**What is Westernization?**

Westernization is a process whereby societies come under or adopt Western culture in areas such as industry, technology, law, politics, economics, lifestyle, diet, language, alphabet, religion, philosophy, and values. Westernization has been a pervasive and accelerating influence across the world in the last few centuries, with some thinkers assuming westernization to be the equivalent of modernization, a way of thought that is often debated. The overall process of westernization is often two-sided in that Western influences and interests themselves are joined with parts of the affected society, at minimum, to change towards a more Westernized society, in the hope of attaining Western life or some aspects of it. To assume, however, Western societies are not affected or changed by this process and interaction with non-Western groups is misleading.

Westernization can also be related to acculturation and enculturation. Specific to westernization and the non-Western culture, foreign societies tend to adopt changes in their own social systems relative to Western ideology, lifestyle, and physical appearance, along with numerous other aspects, and shifts in culture patterns can be seen to take root as a community becomes acculturated to Western customs and characteristics in other words, westernized.

Westernization refers to the act of bringing ideas or ways of life that are typical of Western Europe and North America to other countries. Therefore, western culture connotes the knowledge, belief, morals and way of life of the Western world.

**The History of Westernization in Africa**

The historical context of Westernization in Africa is the encounter with Europe, under the specific conditions of the Atlantic slave trade and the European colonial adventure, which was its logical extension. The forced acculturation of the black populations in the New World, already in full swing by the mid-eighteenth century, represents the first sustained assimilation of Western culture by Africans. It is significant to note the contribution that diaspora blacks were later to make to the process of Westernization in Africa, notably through their role in Christian evangelization and education.

The colonial factor was essential to the process of Westernization in Africa itself. The comprehensive reorganization of African societies in every sphere of life signaled a new dispensation that functioned as the comprehensive framework of the African experience under colonialism. The boundaries that resulted from the nineteenth century partition of Africa were determined without regard to antecedent institutions and cultures; the entities that emerged from partition represented a patchwork of administrative territories that in the twenty-first century have evolved into "modular states," each encompassing a diversity of languages and ethnicities. The colonial powers, especially the French and the Portuguese, undertook a systematic dismantling of indigenous institutions in order to establish colonial rule as the primary source of legitimacy in the territories they controlled. Moreover, they imposed new legal systems based upon European concepts of law, often at variance with indigenous legal systems and almost always with serious implications for such questions as property and inheritance.

It is against this background of the desegregation of African societies and the destabilization of African life that the impact of Christianity has to be considered, for this has been the most important single factor in the process of Westernization in Africa. Western education, involving literacy and the mastery of a European language, became the condition for entry into the modern sector. For most of the colonial period, education was in the hands of the Christian missions, who sought not only to convert Africans but also to inculcate Western values. In West Africa, the assimilation of Western lifestyles was mediated by returnees from the diaspora—the West Indians, Brazilians, and Sierra Leoneans—whose education and skills enabled them to play an effective role in Christian evangelization and the nascent colonial civil service; their relatively privileged status enabled them to serve as a major reference group for indigenous Africa .

Christianity challenged traditional belief systems and promoted the diffusion of new ideas and modes of life; in particular, it sought to impose monogamy and the nuclear family as the norm. Romantic love and new conceptions of the self emerged, a development that was reinforced in the postwar period by the influence of the cinema and popular literature from the West. All over the continent throughout the colonial period, Africans were adopting new habits and acquiring new tastes derived from Western culture, often considered progressive in relation to traditional culture. This cultural revolution came to be associated with the new elite that was spawned by Christian education, an elite developed from an initial body of clerks, interpreters, and later, of teachers and lay preachers, expanding with time to include professionals, especially lawyers and doctors.

As with other societies and cultures in the so-called Third World, the impact of Western civilization on Africa has occasioned a discontinuity in forms of life throughout the continent. This has led to a cultural dualism that often presents itself as a real dilemma in concrete, real-life situations. In other words, the African experience of modernity is fraught with tensions at every level of the communal and individual apprehension. African nationalism was predicated on the conjugation of nation-building and economic development as a means for the improvement in standards of living. Beyond these immediate objectives, it was concerned more fundamentally with the establishment of a new order informed by modern concepts of political life and behavior and by a rationality in conformity with a modern world outlook. The upheavals of the post independence era have derived from the stresses arising from the quest for this ideal. It is thus fair to observe that the fundamental issue with which the contemporary societies of Africa are confronted is that of their full and orderly accession to modernity, that is, to a mode of collective organization based on the model of the liberal and democratic nation-state and of the industrial-technological civilization, a model that is associated with the West.

Westernization describes the formative influence of western powers on political, economic, social, and cultural conditions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is mainly used in the prevailing sense of cultural westernization, with reference to the persistent intellectual, creative, and habit-forming impact of the west on the rest of the world, even after formal decolonization. Proponents welcome the modernizing effects of westernization, critics consider it a form of hegemonic “cultural imperialism.” Although westernization can be substantiated through quantitative data regarding imports and exports, postcolonial studies in particular have qualified the real effects of “western” culture on the rest of the world.

