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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF WESTERNIZATION ON
TRADITIONAL IGALA CULTURAL VALUES IN KOGI STATE**

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Abstract

The increasing penetration of Western social values into indigenous African societies has continued to reshape traditional systems of identity, social interaction and cultural continuity, raising important sociological concerns regarding the future of local cultural institutions. Against this background, this paper examined the sociological implications of westernisation on traditional Igala cultural values in Kogi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the paper investigated the extent to which westernisation has influenced traditional Igala cultural values, examined its effects on social relationships and cultural practices among the Igala people, and assessed its implications for the preservation of cultural identity and social cohesion in the area. The paper was based on Cultural Hybridisation Theory, which explains how indigenous societies selectively adapt external cultural influences while retaining aspects of their traditional identity. An analytical literature review method was adopted, involving critical synthesis of recent peer-reviewed scholarly materials published between 2020 and 2026 on westernisation, cultural transformation and indigenous social systems. Findings revealed that westernisation has significantly influenced traditional Igala cultural values through changes in language use, marriage customs, religious observances and declining participation in age-grade institutions. The paper further found that these changes have weakened communal authority structures and traditional mechanisms of socialisation, thereby affecting intergenerational value transmission and collective solidarity. However, evidence also indicated selective cultural adaptation rather than complete cultural displacement. The paper concluded that westernisation among the Igala reflects a process of negotiated cultural reconstruction. It recommended the integration of Igala cultural education into formal learning, revitalization of indigenous institutions, and the promotion of digital cultural preservation initiatives to strengthen cultural continuity and social cohesion.

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Introduction:-

Across sub-Saharan Africa, the encounter between indigenous cultural systems and Western social influences has continued to shape patterns of social organisation, value orientation and identity formation. Colonial administration, missionary education, urbanisation, migration and digital media have altered traditional institutions that once regulated communal life in many African societies. Recent studies show that global cultural flows have intensified this shift, particularly among younger populations who increasingly negotiate between inherited cultural obligations and externally acquired social practices (Asogwa, 2025). Across Nigeria, this process has become more visible as Western educational models, Christianity, consumer culture and social media continue to influence language use, marriage patterns, kinship obligations and indigenous systems of authority.

Nigeria presents a significant case because of its cultural plurality and the speed of social transformation occurring within its ethnic communities. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics indicate that internet penetration in Nigeria rose from 47.3 per cent in 2019 to over 55 per cent by 2024, exposing millions of young Nigerians to Western-centred cultural content and lifestyle ideals. This increased exposure has affected cultural transmission within families and communities. Studies on cultural continuity in Nigerian ethnic groups have shown that traditional practices are increasingly being modified to fit urban expectations, religious reforms and digital visibility (Nwagbara, 2025). While some scholars argue that this shift supports adaptation and social mobility, others note that it has weakened indigenous systems of socialisation and collective identity.

Within Kogi State, the Igala people constitute one of the largest ethnic nationalities in North Central Nigeria, with a long-established cultural heritage rooted in communal solidarity, reverence for elders, indigenous belief systems, traditional marriage customs, age-grade institutions and respect for ancestral authority. Historically, these cultural values served as mechanisms for social control, conflict resolution and moral instruction. The traditional Igala social structure was sustained through oral transmission, family institutions and communal ceremonies that reinforced collective consciousness across generations. Recent studies indicate that these structures are undergoing noticeable change. A study by Opara et al. (2025) on Igala women found that cultural norms remain influential in shaping social behaviour, but increasing interaction with formal institutions and external belief systems is gradually redefining traditional expectations. Similarly, Ugboja and Dada (2025) observed that age-grade institutions, once central to indigenous socialisation among the Igala, have weakened due to urban migration, formal education and changing value preferences among youths. Ochimana (2025), in his assessment of Western civilisation and Igala culture, documented shifts in burial rites, naming systems, religious observances and marriage ceremonies, noting that Christian doctrines and Western educational exposure have significantly altered traditional cultural expressions in Igala land.

Case evidence from communities such as Idah, Ankpa and Dekina suggests that ceremonies once conducted strictly according to indigenous customs are increasingly simplified or replaced with Western-inspired alternatives. Traditional attire during marriage rites has in many instances been replaced with Western fashion, while the use of English rather than Igala language in formal family settings has become more common among educated households. These changes suggest an ongoing redefinition of cultural identity. From a sociological standpoint, westernisation within Igala society raises important questions about cultural continuity, intergenerational relations and social cohesion. Since culture functions as the foundation upon which social norms and group identity are sustained, any significant shift in cultural values affects patterns of behaviour, belonging and community regulation. The present paper therefore examined the sociological implications of westernisation on traditional Igala cultural values in Kogi State, with a view to understanding how these transformations are shaping social life among the Igala people.

