

Original Research Article

Assessing the Use of Indigenous Communication Media among Rural Dwellers of Osun State, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

The study assessed the use of indigenous communication media among rural dwellers of Osun state to determine their knowledge level. Key informants and other 120 respondents were interviewed using interview schedule from two communities in each of the six administrative zones of the state. Data analysis showed the mean age of respondents to be 47 ± 7 years and 65% of them were male. Majority were literate. Respondents had highest knowledge level in the use of proverbs followed by folklores and songs. Key informant interview showed that coded symbols were phasing out. The study concluded that the use of indigenous communication media was being gradually phased out. Indigenous communication media that are often used should be not be dropped in the face of modern communication media and those that are not used should be used so that people, especially the young ones would get used to them.

Keywords: Usage; Indigenous Communication; Media

1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous communication media are the vehicles common people or rural dwellers employ for the delivery of their messages such as folk scripture, folk music, folk dance or folk painting [1]. Indigenous communication channels have always been in existence in communicating at local levels though research in this area has been neglected [2]. This type of communication system has been able to sustain the rural dwellers before the introduction of modern means of communication. Indigenous Communication systems are means by which local people communicated with one another in the primitive era. These systems of communication are passed from one generation to another. Such communication systems are derived from society's experience and thoughts over a long period of years. It must be noted that the expression indigenous communication in this context is not a substitute for archaic, barbaric or rudimentary communication systems. Rather it represents traditional and ancient communication systems [3]. It is no exaggeration that the average African man today is, to some extent, a deculturalised person, living on foreign cultural values. Though no one should be blamed for this development, it is brought about by several factors such as colonization, introduction of foreign religions - Christianity and Islam, social change,

31 travelling, urbanization etc which brought about diffusion of cultures. Arising
 32 from this situation, many indigenous communication systems were
 33 condemned by Westerners and were looked upon with disdainful eyes to the
 34 extent that local people became discouraged in using them as they were
 35 seen as archaic, traditional, rudimentary and sometimes fetish. [4] reported
 36 that Westerners believed most of the indigenous communication media have
 37 a religious background and were thus condemned with traditional religion.
 38 There is often a certain degree of semantic and conceptual confusion and
 39 misapprehension surrounding what constitutes indigenous or traditional
 40 communication, [5] stated that indigenous communication as used in Africa is
 41 an admixture of social conventions and practice that have become
 42 sharpened and blended into veritable communication modes and systems
 43 which have almost become standard practices for society. It can be said to
 44 be a complex system of communication, which pervades all aspects of rural
 45 life. Indigenous communication was a pre-colonial medium/channel of
 46 communication which has its own limitations especially in the area of national
 47 commerce, education, politics and government [5]. Indigenous
 48 communication is perhaps the most important way by which the rural
 49 dwellers communicate among themselves and with others. According to [6],
 50 [7] interest in the use of indigenous media is now increasing in less developed
 51 countries as a credible and acceptable source of information because mass
 52 media have been less successful in promoting rural development.

53 Indigenous communication media such as theatre, drama, puppet shows,
 54 drumming, village criers, storytellers, orators, songs, using a bell, folk tales,
 55 proverbs, ceremonial occasions like initiations, funerals, wedding,
 56 announcements etc [8]; [9] have played and continue to play important roles
 57 among rural and poor communities [10]. It is important to note that these
 58 indigenous communication systems are peculiar to specific societies; borne out
 59 of the people's culture, religious conviction and experiences and so their
 60 interpretations may vary from one society to the other. In any case, they do
 61 reveal the ethics of each society.[11] defined indigenous media as “any form of
 62 endogenous communication system which by virtue of its origin from/and
 63 integration into a specific culture, serves as a channel for messages in a way

64 and manner that requires the utilization of the values, symbols, institutions and
65 ethos of the host culture through its unique qualities and attributes” [4] opined
66 that indigenous media should be encouraged because it gives room for local
67 participation in development efforts and since exogenous media fail to reach
68 the rural dwellers.

69 For generations, rural populations living in isolated villages without access to
70 modern means of communication have relied on the spoken word and
71 indigenous forms of communication as a means of sharing knowledge and
72 information and providing entertainment. In some rural places where modern
73 communication systems have not reached, the dwellers make use of the
74 indigenous communication systems and pass same to their offspring through
75 generations by socialisation processes. Coded information, drums, folklores
76 are still being used both in urban and rural areas. These are common among
77 the aged and traditional members of the society. However, these media of
78 communication are phasing out among the youths and elites of the society.
79 In the light of the above, this study seeks to provide answers to the following
80 research questions.

