in the clothing habits in Igbo land. The colonisation of Igbo land by Europeans gave way the traditional Loin cloth to European style of clothing. They perceived European clothes as being superior to Igbo cloth. However, Igbo people are not resistant to some changes rather they are more receptive; in most cases, they feel that foreign products are better than their own. In most cases, products produced in Igbo land are referred to as 'Igbo made', 'Aba made', "awalawa" and other derogatory names. Igbo (2012:63-64) opines that "The missionaries prescribed the mode of dressing for their pupils, church teachers, catechists, school teacher...To this effect, wearing trousers, shorts and shirts became the dressing mode of the people. The Igbo dressing pattern changed." The Europeans also prescribed the type of cloth to be worn by court clerks, messengers, constables and every other group that work for them. Most women stopped tying wrappers, especially those working in offices and schools for those of them that are teachers. Traditional clothes were vehemently discouraged, as most people in Igbo land do not waste time to adopt this change. The reasons are not far-fetched, and include that some people want to belong to a particular class; also most people feel that the European types of the clothing are free and some on the other hand adopted the change because of their new faith; and coupled with the mind-set of regarding their own as inferior. In line with this Nwafo (2012:540) asserts that "In view of the strong preference of Igbo's for imported varieties, mainly as a result of their proven superiority." Isichei (1977) states that, "What is generally worn today as Igbo traditional attire; for men is made-up of a woolly jumper usually patterned with lion's heads embroidery over the clothing." Underneath the jumper, men put on skirt, trouser or wrapper mostly of george materials. Titled men, especially ọzọ title holders use red cap, eagle feathers, walking stick, beads and anklets, hand fan, elephant tusk for decoration. Women wear blouse, tie two wrappers with different kinds of beads worn on their ears, neck and wrist, with a headgear.



It is the belief of modern scholars that clothing provides a mark of identity and a means of non-verbal communication. It is observed that Igbo people do not wear their traditional cloth in most occasions. This can affect the Igbo identity, since clothing can communicate more than spoken words. In view of this, Okpo (2011:83-84) decries that, “By 22years after the lunch of cultural policy for Nigeria, neither has there been any trend of promotion of indigenous dress culture at the domestic level nor at the international level through the machinery of cultural diplomacy.” Recently, it has been observed that both men and women wear trousers in Igbo land. Some women and young girls can be seen on the streets with trousers or shorts, going half naked to the detriment of our cultural values. Some of the young boys pull their trousers half buttocks with ear ring on one of their ears. The impression which this type of attire is creating is totally against Igbo identity. In Anambra state of Nigeria, it is mandatory for state workers to wear traditional attire every Wednesday. But the questions are, how effective is this law? Is it possible to extend it to every other person that resides in the state? Can effective machinery be put in motion to ensure efficient implementation? The worry is that civilisation; global unification coupled with the influence of Western culture on Igbo cultural attire is quite alarming.

### **Functions of Clothing**

From ancient times, people from different societies have some kinds of clothing they wear. Findings attested that archaeological and anthropological evidence suggest that early people may have decorated their bodies with painting tattoos and other types of ornaments even before they began wearing clothing made of fur or fabric.

In the olden days, most societies have cloths for men, women, gender, marital status etc, but recently, clothing is no longer rigidly restricted. It is obvious that people all over the world are freer to make their choices. As clothing reveals identity, it therefore depends on the type of message the wearer wants to convey as what one wears tell much about one's personality, social and economic standard. According to Tomlinson (2007)

One useful way to think about the consequentiality of culture for globalization then, is to grasp how culturally informed local actions can have globalizing consequences. The ‘moment’ of culture in the shopping decisions of young people on Sunday afternoons to buy this or that brand of jeans or training shoes or mobile phones -is one of self- representation, against a background narrative of



appropriate cultural style. How do I want to be perceived?  
What cultural images do I want to conform to or contrast  
with? What do I value? What do I desire?