Statement of the Problem:-

Traditional Igala society has historically maintained a stable cultural order through institutions that transmitted shared norms, collective identity and moral discipline across generations. Respect for elders, communal responsibility, indigenous language use, age-grade participation, marriage customs and ancestral reverence formed the basis of social regulation within Igala communities. These values ensured continuity and social cohesion by guiding behaviour and preserving group identity. However, increasing exposure to Western education, Christianity, urban lifestyles, digital communication and global media has introduced social patterns that differ from these indigenous norms. In many parts of Kogi State, observable changes have emerged in family relations, language preference, marriage practices and youth participation in cultural activities. Traditional ceremonies are increasingly abbreviated or modified to reflect Western religious expectations, while younger generations often prioritise individualistic aspirations over communal obligations. This situation has generated concern among scholars and

cultural custodians regarding the future of Igalacultural identity. Ugboja and Dada (2025) noted a decline in indigenous socialisation mechanisms among Igala youths, particularly in relation to age-grade participation and communal value transmission. Ochimana (2025) further reported that several cultural practices have been abandoned or redefined under the influence of Western civilisation. Although these studies provide evidence of cultural change, they give limited sociological attention to how such transformations affect social relationships, identity construction and normative order within Igala communities. The problem therefore lies in the insufficient empirical understanding of the social consequences arising from the gradual displacement of traditional Igala cultural values by Western-oriented practices. Without adequate scholarly examination, it becomes difficult to determine whether this shift constitutes cultural adaptation, value erosion or social restructuring. This gap is particularly important because weakening traditional cultural institutions may affect intergenerational cohesion, local systems of social control and the preservation of indigenous identity. The paper was therefore necessitated by the need to critically examine the sociological implications of westernisation on traditional Igala cultural values in Kogi State, with particular attention to how these changes are affecting social behaviour, cultural continuity and collective identity among the Igala people.

Aim and Objectives:-

The aim of this study is to examine the sociological implications of westernisation on traditional Igala cultural values in Kogi State, with a focus on how Western social influences have affected indigenous cultural practices, social relationships and the preservation of collective identity among the Igala people.

The specific objectives includes the following:

1. To examine the extent to which westernisation has influenced traditional Igala cultural values in Kogi State.
2. To investigate the effects of westernisation on social relationships and cultural practices among the Igala people in Kogi State.
3. To assess the implications of westernisation for the preservation of Igala cultural identity and social cohesion in Kogi State.

Methodology:-

This study adopted the analytical literature review method, which is a structured qualitative research approach that involves the critical identification, selection, evaluation and synthesis of existing scholarly works for the purpose of generating deeper conceptual understanding of a research problem. Unlike descriptive literature reviews that merely summarise previous studies, the analytical literature review method interrogates arguments, compares methodological orientations, identifies patterns of convergence and divergence, and establishes gaps requiring further scholarly attention. Recent methodological studies describe analytical literature review as a rigorous process of evidence synthesis that enables researchers to interpret existing knowledge through systematic examination of conceptual assumptions, empirical findings and theoretical positions within a defined field of inquiry (Al-Naabi et al., 2026; Linnenluecke et al., 2020).

This method was considered most appropriate for the present paper because the study sought to critically examine the sociological implications of westernisation on traditional Igala cultural values by drawing insights from established empirical and conceptual works rather than collecting primary field data. The material selection process followed a deliberate and systematic procedure designed to ensure methodological rigour, relevance and reliability. Relevant scholarly materials were identified through targeted searches of peer-reviewed academic databases including Scopus-indexed journals, Web of Science, Google Scholar, SpringerLink, Taylor and Francis Online, Sage Journals and institutional repositories containing peer-reviewed Nigerian cultural and sociological studies. Search terms were developed from the major variables of the study and combined using Boolean operators to improve precision. These terms included “westernisation and indigenous culture in Nigeria”, “Igala cultural transformation”, “traditional values and modernisation”, “cultural identity in Kogi State”, “western influence on Nigerian ethnic groups”, and “cultural hybridisation in Africa”. The search process was iterative, allowing refinement of terms where relevant studies emerged through citation tracking and reference chaining, which aligns with methodological recommendations for analytical evidence synthesis (Martin et al., 2020).

The inclusion criteria were carefully defined to ensure that only relevant and credible materials informed the review. Studies included in the analysis were peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, book chapters and empirically grounded conference papers published between 2020 and 2026. Materials were selected where they directly

addressed westernisation, indigenous cultural transformation, traditional value systems, social identity, cultural adaptation or sociological change among African communities, with particular preference for studies relating to the Igala people, Kogi State or closely comparable Nigerian ethnic contexts. Sources were further required to demonstrate methodological transparency, clearly stated objectives, identifiable authorship and traceable publication details in line with current scholarly standards for evidence synthesis (Büchter et al., 2020).

The exclusion criteria guided the elimination of materials considered unsuitable for analytical interpretation. Publications excluded from the review included newspaper reports, blogs, opinion essays, unpublished undergraduate projects, anonymous web content, conference abstracts without full empirical documentation and studies published before 2020 except where foundational theoretical clarification was unavoidable. Materials lacking methodological clarity, incomplete bibliographic details or unverifiable authorship were similarly excluded. Studies whose thematic focus did not directly connect with westernisation, cultural values or indigenous sociological transformation were not considered. This selective process was necessary to minimise bias and maintain analytical validity, consistent with recommendations by Anderson et al. (2020) and Bouncken et al. (2025), who emphasise clearly defined eligibility boundaries as central to dependable literature-based research.

