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Assessing The Impact of Globalization on Indigenous Culture of Gedeo People: In the Case of Gedeo Zone

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ABSTRACT
The aim of this research is to assess the impact of globalization on the indigenous culture of Gedeo people in Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia. The study adopted a qualitative methodology, using in-depth individual interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and observation to develop a comprehensive understanding of the erosion of indigenous cultural elements. Key informants were purposively selected from three kebeles (Chichu, Michile, and Andida), including all age groups and both sexes, excluding children. The main objective of this article is to explain the dimensions of the negative impact of globalization on indigenous Gedeo cultures, particularly concerning language, food style, dressing style, marriage, religion, and history. In the process of globalization, there is an interaction of cultures involving borrowing and transmission among societies. This phenomenon is not inherently unusual; however, the domination of one culture over another raises significant concerns. This pattern characterizes contemporary globalization, which has generated considerable controversy regarding the emergence of a global culture. Western norms are gradually being transported across the globe as acceptable ways of behavior, and Gedeo Zone represents one Ethiopian area affected in this regard. Some valued indigenous Gedeo cultural elements have been diluted, while others have been completely eroded. Consequently, Gedeo people face the risk of cultural atrophy as a consequence of current globalization processes. If pressing measures are not implemented, indigenous Gedeo cultures may face extinction in the future.

KEYWORDS
Globalization; indigenous cultures; negative impact.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

For several decades, the concept of globalization has dominated public discourse, drawing attention and perspectives from diverse scholars. Ouattara, A. D. (1997) and King (2001) conceptualize globalization as a process wherein business decisions, productions, and markets exhibit far-reaching international characteristics that transcend national boundaries. Similarly, Zollinger (2007) describes globalization as a process of interactions and integrations among people, companies, and governments of different nations, facilitated by business activities and accelerated by the revolution in information communication technology (ICT). Contemporary academic literature has drawn attention to the various dimensions of globalization, including economic globalization, political globalization, and cultural globalization (Agybay et al., 2026; Inyang, 2017; Nganga et al., 2025).

Globalization represents a vast concept that this research will not attempt to comprehensively address in terms of its overall positive and negative impacts on social, political, and economic sectors. The underlying assumption of this research is that globalization constitutes a process with multiple impacts, representing a progressive intensification of interaction and integration among world societies with the potential to exert a civilizing influence upon humanity and social life (Stiglitz, 2004).

Culture encompasses the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people. It refers to the cumulative deposits of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, religions, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people over generations through individual and collective striving (Kendall, 2010). Culture fundamentally shapes how people think, act, and interact in their everyday lives, providing direction for communication and social engagement.

Globalization contributes significantly to the expansion of North American and Western European cultural heritage. Nicolaides (2012) warns that "African culture is being diluted, to the extent that it is atrophying and encourages a Western ideal of individualism, promoting a homogeneous set of values and beliefs. These Western ideas are easily assimilated into other cultures and paradigms with far-reaching effects" (p. 118). Globalization facilitates continued colonization that impacts intellectual property and cultural rights (Gibson, 2007).

Global access to information and social relations links distant localities in ways that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away, and vice versa (Onyeonoru, 2003). This interconnectedness has opened pathways for acquiring cultural property, including signs, songs, dance, rituals, and other cultural artifacts. These cultural icons represent living heritage and constitute integral components of identity. Using images, reselling them, and misrepresenting these rights constitutes property theft and a serious offense against communities.

Statement of the Problem

The ever-increasing interconnectedness and sharing of world cultures resulting from globalization processes have particularly impacted developing nations. According to Nsibami (2011), globalization represents a process of advancement and increased interaction among world countries and people, facilitated by progressive technological changes in communication, as well as the interaction of cultural values, systems, and practices.

Despite its positive aspects, globalization also produces negative consequences. Afisi (2008) argues that by negatively affecting African integral development, globalization fails to benefit the majority of Africans today. Similarly, Kaul (2012) characterizes globalization as "cultural homicide" that destroys indigenous cultures by homogenizing local cultures into Americanized or Westernized forms. Thacker (2008) examined the myth of globalization. However, these studies were not conducted in Ethiopian contexts and cannot adequately capture Ethiopian reality in general, nor the specific realities of the current study in particular.

Several studies conducted in Ethiopia have revealed various impacts of globalization. Zewde (2019) examined the negative impact of globalization on indigenous cultures, including language, food style, dressing style, marriage, religion, and history of Selale Oromo through qualitative research. Nathaniel (2019) conducted research on the influence of globalization on attitudes and behaviors of Bole residents in Addis Ababa city. Gebregergis and Meaza (2017) investigated the economic impact of globalization on Ethiopia, concluding that the country could benefit more if its economy were integrated and opened to global competition. Additionally, Addisu (2012) produced a critical synthesis of modes of cultural imperialism as reflected in the narratives of Daniel Kibret's works.

