INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

GLOBALISATION AND RELIGIOSITY: THE EFFECTS OF WESTERN VALUES ON RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR.
(A STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF UYO, NIGERIA).

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ABSTRACT: The study examines the effects of globalization, measured on the variables of habits of reading of secular materials, watching of the television and keeping of multiple memberships in social clubs, on the religious behaviour of College students, measured on the inclination towards bible reading, attendance at religious functions and memberships in religious organisations. Of the 300 students chosen purposefully for the interview, it was found that those who scored greater than average on the factors measuring globalization (70% on TV watching; 81.6% on secular material reading habit and 52% on social club memberships) also tended to be less involved on those factors measuring religiosity. Conversely, those who were low on those factors (30% on TV watching; 18.4% on secular material reading habit and 48% on social club memberships) tended towards a high level of religious commitment. On grounds of the inverse relationships and the importance of the religious component of social life, it is recommended that efforts be intensified at minimising the frequency of contact of the youth with those agents of secularising influences, especially the tevision and pornographic materials, as well as education.

Key Words: Globalisation, Religiosity, Information Technology.

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation is fast becoming a household word and every aspect of life, social and non social, now measures itself in terms of the benefits or otherwise, it derives from this fast spreading trend. On the other hand, decreasing religiosity as an emerging form of modern social life and its dangers are becoming issues of concern to social scientists. This development, decreasing religiosity, has undermined the importance of the religious factor (Lenski, 1963) in human behaviour. Furthermore, there is an increasing tendency by social scientists to exclude from consideration the religious dimension of human behaviour from most of the conference themes in recent times. A random sampling of ten conference topics organised by social science departments in the past three years in

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ten universities in Nigeria reveals that only two (20%) out of the ten bothered to include any topics or subthemes that touch on the social impact of religion.

The increasing drift away from that which is immediately perceptible is, in fact, an unfortunate development in the area of sociology of religion, for it suggests rather glaringly our inability to differentiate between what is intrinsic to religion as an ideology from the specific forms of expressing that intrinsicality in a social context. Social scientists and, in fact, other professionals have long discovered the religious component of human behaviour even in the most apparently profane and secular of human activities. Recognizing the importance of the religious behaviour in social life, Gollin (1970) long ago advised that any theory of society must take into account the role of religion. A deliberate de-emphasis on the religious dimension is not only a disservice to man as an inherently religious being, driven by certain religious traits, but a barrier to the theoretical advancement in the field of sociology of religion. Additionally, the tendency to minimise the religious dimension is capable of falsifying the conclusions of our scientific ventures since such would be drawn from partial premises. This study attempts to resurrect an interest in the "religious man" by examining the negative aspects of globalisation on the African culture. Also argues that the forces of globalisation have led to increasing secularisation and subsequent neglect of the religious element in human behaviour thereby signaling a bleak future in social life.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Because of the multiplicity of meaning given to this concept, it has become necessary to specify its usage at each instance. The multi-dimensionality of the concept has already been noted (Yaqub, 2003). This characteristic, Yaqub rightly observes, renders the concept not easily amenable to acceptable definition. While some have suggested that it is a "misleading concept since what is described as globalisation has been happening for over 500 years" (Wallerstein, 2000), others see it as a recent development that cannot be traced beyond the last two decades (Khor, 2001). The diversity of opinions on the issue compels us therefore to adopt only a "working definition," but one that is good enough to see us through until a consensus is reached.

Accordingly, this paper adopts one of the many definitions provided and considers globalisation to refer to "the tremendous revolutionary changes in information and communication technologies, among others, leading to the villagization of the globe" (Yaqub, 2003). Referring to the changes resulting from globalization, Shofoyeke (2004) reports that Held (1999) sees such changes as pointing to... a gradual transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transaction assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact- generating intercontinental and inter-regional flows and networks of activity. This paper examines the negative effects resulting from

this phenomenon in the area of religion due to the rapid expansion of its world-wide influence especially in regard to information and communication technologies. Specifically, globalisation is equated with the unilateral expression and forceful imposition of those western values in the culture which emphasise contractual, commodity and secular modes with a corresponding de-emphasis on the spiritual aspects of social life. Therefore the phenomenon describes the impact of the western culture and its norms, values, structures and institutions on the rest of the world (Ritzer, 2000). Such values find easy expression in modern forms of communication through reading of secular materials, TV viewing and social club memberships, among others. Although these values are well appreciated by other cultures as well, they are seen to be given more than necessary expression, almost to the degree of obsession and addiction, among westerners.

