

## IMPACT OF URBANIZATION ON INDIGENOUS CULTURES IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examined the impact of urbanization on indigenous cultures in Plateau State, Nigeria. It proceeded on the assumption that while it is true that the originality of indigenous cultures is being threatened, urbanization remains contemporary reality and a vital part of modern life. Literature reviews have captured these dilemmas in places like Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Kaduna. Using a descriptive survey of 150 participants drawn from four Local Government Areas—Jos South, Mangu, Shendam and Langtang North—this research investigated how urbanization, popular culture, education, and media influence indigenous identity and cultural practices. Chi-square and descriptive analyses revealed that urbanization significantly affects traditional participation ( $\chi^2(2, N=150)=12.67, p<0.05$ ), popular culture reshapes identity ( $\chi^2(2, N=150)=14.52, p<0.05$ ), and education and media contribute to cultural assimilation ( $\chi^2(2, N=150)=10.84, p<0.05$ ). The findings indicate that modernization fosters development but also threatens the preservation of indigenous heritage. Recommendations were made to balance urban growth with

cultural preservation through education, media, and policy reforms.

**Keywords:** *Acculturation, Culture, Education, Indigenous, Media, Urbanization*

## **Introduction**

Urbanization has become one of the defining features of modern Nigeria, influencing social structures, economic patterns, and cultural identities. Over the past three decades, Nigeria's urban population has grown dramatically, accompanied by shifts in language use, traditional governance, and community rituals (Adeyemi & Musa, 2023). Plateau State, known for its rich cultural diversity, offers a compelling context for exploring how urbanization transforms indigenous ways of life.

As cities like Jos South, Mangu, Shendam and Langtang North expand, traditional systems of authorities and communal practices increasingly give way to modern social norms. While urbanization contributes to infrastructure, education, and innovation, it simultaneously poses risks to indigenous cultural continuity. Amadi (2024) notes that modernization often disrupts traditional belief systems, weakens communal bonds, and replaces indigenous knowledge with globalized lifestyles.

Despite these transformations, limited empirical studies have focused specifically on the cultural implications of urbanization in Plateau State. For instance, Adegbeye and Okonkwo (2022) focused on the extent to which rapid urbanization in Lagos and Abuja have contributed to the erosion of traditional values and indigenous identity among young people while Aliyu and Danjuma (2022) in another research evaluated the effects of modernization on traditional practices and belief systems among youths in Northern Nigeria but focused on Kano and Kaduna States. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating how urbanization, popular culture, and education/media shape indigenous cultural practices and identity across four selected LGAs.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Urbanization and globalization are reshaping the socio-cultural landscape of Nigeria, creating a tension between tradition and modernity. Adegbeye and Okonkwo (2022) and Aliyu and Danjuma (2022) have examined this phenomenon in Lagos and Abuja and Kano and Kaduna States respectively. In Plateau State, however, home to diverse

ethnic groups such as the Berom, Tarok, Goemai, and Mwaghavul, rapid urban expansion has led to the erosion of indigenous languages, ceremonies, and traditional governance structures. In this regard, cultural festivals such as Nzem berom, Bit goemai, Tarok day and Puuskat, once vital for trans-generational learning, are now being replaced by Western-style celebrations and media-driven events (Obaje, 2022).

Furthermore, younger generations increasingly adopt urban lifestyles and media preferences that devalue local traditions. Education systems and mass media, though vital for national development, often promote Western ideals while neglecting indigenous knowledge systems (Yakubu, 2024). Without deliberate cultural preservation strategies, Plateau State risks losing critical aspects of its identity and social cohesion.

As a departure from existing studies, this research examines these cultural shifts and erosion from a more objective perspective with emphasis on the need for a balanced coexistence rather than the bias position of considering one as a threat to the other. Thus, this study investigates the multifaceted impact of urbanization on indigenous cultures in Plateau State, examining how urban growth, popular culture, and education/media interact to shape cultural transformation

### **Objectives of the Study**

- i. To examine the effect of urbanization on indigenous cultural practices in Plateau State.
- ii. To investigate the influence of popular culture on indigenous cultural identity.
- iii. To explore the role of education and media in cultural assimilation.