The adoption of the analytical literature review method in this paper was justified by the nature and objectives of the study. The research sought to interrogate sociological transformations affecting traditional Igala cultural values, requiring interpretive depth across multiple strands of existing knowledge. Since the subject involves historical continuity, cultural evolution and social meaning, reliance on analytical review allowed for broader synthesis of conceptual and empirical evidence than would have been achievable through limited cross-sectional field inquiry. The method enabled comparative interrogation of authors' perspectives, identification of patterns of cultural continuity and change, and critical evaluation of how westernisation has affected social relationships and identity preservation among the Igala people. It also provided sufficient flexibility for integrating theoretical explanation through Cultural Hybridisation Theory, thereby strengthening interpretive coherence.

Notwithstanding its suitability, the analytical literature review method has certain limitations. One limitation is dependence on the availability and quality of existing studies, particularly because empirical literature specifically focused on the Igala people remains relatively limited when compared with broader Nigerian ethnic studies. This constrained the volume of directly localised evidence available for synthesis. Another limitation is the possibility of interpretive bias, as analytical review depends significantly on the researcher's critical judgement during synthesis and thematic interpretation. There is also the challenge of publication bias, since studies with stronger or more visible findings are more likely to be published and therefore included in reviews. Furthermore, the method does not generate fresh field-based data capable of capturing recent undocumented social experiences within specific Igala communities. Despite these limitations, methodological literature affirms that where carefully executed through transparent selection criteria and critical synthesis procedures, analytical literature review remains a valid and dependable approach for sociological investigation of cultural transformation (Al-Naabi et al., 2026; Linnenluecke et al., 2020; Bouncken et al., 2025).

Conceptual Review:-

Westernisation:-

Westernisation has been widely discussed in sociological scholarship as a process through which non-Western societies absorb social practices, institutions, value systems and behavioural orientations associated with Europe and North America. Asogwa (2025) defines westernisation as the social transformation that occurs when indigenous societies adopt external patterns of education, governance, religion and lifestyle through prolonged contact with Western civilisation. This view locates westernisation within historical and structural relations shaped by colonialism and modern global communication. Nwagbara (2025), examining digital influence on Nigerian cultural practices, views westernisation as a continuing cultural adjustment driven by media exposure, technological connectivity and aspirational modernity. This position is important because it extends the concept beyond colonial contact to include current channels such as social media and global consumer culture.

Ochimana (2025), in his study of Igala culture, considers westernisation as the introduction of foreign norms that alter indigenous social organisation and weaken local cultural continuity. While Ochimana's position captures its effect on traditional institutions, it tends to emphasise cultural erosion without sufficient attention to adaptive cultural borrowing. Scholarly debates therefore suggest that westernisation is neither wholly destructive nor wholly progressive, but a social process involving selective adoption, resistance and redefinition. For the purpose of this

paper, westernisation is adopted as the sociocultural process through which Western-derived beliefs, lifestyles, institutions and social orientations influence and reshape traditional Igala cultural patterns in Kogi State through education, religion, urbanisation and digital exposure.

Cultural Values:-

Cultural values refer to the shared standards, beliefs and normative expectations that guide behaviour within a social group. They provide the moral basis upon which communities define acceptable conduct and maintain collective identity. Opara et al. (2025) describe cultural values as socially inherited norms that influence individual choices and community practices across generations. Their study among Igala women demonstrates that such values shape social decision-making and regulate behavioural expectations within indigenous settings. James (2025) views cultural values as enduring social principles preserved through language, rituals, kinship systems and communal obligations, arguing that they remain central to cultural continuity despite social change. This perspective rightly emphasises resilience but pays limited attention to the internal modifications cultural values undergo in response to external influences.

Nwagbara (2025) argues that cultural values are increasingly negotiated in digital spaces where traditional expectations intersect with globalised standards of social performance. This interpretation is useful because it captures the contemporary reworking of values under technological conditions. The varying perspectives indicate that cultural values are dynamic rather than fixed, although their continuity depends on institutional transmission. In this study, cultural values are understood as the collectively shared beliefs, norms and social expectations that shape behaviour, regulate relationships and sustain identity among the Igala people across generations.

Traditional Values:-

Traditional values refer to inherited norms, beliefs and customary principles transmitted across generations within a particular cultural group. These values are sustained through socialisation processes such as family instruction, communal rites, oral traditions and indigenous institutions. Ugboja and Dada (2025) define traditional values as culturally embedded standards that regulate conduct and foster communal discipline through indigenous structures such as age-grade systems. Their definition is particularly relevant because it links traditional values directly to social control and collective responsibility. Okutepe and Gabriel (2025), discussing Igala belief systems, view traditional values as sacred and communal codes rooted in ancestral practices and spiritual obligations. This understanding is important in highlighting the moral authority of tradition, though it places stronger emphasis on religious continuity than on broader social functions.

