
**Traditional Clothing as a Medium of Cultural Identity and Heritage
Preservation Among the Idoma People of Ogbadibo, Nigeria**

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Abstract

Traditional clothing is an important cultural resource whereby the indigenous communities are able to express their identity as well as their cultural heritage. This research investigated the role of traditional clothing as a medium for cultural identity expression and cultural heritage preservation among the Idoma people of the Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was employed to gather data on the community perspectives on the practices of traditional clothing. A structured questionnaire was employed to gather data from 60 respondents purposively selected from families with strong cultural ties within the Ehaji (1) community. The data collected were measured on a four-point Likert scale and were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean scores and standard deviations with a criterion mean of 2.50 employed for decision-making purposes. The results indicated a strong level of support for the fact that traditional clothing is an important medium for the reinforcement of cultural identity as well as a sense of belonging and cultural pride among the Idoma people. The respondents agreed that the traditional clothing is an important mechanism for the preservation of cultural heritage as it is a medium that is imbued with both tangible as well as intangible cultural aspects such as indigenous skills, meanings, as well as knowledge transfer from one generation to the other. High mean scores also indicated that the traditional clothing is a medium for non-verbal cultural communication as a means for the preservation of cultural continuity despite globalization and modernization pressures. This research concludes that the traditional clothing is a dynamic as well as a resilient cultural medium that is important

for identity expression as well as cultural heritage preservation among the Idoma people. It is recommended that there is a need for greater cultural education as well as support for artisans who are involved with the production of the clothing as a valuable resource for cultural heritage preservation purposes.

Keywords: Traditional clothing; Cultural identity; Cultural heritage; Idoma people; Indigenous culture; Nigeria.

1. Introduction:

“The traditional clothes are at the very center of social and cultural life among the indigenous groups of a society.” They are more than just fabric and stitching they are a “manifestation of what people are and what their community values as a whole as they come from their cultures.” In African cultures, clothes are a multilayered symbol of identity and meaning that includes “status, age, belief systems, and affiliation.” For a particular community of Idoma from Ogbadibo LGA of Benue State, Nigeria, traditional clothes, particularly apa fabric and their accessory pieces, are “integral parts of important ceremonies, festivals, and occasions when clothes play a major role in marking and symbolizing their identity and values as a society celebrating life and dignity as a whole.” However, with rapid “modernization and globalization trends,” clothes are changing as a symbol and active involvement with traditional clothes is diminishing as a result of this changing world order, thereby making it a timely and topical issue to investigate how traditional clothes serve as a “medium and symbol of cultural expression and preservation of cultural identity and heritage in this community and others as a whole” as well (Ugbem, 2014; Akpa, 2017; Innocent and Jaja, 2024; Olugbenga et al., 2025).

In indigenous societies, identity is crafted out of shared symbols, traditions, and means of expression, where clothing is one of the strongest and most direct indicators of these. Traditional clothing provides an avenue for people to declare their affiliation with a certain ethnic group and their connection with their ancestral heritage. For the Idoma, clothing serves as a method of Non-Verbal Communication that reflects communal values, roles, and pride. When Idoma people wear their traditional clothing, especially during communal events, they are binding themselves within a history that unites them all even as they establish their belonging within that particular community. Idoma people are therefore not only adorning themselves but also speaking a language of community that articulates their identity within their cultures (Baitzel & Goldstein, 2014; Onah, 2018; Kumatia & Gavor, 2022; Aier, 2024).

“Traditional dress is a vital part of the cultural heritage, in that it combines what we can touch and what we know.” Thus, in the area of the material, dress, materials, and accessories reflect material culture, the outcome of local resources, expert hands, and common aesthetics. In the intangible heritage, the craft of the use, significance, and interpretation of dress is handed down through practice and word of mouth. In the Idoma culture of Ogbadibo, traditional dress is more than the aesthetic appeal, carrying historical narratives, moral precepts, and religious significance that transcend the aesthetic appeal of the dress itself. When this is handed down through transmission and worn at significant ceremonies, it becomes a “living archive of cultural

heritage.” Therefore, the significance of traditional dress is that it is “not a static artifact,” but a “dynamic resource that serves to sustain the indigenous heritage” (Okpeh and Ochefu, 2010; Ugbem, 2014; Rashdan et al., 2024; Song et al., 2024).