### **Research Hypotheses**

- i. H<sub>1</sub>: Urbanization has no significant effect on indigenous cultural practices in Plateau State.
- ii. H<sub>2</sub>: Popular culture has no significant influence on indigenous cultural identity in Plateau State.
- iii. H<sub>3</sub>: Education and media have no significant relationship with cultural assimilation in Plateau State.

## **Literature Review**

### **Concept of Urbanization**

Urbanization is commonly considered an outcome of movements of populations from rural to urban areas, leading to the expansion of towns and cities and the transformation of social and economic structures (Adeyemi & Musa, 2023 and Rangel et al 2024). According to Yadav (2021) industrialization, employment, the standard of living, education and income, are factors that motivate rural people to move to urban areas. For example, in Nigeria, urbanization has accelerated rapidly due to industrialization, improved infrastructure, and internal migration. The 2022 National Population Commission report estimated that over 52% of Nigeria's population now resides in urban centers, compared to just 10% in 1950. This rapid change has been accompanied by shifts in lifestyle, family patterns, and cultural practices (Eze & Danjuma, 2023).

In Plateau State, urbanization has resulted from government decentralization policies, agricultural commercialization, and the growth of educational and administrative institutions. Towns such as Jos south, Mangu, Shendam and Langtang North have become semi-urban centers attracting diverse populations, thereby altering traditional settlement patterns and community relationships (Yakubu & Maimako, 2023).

### **Indigenous Culture and Cultural Identity**

Indigenous culture encompasses the customs, traditions, beliefs, languages, and social systems that characterize a specific ethnic group and are transmitted from one generation to another (Adebayo, 2022). Cultural identity, according to Amadi (2024), is the sense of belonging to a group that shares common heritage, language, and values. These indigenous systems serve as moral compasses, regulate social behavior, and preserve collective memory. However, modernization and exposure to foreign cultures threaten these indigenous structures, especially when younger generations view them as outdated or incompatible with contemporary life.

Plateau State, home to more than 40 ethnic groups, including the Goemai, Berom, Mwaghavul, Tarok, and Ngas, have historically been known for its

strong indigenous traditions such as the Puuskat, Bit goemai, Nzem berom and Irigwe festivals. Yet, increasing urban contact has diluted these practices, with many youths abandoning local dialects and festivals for urban entertainment and global media consumption (Obaje, 2022).

### **Urbanization and the Transformation of Indigenous Cultures**

The relationship between urbanization and indigenous culture is complex and often contradictory. On one hand, urbanization promotes economic and infrastructural growth; on the other, it displaces traditional institutions and belief systems (Danjuma & Abubakar, 2023). In their study on the Jos metropolitan area, Yakubu and Maimako (2022) found that urban growth has reduced participation in communal farming, storytelling, and local governance structures. Similarly, Adebayo (2022) observed that cultural rituals once central to identity formation are increasingly commercialized or abandoned altogether.

Furthermore, urbanization brings about cultural hybridization—where local traditions merge with global influences, producing new cultural forms that are neither entirely indigenous nor wholly foreign (Eze & Danjuma, 2023). While this process can promote creativity, it also leads to cultural dissonance and generational gaps in value transmission.

### **Popular Culture and Cultural Erosion**

Popular culture, driven by music, film, fashion, and social media, has become a major agent of cultural change. In Nigeria, platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube shape youth identities and influence language, fashion, and behavior (Amadi, 2024). This exposure often leads to the imitation of Western norms and lifestyles, displacing local expressions of art and tradition.

Eze and Danjuma (2023) argue that popular culture, though offering a sense of global belonging, erodes communal identities that sustain indigenous societies. In Plateau State, youths increasingly prefer hip-hop and Afrobeats to traditional dances such as Nshok and Puskun, signaling a gradual shift from communal to individualistic expression.