81 (i). Are the indigenous communication media in use again in the rural
82 communities of Osun State?

83 (ii). What is the knowledge level of rural dwellers in the use of indigenous
84 communication media?

85 (iii). Which of the popular communication media are still been used in the
86 rural communities of the state?

87 **Objectives of the Study**

88 The main objective of the study is to assess the use of indigenous
89 communication media among rural dwellers of Osun State.

90 Specific objectives include:

- 91 (i) Determine the perceived knowledge level of rural dwellers in the use
- 92 of indigenous communication media in the State.
- 93 (ii) Identify the indigenous communication media that are often utilized by
- 94 the rural dwellers in the State.

95 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

98 The study was conducted in the six Administrative zones of Osun State. It is
 99 located in the south-western region of the country. The State is believed to
 100 be rich in culture and tradition, and the major occupation of the people of the
 101 State is farming. The state lies within the rainforest region on Western
 102 Nigeria between latitude $6^{\circ}50'1''$ and $8^{\circ}10'1''$ on the north-south pole and
 103 longitude $4^{\circ}05'1''$ and $5^{\circ}02'1''$ on the east-west pole and is within the tropics
 104 bounded by Kwara State in the north, Ogun State in the south, in the west by
 105 Oyo State, and in the east by Ondo State.

106 The population of the study areas consist of rural dwellers either involved in
 107 farming or non-farming activities. All the six administrative zones Ife, Ilesa,
 108 Ikirun, Osogbo, Ila, and Iwo were selected for the study. Two rural
 109 communities were selected from each zone making a total of twelve
 110 communities. Ten households were randomly sampled from each of the
 111 community and the household heads were interviewed for the study. A total
 112 of one hundred and twenty respondents were interviewed using interview
 113 schedule. In addition two key informants were interviewed in the state.

114 Two variables were investigated in the study, dependent and the
 115 independent. The dependent variable is the use of indigenous
 116 communication media. This was measured using regularly used and not
 117 used. Also the knowledge level was measured with four point scale of high

118 knowledge, moderate knowledge, low knowledge and no knowledge. These
119 were appropriately scored. The independent variables in the study include
120 sex, level of education, marital status, religion and occupation of the
121 respondents. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, percentage,
122 standard deviation were used to summarize the data.

123

124 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

125

126 Results in Table 1 show that majority (65.8%) of the respondents were male.
127 About 12.5% were below the age of 26 years with 31.7% between 26 and 45
128 years while 45.8% were between 46 and 65 years and 10% were above 65
129 years. The mean age of the respondents was 47 years with standard
130 deviation of 7. The results in the table show that about 72% of the
131 respondents were married, 13.8% were single with 11.7% widowed. This
132 result support the report of [12] and [13] that majority of responsible adults in
133 rural areas were married. The mean household size of the respondents was
134 7.1 with standard deviation of 2.4. A little above average (55.8%) had
135 household size of between 6 and 8 members while 28.3% had household
136 size between 1 and 5 members.

137 All members of the household belong to one religious group or the other.
138 Only 4.2% practiced traditional religion, 42.5% practiced Christianity while
139 51.6% were practicing Islamic religion. Above average (53.3%) of the
140 respondents were indigenous members of their respective communities while
141 44.2% were non-members. This shows that rural communities were
142 accommodating and that they allowed strangers in their mist. The mean
143 years of residence of the respondents in their various communities were 24.3
144 years with a standard deviation of 7.2. About 26.7% had lived between 11
145 and 20 years while 18.3% lived between 1 and 10 years and 4.2% lived
146 above 50 years in their various communities. The educational status of the
147 respondents showed that 18.3% of the respondents had no formal education,

148 22.5% had only primary education, and 35.0% had secondary education
149 while 22.5% had education at the tertiary level.

