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## **An Examination of the Crisis of Cultural Identity in the Age of Globalization**

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### **Abstract**

The phenomenon of globalization has significantly transformed contemporary societies by increasing interconnectedness in economic, political, technological, and cultural spheres. While globalization has facilitated communication, mobility and cross-cultural exchange, it has also generated profound challenges for cultural identity, particularly in developing societies. This study examines the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization, focusing on how global cultural flows influence indigenous traditions, values, languages, and identity formation. The study adopts a qualitative research design based on secondary data drawn from books, journal articles, and scholarly reports. It is anchored on Cultural Globalization Theory and Cultural Imperialism Theory to explain how dominant global cultures influence local identities. Findings reveal that globalization creates a dual process of cultural integration and cultural dislocation. On one hand, it promotes multicultural interaction, modernization, and global awareness. On the other hand, it contributes to identity fragmentation, cultural homogenization, language decline, and weakening of traditional value systems. The study further finds that cultural identity is not entirely erased but increasingly negotiated through adaptation, resistance, and hybridization. The paper concludes that the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization reflects tensions between global influence and local cultural preservation. It recommends stronger cultural education, language preservation initiatives, and policy support for indigenous cultural production to sustain cultural identity in an increasingly globalized world.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Cultural Identity, Cultural Crisis, Cultural Imperialism, Hybridization, Identity Formation.

## Introduction

Globalization has become one of the defining features of the contemporary world, shaping the economic, political, technological, and cultural realities of societies across the globe. Broadly understood, globalization refers to the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of nations through the rapid movement of goods, capital, information, ideas, and people across borders (Giddens, 1990). This process has been accelerated by advances in communication technologies, digital media, transportation systems, and global economic integration, making the world increasingly interconnected. Among the various dimensions of globalization, cultural globalization remains one of the most debated because of its profound impact on identity, values, traditions, and social consciousness.

Cultural identity refers to the collective sense of belonging shared by individuals within a cultural group, expressed through language, religion, customs, values, traditions, history, and social practices. It shapes how people understand themselves and how they relate to others within society. Cultural identity is not merely a static inheritance from the past; rather, it is continuously constructed, negotiated, and reproduced through social interaction and historical experience (Hall, 1996). It serves as a foundational element in personal and collective self-definition, offering a sense of continuity, belonging, and meaning.

In the age of globalization, however, cultural identity has increasingly become a contested and unstable phenomenon. The rapid circulation of global media content, Western consumer culture, transnational migration, and digital communication platforms has intensified cross-cultural contact at an unprecedented scale. These developments have created opportunities for cultural exchange and global awareness, but they have also generated serious concerns regarding cultural displacement, identity fragmentation, and cultural homogenization. Many societies now face growing tension between preserving indigenous cultural identities and adapting to global cultural influences.

One of the central concerns in globalization studies is the growing dominance of Western cultural models in global communication systems. Through global media industries, multinational corporations, film, music, fashion, advertising, and social media, Western lifestyles and values are widely disseminated and often presented as universal standards of modernity, progress, and success (Herbert Schiller, 1976). This dominance has raised concerns that globalization may function as a form of cultural imperialism, where powerful cultures exert disproportionate influence over weaker or less economically powerful societies. In such circumstances, local cultures may become marginalized, leading to gradual erosion of indigenous traditions, languages, and value systems.

The crisis of cultural identity has become particularly evident in developing societies, where traditional cultural structures often coexist with rapidly expanding

global influences. In many African, Asian, and Latin American societies, younger generations increasingly consume global cultural products through streaming platforms, television, online communities, and social media platforms. This exposure influences their language preferences, fashion choices, music tastes, social relationships, and worldview. As a result, identity formation has become more complex, as individuals navigate between inherited cultural traditions and emerging global cultural expectations.

Despite these concerns, globalization does not always result in total cultural loss. Some scholars argue that cultures are not passive recipients of external influence but active agents capable of adaptation, resistance, and creative transformation (Arjun Appadurai, 1996). Rather than simple cultural domination, globalization often produces hybrid identities in which local and global cultural elements coexist and interact. This means that the crisis of cultural identity is not solely about cultural disappearance but also about negotiation, reconstruction, and redefinition of identity in changing social contexts.

However, the contemporary crisis of cultural identity therefore lies in the tension between cultural continuity and cultural transformation. Individuals and communities increasingly struggle to maintain authentic cultural values while participating in global modernity. This tension affects social cohesion, intergenerational relations, moral systems, and collective memory. The challenge is especially significant in societies where cultural heritage plays a central role in community organization and identity formation.