## **Education, Media, and Acculturation**

Education and media are powerful agents of socialization and cultural transmission. While they are instrumental in national development, they also serve as vectors for cultural change. The formal education system in Nigeria has historically prioritized Western content, neglecting indigenous history, languages, and epistemologies (Danjuma & Abubakar, 2023). Consequently, many students grow up alienated from their native traditions and are more attuned to globalized perspectives.

Mass media reinforces this transformation by portraying urban and Western lifestyles as superior to rural and traditional ones (Adeyemi & Musa, 2023). Television, radio, and online platforms rarely showcase indigenous practices, leading to reduced interest among younger generations. Yakubu (2024) emphasizes that this imbalance contributes to the decline in local language fluency, traditional art, and indigenous moral systems in Plateau State.

## **Empirical Review**

Empirical studies on urbanization and its influence on indigenous cultures in Nigeria have produced a range of findings. This section presents a review of six selected studies that provide relevant insights into the dynamics of cultural change, modernization, and identity among indigenous populations. Each study is summarized in terms of its objectives, methodology, major findings, recommendations, and its difference from the current study.

Adegboye and Okonkwo (2022) investigated the extent to which rapid urbanization in Lagos and Abuja contributes to the erosion of traditional values and indigenous identity among young people. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, using questionnaires administered to 250 respondents across urban centers. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Results revealed a significant decline in indigenous language use, traditional dressing, and local festivals, primarily due to the influence of Western media and education. The authors recommended integrating indigenous culture into urban education curricula and promoting local media content that reflects Nigerian heritage. While their study focused on urban centers in the South-West and Federal Capital Territory, the present

research examines the Middle Belt region (Plateau State), where cultural pluralism and traditional practices remain strong despite urban pressures.

Aliyu and Danjuma (2022) assessed how modernization affects traditional practices and belief systems among youth in Northern Nigeria. Using a mixed-method approach, the researchers conducted 20 key informant interviews and distributed 300 questionnaires in Kano and Kaduna States. The study found that modernization and exposure to global culture have led to a decline in communal living, respect for elders, and indigenous rites of passage. They recommended youth sensitization programs that blend modern education with indigenous moral instruction. Aliyu and Danjuma's work was largely exploratory and focused on religious and moral aspects of cultural change, whereas the current study places emphasis on identity, education, and social participation in the Plateau State context.

Gyang and Pam (2023) examined how urban expansion and infrastructural development in Jos Metropolis affect the cultural heritage of indigenous groups such as the Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta. They achieved this by using a qualitative case study method, with interviews conducted among 30 traditional leaders, artisans, and community elders. The study revealed that urban expansion has led to the demolition of ancestral compounds, reduced participation in traditional festivals, and the decline of indigenous crafts. They suggested policy interventions that protect cultural sites and involve local communities in urban planning. While Gyang and Pam focused on physical displacement and heritage conservation, the current study adopts a broader sociocultural perspective, including education, media influence, and identity transformation.

In their study, Yakubu and Maimako (2023) analyzed the effects of urban growth on community transformation in Jos Metropolis, Plateau State. A cross-sectional survey involving 200 participants was conducted using structured questionnaires. The data were analyzed with chi-square tests to determine the relationship between urbanization and community values. Urban growth was found to not only increase social mobility but also weaken traditional authority structures and communal decision-making. The authors advocated for community-based urban policies that respect traditional governance systems and promote cultural continuity. Though this

study was conducted in the same geographical area, it primarily examined urban governance and social transformation. The current study, however, emphasizes indigenous identity, acculturation, and the role of education and media.

Chukwu and Bello (2022) investigated how social media and digital communication influence youth cultural identity in Nigerian urban centers. A descriptive survey design was used with 350 urban youth respondents across six states. The study found that social media is a major driver of cultural assimilation and it promotes Western fashion, music, and language at the expense of indigenous values. The authors recommended media literacy programs that encourage critical consumption of global media content and promotion of local culture online. Their study focused on digital influence, while the current study integrates media as one of several urbanization factors (alongside education and migration) affecting indigenous cultures in Plateau State.