However, despite its level of significance, there remains an interesting absence of empirical studies on how traditional clothing influences cultural identity and heritage conservation specifically in Idoma culture at the local level. Most studies on traditional clothing in Nigeria are wide-ranging and national in focus, thereby making it easy for many societies, including Ogbadibo, to be underrepresented or have little representation in those works. In addition, there comes the influence of modernization and an emerging trend of adopting European traditional clothing, particularly among the younger generations, which poses a potential risk to how traditional clothing practices can continue into the future. Unfortunately, without concrete empirical studies on this matter, it remains difficult to have empirical cultural policy initiatives, education, and heritage conservation efforts specifically targeted at Idoma culture for this aspect and more of traditional clothing and its influence on Idoma heritage and identity (Kasfir, 1985; Utoh-Ezeajugh, 2023; Ogli, 2023; Utoh-Ezeajugh and Ume, 2025).

The aim of this study is to examine traditional clothing as a medium for expressing cultural identity and preserving cultural heritage among the Idoma people of Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- (i) Examine the role of traditional clothing in shaping and expressing cultural identity;
- (ii) Assess how traditional clothing contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage; and
- (iii) Explore the intergenerational dimensions of traditional dress practices within the community. Through these objectives, the study provides a focused analysis of clothing as both a cultural symbol and a heritage resource.

To achieve the stated objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- (i) What role does traditional clothing play in shaping and expressing cultural identity among the Idoma people of Ogbadibo?
- (ii) How does traditional clothing contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage within the community? and
- (iii) In what ways does the transmission of traditional clothing practices across generations support cultural continuity? These questions frame the empirical inquiry and guide the analysis of findings.

This study contributes to scholarship in Home Science, cultural studies, and fashion studies by providing localized empirical evidence on the cultural functions of traditional clothing in a Nigerian indigenous community. By focusing on the Idoma people of Ogbadibo, the research enriches understanding of how dress operates as a medium of identity and heritage preservation in everyday and ceremonial contexts. The findings have practical significance for cultural educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to promote indigenous heritage and youth engagement. Additionally, the study offers a foundation for future research on cultural

sustainability and the role of material culture in preserving identity within rapidly changing social environments.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive method of the survey design, which is most appropriate for the investigation of how people think, believe, and behave within a specified group at a specified time. This study design enabled us to collect quantitative information on how traditional attire assists with the formation of cultural identity and the preservation of heritage among the Idoma of Ogbadibo. The study adopted the descriptive method because the research sought to record the existing cultural practices and interpretations without changing the variables involved to ensure that the responses of the researched reflect the actual experiences of the community.

2.2 Study Area: Ogbadibo Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria

This research was conducted in Ogbadibo LGA in the Southern part of Benue state. This region is largely comprised of the Idoma ethnicity, of which Ogbadibo is remarkably notable in its rich cultural traditions in dress and festivities. This region has both rural and semi-urban settlements with activities mainly involved in farming, trading, and crafts. This research was conducted specifically in Ehaji (1) community in view of its rich cultural heritage in observing dress code traditions in cultural ceremonies.

2.3 Study Population

It selected its respondents from some identified Ehaji (1) households noted to be rich in cultural information and practical experience with the traditional dress culture. Three ancients of the indigenous families were purposely selected: the Ajene, Owoicho, and Ogwuche lineages. The total study population selected included 60 family members, with 20 representing each family. These families were considered as representatives of the cultural identity of the Idoma people in Ogbadibo, showing continued involvement with traditional practices.

2.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Because the group size was limited, the entire population of 60 respondents constituted the sample. The sample was a purposive one selected so that participants possessed relevant cultural exposure and understanding of traditional clothing practices. This method is very well-suited to cultural studies where the depth of lived experience matters more than randomness of sampling. It ensured data that was rich, context-specific, and most directly relevant to the aims of this study.

2.5 Research Instrument

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to meet the objectives of the study and guided by related literature. The questionnaire was designed to capture the views of the respondents on traditional dress regarding their cultural identity and their heritage.

2.5.1 Questionnaire Structure and Measurement Scale

The questionnaire consisted of four sections:

- **Section A:** Role of traditional clothing in cultural identity
- **Section B:** Traditional clothing and cultural heritage preservation
- **Section C:** Intergenerational transmission and continuity of dress practices
- **Section D:** Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

A 4-point Likert measurement scale was employed to quantify responses, structured as follows:

Response Option	Score
Strongly Agree (SA)	4
Agree (A)	3
Disagree (D)	2
Strongly Disagree (SD)	1

The use of a four-point scale eliminated a neutral option, encouraging respondents to express clear opinions on each statement.