In view of the foregoing, this study examines the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization. It seeks to critically analyze how globalization influences cultural identity, whether through cultural erosion, identity fragmentation, cultural hybridization, or cultural adaptation. By exploring these dynamics, the study contributes to broader scholarly discussions on globalization, identity, and cultural transformation in the contemporary world.

### **Literature Review**

The concept of cultural identity in the context of globalization has attracted extensive scholarly attention across disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, media studies, and cultural studies. Scholars have debated whether globalization strengthens intercultural interaction and diversity or whether it contributes to cultural homogenization and identity crisis. While there is broad agreement that globalization has intensified cultural interconnectedness, there is less consensus regarding its long-term implications for indigenous cultures and identity formation.

One major perspective in the literature views globalization as a force of cultural homogenization. Proponents of this view argue that globalization promotes the spread of dominant cultural values, particularly those originating from Western

societies, at the expense of local cultural traditions. One major perspective in the literature is the cultural imperialism thesis which argues that globalization facilitates the dominance of powerful cultures over weaker ones through unequal media flows. This perspective suggests that global media circulation often privileges Western cultural values, thereby influencing local identities and cultural practices in developing societies (Schiller, 1976).

However, not all scholars interpret globalization as purely destructive to cultural identity. Anthony Giddens (1990) argues that globalization is better understood as intensified worldwide social relations linking distant localities. From this perspective, globalization creates complex networks of interaction that transform rather than simply erase local cultures. Cultural change becomes multidirectional, involving exchange, adaptation, and reinterpretation rather than one-way domination.

Similarly, Arjun Appadurai (1996) provides a more dynamic understanding through his theory of global cultural flows. He argues that globalization operates through multiple "scapes," including mediascapes, ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes. These interconnected flows shape how people imagine themselves and the world around them. Appadurai (1996) emphasizes that cultural influence is not linear; instead, local communities selectively interpret and appropriate global cultural elements according to their own social realities. This suggests that globalization may produce diverse cultural outcomes rather than uniform global culture.

Another influential perspective comes from Stuart Hall (1996), who argues that cultural identity should not be viewed as fixed or essential but as fluid and continuously constructed. This condition creates tension between rooted cultural belonging and global cultural participation. The concept of cultural hybridity has therefore become central to contemporary globalization studies. Marwan Kraidy (2005) argues that globalization often produces hybrid identities that combine local and global cultural elements. Rather than fully replacing indigenous cultures, global influences are frequently adapted into local contexts, resulting in new cultural forms. Hybridization explains why people may retain aspects of traditional identity while simultaneously embracing global lifestyles, technologies, and values.

In developing societies, the crisis of cultural identity is often more pronounced because globalization interacts with existing economic inequalities, colonial histories, and postcolonial cultural struggles. African scholars have observed that globalization significantly affects language use, traditional authority structures, family systems, and indigenous knowledge production. The spread of foreign media content has particularly influenced younger generations, who increasingly identify with global youth culture through music, fashion, digital communication, and celebrity culture.

Despite these challenges, many scholars emphasize resilience and cultural agency. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2009) argues that globalization should not be reduced to Westernization alone. Instead, it involves continuous interaction among cultures, producing multiple modernities and diverse identity outcomes. Local communities often resist cultural domination by revitalizing traditions, promoting indigenous knowledge, and adapting global tools for local cultural preservation.

Although there is extensive literature on globalization and culture, significant gaps remain regarding the precise mechanisms through which globalization produces identity crises. Much of the literature focuses broadly on global cultural transformation without sufficiently analyzing how identity conflict emerges at individual and community levels. This study addresses that gap by examining the crisis of cultural identity as a lived tension between cultural preservation and global adaptation. By doing so, it contributes to deeper understanding of identity formation in the age of globalization.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored primarily on Cultural Imperialism Theory, developed by Herbert Schiller (1976), and is complemented by insights from Cultural Hybridity Theory. These theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization by explaining both the structural inequalities in global cultural flows and the adaptive responses of local cultures to global influences.

Cultural Imperialism Theory emerged as a critical response to the growing global dominance of Western media institutions and communication systems. According to Schiller (1976), global media structures are largely controlled by economically powerful nations, particularly the United States and Western Europe, which possess superior technological infrastructure, financial resources, and institutional capacity for cultural production and distribution. This dominance enables Western societies to export cultural products, ideologies, values, and lifestyles across the world at a scale unmatched by developing societies.