Eniola (2024) explored urban hybridization and cultural adaptation in middle-belt Nigerian cities. The study used ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews across three middle-belt cities—Makurdi, Lafia, and Jos—covering 45 participants. The study identified hybrid cultural expressions, such as the fusion of traditional music with modern genres and the adaptation of indigenous festivals to urban contexts. By way of recommendation, Eniola proposed that urban policymakers recognize cultural hybridity as a means of preserving heritage while embracing modernity. While Eniola's study examined cultural fusion broadly, the current study provides quantitative analysis of how education, media, and migration influence indigenous identity and participation in Plateau State.

Overall, previous studies agree that urbanization, modernization, and media exposure have profound effects on indigenous cultural practices, leading to both erosion and transformation of traditional values. However, most of the existing literature focused either on the southern or northern parts of Nigeria, often neglecting the unique cultural diversity of Plateau State. The present study therefore fills this gap by specifically analyzing the multifaceted effects of urbanization—through education, migration, and media—on indigenous identity and cultural participation in Plateau State, using a mixed-method and region-specific approach.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on Cultural Modernization Theory and Acculturation Theory. These two theories jointly provide a foundation for understanding how urbanization influences indigenous cultures and identity transformation in Plateau State, Nigeria. Cultural Modernization Theory Propounded by Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005, 2022) while Acculturation Theory was Propounded by John W. Berry (1980; revised 1997, 2003, and 2023).

### **Tenets of Cultural Modernization Theory**

Cultural Modernization explains the shift in societies' value systems as they move from traditional agrarian lifestyles to modern industrial and post-industrial societies. The major assumptions include:

- I. Value Shift: Economic and technological development transforms people's priorities from survival values (tradition, religion, obedience) to self-expression values (individualism, rationality, and autonomy).
- II. Erosion of Traditional Structures: Urbanization and industrialization weaken traditional social institutions such as extended families, kinship ties, and chieftaincy systems.
- III. Cultural Diffusion: Exposure to global media, education, and communication spreads modern lifestyles, thereby reducing adherence to indigenous norms.
- IV. Social Transformation: Modernization introduces new forms of identity and behavior, redefining people's worldview and cultural orientation.

The theory is relevant to the current study because it provides an explanatory framework for understanding how the forces of modernization and urbanization contribute to the gradual decline of indigenous practices in Plateau State. As cities like Jos, Mangu, Shendam, and Langtang North continue to expand, traditional institutions, local languages, and festivals face the threat of extinction due to changing social and economic realities. This theory thus explains the transformation of indigenous values into more modern, urban-centered orientations observed among the study population.

### **Tenets of Acculturation Theory:**

Acculturation Theory focuses on the cultural and psychological changes that occur when individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds come into continuous contact. Berry identifies four acculturation strategies, which describe how people respond to intercultural encounters, they include:

- I. Assimilation: Individuals adopt the culture of the dominant group and abandon their original culture.
- II. Integration: Individuals maintain aspects of their indigenous culture while adopting elements of the new one.
- III. Separation: Individuals reject the dominant culture and cling to their traditional customs and values.
- IV. Marginalization: Individuals lose identification with both their native and the dominant cultures, resulting in cultural alienation.

Acculturation Theory is relevant to the current study because it explains how indigenous communities in Plateau State adapt to the pressures of urbanization and globalization. Many residents of urban centers integrate modern lifestyles—education, fashion, and media use—while still maintaining certain traditional practices and festivals. Others, however, assimilate completely, abandoning their native languages and cultural expressions. The theory thus helps to interpret the varying levels of cultural adaptation, resistance, and hybridization observed among Plateau people experiencing urban transformation.

Put together, both Cultural Modernization Theory and Acculturation Theory complement each other in explaining cultural change. While Cultural Modernization Theory focuses on why traditional practices decline due to modernization and urban growth, Acculturation Theory focuses on how individuals and communities negotiate their cultural identity during this transformation. Together, they provide a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which urbanization reshapes indigenous culture, social behavior, and identity in Plateau State, Nigeria.