RELIGIOSITY

Our definition of religiosity follows that provided by Yinger (1969-1970) which has been accepted by most scholars of religion. Religiosity according to Yinger, refers to the highly visible religious traditions among a group, and individuals' relationship to them in terms of belief and participation. Operationally, such individual religiosity can be measured through such variables like church attendance and individual participation in various forms of church activities. It is impossible to avoid this empiricist approach to religion due in part to the inability of social scientists to reach a consensus about what really constitutes the religious experience. In many ways, one has to agree with Luckman's indictment many years ago that what one finds in the study of religion is a sociology of "frozen forms" of religion, a sociology of churches, rather than of religion (Luckman, 1967). This assessment is as true as ever since much of what passes strictly for religion remains invisible and, in measuring the degree of religiosity, one can only look for their external manifestations. Considered thus, decreasing religiosity must be differentiated from:

i) **Religious decline** - as a progressive reduction in the number of religious institution and structures; and

ii) **Religious change** - as social change induced by religious forces, or such change within the institution itself.

THE PROBLEM IN CONTEXT

With the clarification of the two concepts above, the study now undertakes to examine the relationship between them. The benefits accruing to nations as a result of globalisation in the area of trade, foreign investment, skills acquisition and technology transfer have been noted (Khor, 2001), although these benefits have to be understood with much caution because of the unilaterality that often accompanies North-South

relationships. Other benefits of globalisation have also been acknowledged. For example, according to Held et. al (1999), globalisation has led to the emergence of a global economy, expansion of transactional linkages between economic units, creating new forms of collective decision-making... and intensification of transactional communications. Although these authors tend to see these developments as the cause rather than the result of globalization, others like Gibbons (2000) consider them to be the direct impact of the forces of globalisation.

On the other hand, despite the acknowledged benefits of globalization, Yaqub has enumerated some negative returns of the phenomenon especially on the South or Third world nations to include, among others: marginalization, de-industrialisation and entrenched monocultural and stagnated economy (Yaqub, NSS, March 2003). For now the dilemma faced by African nations particularly, is how to erect appropriate structures to buffer the challenges of the forces of globalisation which are observed particularly in the areas of net flows of information, capital investment, technology and values and norms. Since religion falls under the cultural dimension of globalisation this paper examines the area of the transmission of western values and norms through the sweeping wind of globalisation and their net effect on religion as a core value in African culture.

THE STUDY

With the use of judgmental sampling, the study, based on self-reports, interviewed 300 students from the university of Uyo on attitudes which distinguish those students with a flair for western values (aspects of globalisation) from those who are more traditionally oriented. Those values as reported by the students interviewed are in turn correlated with corresponding attitudes towards the spiritual dimension as manifested in their religious behaviour (aspects of religiosity). The attitudes measuring western values as aspects of globalisation include:(i) Average time spent on TV programmes daily, (ii) Regularity of reading of non-religious magazines and literature weekly; and (iii) Number of memberships in social clubs. Behavioural attitudes measuring the degree of religiosity centered on: (a) number and types of membership in religious organisations, (b) regularity in attendance at church/religious functions; and (c) average time devoted to bible study weekly. Specifically, it is suggested that a student is more likely to be pulled towards a western life style: (i) the more time he spends watching TV, (ii) the more time he allots to the reading of magazines and newspapers; and (iii) the greater the number of memberships retained in social clubs.

Conversely, it is suggested that a student is less likely to be religious when there is (a) none or weak membership in religious organisations, (b) irregular and infrequent attendance at religious functions; and (c) little or no time devoted to bible study weekly. The typical respondent was either a final or semi-final year student of either the faculty of

social sciences or Arts in the University of Uyo. No importance was attached to departmental variation as this was unnecessary due to the nature of the variables involved. The median age of respondents was twenty-four. While all the respondents were from (reported) middle class backgrounds, the majority (76%) were final year students and most (82%) were males. The study uses measures of reported behaviour as indices of attitudinal measures, and the responses on each measure are divided into three categories as in the tables below for visual inspection.