150

151 **Table 1: Distribution of respondents by socio-economic characteristics.**

152 **n=120**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Central tendency	
Sex				
Male	79	65.8		
Female	41	34.2		
Age				
0-25 years	15	12.5		
26-35 years	23	19.2	X	47.0
36-45 years	15	12.5	SD	7.0
46-55 years	25	20.8		
56-65 years	30	25.0		
66 years and above	12	10.0		
Marital status				
Single	19	13.8		
Married	86	71.7		
Widowed	14	11.7		
Divorced	1	0.8		
Household size				
1-5 individuals	34	28.3		
6-10 individuals	67	55.8	X	7.1
11-15 individuals	10	8.3		
> 16 individuals	1	0.8		
Missing	8	6.7		
Religion				
Christian	51	42.5		
Islam	62	51.6		
Traditional	5	4.2		
Missing	2	1.7		
Indigenous status				
Yes	64	53.3		
No	53	44.2		
Years of residence				
0-10 years	22	18.3		
11-20 years	32	26.7	X	24.3
21-30 years	23	14.2	SD	7.2
31-40 years	16	13.3		
41-50 years	16	13.3		
50 years and above	5	4.2		
Missing	6	5.0		
Educational status				
Primary	27	22.5		
Secondary	42	35.0		
Tertiary	27	22.5		
No formal education	22	18.3		
Missing	2	1.7		

153

154

155 **Perceived Knowledge level of respondents** in the use of indigenous
156 **communication media**

157 **Songs**

158 Results in Table 2 show that 24.8% of the respondents had high knowledge
159 level, 57.3% had moderate level of knowledge and 17.9% had low
160 knowledge level in the use of **song** as an indigenous communication
161 medium. Results **in the table** also show that 17.1% of the respondents had
162 high knowledge level in the use of various Dances, 36.8% of the respondents
163 had moderate knowledge level, and 45.3% of the respondents had low
164 knowledge while 0.9% of the respondent had no knowledge in the use of
165 dances as a communication medium. The results show that 55.6% of
166 respondents had high knowledge level in the use of Parable/proverb as a
167 medium of communication while 40.2% had moderate knowledge and 4.3%
168 had low knowledge level. The **table** further shows that 38.8% of respondents
169 had high knowledge level in the use of Folklores as a medium of
170 communication while 37.1% had moderate knowledge level and 21.6% had
171 low knowledge level in the use of Folklores. Only 2.2% of the respondents
172 had high level of knowledge in the use of Masquerade as a communication
173 medium while 5.7% had moderate level of knowledge and 42.2% had low
174 knowledge level while **50.0% had no knowledge at all in the use of**
175 **Masquerade.**

176 **Results in** Table 2 **show** that 24.8% of the respondents had high knowledge
177 level in the use of Festivals as a communication medium, 36.8% had
178 moderate and low knowledge levels, respectively and 1.7% had no
179 knowledge at all in the use of Festivals. **The table also shows** that 7.7% of
180 the respondents had high knowledge level in the use of Drama as a
181 communication medium, 15.4% had moderate knowledge level, and 70.9%
182 had low knowledge level while 6.0% had no knowledge in the use of Drama.
183 The **table** further show that 19.0% of the respondents had high knowledge

184 level in the use of Poetry as a communication medium while 13.8% had
 185 moderate knowledge level and 49.1% had low level while 18.1% had no
 186 knowledge in the use of Poetry. Only 17.2% of respondents had high
 187 knowledge level in the use of Coded message as a communication medium
 188 while 31.0% had moderate knowledge level and 34.5% had low knowledge
 189 and 17.2% had no knowledge in the use of Coded messages. Knowledge
 190 level in the use of Symbol as a communication medium was high among
 191 9.8% of the respondents, 18.8% had moderate knowledge level while 34.8%
 192 had low knowledge level and 36.6% had no knowledge in the use of Symbols
 193 as a medium of communication.

194 Results in Table 3 show that respondents still make use of the indigenous
 195 communication media. For example more than 90% of the respondents make
 196 use of these media regularly, Songs (98.3%), Proverb/ Parables (99.1%),
 197 Festival (97.4%), Folklores (90.5%), also more than 80% of the respondents
 198 used the following media regularly, Dance (86.8%), Poetry (80.2%). About
 199 63% regularly use drama as a medium of indigenous communication and
 200 49.6% of the respondents regularly used town crier. Mass media are
 201 regularly used to communicate information which drama and town criers
 202 could have been used in rural communities. This may account for the low use
 203 through indigenous communication media.

204 Furthermore, those indigenous communication media that are not regularly
 205 used include the use of Masquerade (91.5%), Coded message (87.2%),
 206 Movement of sun/shadow (98.3%), Sound of insects/Birds (87.7%) and
 207 symbols (72.6%).

