



# Globalization and Indigenous Cultural Identity among Igala People in North-Central Nigeria: Religious Education, Digital Media, and Socio-ethical Implications

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines globalization and indigenous cultural identity among the Igala people of North-Central Nigeria from a socio-ethical perspective. It explores how religious education, digital media, formal education, economic change, and social transformation influence indigenous beliefs, communal values, and cultural transmission. Using a qualitative approach, globalization does not simply erase Igala culture but creates processes of erosion, adaptation, negotiation, and revitalization. The findings highlight the importance of religious and cultural education, intergenerational dialogue, and digital documentation in sustaining indigenous identity. Igala cultural identity can remain meaningful when communities critically reinterpret local values while responding ethically to global change.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has changed the way communities understand culture, religion, education, and social values. Through migration, digital media, formal schooling, religious movements, economic change, and intercultural contact, local communities are increasingly exposed to new ideas and practices. These global influences may create opportunities for learning and social development, but they may also challenge indigenous beliefs, traditional authority, communal ethics, and cultural identity (Theron *et al.*, 2024; Rizomatovich, 2026). For many African communities, globalization does not simply replace local culture. Instead, it creates a complex process in which people negotiate, reinterpret, preserve, or abandon certain cultural and religious practices.

The Igala people of North-Central Nigeria have a rich cultural and religious heritage shaped by indigenous beliefs, communal values, ritual practices, kinship systems, and moral expectations. These cultural beliefs are not only traditional customs but also social and ethical frameworks that guide family life, community responsibility, respect for elders, gender roles, religious identity, and relationships with the environment. Similar studies on culture and religion have shown that belief systems can influence social practices, family relations, and community identity (Daud, 2024; Reno, 2025). Therefore, examining the cultural beliefs of the Igala people is important for understanding how indigenous values continue to shape social life in a changing global context.

Religion plays a central role in this transformation. Christianity, Islam, and indigenous religious practices interact in different ways within African societies. In some cases, global religious movements challenge local traditions by labeling them as outdated, unscientific, or incompatible with modern religious values. In other cases, communities reinterpret traditional practices through religious and moral education. Studies on religion and society show that religious values can shape social behavior, tolerance, identity, and decision-making (Sulyman *et al.*, 2024; Situngkir *et al.*, 2024; Sumarna and Gunawan, 2024). This means that the transformation of Igala cultural beliefs cannot be separated from the influence of religious education and changing religious interpretations.

Education is also an important medium through which cultural and religious values are transmitted, questioned, and reconstructed. Formal education exposes young people to national curricula, global knowledge, digital technologies, and new ways of thinking about identity, rights, gender, and community life. At the same time, education can also be used to preserve indigenous values when cultural materials, local history, oral traditions, and religious sensitivity are integrated into learning. Studies have shown that religious and cultural values can be used as instructional materials and hidden curriculum to strengthen character, identity, and moral awareness (Bursan *et al.*, 2027; Indra *et al.*, 2026). Therefore, education can either weaken or strengthen cultural continuity depending on how it engages with local traditions.

The relationship between globalization and cultural identity is often marked by ethical tension. Global values such as individual freedom, human rights, digital self-expression, and market-oriented lifestyles may conflict with traditional values such as communal duty, respect for lineage, collective responsibility, and obedience to cultural authority. Among the Igala people, this tension may appear in attitudes toward ancestral practices, marriage customs, rites of passage, communal labor, gender expectations, and the use of the indigenous language. Similar concerns have been raised in studies discussing cultural

essentialism, religious identity, and the preservation of African spiritual traditions in postcolonial contexts (Reno, 2025). These issues show that cultural change is not only social but also ethical, because it involves questions about what should be preserved, reformed, or rejected.

Digital technology has further intensified this process. Social media, mobile communication, online religious teaching, and digital entertainment expose young people to global lifestyles and alternative value systems. These platforms can weaken traditional forms of cultural transmission, especially when younger generations become less interested in oral history, indigenous language, or ritual knowledge. However, digital technology can also support cultural preservation when used to document traditions, share local history, and strengthen community identity. Technology-based education has been discussed as a tool for strengthening religious character and value formation when used intentionally in learning contexts (Indra *et al.*, 2026). Thus, globalization through digital media can be both a threat and a resource for cultural education.

From an educational and religious perspective, the challenge is not simply to reject globalization or preserve tradition unchanged. Rather, the challenge is to develop critical cultural and religious education that helps communities understand their heritage, evaluate external influences, and adapt local values responsibly. Inclusive and multicultural education can support citizenship, tolerance, and sustainable development by helping learners appreciate diversity while maintaining meaningful cultural identity (Lhawon, 2025). In the Igala context, schools, religious institutions, families, and traditional leaders all have roles in guiding younger generations to understand indigenous beliefs and their ethical significance.