MEASURES OF ATTITUDINAL ORIENTATION

Tables relating indices of aspects of Globalisation to Religiosity

(a) **Hours on TV Programmes daily**

		Low 0 - 1	Average 2 – 3	High 4 and above
Church Attendance	Regular	40 (13%)	50 (16.7%)	-
	Occasionally	-	-	210 (70%)
	Never	-	-	-

(b) **Hours on Magazines/Secular Lit. Weekly**

		Low 0 - 1	Average 2 – 3	High 4 and above
Private Bible Reading	Regular	22 (7%)	32 (10.7%)	130 (43 %)
	Occasionally	-	-	-
	Never	-	-	116 (38.6%0

(c) **Membership in Social Clubs**

		Low 0 - 1	Average 2 – 3	High 4 and above
Church/ Religious Function	Regular	42 (14%)	-	-
	Occasionally	-	102 (34. %)	156 (52 %)
	Never	-	-	-

RESULTS

The tables above relate students' inclination towards western values, measured on the three independent variables of: (a) No. of hours on TV programmes daily, (b) No. of hours devoted to reading of magazines and secular literature weekly, and (c) No. of memberships in social clubs, to students' religious inclination, measured in terms of the three dependent variables of: (a) frequency of church attendance, (b) frequency of

private bible reading, and (c) frequency of attendance at church/religious functions.

The observed results are as follows: The 210 (70%) students who indicated a greater than average time (4 hrs. and above) to TV programmes daily also reported going church rather occasionally as against 40 (13%) and 50 (16. 7%) in the low and average categories respectively who do so regularly (table a). In table (b) of the 246 (82%) students with frequent habit of reading of secular magazines and related literature, 130 (43%) reported occasional reading of the Bible and other religious materials in their private time, while 116 (38.6%) never do so. This is against the 22 (7%) students in the low category who do so regularly and the 32 (10.7%) students who do so occasionally.

Finally, in table (c) the 156 (52%) students with average to high memberships in social clubs also reported a less than regular attendance at church and religious functions. This is against the 42 (14%) who are low in social club memberships and attending religious functions regularly and the 102 (34%) with average social club memberships and also attending religious functions occasionally.

In all cases, an inverse relationship is observed between those attitudes reflecting western values which are here considered as independent variables and actual religious behavior as dependent variables. Similar observations were made on other variables. For example, a negative association between watching an entertainment show or football in the television on Sunday morning and going to church was recorded. The above associations, however, are not intended to suggest any cause-effect relationships as it is becoming increasingly clear that in the social realm influence may flow as two-way streets, making it difficult to know which is the cause and which the effect. But they are not worthy because of their ability to enhance theoretical propositions and guide future research.

For example, in a previous study on rural people, religious forces were found to be responsible for the eroding of many African traditional values (Umoh, 1999). In this study, western values are seen to be largely responsible for student's decreasing religiosity. This seeming contradiction may be explained by the differences in the two populations. As pointed out by Kohn (1977) the values of rural people usually differ from those emphasized by an enlightened population, like the college students in the present study.

DISCUSSION

The associations above tend to suggest that exposure to modern values as a result of the influence of globalisation can lead to a decreasing trend in religious behaviour. The gradual drift towards an unregulated use of modern technological facilities and gadgets by the youths has been recoded. Critics are as concerned about the amount of time that children spend watching television as they are about the content of the material viewed. For example, more than three decades ago, Brenner (1970) reported that by the time

the average child is sixteen, he has watched from twelve thousand to fifteen thousand hours of television. This, he says, is the equivalent of fifteen to twenty months of watching.

It is obvious that the greater the time devoted to recreational values and entertainment by the media, both print and electronic, the less the time left for promoting other values as the above associations suggest. The African has been rightly described as being religious by nature. This religiosity, far from finding its locus in the western idea of religion with its focus only in the churches, is a natural inclination to reference towards the unseen and wholly-other on which he anchors his belief, trust and hope (Nwanunobi, 1992). Despite some positive benefits attributable to globalisation in the religious sphere, for example, media evangelism and cross-cultural religious contact through the exchange of religious personnel and ideas, its negative effects on religious behaviour are enormous. The greatest of such effects is the drift towards irreligiosity. For example, among the factors identified as being responsible for eroding traditional African religious practice are the tendencies towards modernisation (Umoh, 1999).