Globally, questions about clothing do not necessarily demand the cultural values or what is desirable about a particular culture. It could be said that people all over the world were having the same view about clothing in recent times. In Igbo traditional society, it is an eye sore to see a woman putting on men's clothing. But recently, most women wear any kind of clothing ranging from knickers, baggie to trousers. Culturally, globalisation involves the increasing 'reflexivity' of modern life; the systemic integration of myriad small individual actions into the workings of the social institutions' which appear unanimously to govern our lives, (Giddens, 1990). What we wear exposes our understanding of life and the world around us. Sklair (1998:197), states that "The culture-ideology of consumerism is characterized by a belief that the meaning of life is to be found in the things that we possess. To consume, therefore is to be fully alive, and to remain fully alive we must continuously consume."

Clothing derives meaning from the environment it is worn, and in as much as the wearer speaks more about him or herself from what he wears, his or her cultural background is directly or indirectly represented. In most cultures the bride groom has a special cloth; so also, there are cloths for rituals and cloths for burials. Some cloths serve as leisure cloths and enhance safety during hazardous activities. In Igbo society, men who wrestle have special cloth as well as dancers. In most Western societies, people performing football, soccer, etc, wear matching jerseys and pants for protection. However, in recent times jerseys and pants or any kind of such clothes have become the general clothing for sporting and pleasurable activities; and people from different parts of the world come together during these eventful activities. Nations can only identify their candidates through the colour of what they wore, unless where it involves the Westerners and Africans or some other nations that are dark in complexion, one can now identify their candidates through the colour of the skin. According to Kottak (2009: 391), "The linkages in the modern world system have both enlarged and erased old boundaries and distinctions." Tomlinson (2007) referring to Karl Marx's depiction of the future communist society in the communist manifest to states, states that Marx and Engels presented a bold vision of a future world in which the divisions of nations have disappeared, along with all other 'local' attachments, including those of religious beliefs. Apart from some conservative societies and religious belief, cultures of all the nations were tending to become one. For instance, most Christian churches in some parts of Africa do not allow women to put on



trousers or leave their hair uncovered inside the church. Now, the trend has changed especially in most new generation churches emulating what they saw in some parts of the Western societies. This is what Tomlinson (2007:358) refers to as "a particular culture masquerading as universal one."

Clothing protects the wearer from the weather. It isolates the wearer against cold or hot conditions. Researchers have identified that clothing serves as protection from rough surfaces, rash-causing plants, insect bites, splinters, thorns and prickles by providing a barrier between the skin and the environment.

People also wear cloth for beautification. These have been identified as a universal function. A reliable source remarked that once we realize that all cultures are patchworks; that no culture is ever homogenous and that many cultures have fabricated their history we must look elsewhere for evidence of culture. Although there may be inconsistency in the sameness of clothing among people, the fact remains that higher percentage of the world's clothing, Igbo people inclusive tends towards uniformity.

Generally speaking, clothing serves the functions of defining peoples' roles in the society. These come inform of uniformed group such as, cloths worn by nurses, vocational dresses worn by the clergy, cloths worn by arm forces-army, police. There are occupational cloths such as, those worn by teachers, broadcasters, farmers, and occasion cloths worn during weddings, parties etc. All societies in the world perform these roles; at a glance, one can say that this person is a nurse, a police officer, among others. Differential in social roles depicts the type of cloth to be worn and so integrates and brings all cultures to sameness.

Clothing is an aspect of culture. Scholars have stated that clothing represents one's identity and communicates non-verbally. One can as well say that clothing serves as a language. In some cultures, clothing speaks more of a person's gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, occupation and social role. For instances, different ethnic groups in Nigeria can be identified through their attire. Culture and traditions of people also inspire what one wears. The way of life of a society may influence the kind of clothing for men, women, and the elite. Specifically, some religious traditions and beliefs have influenced the clothing that women wear in public; this made them to cover themselves up whenever they go outside.