2.6 Validity and Reliability of Instrument

To ensure content and face validity, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review by three academics in Home Science and Management with specialization in cultural studies and research methodology. Their feedback informed revisions to ensure clarity, cultural appropriateness, and alignment with the study objectives. Reliability of the instrument was assessed through internal consistency checks. Although the study was community-based with a small population, consistency in responses across related items indicated that the instrument reliably measured constructs related to cultural identity and heritage preservation.

2.7 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through direct, face-to-face administration of the questionnaire by the researcher. This approach was adopted to accommodate varying literacy levels among respondents and to allow immediate clarification of questionnaire items where necessary. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, and all administered copies were retrieved on the spot, resulting in a 100% response rate.

2.8 Data Analysis Techniques

Collected data were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, specifically mean scores and standard deviation. The mean score for each questionnaire item was computed using the expression:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N} \quad (1)$$

where:

\bar{X} = Mean score

$\sum X$ = Sum of respondents' scores

N = number of respondents.

A criterion mean of 2.50 was used as the decision benchmark. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered *agreed*, while items with mean scores below 2.50 were considered *disagreed*. Results were presented using tables and summary charts to enhance clarity and facilitate interpretation.

2.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards appropriate for social and cultural research were strictly observed. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and no identifying information was included in the analysis or reporting of results. The study respected local cultural norms, and data collection was conducted with the approval and cooperation of family heads and community elders. The research was carried out solely for academic purposes, with findings intended to support cultural preservation and scholarly advancement.

3. Theory / Conceptual Framework

3.1 Concept of Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a sense of belonging which is common to a group of persons. In other words, it is something which is generated within a society through actions, material, and symbolic forms. In relation to indigenous societies, identity is not far from those things which are tangible, like language, ceremonials, festivals, and clothes. In regard to the Idoma, Ogbadibo, Nigeria, identity is not something which is inherited; it is something which is acted out, and traditional clothes are some of the basics of identity itself. This particular research adopts a sociocultural perspective where identity is viewed as a dynamic concept.

3.1.1 Clothing as a Symbolic Signifier of Identity

Dressing serves as a powerful symbolic code through which cultural messages can be conveyed without uttering a single word. Based on a dress theory analysis, dressing is a signifying system consisting of a set of signs pointing towards ethnic belonging, social class, age, sex, and moral virtues. For instance, traditional attire such as apa cloth worn by the Idoma people represents

ethnic identity, ancestry, and belonging. Color schemes used in these outfits, as well as their modes of wear, possess culturally defined messages distinctively separating the Idoma people from other ethnic groups.

3.1.2 Clothing and Social Belonging

In addition to its symbolic meaning, clothes have a pivotal role in creating a sense of social identity and cohesion. Participation in social events by wearing clothes that correspond to an appropriate cultural setting has a significant effect on creating a sense of inclusiveness and identification with a particular social context or group. In Idoma culture, for example, engagement in cultural functions while clad in traditional attire helps in creating personal and social identity linkages. Persons who identify with traditional attire are considered well-grounded in their culture and have strong affiliations, whereas those who do otherwise appear distant from their culture.

3.2 Cultural Heritage Theory

A cultural heritage theory provides a perspective through which an understanding of how communities protect and transmit their cultural expressions can be attained. Cultural heritage is not an inert asset but a dynamic process that is shaped by common memory, skill, and redefinition. This paper is based on a UNESCO perspective that emphasizes the importance of safeguarding both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Traditional garments act as cultural heritage that contains knowledge and cultural significance.

3.2.1 Tangible & Intangible Cultural

The tangible cultural heritage would include material objects such as textiles, clothing, and accessories, while intangible heritage would include knowledge, meanings, and practices relating to their production and use. In the case of the Idoma, traditional clothing is a mixture of both. The clothing is a material aspect of their intangible cultural heritage, while its making through weaving, sewing, and understanding, as well as use, can be considered intangible heritage. Furthermore, to preserve traditional clothing, one not only needs to preserve the clothing but also the knowledge systems.

3.2.2 Traditional Clothing as Material Culture

In consideration of material culture studies, clothing and other artefacts may also be regarded as bearers of social meaning and cultural memory. Traditional clothing serves as a symbol of past experiences, adaption to the environment, and social organization. The Idoma's choice of textile, pattern, and style of dress corresponds to regional resources, aesthetic preferences, and cultural narratives. The consideration of traditional clothing as material culture means that this investigation views clothing as an active participant in social life, as opposed to being passive objects, in constructions of identity and heritage.