Despite these contributions, significant gaps remain. Although Zewde (2019) studied the impact of globalization on indigenous cultures across multiple dimensions, these issues are too broad to be adequately examined in a single study. Moreover, since the culture of Selale Oromo differs from the current study context both geographically and substantively, that research cannot address the issues examined in the present study. The current research conducts more in-depth investigations of indigenous cultural values and practices. Similarly, while Nathaniel's (2019) study appears superficially similar, it focused on attitudes and behaviors of Bole residents in Addis Ababa, which differs from the current study's focus on actions beyond mere attitudes and behaviors. Addisu's (2012) critical synthesis of Daniel Kibret's works did not address the subject from the context of Gedeo Zone and consequently cannot capture current realities regarding globalization's impact on local culture in this area.

The current study comprehensively addresses the cultural impacts of globalization in Gedeo Zone. The researcher determined that conducting research on the effects of globalization on indigenous cultures is necessary because, based on observational evidence, globalization significantly impacts cultural values and practices of Gedeo people. This impact manifests through the influx of manufactured goods and services into developing countries and the eagerness of local populations to adopt new goods and services. Equally important,

globalization is not a value-free, self-determining process; rather, it represents socio-political, economic, cultural ideology and military domination by Western societies, facilitated by government policies, transnational corporations, international agencies, and even civil society organizations through networks enabled by information and communication technologies. This globalization process erodes the existing socio-economic and cultural life of indigenous African peoples Kwame (2007).

The current manifestation of globalization leads to cultural imperialism or dominance of one nation's culture over others, closely related to global communication. It involves imposing the culture of a "superior" country over less powerful societies. Thus, cultural imperialism represents the practice of promoting and imposing a culture, typically that of a politically powerful nation, over a less powerful society, alienating people from their indigenous culture. This study examines and investigates the negative effects of cultural globalization on indigenous cultural values and practices of Gedeo Zone residents.

By undertaking this investigation, the study attempts to unravel unprecedented changes in indigenous values and practices among Gedeo Zone communities. Cognizant of gaps in the existing literature, this research addresses the following questions:

1. What are the indigenous cultural values and practices of the study community?
2. How is globalization impacting indigenous cultural elements such as language, food style, dressing style, marriage, religion, and history in Gedeo Zone?
3. How is the local population in Gedeo Zone responding to the negative impacts of globalization?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in cultural imperialism theory as postulated by Schiller (1976). The theory focuses on the cultural aspects of imperialism—specifically, the creation and maintenance of unequal relationships between civilizations when they come into contact, thereby favoring the more powerful civilization. Cultural imperialism theory emerged in the 1960s and addresses the conquest and control of a nation's culture by a more powerful nation. The theory suggests that ideas, worldviews, and cultures of more powerful nations (in this case, Western nations) dominate media around the world through globalization, which significantly influences third-world nations. This dynamic directly threatens the continued survival of cultures in most developing countries, as Westernized cultures, views, and ideas are imposed upon them, thereby destroying native or indigenous cultures.

Alexandra (2000) describes cultural imperialism as the practice of promoting a more powerful culture over a less known or desirable culture. Typically, the former belongs to large, economically or militarily powerful nations, while the latter belongs to smaller, less powerful ones. Cultural imperialism can manifest as active, formal policy or as a general attitude. The

modus operandi of cultural imperialism resembles colonization in that cultural products from developed countries invade developing countries and overwhelm indigenous cultures.

Bello and Adesemoye (2012) submit that based on cultural imperialism theory assumptions, humans do not possess free will to choose how they feel, act, think, and live. Therefore, when cultures interact through various media—internet, television, music, technology, or religion—and Western culture imposes itself on third-world countries, such influences challenge fundamental values of indigenous cultures and people's ways of life, creating infringements on cultural practice. Rauschenberger (2003) and Hamm (2005) trace the emergence of cultural imperialism in historical perspective, noting that speculation about cultural imperialism emerged in the post-World War II period under various names, including neo-colonialism, soft imperialism, and economic imperialism. Schiller (1976) comprehensively describes cultural imperialism as the sum of processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its culture or value systems are attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into reshaping or changing orientation to conform to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominant center of the system. This theoretical framework provides the analytical lens through which this study examines the impact of globalization on Gedeo indigenous culture.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concepts of Globalization

Globalization is historically complex, with definitions varying according to the particular driving force they identify. The meaning of the term itself remains a topic of global discussion, potentially referring to "real" processes, ideas that justify them, or ways of thinking about them (Ibrahim, 2013). The concept of globalization has acquired different meanings over the past four decades, growing to become one of the most common yet misunderstood terms used frequently (Giddens, 1996). Supporting this observation, Scholte (2002) opines that every study of globalization should include a careful and critical definition of the word itself, believing that a "muddled or misguided core concept compromises overall comprehension of a problem, while a sharp and revealing definition promotes insightful, interesting, and empowering knowledge, and an understanding that helps us to shape our destiny in a positive direction." Aimiuwu (2004) suggests that definitions of globalization could be institutional/organizational, process-oriented, system or value-driven, ideological, or combinations of these elements. Today, anyone asked about globalization in social and political science at any university can provide different working definitions based on their own perceptions and biases (Noble, 2003).