Previous studies have discussed religion, culture, education, and social transformation in different contexts. Research has examined cultural beliefs in marital practices, religious tolerance in schools, technology for religious character formation, African spiritual identity, and the integration of religious values into learning materials (Bursan *et al.*, 2027; Daud, 2024; Indra *et al.*, 2026; Reno, 2025; Sulyman *et al.*, 2024). However, there is still a need for focused discussion on how globalization affects the cultural beliefs of specific African communities, such as the Igala people, especially from a socio-ethical and educational perspective. This gap is important because cultural identity is sustained not only through ritual practice but also through education, religious interpretation, and intergenerational learning.

This study examines globalization, religious education, and cultural identity among the Igala people of North-Central Nigeria from a socio-ethical perspective. It discusses how global religious, educational, technological, and social influences affect indigenous beliefs, communal values, traditional practices, and cultural transmission. The study also explores how education and religious dialogue can help communities preserve, reinterpret, and transmit local values in ways that remain meaningful in contemporary society.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the socio-ethical implications of globalization for Igala cultural beliefs and to highlight the role of religious and cultural education in sustaining community identity. The study contributes to discussions in religion, education, and society by showing that cultural transformation should not be understood only as cultural loss, but also as a process of negotiation, adaptation, and possible revitalization. It argues that the future of Igala cultural identity depends on dialogue among traditional leaders, religious actors, educators, youth, and cultural institutions.

## 2. METHODS

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to examine globalization, religious education, and socio-ethical change in the cultural beliefs of the Igala people of North-Central Nigeria. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the study focused on cultural meanings, religious interpretations, ethical tensions, and community experiences related to globalization and cultural identity.

The study focused on selected Igala communities in North-Central Nigeria. The participants included elders, religious leaders, cultural actors, educated youths, and community members who had knowledge or experience of Igala cultural beliefs and contemporary social change. These participants were selected because they could provide information on indigenous practices, religious influence, education, intergenerational learning, and the effects of globalization on community values.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. The interviews explored participants' views on cultural beliefs, religious change, education, youth attitudes, gender-related practices, communal values, and the influence of digital media and global lifestyles. Focus group discussions were used to capture collective opinions and generational differences, while participant observation helped document cultural events, community interactions, and visible changes in cultural practice.

Ethical procedures were observed during the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their participation was voluntary. Consent was obtained before interviews and discussions. Confidentiality was maintained by avoiding the disclosure of personal identities, and the information collected was used only for academic purposes.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview notes, focus group responses, and observation records were reviewed repeatedly to identify recurring patterns. The data were then coded and grouped into themes related to cultural erosion, religious reinterpretation, educational influence, intergenerational change, ethical tension, cultural resistance, and revitalization. The thematic analysis process followed the principles of identifying, reviewing, defining, and interpreting themes from qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2019).

The analysis focused on connecting participants' experiences with the broader socio-ethical issues discussed in the study. This allowed the study to explain how globalization affects Igala cultural beliefs and how religious and cultural education may support the preservation, reinterpretation, and transmission of indigenous values.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Main Forms of Global Influence on Igala Cultural Beliefs

Globalization affects Igala cultural beliefs through several channels. These include religious change, formal education, digital media, economic transformation, and changing ideas about gender and identity. The main areas of influence are summarized in **Table 1**. Globalization does not affect Igala culture in one direction only. Some influences weaken traditional practices, while others create opportunities for cultural education, reinterpretation, and revival.

**Table 1.** Main forms of global influence on Igala cultural beliefs.

AREA OF INFLUENCE	EXAMPLES	POSSIBLE IMPACT ON IGALA CULTURE
Religious change	Christianity, Islam, and religious reform	Reinterpretation or rejection of indigenous beliefs
Formal education	School curriculum, literacy, and global knowledge	Reduced reliance on oral tradition, but increased critical awareness
Digital media	Social media, online sermons, and entertainment	Exposure to global lifestyles and new identities
Economic change	Market values, wage labor, migration	Shift from communal obligation to individual interest
Gender discourse	Rights, equality, autonomy	Questioning of traditional gender roles
Cultural revival	Festivals, language promotion, heritage activities	Reaffirmation of cultural identity

### 3.2. Religion and Indigenous Cultural Beliefs

Religion is one of the strongest influences on Igala cultural transformation (**Table 2**). Christianity and Islam introduce new moral interpretations that may challenge ancestral practices, rituals, and indigenous religious authority. However, religion can also support cultural continuity when it emphasizes shared values such as respect, discipline, peace, and community responsibility. Religious education can either weaken or strengthen cultural identity. If religious teaching rejects all indigenous practices, cultural knowledge may decline. However, if it recognizes positive local values, it can support moral education and community identity. This is consistent with studies showing that religion influences social behavior, tolerance, and moral development ([Sulyman et al., 2024](#); [Sumarna and Gunawan, 2024](#)).