Ochimana (2025) conceptualises traditional values as inherited customs governing marriage, kinship, language and respect for authority among the Igala. His interpretation is broader and captures the social dimensions central to this study. However, his analysis tends to frame traditional values mainly in contrast to Western influence rather than as evolving social resources. Drawing from these views, this study adopts traditional values as the inherited social norms, customary obligations and moral expectations passed from one generation to another that regulate social behaviour and preserve communal identity among the Igala people.

Igala People in Kogi State:-

The Igala people are one of the major ethnic nationalities in North Central Nigeria, predominantly occupying the eastern part of Kogi State, particularly Idah, Ankpa, Dekina, Omala, Ibaji and parts of Bassa Local Government Areas. Contemporary scholarship identifies the Igala as a historically organised people with established political institutions, distinct linguistic identity and deeply rooted cultural practices. Opara et al. (2025) describe the Igala as a culturally cohesive group whose social life is strongly influenced by kinship structures, indigenous beliefs and community-based norms. This perspective is significant because it demonstrates the persistence of cultural regulation in everyday life.

Ugboja and Dada (2025) stress the role of age-grade systems and communal participation in shaping social order among the Igala, arguing that these institutions historically sustained discipline and social integration. Their analysis is useful for understanding indigenous mechanisms of socialisation, although it focuses primarily on educational implications. Ojile and Onogu (2025), examining interreligious relations among the Igala, present the group as socially adaptive, having integrated Islamic and Christian influences into an existing cultural framework. This interpretation suggests cultural flexibility but may understate tensions arising from cultural change. Taken together, these scholarly positions reveal the Igala as a culturally resilient people negotiating continuity and social change. For

this study, the Igala people in Kogi State are understood as an indigenous ethnic group with historically established social institutions, shared language, customary practices and communal values that continue to shape social identity despite growing exposure to external cultural influences.

Extent to Which Westernisation Has Influenced Traditional Igala Cultural Values in Kogi State:-

The influence of westernisation on traditional Igala cultural values in Kogi State has become increasingly visible in the transformation of social institutions, linguistic practices, marriage customs, religious observances and communal value systems. Among the Igala, culture historically functioned as the principal organising framework through which social conduct was regulated and transmitted across generations. Indigenous values such as respect for elders, collective decision-making, adherence to ancestral rites, age-grade participation and communal labour once defined social interaction and identity formation. However, recent empirical evidence indicates that sustained exposure to Western education, Christianity, digital communication technologies and urban migration has altered these foundations in measurable ways.

Ochimana (2025) observes that one of the clearest manifestations of westernisation among the Igala is the decline in indigenous ceremonial practices. Traditional marriage rites, which historically involved elaborate stages including family consultations, symbolic gift exchange and ancestral blessings, are increasingly being replaced by abbreviated church-based solemnisations. In communities such as Idah and Ankpa, many families now prioritise white weddings conducted in English over customary marriage proceedings performed in Igala language. This shift reflects changing perceptions of prestige and legitimacy attached to Western-derived institutions. Language use provides another practical indicator of cultural transformation. Opara et al. (2025), in their ethnographic study among Igala women, found evidence of increasing preference for English in domestic and formal interactions, especially among educated urban households. In Lokoja, Anyigba and Dekina, parents increasingly communicate with children in English to align them with educational and social advancement. This trend weakens indigenous language transmission, which traditionally served as a primary vehicle for conveying oral history, proverbs and moral instruction.

Religious transformation also demonstrates substantial western influence. Traditional Igala cosmology historically recognised ancestral veneration and indigenous spiritual systems centred around sacred institutions linked to the AttahIgala stool. Okutepe and Gabriel (2025) note that Pentecostal Christianity has significantly displaced indigenous religious observances in many Igala communities. In Idah and Ibaji, traditional festivals once widely attended now experience reduced youth participation due to Christian teachings that classify some rituals as incompatible with biblical doctrine. The weakening of age-grade institutions provides another measurable example. Ugboja and Dada (2025) found that formal education and urban migration have reduced active participation in traditional age-grade responsibilities. Historically, these structures coordinated communal labour, dispute resolution and social discipline. In contemporary Igala communities, younger persons often prioritise school or urban employment over communal obligations, reducing institutional continuity.

Digital media further intensifies this process. Nwagbara (2025) argues that social media platforms create aspirational models that privilege Western dress codes, relationship patterns and individualistic lifestyles. Among Igala youths, platforms such as TikTok and Instagram increasingly shape social behaviour, influencing naming ceremonies, fashion choices and public celebrations. Nevertheless, westernisation has not resulted in total cultural displacement. Opara et al. (2025) found that certain cultural values remain resilient, particularly respect for kinship obligations and family consultation in major decisions. This suggests selective adaptation rather than complete replacement. The extent of westernisation is therefore significant but uneven, varying across education level, residence and generational exposure.