After reviewing considerable definitions, this paper adopts two definitions most suitable for its purpose. The first, proffered by the Bank of Industry, sees globalization as the closer integration of countries and peoples of the world, the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flow of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and people across national borders—a process of creating a global market of investments, trade, and information through the integration of

economic decision-making on consumption, investment, and savings across the world (Stiglitz, 2004). The second, by Nsibami (2011), defines globalization as a process of advancement and increase in interaction among world countries and people, facilitated by progressive technological changes in communication, as well as interaction of cultural values, systems, and practices.

Concept of Culture

People use their culture to perform different functions, represent themselves, and create their identity (Millar & Vione, 2024; Ndiangui, 2025; Zhunussova & Ryspayeva, 2025). It is difficult to understand and define people without reference to their culture. Culture constitutes a fundamental element in every feature of life. Various scholars define culture in multiple ways (Cortés Vázquez & Villán Rodríguez, 2026; Ndiangui, 2025; Yussupova & Tarman, 2025). According to Kendall (2010), culture encompasses the knowledge, language, values, customs, and material objects passed from person to person and from one generation to the next in a human group or society. This definition denotes the comprehensive aspects of life.

Culture fundamentally determines how people think and act in everyday life. Through culture, people receive direction regarding how they communicate with others. Anderson and Taylor (2011) define culture as a complex system of meaning and behavior that defines the way of life for a given group or society, including beliefs, values, knowledge, art, morals, laws, customs, habits, language, and dress, among other things.

In general terms, culture includes ways of thinking as well as patterns of behavior. Through culture, individuals perceive things as beautiful or awful, truthful or mistaken, respectable or bad. Within this general definition, several key concepts emerge relevant to this study, including indigenous cultures, popular culture, and global culture.

Indigenous culture, as defined by the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources (IGC, 2014), refers to the culture of indigenous people, local community, or society that is shared—or at least accepted without opposition—by the majority of people and maintained as traditional cultural expression.

Identity, according to Browne (2008), denotes how individuals or groups see and define themselves and how other individuals or groups see and define them. Identity forms through the socialization process and the influence of social institutions like the family, education system, and mass media. (Aronson et al., 2010, p. 118) define identity as self-concept—the knowledge of who we are together with self-awareness to develop a cognitive representation of the self. The "self" or "who we are" is controlled by both internal and external factors that define identity.

If people lose their identity, Browne (2008) explains, they would lack the means of identifying with or relating to their peer group, neighbors, communities in which they live, or people they encounter in everyday lives (p. 39). Identity makes people acceptable within the society where they live. Individuals are not free to adopt any identity they choose due to factors

such as social class, sex, and ethnic group. Cultural practices and cultural representations are crucial instruments for creating individual identity.

OpenStax (2021) affirms that values strengthen the stability of social order by regulating individual thinking and behavior, providing guidelines that direct human behavior in different ways. Values are important for bringing stability and uniformity in group interaction. Values can be shared within a culture or universally, and because of this nature, they play an important role in fostering social unity. Shared values are essential for maintaining societal wellbeing, and social values contain elements concerned with others' wellbeing.

Norms represent expected behaviors—basically, model practices. Norms make life smooth and predictable. Different literatures indicate that imagining a society without norms is impossible. To live acceptably within a society, one must respect and follow its norms. No one exists alone; everyone depends on their society. Unless people are faithful to their societal norms, they may be considered deviant. Deviant behavior threatens social stability. When people fail to behave as expected, society cannot function efficiently, and individuals feel insecure and confused. To maintain balance, people should understand the behavior expected from others while paying attention to what others expect of them and what kind of society future generations should inherit.

Though norms vary with culture, age, sex, and other factors, humans share some norms in common; these shared norms are considered universal. According to Kendall (2010), standards such as taboos against incest, respectful communication with higher-status individuals and strangers, and more familiar address with lower-status people and friends exemplify normative expectations.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Experience

Globalization, as an overwhelming world trend promoted by multinational corporations, manufactures products in many countries and sells to consumers around the world. Money, technology, and raw materials move ever more swiftly across national borders. Along with products and finances, ideas and cultures circulate more freely. As a result, laws, economies, and social movements are forming at the international level.

However, the contemporary phenomenon of globalization represents precisely the globalization of liberal capitalism and materialistic modernity (Giddens, 1990). Because the economic system dominates and controls other social systems, a materialistic and consumerist culture spreads through mass media to populations. Natural ways of life change into mechanistic and individualistic patterns. The gap between rich and poor within each country and between rich and poor countries continues increasing (Waters, 2001). The world may be a global village, but it is not a global community.

Today, cultural globalization appears most urgently centered around the impact of growing volumes of cultural product exchanges, the rising power and visibility of cultural

industries, the apparent ubiquity of Western popular culture, and the consequences for identity arising from these forces (Held et al., 1999). The combined effect of contemporary cultural globalization processes is often understood through the notion of deterritorialization—the loss of the natural relation of culture to geographical and social territories (Canclini in Tomlinson, 1999). Additionally, globalization significantly influences the socio-economic, political, educational, and cultural life of many countries, especially developing nations (Öniş, 1997). These marginalized policies have set in motion processes requiring increased demands on natural resources made by desperate people to meet livelihood needs (Mearns, 1991).