208

Report of the key informant

Aworo of Ila – Orangun was interviewed on the use of indigenous media in his area. He had this to say:

The Yoruba culture is fast being eroded by foreign culture. The use of coded message is commonly used by elders and the herbalists. It is also common among members of particular cults. It was regularly used many years back especially among the members of rural communities. In case of masquerades, there are some that are used to carry special sacrifice. They are not usually used during the day light. Symbols are still used by old or elderly people in rural areas. This is to pass information to people with fore knowledge about ones movement. Many homes today do not even speak our language, how do you expect they will know our culture? The way out is to include the teaching of our culture in schools.

Aworo is the head of herbalists in Igbomina land. His report showed that the use of some indigenous media is limited to the aged and the herbalist.

Olowaa of Owaa was also interviewed on the use of indigenous communication media.

He had this to say:

Indigenous communication media was the only medium of communication before the whites brought their own. But we have left our own and embraced theirs. There are reasons for this. However, our tradition should not die. Even some of the indigenous media that are used in the palace like trumpets to remind the king of events, the traditional drums to remind the king of an outing are not used again, except on special occasions. The use of some of these is left with the aged which may pass out with them. For example, some old people still use shadow to know the time of the day, some still use symbols on the way to their farms. In the case of coded messages, it is still found among traditional titleholder, Obas, some chiefs as well as the herbalists, traditional worshipers (Babalawo) and some traditional worshipers. The way out is to allow our children to know our traditions and practice our culture. It should be made compulsory in school curriculums.

Report from another key informant, Olowaa of Owaa is the King and traditional head of Owaa community. He also affirmed that many of the

indigenous media are left with people that practise the native cultures and adhere to the traditions. It is also to be noted that erosion of the indigenous media is also touching the source of tradition, the palace.

Table 2: Showing the perceived knowledge level of the respondent in the use of some indigenous communication media

<i>Variable</i>	High knowledge		Moderate knowledge		Low knowledge		No knowledge at all	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
Songs	29	24.8	67	57.3	21	17.9	0	0.0
Dance	20	17.1	43	36.8	53	45.3	1	0.9
Proverb/parable	65	55.6	47	40.2	5	4.3	0	0.0
Folklore	45	38.8	43	37.1	25	21.6	3	2.6
Masquerade	5	2.2	13	5.7	97	42.2	115	50.0
Festival	29	24.8	43	36.8	43	36.8	2	1.7
Drama	9	7.7	18	15.4	83	70.9	7	6.0
Poetry	22	19.0	16	13.8	57	49.1	21	18.1
Coded message	20	17.2	36	31.0	40	34.5	20	17.2
Symbols	11	9.8	21	18.8	39	34.8	41	36.6
Movement of sun	21	18.8	20	17.2	16	13.7	60	51.3
Sound of insects/birds	6	5.1	8	6.8	32	27.4	71	60.7
Town criers	84	72.4	20	17.2	10	8.6	2	1.7

Source: Field survey, 2011

254 **Table 3: Showing the use of some indigenous communication media**

<i>Variable</i>	Regularly used		Not regularly used	
	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>
Coded message	15	12.8	102	87.2
Songs	115	98.3	2	1.7
Proverb/parable	114	99.1	1	0.9
Movement of sun	2	1.7	113	98.3
Sound of insect/bird	14	12.3	100	87.7
Festival	114	97.4	3	2.6
Dance	99	86.8	15	13.2
Town crier	56	49.6	57	50.4
Masquerade	10	8.5	107	91.5
Folklore	105	90.5	11	9.5
Poetry	92	80.2	23	19.8
Drama	73	62.9	43	37.1
Symbols	32	27.4	85	72.6

255 **Source:** Field survey, 2011

256

257 **Conclusion and Recommendations**

258 Indigenous communication is part of culture. It is being practiced in places
 259 where the intensity of use of exogenous media is low. It is also common
 260 among the aged, traditional worshippers and people that value cultures.
 261 However, it is gradually phasing out, due to diffusion of exogenous media.

262 **Recommendations**

263 The traditional rulers and elderly people should endeavour to preserve the
 264 culture and tradition of their communities.

265 Families should introduce their young ones to the use of indigenous
 266 communication by using such in their presence and encouraging them to use
 267 them.

268 Indigenous communication media that are often used should **be** not be
 269 dropped in the face of modern communication media and those that are not
 270 used should be used so that people, especially the young ones would get
 271 used to them.

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322 **COMPETING INTERESTS**

323 No competing interests exist

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