The theory argues that media is not culturally neutral. Rather, media content often carries embedded ideological assumptions that reflect the worldview, social values, and political interests of dominant societies. Through repeated exposure, Western ideals such as consumerism, individualism, material success, liberalism, and modern lifestyle patterns are presented as universal standards of progress and civilization. As these values circulate globally, they may gradually displace, weaken, or marginalize indigenous cultural systems, especially in societies with weaker media production capacity. In this way, globalization may function as a form of symbolic domination, where local cultures increasingly measure themselves against foreign cultural standards.

Within the context of globalization, Cultural Imperialism Theory provides a useful explanation for the crisis of cultural identity. Continuous exposure to dominant foreign cultural models can create psychological, social, and cultural tension among individuals and communities. People may begin to detach from indigenous traditions while simultaneously struggling to fully assimilate into global cultural norms. This often produces identity fragmentation, cultural alienation, and weakened communal belonging. Individuals may feel disconnected from their historical roots while also experiencing uncertainty about their place within rapidly changing global cultural systems.

Within this study, Cultural Imperialism Theory explains how unequal global media structures intensify exposure to foreign cultural models, thereby influencing identity formation, cultural preferences, and value orientation among individuals in developing societies. Applied to this study, Cultural Imperialism Theory helps explain how globalization contributes to the crisis of cultural identity by exposing individuals and communities to powerful external cultural influences that shape perceptions of beauty, success, morality, lifestyle, and social desirability.

As a result, younger generations often experience tension between inherited cultural identities and emerging global identities. Traditional customs, indigenous languages, and communal values may increasingly be perceived as outdated or less prestigious compared to global cultural norms. This creates an identity crisis characterized by uncertainty regarding cultural belonging, self-definition, and cultural loyalty.

However, although Cultural Imperialism Theory offers valuable insights, it has notable limitations. Critics argue that the theory tends to be overly deterministic because it assumes that local cultures passively absorb foreign influences without resistance, reinterpretation, or creative adaptation. This criticism has led scholars to develop alternative perspectives that better account for cultural agency and the dynamic nature of identity formation.

To address this limitation, this study also draws from Cultural Hybridity Theory, advanced by scholars such as Marwan Kraidy (2005). Cultural hybridity emphasizes that globalization does not always result in complete cultural domination or cultural erasure. Instead, it often produces new cultural forms through interaction, negotiation, and adaptation between local and global influences. From this perspective, cultures are not static or fixed but dynamic systems that continuously evolve through contact with external forces.

Cultural Hybridity Theory complements this limitation by showing that local cultures are not passive recipients of globalization. Instead, they adapt, reinterpret, and integrate global influences into existing cultural systems, producing new hybrid identities (Kraidy, 2005). This perspective is essential for understanding why the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization cannot be reduced simply to

cultural disappearance. In many societies, globalization generates hybrid identities that combine local traditions with global influences. Such identities reflect continuous negotiation between cultural preservation and cultural adaptation. Identity therefore becomes fluid, multilayered, and increasingly shaped by both historical heritage and contemporary global interaction.

The combined use of Cultural Imperialism Theory and Cultural Hybridity Theory provides a balanced analytical lens for this study. Cultural Imperialism explains the structural power imbalance within global media systems and how this imbalance contributes to cultural identity crisis. Cultural Hybridity, on the other hand, explains how individuals and communities respond creatively to global influences through adaptation, resistance, and identity reconstruction. Together, these theories demonstrate that the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization should not be understood merely as cultural disappearance. Rather, it reflects an ongoing struggle involving cultural preservation, adaptation, negotiation, and transformation. Cultural identity in the global era is therefore increasingly fluid, contested, and continuously reconstructed through interaction between local traditions and global cultural forces.

### **Methodological Orientation**

This study adopts a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for examining cultural phenomena, interpretive meanings, and complex social processes associated with globalization and identity formation. The qualitative approach is particularly suitable because the study seeks to understand how globalization influences cultural identity through lived experiences, symbolic expressions, social interactions, and socio-cultural transformations rather than through numerical measurement or statistical generalization. According to John W. Creswell (2014), qualitative research enables in-depth exploration of social realities by focusing on meanings, interpretations, and contextual understanding. In the context of this study, this approach provides a suitable framework for analyzing the crisis of cultural identity as a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon shaped by global and local interactions.

The study relies exclusively on secondary sources of data. These include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic textbooks, scholarly monographs, conference proceedings, policy documents, and credible online academic databases related to globalization, cultural identity, media studies, sociology, and cultural transformation. The use of secondary data provides broad theoretical and empirical foundations for understanding the relationship between globalization and cultural identity. By drawing from established scholarly works, the study benefits from multiple perspectives and diverse conceptual approaches that enrich the analysis. These

sources also enable comparative understanding across different societies while maintaining focus on the central research problem.