Some cultures also have specific clothes for gender. Scholars have shown that 19<sup>th</sup> century made a very sharp distinction between men's and women's clothing in colour, shape, fabric, and decoration. Gradually, these distinctions broke down especially when women



claimed masculine items of clothing. Recently, men and women wear both trousers and suits simultaneously. The only differences are in shapes and in other details, such as, the buttons for both genders are placed differently. Also, jeans are fashioned differently for both genders. Tomlinson (2007) feared that one common speculation about the globalisation process is that it will lead to a global culture. It is no longer a speculation as Tomlinson asserted, because one can see ‘unifying’ effects of connectivity in all spheres of life. Generally speaking, most garments worn were neither male nor female attire. Most traditional clothing is now rapidly giving way to more casual dresses. A source indicates that mass production of clothing meant that the traditional style of Africans, Asians and Americans were largely replaced by everyday European styles. Such clothing as T-shirts, sports clothing, jeans, jackets, sweaters have overshadowed traditional wears. Globalisation has homogenized culture, such that it has brought sameness and reduction of diversity. Goodman (2007) affirms that globalisation makes people more different but in a similar way. It creates a mixed system, where people are homogenised into similar individuals, ethnicities and nations.

In view of the above, modern scholars were worried as to what will be the end of globalisation. Uniformity in clothing has affected most cultures of the world including Igbo culture. Reliable evidence has shown that as national economies grow increasingly internationally, clothing style have become correspondingly global. According to Goodman (2007), the apparent increasing global integration does not simply result in the elimination of cultural diversity, but, rather, provides the context for the production of new cultural forms which are marked by local specificity. Some different cultures have also modified their originally European style in accordance with local values and lifestyles. Nonetheless, the modification of cultural clothing has done more harm than good in preserving cultural identity.

### **Harnessing Cultural Attire for the attainment of Igbo Identity**

There is no doubt that, some people like to wear their traditional clothing, especially in special occasions to portray their nationality and ethnicity. But the fact remains that, the context of the recent globalization across-the-board all over the world cannot be denied. Therefore, those at the helm of affairs will need to create awareness to the populace, such that, at gatherings, traditional marriages, and title takings people of substance who like putting on their traditional attire should not relent, and those who despise traditional wear should emulate others and put on traditional cloths as an exemplar. People who adore them as their heroes will begin to do the same by imitating



them. Again, some sort of propaganda also needs to be launched showing or explaining the significance of our different traditional clothing and outfits. For instance *afe isi agu* and red cap could be explained as the effigy of a fulfilled, rich Igbo man; while *omuma na ntukwasa* with the headgear shows a married woman with respect. The advantages of the different Igbo traditional clothing can also be explained to people. Its simplicity, protection, beauty and portraying one in high esteem will also be clarified.

Globalization and civilization have changed and affected most of the Igbo ways of life in all spheres of life, especially on Igbo traditional attire. Most of the Igbo who prefer western clothes rather than patronise the rich Igbo traditional attire should be discouraged and made to understand that, cultural attire represents the people's values and years of struggle.

Furthermore, Igbo people must take pleasure in promoting their traditional attire by wearing them always to restore the Igbo dignity and identity. Putting on the traditional attires will bring back the uniqueness and distinct nature of the Igbo, create avenue for local and international image building.

In some parts of Igbo land, indecent dressing has become rampant especially among the youths. The dressing behavioural pattern of some of the youths is alarming. Some girls dress to expose their breast, and parts of their private parts, while some of the boys sag their trousers, put on ear rings among others. This is totally against the cultural dressing code of the Igbo and cannot in any way depict Igbo dignity and identity. The onus lies on the parents and teachers to facilitate enabling environment for the youth, right from childhood to acquire a positive attitude as they grow up. For instance, a situation where a child goes half naked from home or comes to school half naked with the parents and the teachers not to reprimand the child or student that is going astray is abnormal and cannot go well for the enhancement of cultural dressing pattern for the upgrading of Igbo identity.



## Conclusion

Clothing as an identity should not be over looked despite the ongoing unification and global culture. African attire especially that of the Igbo people of eastern Nigeria are distinct and a sign of modesty, therefore should not be relegated. Parents should cloth their children traditionally and encourage the grown-up ones to do the same. Onwuejeogwu (2007:278) suggests that Igbo people should look for “those parts of their face” lost during colonial days. Those parts may still be found in African traditions and cultures. Having found them, they will also discover new inspiration, new creativity, new confidence to face the problems of industrialization and modernization.” It is therefore, everybody's responsibility to ensure that Igbo identity found in clothing is not lost, since one way of tarnishing peoples identity is the neglect of the traditional attire which speaks louder than voice. Research finding has revealed that globalisation is changing our lifestyle and one way of accepting it is in the name of civilization.

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