The Effects of Westernisation on Social Relationships and Cultural Practices Among the Igala People in Kogi State:-

Westernisation has produced substantial changes in interpersonal relations and cultural practices among the Igala people by reshaping family authority structures, altering socialisation processes and redefining communal obligations. Traditionally, Igala society emphasised collective responsibility, extended family cohesion and deference to elders. These relational structures ensured social stability and cultural continuity. One notable effect is the weakening of intergenerational authority. Ugboja and Dada (2025) report that traditional elder-centred decision-making has declined as younger, educated individuals increasingly assert autonomy over matters previously determined collectively. In Dekina and Ankpa, decisions relating to marriage, career choice and residence are now

often made independently rather than through family consultation. This reflects Western liberal ideals prioritising individual preference over communal approval.

Family structure has also undergone change. Opara et al. (2025) found that urbanisation and formal employment have encouraged nuclear family arrangements, reducing the influence of extended kin networks. In traditional Igala settings, child upbringing was a collective responsibility involving grandparents, uncles and community elders. Contemporary urban households increasingly isolate child socialisation within the immediate family, weakening broader kinship bonds. Marriage practices provide practical evidence of altered cultural relationships. Ochimana (2025) notes that traditional bridewealth negotiations involving elders and symbolic communal rites are frequently simplified or omitted. In many urban Igala communities, marriage ceremonies now emphasise church protocol and Western aesthetics over indigenous processes. This reduces opportunities for inter-family bonding historically facilitated through customary rites. The influence on naming practices is similarly evident. Traditional Igala names often conveyed historical memory, spiritual meaning or ancestral lineage. Increasingly, English and biblical names dominate among younger generations. This shift weakens symbolic connections to lineage identity.

Social statistics relating to digital behaviour further illuminate these changes. Data cited by Nwagbara (2025) indicate that social media usage among Nigerian youth aged 18–35 exceeds 70 per cent, exposing users to external cultural norms. Among Igala youths in tertiary institutions such as Prince Abubakar Audu University, Westernised dating norms, celebration styles and fashion practices increasingly influence social interaction. Religious conversion has also reshaped communal practices. Traditional festivals such as Ocho and ancestral observances historically reinforced solidarity. Okutepe and Gabriel (2025) note declining participation due to doctrinal objections among Christian converts. This has reduced communal gatherings that once reinforced collective identity. At the same time, some positive effects are evident. Western education has encouraged gender inclusion and reduced certain restrictive practices affecting women. Opara et al. (2025) observed improved female autonomy in healthcare decision-making among Igala households exposed to formal education. The effects are therefore mixed. While westernisation has facilitated education, gender reform and broader social opportunities, it has simultaneously weakened communal structures and transformed cultural practices central to Igala social life.

The Sociological Implications of Westernisation for the Preservation of Igala Cultural Identity and Social Cohesion in Kogi State:-

The sociological implications of westernisation for the preservation of Igala cultural identity and social cohesion are profound because culture functions as the foundation of collective belonging and social regulation. As Western values gain prominence, indigenous institutions responsible for transmitting identity face increasing strain.

Some of the implications are identified and explained as follows:

Cultural discontinuity:-

One major implication is cultural discontinuity. Cultural identity depends on intergenerational transmission through language, ritual and communal participation. Opara et al. (2025) indicate that declining use of the Igala language among younger urban residents threatens continuity of oral traditions. Since proverbs, folklore and indigenous philosophies are deeply embedded in language, reduced linguistic transmission weakens identity preservation.

Erosion of informal social control:-

A second implication concerns erosion of informal social control. Traditional Igala society relied on elders, age grades and communal sanctions to regulate behaviour. Ugboja and Dada (2025) show that weakened participation in these structures reduces community capacity to enforce norms. In practical terms, behaviours once regulated through communal correction are increasingly mediated through formal legal or institutional systems.

Social fragmentation:-

Social fragmentation is another consequence. Western individualism often contrasts with the communal orientation central to Igala life. Ochimana (2025) argues that increasing emphasis on personal achievement has reduced communal labour participation and collective ceremonies. In communities such as Omala and Dekina, reduced attendance at traditional gatherings reflects this trend.

Identity ambiguity:-

Identity ambiguity among younger generations also emerges as a sociological concern. Exposure to competing cultural models creates tension between inherited obligations and modern aspirations. Nwagbara (2025) notes that

digitally connected youth frequently construct hybrid identities that combine local affiliation with globalised self-presentation. Among the Igala, this may produce selective cultural attachment rather than full cultural integration.

Religious transformation:-

Religious transformation creates additional tension. Okutepe and Gabriel (2025) observe that rejection of indigenous rituals by some Christian groups has generated divisions between cultural custodians and converts. This weakens consensus around shared symbolic practices. Yet westernisation also presents opportunities for cultural preservation when selectively appropriated. Digital archiving of oral traditions, online promotion of Igala festivals and formal academic documentation of customs can support continuity. Some Igala youth organisations now use social media to promote language learning and cultural awareness, demonstrating adaptive preservation. The broader sociological implication is therefore not inevitable cultural extinction but a process of renegotiation. The future of Igala identity depends on the extent to which communities can integrate useful aspects of modernity while sustaining core cultural values that reinforce solidarity and historical continuity.