In terms of research design, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. The descriptive aspect involves identifying and explaining observable patterns of cultural transformation associated with globalization. This includes documenting how globalization affects language, traditions, belief systems, social behavior, consumption patterns, and identity formation. The analytical aspect goes further by critically examining the mechanisms through which globalization produces identity-related tensions, cultural dislocation, and hybrid cultural expressions. Through this combined approach, the study moves beyond simple observation to offer critical interpretation of the crisis of cultural identity in contemporary societies.

The primary analytical technique employed is qualitative content analysis. Content analysis involves the systematic examination and interpretation of textual materials to identify recurring themes, conceptual patterns, and embedded meanings relevant to the research problem. This method allows the researcher to organize existing literature into coherent analytical categories and extract meaningful insights regarding globalization and identity transformation. The use of content analysis is particularly valuable because the subject under investigation involves abstract concepts such as identity, belonging, cultural continuity, and cultural crisis, which require interpretive rather than statistical analysis.

Through content analysis, several key analytical categories emerge as central to this study. These include cultural homogenization, identity fragmentation, cultural erosion, cultural hybridization, and cultural resilience. Cultural homogenization refers to the increasing similarity of cultural expressions due to global influence. Identity fragmentation describes the weakening or destabilization of coherent cultural self-definition caused by conflicting cultural pressures. Cultural erosion refers to the gradual decline of indigenous traditions, languages, and values. Cultural hybridization captures the blending of local and global cultural elements to form new identities. Cultural resilience highlights the capacity of communities to preserve and adapt their cultural heritage despite external pressures. These categories provide an interpretive framework for understanding the various dimensions of cultural identity crisis in the age of globalization.

The scope of this study is conceptual and global in orientation, focusing broadly on the crisis of cultural identity in contemporary societies affected by globalization. Particular attention is given to developing societies where the effects of global cultural flows are often more pronounced due to structural inequalities in media production, economic power, and cultural representation. The study examines how globalization influences cultural identity at both individual and collective levels, especially in relation to language, religion, social values, traditions, and identity construction.

The study is delimited in several ways. First, it does not involve primary data collection such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic fieldwork. Second, it does not employ quantitative or statistical techniques for data analysis. These limitations are intentional because the study prioritizes conceptual depth, theoretical interpretation, and critical analysis over empirical measurement. While primary data could provide additional insights into lived experiences, the use of extensive secondary literature remains sufficient for addressing the central objectives of the study.

Overall, this methodological orientation provides a strong analytical foundation for examining the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization. By integrating diverse scholarly perspectives and applying qualitative content analysis to existing literature, the study identifies consistent patterns in the interaction between global cultural forces and local identity systems. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how globalization simultaneously threatens, transforms, and redefines cultural identity in the contemporary world.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The analysis of existing scholarly literature on globalization and cultural identity reveals that the crisis of cultural identity in the contemporary era is characterized by a complex interaction between cultural continuity, disruption, adaptation, and transformation. The findings indicate that globalization has not simply erased local cultures; rather, it has intensified cultural interaction in ways that simultaneously challenge and reconstruct identity. Cultural identity in the age of globalization is therefore increasingly fluid, contested, and dynamic, shaped by the continuous interaction between local traditions and global cultural forces (Arjun Appadurai, 1996; Anthony Giddens, 1990).

A major finding of this study concerns the growing phenomenon of cultural homogenization. Globalization, especially through media and digital communication technologies, has accelerated the spread of dominant cultural models across the world. Western cultural products such as Hollywood films, international music, fashion industries, advertising, and social media trends increasingly shape global cultural preferences. This widespread circulation of dominant cultural content has contributed to the standardization of lifestyles, consumer behavior, language use, and social values. Many individuals, particularly younger generations, increasingly adopt globally popular cultural practices in ways that reduce attachment to indigenous traditions. This supports the argument of Herbert Schiller (1976), who maintains that global media systems often function as instruments of cultural dominance.

Another major finding relates to identity fragmentation. Globalization exposes individuals to multiple cultural systems simultaneously, creating competing identity

expectations. Traditional identities rooted in ethnicity, religion, family, and communal values now coexist with global identities shaped by digital culture, transnational media, and global social networks. This often creates tension between inherited cultural norms and modern global lifestyles. Many individuals struggle to reconcile traditional expectations with global cultural aspirations, leading to confusion, divided loyalties, and uncertainty in self-definition. The crisis of cultural identity therefore emerges not merely as cultural loss but as an internal struggle over belonging, values, and identity construction.