According to Bello (2010), the cultural fabrics of most developing countries have suffered seemingly irreparable damage in the face of globalization. Mass media and so-called new media—radio, television, computers, newspapers, magazines, books, billboards, cinema, recordings, films, internet—have, through both content and production, eroded the cultural values of developing countries, including ceremonies, festivals, celebrations, rituals, and other living expressions.

African Experience

(Toure et al., 2008) demonstrated how Western influence disseminates culture in the name of expanding ICT, with ICT perceived for its pedagogical possibilities. Their study examined the impact of one-way flow of internet products on young African generations. They stated, "One way flow of information shapes African minds in Western molds, reinforces desires for dominance, and promotes an attitude of victimization" (Toure et al., 2008). According to their findings, within fractions of a minute on the internet, plentiful information about Western culture is available, but it would be difficult to think that Westerners could learn equally about African cultures. They concluded by emphasizing the need to appropriate internet resources—"appropriation of an innovation involves reinventing them in the new context rather than doing parrot-like mimicking"—and emphasized preserving local values through selectivity.

Major critics of globalization from Africa have argued that globalization is destructive to African culture and development (Oni, 2005). Nicolaides (2012) made similar observations about South African youths, discussing how the younger generation of teenagers in South Africa have mostly abandoned their African culture and language, and often religion, trying to be "hip" by imitating mainly American rap artist role models who largely display acute lack of values and act immorally on television shows, promoting promiscuous behavior especially in music lyrics. Bello and Adesemoye (2012) observed that "teenagers and youths generally are vital segments of society who could be instrumental in promoting African cultures.

Ethiopian Experience

Ethiopia is an ancient country with remarkably rich linguistic and cultural diversity. This diversity includes tangible and intangible heritage with both traditional and modern cultural expressions, languages, and centuries-old know-how in handicraft production (Mulat, 2015). Ethiopia's intangible heritage is exceptionally rich and varied. Such realities of globalization have raised questions about the appropriateness of certain traditional cultures, dressing styles, sexual

orientations, marriage practices, plays, feeding patterns, funerals, and indigenous justice systems (MDG-F, 2013). Ethiopia, as a cultural industry, represents perhaps one of the oldest independent states for black Africans, providing inspiration for dreams of black independence worldwide (Addisu, 2012; McHolm & Devall-Martin, 2026). Studies conducted at Addis Ababa University include limited research on cultural imperialism and related issues. Mahelet (2006) conducted an MA thesis on colonization, cultural conflict, and identity crisis, selecting two African novels for study: Joys of Motherhood by Buchi Emecheta and Nervous Conditions by Tsitsi Dangarembga. Mahelet emphasized cultural conflict and identity crisis resulting from colonialism, demonstrating how indigenous people's culture and way of life became distorted upon arrival of white missionaries with their religion. Regarding education, Mahelet exhibited the negative consequences of "colonial education" upon personal identity and culture.

In the Department of Ethiopian Literature and Folklore, Yasin (2006) examined identity questions among educated youth through analysis of selected Amharic poems from 1933 to 1966 (Ethiopian calendar). The poems were selected for their reflections on the economic, social, political, cultural, and philosophical state of that generation. His study revealed identity crises, self-alienation, and ignorance of one's own cultures and values in the poems. Yasin identified causes for losing identity and culture, claiming that youths depicted in the poems experienced great identity loss because of the European education they received. After modern education, Yasin argues, they became deliberately ignorant of their forefathers' way of life, which previously bonded them with the society where they flourished. Yasin explains: "Losing one's own identity is denying the abstract connections of generations transmitted by the forefathers who are the base for today's tangible identity. It is even hesitation of the existence of the legacies inherited from forefathers. It is ignoring where one is from, where one is, and where one is going" (p. 26). According to Yasin, this occurred because "the educated youth's future life is influenced negatively by exposure to Western imported education policy copied directly without any consideration to the basic need and context of their culture."

By implication, almost all literature reviewed in this chapter could fruitfully apply to Ethiopian context. Core points raised about threats to African indigenous cultures are witnessed in Ethiopia too. Though Ethiopian history differs completely from other African countries, currently Ethiopia revolves within the same orbit of Western domination. Today, the mechanism Western countries use follows almost identical policy to impose culture on third-world countries. Thus, reviewed works appropriately apply to Ethiopian context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative research design was adopted to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of the Gedeo people. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), qualitative methodology is a research approach that enables generation of data not easily produced by statistical procedures or other quantification means. Moreover, qualitative research is preferred for collecting data

about human life realities, experiences, behavior, emotion and feeling, organizational function, social movement, cultural phenomena, and their interaction with nature. The qualitative approach was employed to identify indigenous cultural values and practices and assess globalization's impact on them.

The researcher employed a cross-sectional study design allowing data collection at a single point in time, as the study could not be conducted over extended periods requiring longitudinal design.

Sources and Types of Data

Primary data were drawn from 40 purposively selected participants from three kebeles: Chichu, Michile, and Andida in the Gedeo Zone. The sample comprised four key informant interviewees from the Dilla Zuria Woreda Culture and Tourism Office and kebele leadership; 12 in-depth interview respondents (four per kebele); and 24 focus group discussants (eight per kebele). Participants included men and women, elders, and adults knowledgeable about indigenous traditions. Additionally, two cultural houses were observed. Secondary data included published and unpublished materials such as books, journal articles, government reports, and policy documents.