## Methodology

### Research Design:

The study adopted a descriptive survey designed to gather data on respondents' perceptions of urbanization and cultural change.

### Participants:

A total of 150 participants were drawn from four Local Government Areas in Plateau Senatorial Districts: Jos south, Mangu, Shendam, and Langtang North. Stratified random sampling ensured fair representation of gender, age, and occupation. Gender: 60 males (40%) and 90 females (60%), Age range: 18–60 years (Mean = 34.5, SD = 8.6), Occupation: 40 students, 50 civil servants, 35 traders, and 25 artisans, Education: 30 with secondary education, 95 with tertiary education, and 25 with postgraduate qualifications

### Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire validated through a pilot test (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.82$ ). It covered demographic details, traditional participation, exposure to popular culture, and the impact of education/media.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Chi-square) at a 0.05 significance level.

### Results:

**Table 1:** Descriptive characteristics of respondents by local government area.

Local Government Area	N	Mean (Cultural Participation)	SD
Jos south	40	3.42	0.71
Mangu	35	3.38	0.69
Shendam	35	3.56	0.74
Langtang North	40	3.60	0.66
Total	150	3.49	0.70

The mean score (M = 3.38, SD = 0.58) suggests moderate participation in indigenous cultural practices, with Shendam respondents showing the highest engagement

**Table 2:** Chi-square test results for hypotheses.

Hypothesis	Variable Relationship	$\chi^2$ Calculated	df	$\chi^2$ Critical (0.05)	p-value Decision
H1	Urbanization Cultural Practices	12.67	2	5.99	<0.05 Reject H <sub>1</sub>
H2	Popular Culture Cultural Identity	14.52	2	5.99	<0.05 Reject H <sub>2</sub>
H3	Education/Media Cultural Assimilation	10.84	2	5.99	<0.05 Reject H <sub>3</sub>

$\chi^2$  tests conducted at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

### Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the impact of urbanization on indigenous cultures in Plateau State, focusing on how urbanization, popular culture, education, and media influence traditional cultural practices and identity. The hypotheses were tested using chi-square analysis, and the results showed that all three factors—urbanization, popular culture, and education/media, had significant effects on indigenous culture.

The first hypothesis tested whether urbanization has a significant effect on indigenous cultural practices in Plateau State. The chi-square result ( $\chi^2(2, N=150)=12.67, p<0.05$ ) indicated a significant relationship, suggesting that urbanization contributes to a decline in indigenous participation in traditional events, rituals, and communal practices. This finding aligns with Adeoye (2022), who observed that rapid urban expansion in Nigeria often weakens traditional kinship structures and diminishes participation in local festivals and rites. Similarly, Oshagwu and Ibrahim (2023) reported that migration to urban centers results in

reduced transmission of indigenous knowledge and oral traditions among younger generations.

However, while some scholars argue that urbanization erodes traditional culture, Eniola (2024) posits that urban centers can also serve as platforms for cultural hybridization, where traditional values adapt rather than vanish. This nuanced view suggests that urbanization, though disruptive, can also create opportunities for the revitalization of indigenous expressions in contemporary forms.

The second hypothesis examined whether popular culture influences indigenous cultural identity. The chi-square result ( $\chi^2(2, N=150)=14.52, p<0.05$ ) confirmed a significant relationship. Respondents exposed to global entertainment and social media demonstrated a greater preference for non-indigenous fashion, music, and communication patterns. This finding corroborates Chukwu and Bello (2022), who found that social media and Western entertainment significantly reshape youth identity and cultural values in urban Nigeria. Likewise, Musa and Nwosu (2023) emphasized that exposure to global digital content promotes cultural assimilation, often replacing indigenous narratives with global trends.

Contrarily, Yakubu (2024) contended that popular culture can coexist with traditional culture if local creators actively infuse indigenous elements into modern media. This suggests that the erosion of indigenous identity is not inevitable but contingent on how cultural producers negotiate globalization.