3.3 Dress & Communication Theory

Clothing functions like an ideographic language, where messages are transmitted without using words, revealing who we are, where we come from, and who we belong to. This explains why what people wear communicates messages about identity, status, values, and belonging. Wearing traditional fabrics in Ogbadibo communicates messages about valuing tradition, showing allegiance to Idoma traditions, and being one of them. These messages reach their target because there exists a common code, where both senders and receivers interpret these messages within a cultural context. Traditional fabrics, therefore, are a system of codes within a cultural setting that reinforces identity and heritage.

3.4 Transmitting Intergenerational Cultural Knowledge

"Intergenerational transmission theory" focuses on how culture's know-how and values are transmitted from generation to generation through knowledge passed from senior to junior generations. Clothing culture is at the very apex of this knowledge transmission and is actually a practical means of imparting knowledge. In an Idoma setting, senior generations use traditional clothing to teach the younger generations during cultural events such as festivals and initiation ceremonies. This practical way of imparting cultural knowledge ensures that culture and identity are embedded in the junior generation through practical learning rather than theoretical impartation since the use of such clothing is becoming less practical or normal.

3.5 Traditional Clothing as Cultural Resistance in a Globalized World

With the advent of globalization, it can also be cited that cultural resistance through dress culture can be adopted as the cultural identity in the Idoma culture. The modern trends in fashion and Western fashion are finding their ways in defining daily fashion trends and among the generation that matters most-the youths. The indigenous fashion trend in the Idoma culture can be viewed as a significant demonstration of the determination to cultural identity and freedom in an era where cultural homogenization is gradually taking place. The adoption and sustenance of cultural dress in public gatherings and events can be viewed as a way of demonstrating resistance against the destruction of indigenous culture and values.

Conceptual Framework of the Study (Narrative Description)

The conceptual framework guiding this study is based on the interaction between traditional clothing, cultural identity, and heritage preservation, moderated by intergenerational transmission and globalization pressures.

Traditional clothing serves as the central independent cultural variable, functioning simultaneously as a symbolic marker, material culture, and communication medium. This influences cultural identity (sense of belonging, pride, and recognition) and cultural heritage preservation (continuity of values, knowledge, and practices). Intergenerational transmission strengthens this relationship, while globalization and modernization act as external pressures that may weaken it.

Text-based representation of the framework:

Traditional Clothing	→	Cultural Identity
Symbolism, Dress Practice	→	Belonging, Pride, Recognition
Traditional Clothing	→	Heritage Preservation
Material Culture, Craft Knowledge	→	Cultural Continuity

Moderating factors:

- Intergenerational transmission (strengthening effect)
- Globalization and modernization (weakening effect)

4. Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study on traditional clothing as a medium of cultural identity and heritage preservation among the Idoma people of Ogbadibo Local Government Area. The results are organized according to the research objectives and research questions. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were used to analyze respondents' perceptions. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted as the decision benchmark; items with mean values ≥ 2.50 were considered *agreed*, while those below 2.50 were considered *disagreed*.

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The respondents comprised members of three culturally rooted Idoma families (Ajene, Owoicho, and Ogwuche) in Ehaji (1) community. Both male and female respondents were represented, spanning youth, middle-aged adults, and elders. Most respondents had lived in the community since birth and had participated in traditional ceremonies and festivals, indicating a high level of cultural exposure and relevance of the data obtained. The demographic composition ensured that perceptions reflected intergenerational views on traditional clothing practices.

4.2 Role of Traditional Clothing in Cultural Identity Formation

This subsection presents respondents' perceptions of how traditional clothing contributes to cultural identity among the Idoma people.