**THE EFFECT OF WESTERNIZATION IN AFRICA**

The negative effect of westernization in Africa:

Africa has been failed by westernization.According to author Chigozie Obioma touches on the issue of how westernization has to a great extent affected Africa negatively. He argues that westernization brought through the colonization of Africa has led to the diminishing of their traditional beliefs and culture. He further emphasizes the impact of westernization on political ideologies, specifically mentioning the proliferation of western education that resulted in the increase of ‘westernized-elites’. A main point of his argument was that on an international level, Africa has always been known strictly for its performance art. Historically, there has been few African originated political or economic ideologies presented to the world due to insistence on the implementation of western ideologies, thus, the statement above made. The whole core of his essay highlighted the negative effects of westernization in Africa and how it has essentially harmed the African populations, forcing them into a condition whereby it is hard for them to grow and develop. Obioma concludes that the only way to break out of this influence is for them to realize that aping the west is not the solution at all in becoming modernized and civilized (Obioma, 2017).

Since the dawn of the twenty first century, Westernization has been a phenomenon that has been spreading across the globe at a tremendous rate. The spread of Westernization can be attributed to many factors of which Globalization can be said to have played a very crucial role in its spread.

Nigeria like many country in the world has always been at the receiving end of these western norms and value system where the negative aspects of these western norms and value system is now something that is witness in the lives of many Nigerians, and of course the positive impact are things nobody wants to emulate or make part of their everyday lives. The negative impact of westernization has since spread its tentacles to every nook and cranny of the Nigerian state thus influencing and changing the culture of many tribes and ethnic group in the country.

A renowned scholar once defined Culture as the "way of life of a particular people living in a particular place". From this definition given, one can readily say that the ways of westernization was never part of Nigerians as a people living in a particular place.

A growing trend now in Nigeria that is almost becoming a norm is the way many Nigerians dress, while many will say "to dress decent is a choice" they tend to forget that from the pre colonial era, Nigerians have always have different dress attire that has always been the embodiment of Nigerian traditional value and culture system, dress attire that are very beautiful and more often than not provoke the envy of many westerners. The way many Nigerians dress nowadays often make one to wonder about the moral scruple of that individual, this is most common with some Nigerian women, you take a good look at the way some women dress in the society and you cannot help but marvel at the level of indecency being display, they reveal almost all the things that shouldn't even be revealed, things that should only be seen by their husband alone, should you even ask why they display such things in public, they tell you it’s their body and they can decide to do whatever they what to do with it. More often than not these women who often flaunt their intimate parts are often at the receiving end of many men who most times mistake them for commercial sex workers, the women in turn tend to pour their anger at these men forgetting that in Nigeria today most people react to what they see and hear in the society. What this is trying to say is the fact that we Africans forgot about her modern ways of dressing since the advent of westernization, before we were always dressing decently wearing cloths that would cover our whole body but now we feel the less decent we dress the more we are trending which isn’t supposed to be.

Let us shift our attention now to another trend that is by far worse than that of indecent dressing, "Infidelity", you take a very good look at Nigeria today and you just can't help but marvel at the way some married men cheat on their wives at will. Before the spread of westernization, infidelity was something that was severely treated and spoken against in Nigeria, should a man or woman cheat on his or her spouse, that person will be brought to the village square and flogged, but now all you see are married men engaging in the act and still say that there is absolutely nothing wrong for a man to cheat on his wife. The Women now have also joined the men in this abysmal act, some women now a-days tend to copy what their male counterparts are doing, that is cheating on their husband, when asked why they engage in such act, they tell you "what a man can do a woman can do better" that is cheating is not only good for a man but good for a woman.

Among all these things, the issue that really calls for concern is the issue of "homosexuality". To the Nigerian traditional man, homosexuality is a foreign word and should one try to explain it to him, he will rebuke you with all the might he can muster. Be that as it may, homosexuality is now almost becoming as morally right as infidelity and indecent dressing, although the National Assembly have banned the act, this does not however stop many from engaging in it. The pressure from many foreign countries on Nigeria's stand on homosexuality goes a long way to say that many Nigerian homosexuals both home and abroad are lobbying for the National Assembly to legalize the act. Although the Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs have reiterated Nigeria's stand on homosexuality, many foreign organizations seem not agree with it saying that it is an individual’s fundamental human right. What they seem to forget is that such a thing was and still is a taboo in our many traditional norms and value system in the country today.

To give an example about thus homosexuality in Africa, before the beginning of westernization there was nothing like Gay marriage or the lgbtq family. All we had was marriage between a man and a woman but now we have more than that and all this is due to the fact that we copy the western lifestyle and feel everything they do is good. Now we have girls doing surgeries to become a boy and we also have men dressing like women and all this is because of westernization.

The positive effects of westernization in Africa:

First of all, let look at the language aspect, in Nigeria alone we have more than 30 languages and it not possible for everyone to understand all languages and that would make communication difficult because it not only people of your culture you will meet in life. Therefore English has been of good help because almost 80% of Africans can at least speak the basic English and that can help them communicate with others. English language has been adopted as the official language and has been used in educating Nigerian citizens.