**Table 2.** Religious influence on Igala cultural beliefs.

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE	CULTURAL RESPONSE	SOCIO-ETHICAL ISSUE
Rejection of indigenous rituals	Some practices are seen as outdated or unacceptable	Loss of cultural memory
Moral teaching in churches and mosques	Traditional values are reinterpreted through religious ethics	Possibility of ethical continuity
Religious education	Youth learn new ideas about identity and morality	Tension between inherited culture and new belief systems
Interfaith interaction	Indigenous, Christian, and Islamic values coexist	Need for tolerance and dialogue

### 3.3. Education and Intergenerational Cultural Transmission

Formal education has changed how young Igala people understand culture (**Table 3**). Schools expose students to national and global knowledge, but they may also reduce attention to indigenous language, oral history, and traditional values if local culture is not included in learning. Education is therefore not automatically harmful to culture. The main issue is whether education includes local identity and cultural knowledge. Studies show that cultural and religious values can be integrated into learning materials and hidden curriculum to strengthen identity and character ([Bursan et al., 2027](#); [Indra et al., 2026](#)).

**Table 3.** Role of education in Igala cultural transmission.

EDUCATIONAL FACTOR	RISK	OPPORTUNITY
Formal schooling	Local culture may be seen as less important	Students can learn culture critically
Curriculum	Indigenous history may be ignored	Local content can be integrated into lessons
Religious education	Traditional practices may be rejected	Shared moral values can be taught
Hidden curriculum	Global values may dominate	Character and cultural identity can be strengthened
Teacher role	Teachers may lack local cultural knowledge	Teachers can become cultural mediators

### 3.4. Digital Media and Cultural Identity

Digital media exposes Igala youth to global lifestyles, entertainment, religious teaching, and social values (**Table 4**). This may weaken traditional oral transmission. However, digital media can also help preserve culture when used for documentation and education. Digital media should be treated as both a challenge and a resource. If used intentionally, it can support cultural education and intergenerational learning. Technology-based education can also strengthen value formation when guided by clear educational goals ([Indra et al., 2026](#)).

**Table 4.** Digital media and Igala cultural identity.

DIGITAL MEDIA USE	NEGATIVE POSSIBILITY	POSITIVE POSSIBILITY
Social media	Youth may adopt global lifestyles without cultural grounding	Igala language and history can be shared online
Online religious teaching	Indigenous practices may be criticized	Religious-cultural dialogue can be promoted
Digital entertainment	Local festivals and oral stories may be neglected	Cultural performances can be recorded and promoted
Mobile communication	Elder-led learning may decline	Families and communities can share cultural knowledge digitally

### 3.5. Communal Values and Global Individualism

A major socio-ethical tension appears between Igala communal values and global individualism (**Table 5**). Traditional Igala life emphasizes family duty, respect for elders, communal responsibility, and collective identity. Globalization often promotes personal freedom, economic independence, and individual choice. This tension does not mean that one side must completely replace the other. The challenge is to balance personal freedom with community responsibility. Tradition continues to influence family and social practices even when communities experience change ([Daud, 2024](#)).

### 3.6. Gender, Culture, and Religious-Social Change

Gender-related cultural practices are also affected by globalization, religion, and education (**Table 6**). Some traditional gender expectations are questioned by young people, especially those influenced by formal education and global ideas about equality. The goal is not to reject culture entirely, but to evaluate which practices support dignity, responsibility, and social

harmony. Inclusive and multicultural education can help communities value diversity and promote ethical awareness (Lhawon, 2025).

### 3.7. Cultural Resistance and Revitalization

The Igala people are not passive in facing globalization. Cultural resistance and revitalization appear through festivals, language promotion, community associations, oral history, and digital documentation. Cultural revitalization is strongest when it is connected to education. Festivals and traditions should not only be performed, but also explained to younger generations. This supports the idea that African cultural identity can be reaffirmed when communities reinterpret traditions as meaningful resources for contemporary life (Reno, 2025).