The findings further reveal significant language transformation and linguistic displacement. Language remains one of the strongest carriers of cultural identity because it preserves collective memory, indigenous knowledge, oral tradition, and worldview. However, globalization has strengthened the dominance of global languages such as English, French, and Spanish, particularly in education, media, business, and digital communication. In many developing societies, indigenous languages are increasingly marginalized as younger generations prefer globally dominant languages for social mobility and digital participation. This linguistic shift contributes significantly to identity crisis because loss of language often weakens cultural continuity and intergenerational transmission of values.

Another important finding concerns the transformation of social values and moral systems. Globalization has introduced alternative ethical frameworks centered on individual autonomy, personal freedom, consumer culture, and self-expression. These values often contrast with traditional communal systems that emphasize collective responsibility, respect for elders, social obligation, and communal solidarity. The increasing influence of global value systems has contributed to changing attitudes toward family structures, marriage, gender roles, social authority, and community life. In many societies, traditional moral frameworks are being questioned, renegotiated, or partially abandoned in favor of globalized cultural norms.

The study also finds strong evidence of consumerism as a cultural force. Global capitalism and digital media have created a global consumer culture in which identity is increasingly expressed through consumption patterns. Brands, fashion choices, gadgets, entertainment preferences, and lifestyle symbols have become important markers of identity. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube amplify this process by continuously promoting aspirational lifestyles. Individuals increasingly construct identity through visibility, branding, and digital self-presentation. This shift reinforces global cultural norms while reducing emphasis on traditional identity markers.

Despite these challenges, the findings also reveal substantial evidence of cultural adaptation and resilience. Local cultures are not passive victims of globalization. Instead, many communities actively adapt global influences to local

realities. Traditional music, language, religious practices, fashion, and cultural expressions increasingly appear in modernized forms within digital spaces. Communities use technology to document traditions, promote indigenous knowledge, and sustain cultural memory. This demonstrates that globalization can also create opportunities for cultural preservation and revitalization.

A particularly important finding is the emergence of cultural hybridity. Rather than total cultural replacement, globalization often produces hybrid identities that combine local and global cultural elements. Individuals may embrace global technology, media, and lifestyles while still maintaining aspects of traditional identity. For example, a person may participate fully in global digital culture while retaining indigenous language, religious beliefs, or cultural customs. This supports the argument of Marwan Kraidy (2005), who suggests that globalization frequently generates hybrid cultural forms rather than uniform global culture.

The discussion therefore shows that the crisis of cultural identity in the age of globalization has a dual character. On one hand, globalization intensifies cultural homogenization, identity fragmentation, linguistic erosion, and weakening of traditional value systems. On the other hand, it provides new spaces for cultural reinvention, hybridization, and resilience. The crisis of cultural identity should therefore not be understood simply as the disappearance of culture, but as an ongoing process of negotiation between continuity and change.

## **Conclusion**

The process of globalization has revolutionized the current cultural paradigm by making the interactions among people, ideas, technology, and institutions much stronger than ever before. Although this increased interaction offers many possibilities for cultural exchange and innovation in the context of global collaboration, there is also a number of issues related to the maintenance of cultural identity. The present paper proves that the problem of cultural identity crisis does not stem from globalization as such but is caused by the complex interplay between the pressure of cultural homogenization and the power of local cultures.

Using the theories of Cultural Imperialism and Cultural Hybridity, the research proves that globalization operates an uneven cultural influence through global media, consumer culture, and digital communication, which favors Western rather than indigenous values. All these factors lead to identity fragmentation, decline of languages, the breakdown of traditional value system, and communal sense of belonging. At the same time, the research finds that local cultures are not just passive victims of external cultural influence. Instead, people negotiate, interpret, and transform the elements of global culture in a new way, creating hybrid cultural identities.

From the foregoing discussion, one can deduce that the problem of cultural identity should not necessarily be seen as the loss of indigenous cultures, but as a continuous process of cultural negotiations where both continuity and change occur. Culture continues to be flexible and adaptive through continuous interactions with the world at large. In contemporary societies, it is necessary to take advantage of the benefits brought about by globalization without compromising the languages, culture, value systems, and memories that define their unique cultural identity.

For any society to preserve its cultural identity in the era of globalization, deliberate steps must be taken by the government and other institutions to ensure the promotion of indigenous languages, cultural industries, and cultural education, as well as the proper use of digital technologies for cultural preservation.

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