Table 1: Role of Traditional Clothing in Cultural Identity Formation

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Traditional clothing reflects the cultural identity of the community	3.20	0.54	Agreed
2	Wearing traditional attire strengthens a sense of belonging	3.61	0.49	Agreed
3	Clothing styles are markers of cultural distinctiveness	3.30	0.46	Agreed
4	Generations connect to their roots through traditional dress	3.50	0.50	Agreed
5	Traditional clothing symbolizes pride in cultural heritage	3.81	0.40	Agreed
6	Young people recognize cultural identity through clothing	3.90	0.30	Agreed
7	Ethnic identity is preserved through continued use of traditional attire	3.40	0.66	Agreed
8	Traditional clothing promotes unity within the community	3.60	0.49	Agreed
9	Community recognition is influenced by traditional dress	3.70	0.46	Agreed
10	Traditional attire distinguishes one culture from another	3.10	0.54	Agreed

The results indicate a strong consensus that traditional clothing plays a critical role in cultural identity formation. The highest mean score (3.90) was recorded for youth recognition of cultural identity through clothing, suggesting that despite modernization, traditional attire remains an important identity marker for younger generations. High mean values for cultural pride (3.81) and community recognition (3.70) further highlight clothing as a source of collective esteem and social acknowledgment.

4.3 Traditional Clothing and Cultural Heritage Preservation

This subsection presents findings on how traditional clothing contributes to the preservation and continuity of cultural heritage.

Table 2: Traditional Clothing and Cultural Heritage Preservation

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Traditional clothing plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage	3.50	0.50	Agreed
2	Local craftsmanship safeguards indigenous knowledge	3.80	0.40	Agreed
3	Passing down attire sustains cultural traditions	3.90	0.30	Agreed
4	Handmade clothing supports heritage preservation	3.40	0.66	Agreed
5	Traditional dress represents continuity across time	2.60	0.92	Agreed
6	Communities value traditional clothing as part of their heritage	3.90	0.30	Agreed
7	Traditional clothing is essential for maintaining cultural practices	3.56	0.54	Agreed
8	Cultural preservation is reflected in the use of traditional attire	3.40	0.64	Agreed
9	Wearing ancestral attire strengthens cultural continuity	3.83	0.40	Agreed
10	Traditional textiles contribute to heritage preservation	3.90	0.30	Agreed

The findings reveal strong agreement that traditional clothing functions as a key mechanism for cultural heritage preservation. The highest mean scores (3.90) were recorded for intergenerational transfer of attire, community valuation of traditional clothing, and the role of traditional textiles, underscoring the importance of clothing as a living cultural archive. The relatively lower, though still accepted, mean score for continuity across time (2.60) suggests emerging pressures from modernization that may affect long-term sustainability. Traditional Clothing plays a strong role in cultural preservation as shown in tables 1 and 2.

A bar chart (Figure 1) was plotted to show that both cultural identity indicators and heritage preservation indicators recorded mean values well above the criterion mean of 2.50, confirming strong agreement among respondents. The slightly higher mean score for heritage preservation indicators suggests that traditional clothing is perceived not only as an identity marker but more strongly as a mechanism for sustaining and transmitting Idoma cultural heritage over time.

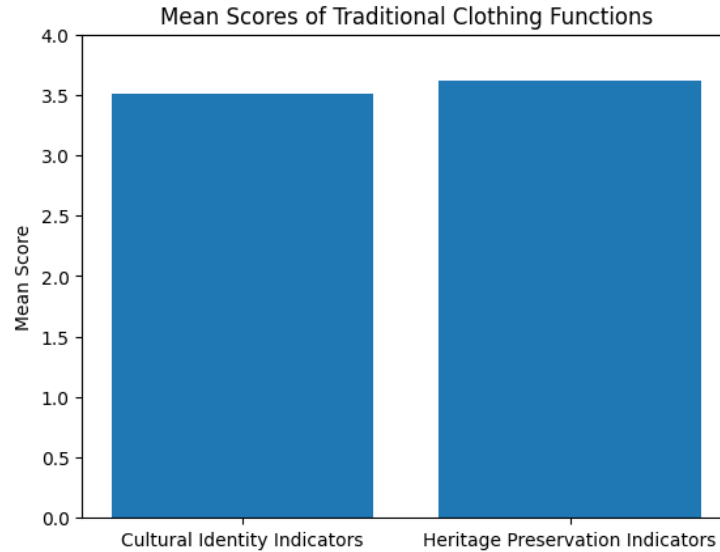


Figure 1. Mean scores of traditional clothing functions among the Idoma people of Ogbadibo, showing comparative contributions to cultural identity and heritage preservation.

4.4 Summary of Key Empirical Findings

Overall, the results demonstrate that traditional clothing among the Idoma people of Ogbadibo serves dual and interconnected roles. First, it acts as a symbolic marker of cultural identity, reinforcing belonging, unity, and pride within the community. Second, it functions as a vehicle for cultural heritage preservation, particularly through intergenerational transmission and local craftsmanship. The consistency of high mean scores across identity and heritage indicators confirms that traditional clothing remains culturally significant despite changing social dynamics.