Methods of Data Collection

To obtain required data for successful completion of this study, a combination of different data collection methods was employed to complement the weaknesses of individual methods (Yeraswork, 2010).

Data were collected through in-depth individual interviews, key informant interviews, four focus group discussions, and non-participant observation. Interview guides were developed in English and translated into Gedu'ffa and Amharic, with the assistance of local language experts. Observational checklists were used to document material culture and daily practices in cultural houses.

In-depth Interview: In-depth or extended interviews provide richer material than typically available from surveys (Yeraswork, 2010). The researcher used open-ended, in-depth individual interviews to identify cherished indigenous values and non-indigenous values and practices in the study area.

Key Informant Interview: Key informant interviewing formed an integral part of field research where knowledgeable informants who understand and willingly provide needed information are interviewed (Yeraswork, 2010). For this study, key informant interviews explored indigenous cultural values and practices.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD): Focus group discussion involved bringing together groups of people to discuss specific issues (Yeraswork, 2010)—in this case, the interplay of local culture and globalization. To complement and triangulate data obtained from interviews, this study employed four FGDs conducted with purposively recruited youths and elderly people.

Observation: Observation served as another data collection instrument. Two cultural houses in Dilla Zuria Woreda were observed using observation checklists.

Population, Sampling Techniques, and Sample Size

The study area consists of 17 kebeles. The researcher selected three kebeles through non-probability sampling techniques. Participants from Dilla Zuria Woreda Culture and Tourism Office, including elders, youths, and adults with knowledge about indigenous cultures and globalization processes, were purposively selected from the target population.

Regarding sampling, non-probability sampling was employed. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) state that with non-probability sampling, there is no way to specify the probability of each unit's inclusion, and no assurance that every unit has some chance of being included. This implies that sample size is restricted. One type of non-probability sampling, purposive sampling, was applied. Howitt and Cramer (2014) define purposive sampling as "recruiting specified types of people because they have characteristics of interest to the theoretical concerns of the researcher." Based on this definition, the researcher selected participants purposively, believing this sufficient for theoretical saturation, as qualitative research by nature aims not for generalization but for quality information. Sample size included: 4 key informant interviewees from Dilla Zuria Woreda Culture and Tourism Office and kebele leadership; 12 individuals for in-depth interviews (4 from each selected kebele); and 24 individuals for focus group discussions (8 participants from each kebele). Totally, 40 individuals participated, and 2 cultural houses were observed. Purposive sampling was employed because this technique gives the researcher freedom to choose knowledgeable subjects about the research issue and allows obtaining a representative sample (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996).

Validity and Reliability

Trustworthiness was ensured through several strategies. Triangulation of methods (interviews, FGDs, observation) and sources (various categories of participants, secondary documents) enhanced the credibility of findings. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to verify accuracy. Prolonged engagement in the community helped build rapport and deepen understanding. A reflexive journal was maintained to document researcher biases and methodological decisions. These steps align with accepted qualitative quality criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis Techniques

All interviews and discussions were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. The researcher employed thematic analysis strategy to analyze collected data from key informant interviews, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. To make sense of collected data and highlight important messages and findings, content analysis was used. After transcription and translation into English following thematic analysis procedures, collected data was categorized according to objectives, and analysis and discussion commenced.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is as crucial as other aspects in the research process, significantly affecting study success. The researcher considered ethical values of the host community where research

was conducted. The researcher appropriately clarified study objectives, received oral consent, and conducted analysis using pseudonyms to protect participant identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

If culture develops with homogeneous character, it may be assumed to represent a form of cultural imperialism. For example, change in language usage typically indicates cultural integration when the principal community language differs from native language. One common criticism of contemporary globalization's impact is that it produces mainly one culture, destroys diversity, and assimilates everyone into the same global culture.

In Ethiopia, domestic cultures are currently joined by numerous additional cultural forms from abroad, presenting people with confusing lifestyle options. According to Getalem (2015), different Western-based satellite television programs delivering mostly Western cultural and entertainment products negatively affect Ethiopian indigenous cultures. Currently, individuals and groups attempt to merge their cultures with new global practices based on mass media exposure worldwide. Consequently, Ethiopian cultures and values are changing rapidly, becoming increasingly dependent on Western cultures. Not all Western cultures are inherently negative, but the problem arises when Ethiopians accept all Western cultures without identifying negative impacts on their lives.

Globalization hides or at least undermines all previous ways of addressing needs and dealing with human life changes. According to Jeremy (2004), all other ways of life become diminished and marginalized at a stroke due to globalization, which he considers a declaration of war upon all other cultures.

The findings are presented thematically, showing how globalization has impacted Gedeo indigenous culture. Each theme is illustrated with interview excerpts and discussed in relation to previous studies.

The following dimensions represent negative impacts of globalization on indigenous Ethiopian cultures, particularly in Gedeo Zone, as identified in this research.