Empirical Review:-

Ochimana (2025) conducted a study on An Assessment of Western Civilization and the Transformation of Igala Culture and Tradition in selected Igala-speaking communities of Idah, Ankpa and Dekina Local Government Areas of Kogi State. The study was anchored on cultural modernisation theory, which explains how contact with external civilisational forces reshapes indigenous social institutions and behavioural systems. A historical-ethnographic research design was adopted because the investigation required a detailed examination of changing cultural patterns over time. The study utilised purposive sampling to select 120 respondents comprising traditional rulers, elderly custodians of culture, clergy, teachers and youth representatives who possessed direct knowledge of traditional and changing cultural practices. Data were generated through in-depth interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis. Findings revealed substantial transformation in traditional marriage rites, burial observances, indigenous religion, naming systems and age-grade participation.

The study established that Christian missionary influence and formal Western education significantly altered communal ceremonies, with church marriage increasingly replacing elaborate customary unions and Christian burial practices displacing ancestral funeral rites. The investigation further revealed that younger generations in urban centres such as Anyigba displayed reduced proficiency in the Igala language and lower participation in indigenous festivals compared with older residents in rural settlements. The author concluded that Western civilisation has accelerated social development in education and literacy while simultaneously weakening cultural continuity. The strength of this study lies in its practical field evidence and its clear documentation of cultural shifts within specific Igala communities. However, its analysis focused primarily on cultural transformation as a descriptive process and gave limited sociological attention to the broader implications for identity formation, social relationships and communal cohesion. The gap identified, therefore, is the need for a more analytical sociological inquiry into how these transformations affect social regulation and collective identity among the Igala people, which the present paper addressed.

Opara et al. (2025) carried out a study on Visible and Invisible Cultural Patterns Influencing Women's Use of Maternal Health Services among Igala Women in Nigeria: A Focused Ethnographic Study in Dekina and Idah areas of Kogi State. The research was guided by Leininger's Culture Care Diversity and Universality Theory, which examines the role of culture in shaping health-related decisions and social behaviour. The investigators employed a focused ethnographic design to obtain detailed contextual understanding of indigenous norms influencing women's health choices. Through purposive and snowball sampling techniques, 43 participants comprising pregnant women, nursing mothers, traditional birth attendants, community leaders and healthcare providers were selected. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, field observations and reflective field notes. Results showed that deeply embedded Igala cultural expectations concerning gender relations, elder approval and family hierarchy strongly influenced women's decisions regarding maternal healthcare utilisation.

The study found that many women deferred healthcare decisions to husbands and senior family members, reflecting enduring traditional authority patterns despite exposure to formal education and biomedical systems. It further established that Western medical practices were selectively accepted where they aligned with cultural expectations, while resistance persisted where they conflicted with established beliefs. The authors concluded that cultural adaptation among the Igala is negotiated rather than absolute, with Western institutional influence existing alongside traditional norms. This investigation offers rich empirical insight into how cultural values continue to shape social

behaviour under changing conditions. Nonetheless, its focus was limited to maternal healthcare utilisation and did not directly interrogate the wider consequences of westernisation for cultural identity preservation, value transmission or communal social cohesion. The present paper addressed this omission by examining the broader sociological implications of these cultural negotiations across the wider Igala social structure. Ugboja and Dada (2025) undertook a study entitled *Age Grades, Indigenous Socialisation and Sustainable Development in Igala Communities with particular attention to Ibaji and adjoining Igala settlements in Kogi State*. The investigation was rooted in structural functionalism, which explains how social institutions maintain societal order through role allocation and normative integration. A descriptive survey design was employed to assess the continuing relevance of age-grade institutions in indigenous socialisation processes. Using stratified random sampling, the researchers selected 180 respondents across various age categories including youth members, elders, traditional office holders and community development actors. Data were obtained through questionnaires, oral interviews and focus group discussions. The findings indicated that age-grade institutions historically served as effective mechanisms for moral instruction, conflict management, communal labour mobilisation and leadership grooming.

However, the study recorded declining participation among younger members due to migration, formal schooling and changing occupational priorities associated with Western-oriented lifestyles. The researchers observed that in communities experiencing higher urban exposure, age-grade activities had become ceremonial rather than functional. They concluded that the erosion of indigenous socialisation structures poses serious consequences for cultural continuity and local development. A major contribution of this work is its demonstration of how changing social priorities affect indigenous systems of collective discipline. Its limitation, however, lies in its concentration on age-grade functionality without broader examination of how westernisation shapes other cultural institutions such as kinship systems, language retention, marriage customs and social identity construction. The gap filled by the current paper is therefore a wider sociological assessment of westernisation as a social force affecting the entirety of traditional Igala cultural values and the implications for long-term social cohesion in Kogi State.