5. Discussion

In this discussion, the study will relate our research findings to our research purposes, research questions, and research frameworks. In this way, it becomes possible to position what the study discovered within a wider discourse about cultural identity, dress theory studies, and preservation of cultural heritages, particularly from indigenous cultures of Africa.

The findings from the study indicate the various ways in which traditional dress is core to the formation and consolidation of the cultural identity of the Idoma people in Ogbadibo. The consistent high scores obtained for the identity measures demonstrate that traditional dress serves as a clear identifier of belonging to a particular culture. This supports the theoretical positioning of cultural identity in relation to the construct of identity being socially mediated by common symbols and practice. The findings demonstrate agreement about the reinforcement of belonging through traditional dress, further establishing the notion that traditional dress is more than just textiles-it is meaning-making cultural practice.

The results have further shown that traditional clothing is an effective channel for non-verbal communication in line with dress and communication principles. A vast level of agreement is shown among respondents that traditional clothing is a symbol for cultural values, recognition, and uniqueness. This implies that there is a collective symbol for dressing in the Idoma community that makes traditional clothing a communicative channel that reaffirms identity/heritage continually. The recognition shown by younger respondents towards traditional clothing indicates that there are continued symbolic interpretations associated with dressing despite international fashion influences being more prominent.

In cultural heritage protection, there is a general consensus that cultural dress significantly assists in cultural heritage conservation. The high mean score recorded in inter-generational transfer patterns, skills for constructive production by the Idoma people, and cultural importance of cultural dress helps to enhance cultural heritage theories that strongly emphasize the fusion of cultural heritage. For the Idoma people, cultural dress has physical aspects represented by artifacts as well as the encoded knowledge that encompasses elements such as the meaning of the cultural dress.

The findings illustrate how culture is transmitted across generations and how the subjects see cultural dress passed on from generation to generation. This lends strong support to the view that the continuation of culture is very much in the domain of non-formal education in the home and in the community. Although the mean score on the continuation across time trend appears moderately low, it remains positive and tends to suggest other challenging barriers in this regard such as modernization and the movement of people to urban centers and their choices in lifestyles. This finds support in other studies that indicate a possible chasm between the generations as an important barrier in keeping Indigenous culture alive. Moreover, research indicates that traditional wear is a symbol of cultural resilience in a globalized world. Indigenous peoples wear traditional clothing for cultural festivities like ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, and public gatherings, symbolizing a purposeful expression of cultural identity in light of globalization. This is consistent with models that regard traditional clothing as a survival tool in modern society. For the Idoma in Ogbadibo, traditional clothing is more than just a part of their past traditions; it symbolizes a deliberate act of survival.

In general, these findings align with what might be expected from theory. In Idoma culture, traditional dress has been seen to play an important role in this process of identity consolidation, protection, communication, and, in this way, cultural continuity. The work thus also speaks to existing debates in Indigenous studies in relation to cultural preservation, using, in this instance, specifically Nigerian culture, which has not been particularly visible in other cultural analyses across the world.

Conclusions

It also examined the traditional attires as expressions, through which Idoma people in Ogbadibo LGA, Benue State, Nigeria, observe their culture and heritage. The findings revealed that

traditional dress is not just about what is worn; it is a colorful, articulate symbol of identity and a fulcrum for heritage.

The data show that indigenous dress is at the core of how the Idoma people construct and display who they are. The general consensus among the respondents is that such dresses create a sense of belonging, enhance ethnic pride, and give reason for social cohesion. One can wear clothes as a visible cue used by individuals to claim origins and be acknowledged by others in that community. The fact that people use shared cultural symbols to perform their identity is encompassed within the idea that identity performs.

The study further illustrates that traditional dress is significant in preserving culture and heritage. Such dress embodies tangible and intangible aspects, such as physical artifacts with knowledge, expertise, and meaning associated with their making and use. Importantly, there is a great emphasis on intergenerational transmission that signals the place of family and communal events in perpetuating that culture. Traditional dress has emerged as a strong avenue in maintaining historical memory and indigenous knowledge among the Idoma in the face of modernization and globalization. Traditional dress serves, in short, as an alive cultural system reinforcing identity, preserving heritage, enabling cultural dialogue, and helping resist cultural homogenization. Its continued relevance across age groups shows it is a living practice, not merely a relic of the past.

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