Language

Language serves as the carrier of culture; every language crystallizes its respective culture. Language enables cultural exchange and diffusion as people communicate. However, according to key informants explaining English's role, English currently spreads and is used worldwide, inevitably becoming an important tool for Western cultural output and a means for Western countries to seek cultural hegemony. Language users gain cultural identity and social belonging through language. A nation's language is deeply rooted in national culture and accompanied by national traditions. Language cannot survive, develop, or improve without culture; language constitutes culture's core. Conversely, strong cultures maintain dominant positions, able to select and deploy other cultures according to their needs to strengthen themselves.

When asked about English, Amharic, and Oromiffa impacts on local languages (Gedu'ffa), interviewees responded that due to Western education and past colonialism, some cultural

values have been destroyed. Local languages like Gee'ez in Ethiopia became outdated due to displacement by English, currently the most efficient education medium, especially at secondary and tertiary levels. During colonialism, human development became valuable only when acquired in colonial powers' languages; ability became valuable to national development efforts only if acquired in colonial masters' languages like English. Thus, colonialism influenced the world, radically changing culture, education, science, and communication. British colonialism introduced English in ruled countries, and it has become a global language rooted in past British imperialism and modern American imperialism. Regarding English language influence on Gedeo languages, one key informant stated that in Africa, English has become highly influential, though some African countries were ruled by France, Italy, or Spain. In the modern world, African countries increasingly follow English, particularly South Africa, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe adopting English as their own language. Among educated populations, English functions as lingua franca and serves as primary government, business, and commerce language. Educationally, it is compulsory in all schools and preferred instruction medium in most schools and tertiary institutions. In terms of societal influence, English has spread far beyond British-origin domains. Among the African majority, English has typically been seen as liberation and black unity language. The mixing of English with indigenous languages strongly indicates English impact.

Other interviewees explained that English language influence over other languages increases over time. Nowadays, educational qualification in Ethiopian languages, especially Gedeo language (Gedu'ffa), carries less value than qualification in colonial languages (English) because of Western influence supported by science-based civilizations. English introduction gradually eroded Ethiopian languages' place in education. Sometimes, finding individuals preferring mother tongue use becomes difficult, especially in urban areas, compared to English. Instead of using mother tongue, people highly prefer using non-native English because English is considered valuable and more necessary than native Ethiopian languages. This explains why some Ethiopian languages are at risk of dying. Local people (Dilla Zuria Woreda Gedeo people) not only prefer English but also prefer Amharic or Oromiffa over Gedu'ffa because these two languages dominate nationally, especially in urban areas. Other key informants added that established knowledge shows lost language equals lost culture, and lost culture represents invaluable knowledge loss. English dominance influence on non-English speaking countries like Ethiopia may contradict influence on English-speaking countries; negative impacts may exceed positive ones. English benefits include enabling free communication between people from different countries. However, language serves not merely as communication tool but also as culture carrier and identity marker. Facing English dominance resistance, many non-English speaking countries feel helpless and worried about culture invasion from English dominance. Although English dominance impacts are invisible and intangible, they exist and cannot be changed quickly. Other interviewees stated that current English usage patterns exceeding local languages demonstrate cultural imperialism as continuation of colonial policy, though means are relatively civilized and updated. Especially for minority languages, English dominance can be

devastating, potentially meaning death of language, culture, and identity. Language death has existed since ancient times, but currently its scale is larger and speed quicker in Ethiopian urban areas, especially Gedeo Zone.

In Ethiopia, English has been taught as a subject for students starting in primary school since 1994, when a new education policy was implemented (Jeremy, 2004). Most Ethiopian universities use English as instruction language because, as one informant explained, "90 percent of academic resources we get in Ethiopia come from the West and this is almost done in English language" (Bogale, 2009).

The Gedeo language (Gedu'ffa) is under severe pressure from English, Amharic, and Oromiffa. English, the medium of instruction from grade seven onwards, is perceived as the language of opportunity, while indigenous languages are devalued. A key informant explained:

"*Our children now grow up speaking only Amharic and English. Even at home, if you speak Gedu'ffa, they answer you in Amharic. If this continues, our language will disappear within two generations.*" (Elder, Andida)

Another participant added:

"*In school, they are punished if they use the mother tongue. The teachers tell them, 'You must learn English to succeed.' So the children are ashamed of their own language.*" (In-depth interview, Michile)

These accounts support Bogale's (2009) observation that Ethiopian students and parents recognize English as the key to educational and social mobility, contributing to the marginalization of local languages. This echoes Zewde's (2019) findings among the Selale Oromo, where English and Amharic were rapidly displacing Afaan Oromo. The dynamic reflects cultural imperialism as a continuation of colonial linguistic hierarchies, whereby indigenous languages become associated with backwardness and are gradually abandoned (Schiller, 1976). The death of a language entails the loss of unique cultural knowledge and identity (Akande, 2002).

Ethiopia, one of the oldest independent nations with well-developed Amharic language, has used English as high school and post-secondary instruction language since modern education began after 1920. What makes Ethiopian English use unique, as one key informant noted, is that in Gedeo Zone, English is taught as second language from grades 1 to 6; from grade seven upward, instruction language changes to English and continues through colleges and universities, while Ethiopia's working languages remain Amharic and Oromiffa. This causes low academic performance among students.