The third hypothesis assessed the relationship between education, media, and cultural assimilation. The result ( $\chi^2(2, N=150)=10.84, p<0.05$ ) revealed a significant relationship, indicating that higher education levels and greater media exposure correspond with higher adoption of non-indigenous cultural practices. This finding supports Olorunfemi and Tanko (2023), who noted that Western-oriented curricula and globalized media foster the internalization of foreign values at the expense of local traditions. Similarly, Adetola and James (2024) found that tertiary education, without the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems, contributes to the gradual loss of local languages and practices among Nigerian youth.

Nevertheless, Bulus and Dung (2023) argued that education could serve as a preservation tool if curricula integrate indigenous knowledge, folklore, and values. The implication is that the negative influence of education and media is not inherent but results from the neglect of cultural inclusion in learning and broadcasting systems.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that urbanization, popular culture, and education/media significantly affect indigenous cultures in Plateau State. While urban development brings socio-economic benefits, it simultaneously erodes traditional practices, languages, and community values. A balanced approach to modernization is essential to sustain cultural identity amid urban expansion.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, which revealed that urbanization, popular culture, and education/media significantly influence indigenous cultures in Plateau State, the following recommendations are proposed to promote a balance between modernization and cultural preservation:

1. Integrate Indigenous Education Curriculum reform is essential to ensure that indigenous knowledge, languages, and history are systematically incorporated into formal education. Schools at all levels, primary, secondary, and tertiary, should embed local history, folklore, proverbs, and traditional knowledge systems into their syllabi. This integration would not only preserve cultural heritage but also instill a sense of identity and pride among younger generations. Teacher training institutions should also prioritize the development of culturally responsive pedagogy, equipping educators to effectively teach and transmit indigenous values alongside modern knowledge. Such reforms will align education with cultural sustainability goals and help mitigate the cultural displacement often associated with Westernized education.
2. Establish Cultural Centers in Each Local Government Area (LGA) To preserve and revitalize indigenous practices, every Local Government Area—particularly Jos

south, Mangu, Shendam and Langtang North—should establish functional cultural preservation centers. These centers would serve as hubs for organizing traditional festivals, exhibitions of indigenous crafts, music, and dance, and for recording oral traditions and folklore. They should also provide vocational training in local crafts and arts, ensuring intergenerational transmission of cultural skills. By institutionalizing these centers, communities will have structured environments for the promotion and continuity of their cultural heritage amidst urban transformation.

3. **Strengthening Media Collaboration** Media remains one of the most powerful tools for cultural communication in the 21st century. It is therefore recommended that the Plateau State Ministry of Information, in collaboration with local filmmakers, radio and television stations, and social media influencers, produce content that celebrates indigenous heritage. Documentaries, talk shows, and dramas featuring local dialects, proverbs, and traditions should be regularly broadcast. Additionally, social media campaigns highlighting the beauty and relevance of local culture should be promoted among youth audiences. Strategic use of both traditional and digital media can counteract the dominance of foreign content and promote positive representation of indigenous identities.
4. **Implement Policy and Institutional Interventions** The government, in partnership with traditional councils, should develop and enforce policies that promote cultural preservation as an integral component of urban development planning. Urban policies should mandate the inclusion of cultural considerations in infrastructure projects, housing schemes, and community development initiatives. Local government authorities should also provide funding for cultural documentation, research, and heritage tourism. By embedding cultural sustainability into governance and planning, Plateau State can balance modernization with the protection of its rich indigenous heritage.
5. **Enhance Youth Engagement in Indigenous Culture** Young people are vital custodians of the future, and their involvement in cultural preservation is critical. Programs should be designed to actively involve youth in traditional festivals, crafts, music, and storytelling. Scholarships, awards, and grants can be established for students and youth groups that promote indigenous culture through academic

projects, performances, or innovations. Schools and communities should create cultural clubs where students can learn and perform traditional arts. Such initiatives would make cultural participation appealing to younger generations and ensure continuity of indigenous practices in an urbanizing society.

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