Another positive effect of westernization in Africa is the economic aspect, A major effect of westernization was the progressive integration of Africa into the world capitalist system, within which Africa functioned primarily as a source of raw materials for Western industrial production. There was imposition of taxation, which forced Africans into wage labour

Colonial economy also caused agriculture to be diverted toward the production of primary products and cash crops: cocoa, groundnut, palm oil, sisal, and so on. Due to the Western world there was sudden shift in production mode from production of food crops to cash crops, a situation that caused hunger and starvation in Africa. Africa began to produce more of what she needs less and produce less of what she needs most. Africa was perpetually turned to producer of primary raw materials, a situation that caused unequal exchange

Another positive impact of westernization is the Christianity: The impact of Christianity has to be considered, for this has been the most important single factor in the process of Westernization in Africa. Western education, involving literacy and the mastery of a European language, became the condition for entry into the modern sector.

**The cultural change that have taken place in my local community upon the advent of westernization**

First of all what is cultural change? Culture change is a term used in public policy making that emphasizes the influence of cultural capital on individual and community behavior. It has been sometimes called repositioning of culture,which means the reconstruction of the cultural concept of a society. It places stress on the social and cultural capital determinants of decision making and the manner in which these interact with other factors like the availability of information or the financial incentives facing individuals to drive behavior.

Talking about the cultural change that has occur since the advent of westernization, we can talk about the following and how it has affected my own local community.

1. Education : Long before the Europeans arrived, education had been part of Nigerians. The Children were taught about their culture, social activities, survival skills and work. Most of these education processes were impacted into the children informally; a few of these societies gave a more formal teaching of the society and culture.In these Societies, there are formal instructions that governed the rites of passage from youth into adulthood. The youth is expected to have attained the necessary social and survival skills as well as having a grounded knowledge in the culture. These are the foundations of education in Nigeria, and upon them were the western education implemented upon European Education was introduced into Nigeria in the 1840s. It began in Lagos, Calabar and other coastal cities. In a few decades schooling in English language gradually took roots in the Nigeria. During the Colonial years, Great Britain did not promote education. The schools were set up and operated by Christian Missionaries. The British colonial government only funded a few schools. The policy of the government was to give grant to mission schools rather than expand the system. The beginning of education has been of great impact to the people of Africa and giving my local community has an example, we have been given the opportunity to school and most of the people in the community attend school even if it just primary school. Most people have been given a chance to go to school in my community wether private or government owned. Also in my community alone there are schools in it starting from kindergarten to the university level. The western education is been thought in the school and this schools end up producing good students and extremely brilliant students who are willing to help in the development of the community.
2. Religion: The Western religions refers to religions that originated within Western culture, and are thus historically, culturally, and theologically distinct from the Eastern religions. The term Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) is often used instead of using the East and West terminology. Western culture itself was significantly influenced by the emergence of Christianity and its adoption as the state church of the Roman Empire in the late 4th century and the term "Christendom" largely indicates this intertwined history. Western Christianity was significantly influenced by Hellenistic religion (notably Platonism) as well as the Roman imperial cult. Western Christianity is based on Roman Catholicism (Latin Rite), as opposed to Eastern Orthodoxy, from which it was divided by the Great Schism of the 11th century, and further includes all Protestant traditions splitting off Roman Catholicism from the 16th century. Since the 19th century, Western religion has diversified into numerous new religious movements, including Occultism, Spiritism and diverse forms of Neopaganism.

The start of religion has helped reduce the traditional religion and also it has given people new hope and a sense of believe. In my community almost every street has a church or a mosque, and this has helped almost everyone to find the religion that suits them more. It has created peace and love in the community because we all believe we are one. For instance the Christians, if one of their members aren’t around they ensure to visit such member so as to be sure nothing is wrong. It has bonded us all together in my community and has helped us live in harmony.

1. Ways of dressing: African clothing is the traditional clothing worn by the people of Africa. In all instances except rural areas these traditional garments have been replaced by Western clothing introduced by European colonialists. African clothing and fashion is a diverse topic that is able to provide a look into different African cultures. Clothing varies from brightly colored textiles, to abstractly embroidered robes, to colorful beaded bracelets and necklaces. Since Africa is such a large and diverse continent, traditional clothing differs throughout each country. For example, many countries in West Africa have a “distinct regional dress styles that are the products of long-standing textile crafts in weaving, dyeing, and printing", but these traditions are still able to coexist with western styles. A large contrast in African fashion is between rural and urban societies. Urban societies typically are exposed more to trade and the changing world, while it takes more time for new western trends to get to rural areas. People in Africa wear traditional cultural clothing.

In my community, the western ways of dressing has taken over the way we dress and has made us in the community to even forget about our African cloth because all we do is wear cloth from the western world. The impact of the westernization in the aspect of dressing hasn’t been too good because it made us forget our own. In my community hardly do I see people dressed in the cultural way, but a lot are dressed in jeans and shirt for the boys and the girls skirt ad top.

In conclusion:There are a lot of things that the westernization has brought to Africa as a whole and they all have ways in which they benefit the people , but also breaking it down smaller, we will find out that some communities still live like there isn’t westernization. In my community we are privileged to have at least experienced the western life and also the cultural changes it brought to the community.