The new Ethiopian government structure emphasizes self-determination based on linguistic and cultural identity, creating eleven regional states and two special administrative towns. Among eleven regional states, Amhara, South Ethiopia, Central Ethiopia, and South West Ethiopia regions use Amharic as working language, which also serves as federal government working language in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa special administrative towns. This federal arrangement and freedom of local language use necessitated adopting English and Amharic as

official working languages by federal government. However, as one key informant noted, English has become increasingly influential and potentially serves as "killer language" of other native Ethiopian languages.

To determine whether English is a killer language, language death must be examined generally. Whenever dominant nation language is introduced into less powerful society, indigenous populations may regard new language as more prestigious than mother tongue (i.e., fluent speakers have more authority access) and gradually become multilingual. Indigenous languages like Gedu'ffa may eventually be abandoned or incorporated into foreign English. Minority languages then become appropriate for fewer contexts until entirely supplanted by incoming languages, resulting in language shift or death.

Food Style

Regarding globalization's negative impact on food style, key informants stated that Ethiopian societies' eating styles, especially Gedeo people, are changing due to globalization. Traditionally, most Ethiopians ate organic rather than inorganic foods—expensive, genetically modified, imported products. Eating more cultural diets rather than expensive, genetically modified imported foods is healthier. Increased Ethiopian cultural food consumption could catalyze and increase international trade in such commodities, economically empowering Ethiopian people.

Traditional Gedeo cuisine, particularly kocho (processed enset), is being replaced by Western-style fast foods and imported products. A focus group discussant lamented:

"*During our childhood, every meal was from our land—kocho, vegetables, milk. Now, young people want pizza, burgers, and French fries. Even in the village, you see children drinking Coca-Cola instead of water*." (FGD, Chichu)

Another informant noted:

"*They think eating our own food is primitive. When relatives come from the city, they bring pizza and don't touch the traditional dishes. It is like they are ashamed of our food*." (Key informant, Dilla Zuria)

This shift aligns with the commercialization of food culture described by Asogwa et al. (2011), where global brands and fast food symbolize modernity and status, leading to the decline of traditional eating habits. The health and economic consequences are significant: imported, processed foods are often less nutritious and undermine local agricultural livelihoods. The findings resonate with the global trend of dietary homogenization driven by multinational corporations (Ritzer, 2008).

Religion and History

Globalization negatively impacts religion and history. Regarding religion, key informants stated that in Ethiopia, especially Gedeo Zone, many people currently become disappointed and regress from original beliefs due to globalization's negative impact. Gedeo people's religion and culture previously offered alternatives addressing rising corruption, crime, and violence. The erosion of indigenous belief systems and historical memory was another prominent theme. The

Gedeo Gada system, a traditional institution of governance, conflict resolution, and spirituality, is losing its influence. An elder remarked:

"*The Gada system kept our people united; it solved disputes without courts and taught us to respect one another. Now, young people laugh at it. They say it is witchcraft or old people's superstition*." (Key informant, Michile)

A youth participant reflected on the impact of external religious influences:

"*We are taught that our forefathers' ways were pagan. So we follow the new religions—Orthodox, Protestant. But now there is so much corruption and crime. Maybe our old ways had something valuable*." (In-depth interview, Andida)

The suppression of indigenous spirituality under the guise of modernization and globalized Christianity mirrors the broader African experience, where traditional institutions have been delegitimized (Ezema, 2010). As Yasin (2006) observed in Ethiopian poetry, educated youth often experience identity crises, becoming alienated from ancestral legacies. This historical amnesia, whereby the past is dismissed as irrelevant, is a direct consequence of cultural imperialism (Schiller, 1976). The decline of the Gada system represents not only a loss of conflict resolution mechanisms but also a loss of identity and social cohesion.

Dressing Style

Regarding globalization's negative impact on dressing culture, key informants stated that looking good generally interests many people, especially youth. Over years, youth have tried to be fashionable, exhibiting clothing influenced largely by foreign fashion due to globalization. This influence extent negatively affects youth and local (domestic) fashion industries. Ethiopian clothing style has become adaptation of Western fashion trends. European and American influence has become so widespread and invasive across almost every activity—education, religion, politics, social change—and fashion is no exception.

Western fashion trends have significantly altered dressing norms. Traditional Gedeo attire is now reserved for festivals and ceremonies, while daily wear imitates Western styles. A young female participant explained:

"*I like wearing jeans and tight dresses because that is what I see on TV and Instagram. If I wear our traditional clothes, my friends call me a village girl. I want to look modern*." (In-depth interview, Chichu)

An elder expressed concern over the moral implications:

"*Girls walk almost naked today; they wear shorts and mini-skirts. In our culture, this was shameful. It tempts the men and brings disrespect. Our dress taught modesty*." (FGD, Michile)

These changes mirror Zewde's (2019) findings among the Selale Oromo, where fashion was identified as a major vector of Western cultural influence. The pressure to conform to global beauty standards, often mediated through social media and satellite television, leads youth to abandon indigenous attire (Getalem, 2015). As noted by Browne (2008), global culture erodes local distinctions, and dressing is one of the most visible manifestations. The health risks associated with unregulated cosmetics and the psychosocial pressures on young girls are

additional concerns mentioned by participants, echoing Nicolaides' (2012) alarm about the loss of intrinsic African values.