**Table 5.** Communal values and global individualism.

IGALA COMMUNAL VALUE	GLOBAL INFLUENCE	ETHICAL TENSION
Respect for elders	Youth autonomy	Authority versus personal freedom
Communal labor	Wage labor and migration	Collective duty versus individual productivity
Lineage identity	Individual self-expression	Family responsibility versus personal identity
Marriage customs	Modern relationship ideals	Tradition versus choice
Indigenous language	Global languages	Cultural continuity versus global mobility

**Table 6.** Gender-related cultural change among the Igala people.

AREA	TRADITIONAL CONCERN	CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGE	NEEDED RESPONSE
Gender roles	Defined by custom and community expectation	Questioned through education and rights discourse	Dialogue and ethical reflection
Marriage practices	Linked to family and lineage	Influenced by personal choice	Balance between culture and dignity
Female participation	Sometimes limited by tradition	Increased demand for inclusion	Community-based reform
Religious teaching	Can reinforce or challenge gender roles	Mixed interpretations	Inclusive religious education

**Table 7.** Forms of cultural resistance and revitalization.

FORM OF REVITALIZATION	FUNCTION	EDUCATIONAL VALUE
Cultural festivals	Preserve performance, ritual memory, and identity	Teach youth about heritage
Language promotion	Maintains Igala communication and worldview	Supports cultural literacy
Oral history documentation	Records the elders' knowledge	Strengthens intergenerational learning
Religious-cultural dialogue	Reduces conflict between traditions and modern religions	Promotes tolerance
Digital archiving	Stores cultural materials online	Makes culture accessible to youth

### 3.8. Educational Implications for Religion, Culture, and Society

The transformation of Igala cultural beliefs has important implications for religious and cultural education (**Table 8**). Schools, religious institutions, families, and cultural leaders need to work together to preserve useful cultural values while allowing ethical reform. These implications show that education is central to cultural continuity. Religious and cultural education can help young people understand both their heritage and the modern world.

### 3.9. Summary of Socio-Ethical Implications

The overall socio-ethical implications of globalization for the Igala people are summarized in **Table 9**. Globalization has transformed Igala cultural beliefs through erosion, adaptation, resistance, and revitalization. The most important issue is not whether globalization should be accepted or rejected, but how Igala communities can respond through education, religious dialogue, and cultural agency. Cultural identity can remain meaningful when it is taught, discussed, documented, and reinterpreted across generations.

**Table 8.** Educational implications of Igala cultural transformation.

EDUCATIONAL AREA	RECOMMENDED FOCUS	EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION
School curriculum	Include local history, language, and cultural ethics	Strengthen identity and cultural awareness
Religious education	Promote respect, tolerance, and dialogue	Reduce rejection of indigenous culture
Family education	Encourage storytelling and elder-youth interaction	Preserve oral tradition
Community programs	Support cultural festivals and heritage workshops	Increase youth participation
Digital education	Use media to document and teach culture	Connect tradition with modern platforms

**Table 9.** Summary of socio-ethical implications.

THEME	MAIN FINDING	SOCIO-ETHICAL IMPLICATION
Religion	Indigenous beliefs are reinterpreted or rejected	Need for religious-cultural dialogue
Education	Youth gain global knowledge but may lose local grounding	Need for culturally responsive education
Digital media	Culture can be weakened or preserved online	Need for intentional digital cultural education
Economy	Market values weaken communal obligations	Need to balance individual success and communal duty
Gender	Traditional roles are questioned	Need for reform based on dignity and inclusion
Cultural revival	Communities actively preserve identity	Need for youth-centered heritage education

## 4. CONCLUSION

Globalization has transformed the cultural beliefs of the Igala people through religion, education, digital media, economic change, and shifting social values. These influences have weakened some indigenous practices, especially among younger generations, but they have

also created opportunities for reinterpretation, cultural revival, and intergenerational learning. The main socio-ethical tension lies between traditional communal values and global ideas of individual freedom, market-oriented life, gender equality, and religious reform. This tension affects attitudes toward indigenous beliefs, family responsibility, gender roles, cultural authority, and community identity. However, the Igala experience shows that globalization does not simply erase local culture. Instead, it produces negotiation, adaptation, resistance, and revitalization. Religious and cultural education are important for sustaining Igala identity in contemporary society. Schools, religious institutions, families, and cultural leaders should work together to teach local history, indigenous ethics, religious tolerance, cultural values, and responsible engagement with modern influences. Digital media can also be used to document language, festivals, oral traditions, and community knowledge. Preserving Igala cultural identity requires active educational strategies, religious-cultural dialogue, youth participation, and community-based cultural documentation. Future studies may examine how Igala youth, religious leaders, educators, and cultural institutions can collaborate to strengthen cultural identity while responding ethically to globalization.

## 5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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