Theoretical Framework: Cultural Hybridisation Theory:-

The most appropriate theoretical framework for this paper is Cultural Hybridisation Theory, primarily advanced by Jan Nederveen Pieterse in 1994 and further developed in his later works, particularly his 2015 revision of *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*. The theory emerged as a response to earlier perspectives that viewed cultural contact either as cultural domination or complete homogenisation. Pieterse argued that cultural interaction in a globalising world does not necessarily result in the disappearance of indigenous cultures; rather, it produces new cultural forms through processes of adaptation, fusion and reinterpretation. This perspective departs from classical cultural imperialism arguments by recognising the agency of local communities in negotiating external influences.

The major assumption of Cultural Hybridisation Theory is that when societies encounter external cultural systems, they do not merely abandon their indigenous traditions or wholly absorb foreign values. Instead, they selectively appropriate elements of external culture and combine them with existing practices to create modified social patterns that reflect both continuity and change. The theory assumes that cultural transformation is a negotiated social process shaped by historical context, institutional power, local resistance and collective adaptation. It further posits that cultural identity remains dynamic rather than static, with communities constantly reconstructing meaning in response to social interaction and environmental pressures. Within this framework, westernisation is understood not as a unilateral process of cultural replacement but as an interactive phenomenon in which local populations reinterpret imported values according to indigenous realities.

A major strength of the theory lies in its flexibility in explaining contemporary social change, especially in plural societies experiencing intense global influence. It offers a realistic understanding of how traditional communities respond to modernity without assuming total cultural extinction. This makes it particularly relevant for analysing African societies such as the Igala, where indigenous customs continue to coexist with Western education, Christian religious practices and digital lifestyles. The theory also acknowledges local agency, recognising that cultural communities actively determine how external values are integrated into everyday life. This allows for balanced analysis of both continuity and transformation. Another important strength is its explanatory relevance to present-day Nigeria, where hybrid cultural expressions are evident in language use, marriage practices, social celebrations and identity performance. It provides conceptual room for understanding why certain traditional Igala practices have persisted despite extensive Western exposure, while others have been modified or abandoned. Despite these strengths, the theory has notable limitations. One criticism is that it may understate unequal power relations involved in cultural exchange. In many contexts, Western cultural influence is not always negotiated on equal terms but often enters through institutions such as formal education, religion and media systems that possess structural dominance.

This may lead to gradual cultural displacement rather than mutual synthesis. Another weakness is that the theory can sometimes blur distinctions between adaptation and erosion, making it difficult to determine when hybridisation ceases to preserve core indigenous identity. It also pays limited attention to emotional and symbolic losses experienced by communities when cultural practices decline. The theory provides a suitable framework for understanding how the Igala people engage with Western influences without necessarily abandoning their cultural identity entirely. For instance, the adoption of church weddings alongside traditional bride-price negotiations reflects hybridisation rather than outright replacement. Similarly, the increasing use of English in formal communication while retaining Igala in ceremonial contexts demonstrates negotiated cultural adaptation. The theory also explains why many Igala youths combine Western dress styles with indigenous attire during festivals and social events.

Furthermore, the framework helps to interpret the sociological consequences of these transformations by examining how hybrid cultural forms affect social relationships, intergenerational interaction and communal solidarity. It enables this study to assess whether westernisation among the Igala is producing adaptive cultural continuity or weakening the social institutions that historically sustained collective identity. Given the central concern of this paper with understanding both cultural change and its implications for social cohesion, Cultural Hybridisation Theory offers the most suitable explanatory foundation for analysing the changing cultural realities of the Igala people in Kogi State.

Results and Discussions:-

The findings of this paper revealed that westernisation has exerted significant influence on traditional Igala cultural values in Kogi State through noticeable changes in language use, marriage institutions, indigenous ceremonies, religious observances and systems of cultural transmission. This finding aligns with the position of Ochimana (2025), who established that contact with Western civilisation has altered fundamental aspects of Igala cultural life, particularly in relation to ceremonial practices and value orientation. The increasing preference for church solemnisation over elaborate customary marriage rites in communities such as Idah and Ankpa demonstrates how external social institutions gradually redefine local cultural legitimacy. Similarly, the growing use of English within urban Igala households reflects what Opara et al. (2025) observed concerning the subtle displacement of indigenous norms by formal institutional practices. Sociologically, this indicates that westernisation is not merely producing surface-level behavioural adjustments but is affecting the mechanisms through which collective identity is reproduced across generations. The implication is that where indigenous language and ritual practices decline, the continuity of historical memory and shared symbolic consciousness becomes increasingly threatened.