In view of the above, it is here maintained that globalisation in its present form as the tendency towards world-wide cultural unification is ill-suited for the African terrain and worldview. Therefore, the paper advocates a return to the African values of commitment to the spiritual and attachment to the world of the ancestral spirits. Such an approach is capable of stemming some of the devastating influences of globalisation. Our changing values due to globalisation have left much to be desired. There is the decline in the moral standards and values among university students as this study shows, and in the society at large. Youths are increasingly manifesting values that are no longer influenced by parents, religion or traditional standards. The high level of moral decadence and general value disorientation of our youth especially those in higher institutions of learning can be easily noticed in the mode of dressing, practice of cultism, disrespect for discipline, examination malpractice, assaults, molestation and sexual laxity including prostitution and abortion.

Furthermore, along with adult supervision and screening of the materials that children watch and read, parents should also control the entertainment behaviour of their wards through allowing them only specific periods of the day for such activities. Such will provide more time to acquaint themselves with matters of religion. The justification for such an approach is that the fear of punishment by the ancestors emphasized by the African Traditional Religion and worldview is capable of reducing the preponderance of crime in the cities, the natural habitat of globalisation.

The increase in moral decadence which manifests itself in various forms of antisocial and criminal behaviour in both private and public life can very well be blamed on the neglect of the spiritual dimension of human behaviour noted in this study. Another effect in the profuse production and dissemination of obnoxious materials by the media is that the unmindful consumer is gradually manipulated into drifting away from issues of

social relevance and moral integrity. This is more so when the consumer-victim is a tender mind which is yet to be trained to distinguish between phantasy and reality.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The critical issue raised by the variables measuring globalization especially regarding the access to television and secular reading materials centers around the use of modern information technology which the UK Department of Industry in 1981 publication defined as:

> *The acquisition, processing, storage and dissemination of vocal, pictorial, textual and numerical information by a micro-electronic-based combination of computing and telecommunications.*

No one doubts the immense benefits that humanity can derive from the proper use of modern communication media nor can one be so naive as to deny the dangers inherent in their misuse. This paradox has been captured by the topic chosen by the Catholic hierarchy to mark the 2004 (38th) World Communication Day- 'The media and the family: A Risk and a Richness' The potential benefits that accrue from the use of these gadgets are enormous and unquantifiable. On the other hand, the areas of misuse are also beyond imagination. Such include the dissemination of materials which promote pornography, violence, fraud, forgery and aggressive behaviours which disturb children and are capable of being part of their real life.

With as many as 210 (70%) and 246 (81%) of the students interviewed recording a greater than average period in their daily/weekly contacts with the television and secular reading materials respectively, the amount of knowledge acquired through these sources are better imagined than experienced. These include education and learning through the use of internet and websites, exposure to current breakthroughs in the area of scientific development, easy access to information and various forms of knowledge, entertainment and promotion of social values, among others.

In conclusion it can be maintained that, since there appears to be a correlation between the secular and religious/ethical values in this sample, one way to promote moral integrity especially in the youth is to encourage a reduction in contact with these channels. This can be done through education on the dangers of certain types of programmes and columns in the television and weeklies respectively. The institution of the 'family hour' not only is capable of reducing the unregulated use of these gadgets by children but also assures adult supervision over the quality of the materials watched. While television is useful, desirable and almost unavoidable it is a great danger to leave children alone with it. Worse still is the internet in which there is no control over its offerings, thus leaving the adventurous and inquisitive child with a knack for the sleazy to

go over its limits. The challenges posed by the new technologies, not only to religion but to other areas of social life, make their regulated use a necessity. Such challenges include the violation of privacy, commercial exploitation through glamorous and seductive advertising, sexploitation, debasement of taste and the creation of a sense of social anomie that leads up to the break up of the family, among others. While the conclusions drawn from the variable associations of the study (globalisation and decreasing religiosity) may be noteworthy, it is necessary to warn that they are to be regarded as tentative since they are drawn from observations only without the usual statistical tests of significance. Since the study cannot provide a conclusive test of the theoretical model for the relationships, future research is necessary with the use of quantitative data in order to provide statistical tests of the relationships for the purpose of conclusion-drawing and wider generalisation.

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