Marriage and Sexual Norms

Globalization has profoundly affected marriage customs and sexual behavior. Traditional values prized virginity, monogamous marriage, and strict sexual morality. Exposure to pornographic media via mobile phones, however, has introduced alien practices. A young male interviewee confessed:

"*I watched porn on my phone because my friends showed me. Now I cannot stop. I see things—different positions, even same-sex acts—that are against everything I was taught. It changes the way I think about women*." (In-depth interview, Andida)

Another participant, a young woman, expressed the social pressure:

"*Boys now expect you to do things before marriage. If you refuse, they call you old-fashioned. Many girls give in and then get pregnant or drop out of school*." (FGD, Chichu)

An elder summarized:

"*Our children no longer value virginity; they have many partners. The curse of impurity is spreading. The internet is destroying our marriage traditions*." (Key informant, Dilla Zuria)

These findings resonate strongly with arguments by Kaul (2012) that globalization commits "cultural homicide" by sexualizing youth through Western media and undermining indigenous moral frameworks. Bello and Adesemoye (2012) observed similar trends in Nigeria, where exposure to Western films reshaped teenagers' sexual attitudes. The easy availability of pornographic content via the internet, as described by Chukwuebuka (2013), functions as a tool of cultural imperialism, normalizing behaviors that clash with Gedeo values. The resulting erosion of marriage stability and the dehumanization of women, as one participant stated ("women appear … as an animal"), confirm the destructive influence of globalized sexual culture.

Overall, the negative impacts of globalization on Gedeo indigenous culture are pervasive. In every dimension examined, local traditions are being replaced by Western norms and practices. This study corroborates earlier Ethiopian research (Zewde, 2019) and continental analyses (Asogwa et al., 2011; Nicolaides, 2012), while providing localized evidence of cultural atrophy. The Gedeo people are experiencing what Ritzer (2008) terms the "McDonaldization" of society: uniformity, standardization, and the loss of meaningful cultural diversity. Unless deliberate preservation and revitalization measures are enacted, Gedeo language, dress, food, marital customs, religion, and history risk extinction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on research results, the following conclusions are drawn:

Globalization has significantly eroded the indigenous culture of the Gedeo people. The influx of Western norms through language, media, consumer goods, and technology has weakened local

languages, transformed dietary patterns, undermined traditional dress and marriage customs, and diminished the authority of indigenous belief systems. The findings affirm that the current globalization process is not a neutral exchange but a form of cultural imperialism that favors the dominant West at the expense of local communities. If left unchecked, Gedeo culture may face irreversible atrophy.

Recommendations

Based on study results, the following recommendations aim to reduce globalization's impacts on indigenous culture in the study area:

1. Federal, regional, and local governments should document indigenous culture. Without extensive documentation, identifying, preserving, promoting, and developing culture becomes difficult. Documentation enables transmission to future generations, potentially reducing youth resistance and possible cultural identity confusion, promoting tourism and local community, and opening academic programs based on local realities.
2. National, regional, and local directions should identify globalization's impact on local culture, accompanied by appropriate supervision and budgeting. This includes regular assessment of community responses and support for reducing tensions and negative impacts.
3. Gedeo Zone Culture and Tourism Office should identify gaps in promoting community cultures. To rehabilitate culture, information gathering comes first. After collecting and interpreting information, various rehabilitation strategies should be employed. Culture promotion requires programs initiating cultural norms and values. Since culture serves multiple purposes for its owners, preparing cultural ceremonies at meetings, training, and holidays could enhance and advertise Gedeo Zone people's culture.
4. The Culture and Tourism Office should work on youth awareness creation in the zone. Clear objectives for youth awareness creation should be established, followed by activities achieving these objectives. Awareness programs may include various activities during holidays, meetings, and trainings through cultural shows. Schools should host awareness creation because they form bases for youth future life. At schools, culture and tourism bureaus must undertake multiple activities for youth awareness. Additionally, creating cultural training centers and providing follow-up represents important recommendations for restoring people's culture.
5. Parental explanation and transparent discussion about sexuality and reproductive health with children and youth will prevent information-seeking from inappropriate sources like pornographic media. To prevent youth attraction to Western pornographic media products, sex education should be encouraged in high schools and secondary schools and included in curricula.

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Author's Note

It's important to acknowledge about the fact that some parts of this article were polished with the help of a generative AI tool (ChatGPT-4). I used it mainly to enhance readability, fix grammatical errors, and occasionally to help me find clearer or more concise ways to express my thoughts. Earlier on, I also turned to DeepL for help with translating materials that were originally written in Amharic.

However, I want to emphasize that the AI was never used to create the main arguments, come up with research questions, interpret the literature, or draw any conclusions. Every idea, analytical claim, and policy suggestion you see here is entirely my own, shaped by my engagement with the referenced scholarship and years of experience in Ethiopian academic life. I've carefully reviewed and revised all the parts where I used AI assistance to make sure, they accurately reflect my intended meaning and argument. Any mistakes or oversights that remain are solely my responsibility.