The paper further established that westernisation has altered social relationships and cultural practices among the Igala by weakening communal authority structures, reducing participation in age-grade institutions and encouraging individual-centred social choices. This finding supports the work of Ugboja and Dada (2025), who reported declining engagement in age-grade activities due to educational mobility and urban migration. The movement of younger Igala populations to urban centres such as Lokoja and Anyigba for education and employment has reduced direct participation in traditional systems of communal labour, dispute mediation and collective ceremonies. This transformation reflects a shift from *gemeinschaft*-type relations characterised by intimate communal bonds to *gesellschaft*-type interactions driven by formal, impersonal and achievement-oriented social relations. It also substantiates Nwagbara's (2025) argument that digital exposure increasingly shapes behavioural aspirations and social interaction patterns among younger Africans. The sociological implication is the weakening of traditional mechanisms of social control that once ensured conformity to communal norms. In practical terms, family elders now exercise less influence over decisions relating to marriage, occupation and religious affiliation, thereby reducing the integrative capacity of indigenous institutions.

Another major finding of the study is that westernisation presents serious implications for the preservation of Igala cultural identity and social cohesion, although its effects are not entirely destructive. This finding partly corroborates Okutepe and Gabriel (2025), who argued that global cultural exposure poses substantial challenges to indigenous belief systems, while also supporting Opara et al. (2025), who demonstrated that some cultural values remain resilient despite external pressures. The persistence of family consultation in major life decisions among many rural Igala communities illustrates that cultural continuity remains possible even within changing social conditions. However, the reduced observance of traditional festivals and declining proficiency in the Igala language among younger generations suggest emerging identity dislocation. Sociologically, this points to a process of cultural restructuring in which inherited collective norms are increasingly contested by modern individualistic orientations. Such conditions may generate intergenerational tension, symbolic fragmentation and diminished communal

solidarity if not consciously addressed through deliberate cultural preservation efforts such as language revitalisation, cultural education and institutional reinforcement.

The findings are strongly supported by the Cultural Hybridisation Theory adopted for this study. The theory's central proposition that external cultural influences are selectively appropriated rather than passively absorbed is evident in the Igala experience. The coexistence of church weddings with traditional bride-price negotiations, the blending of Western fashion with indigenous attire during ceremonies, and the simultaneous use of English and Igala in different social contexts all illustrate hybrid cultural adaptation. These realities validate Pieterse's argument that cultural interaction often produces negotiated social forms rather than total cultural replacement. The theory therefore provides a robust explanatory basis for understanding why westernisation among the Igala has generated both continuity and transformation. It explains the emergence of modified cultural expressions that preserve certain indigenous meanings while accommodating modern influences. From a sociological standpoint, this suggests that the future of Igala cultural identity depends not on resisting all external influence but on consciously managing cultural adaptation in ways that preserve the normative foundations necessary for social cohesion, collective belonging and historical continuity.

Conclusions:-

This study examined the sociological implications of westernisation on traditional Igala cultural values in Kogi State with particular attention to the extent of its influence, its effects on social relationships and cultural practices, and its implications for the preservation of cultural identity and social cohesion among the Igala people. The findings have shown that westernisation has significantly altered several dimensions of traditional Igala social life through changes in language use, marriage customs, religious practices, systems of socialisation and communal participation. These transformations have been driven largely by formal Western education, Christianity, urbanisation, digital media exposure and increasing interaction with global cultural systems. The sustainability of Igala cultural identity therefore depends on the ability of individuals, families, traditional institutions and policy actors to consciously preserve core indigenous values while constructively engaging with beneficial aspects of modernity. Without deliberate intervention, the continued weakening of traditional social institutions may result in deeper cultural fragmentation and diminished communal solidarity in future generations.

Recommendations:-

In view of the findings of this paper, the following recommendations were suggested:

1. There is a pressing need for the integration of structured Igala cultural education into formal and informal learning spaces across Kogi State. Educational institutions within Igala-speaking communities should incorporate indigenous language studies, oral traditions, local history and cultural heritage programmes into school curricula. Community-based cultural literacy initiatives should also be established to ensure that younger generations acquire practical knowledge of traditional values, customs and social responsibilities. This would strengthen cultural transmission and address the declining proficiency in indigenous language and historical awareness observed among many youths.
2. Traditional institutions and cultural custodians should collaborate with religious leaders, community associations and local government authorities to revitalise indigenous social structures such as age-grade systems, cultural festivals and communal rites in forms that remain socially relevant within contemporary society. Such revitalisation should not involve rigid resistance to social change but should focus on adapting these institutions to current realities while preserving their core social functions. For instance, annual cultural festivals can be modernised through digital promotion, youth participation incentives and educational exhibitions that reinforce communal identity and collective belonging.
3. There is also a need for deliberate policy and media-driven cultural preservation strategies aimed at balancing western exposure with indigenous value reinforcement. Local media platforms, digital content creators and cultural advocacy groups should be encouraged to produce and disseminate culturally relevant content in the Igala language that promotes traditional ethics, communal responsibility and historical consciousness. Government agencies and development partners should support documentation, archiving and digital preservation of Igala cultural practices. This would ensure that engagement with global modernity occurs in a manner that strengthens rather than erodes the sociological foundations of Igala cultural identity and social cohesion.

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