

Original Research Article

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

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the use of indigenous communication media among rural dwellers of Osun state to determine their knowledge level. Specifically, indigenous communication media that are often utilized by the rural dwellers were identified and socio-economic characteristics were described. 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 was carried out using frequency counts, percentage, mean, standard deviation. Data analysis showed the mean age of respondents to be 47 ± 7 years and 65% of them were male. Majority were literate. The findings revealed that majority had low knowledge about indigenous communication and more so, most of this communication had gone to extinction except on few cases such as use of proverbs, folklores and songs in which they were highly knowledgeable. 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. It recommends that Indigenous communication media that are often used should not be abandoned in the face of modern communication media, and those that are abandoned should be used so that people, especially the young, would get used to them.

Keywords: Usage; Indigenous Communication; Media; Rural dwellers

1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous communication media are the vehicles common people or rural dwellers employ for the delivery of their messages. [1] viewed traditional media as body languages and other non-verbal languages being used in the traditional societies for a variety of purposes. 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. The messages and ideas are transmitted by means of itinerant dance and mime groups, puppet shows and other folk media which serve not only to entertain but to influence attitudes and behaviour' [2]. Before the introduction of printed material, radio, film and television, mass communication in Nigeria was done through the indigenous systems of communication. [3] claimed that Western commerce, religion, education, politics and the form of government, imported from Britain from the 19th century, found the indigenous communications systems inadequate for several reasons: the systems use local languages, they are interactive in the form of several chains of face to-face activities from the source or sources to the receivers, they are exclusively integrated into local cultures; they do not depend on Western technology and they are dissimilar from the Western model of mass communication[3]. Despite the deficiency in indigenous communication, this type of communication system has been able to sustain the rural dwellers before the introduction of modern means of communication. It provides identity among communities that uses them and also guides unruly behaviours in the society. 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 [4]. 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, travelling, urbanization etc which brought about diffusion of cultures. Arising from this situation, many indigenous communication systems were condemned by westerners and were looked upon with disdainful eyes to the extent that local people became discouraged in using them as they were seen as archaic, traditional, rudimentary and sometimes fetish. [5] reported that westerners believed most of the indigenous communication media have a religious background and were thus condemned with traditional religion.

There is often a certain degree of semantic and conceptual confusion and misapprehension surrounding what constitutes indigenous or traditional communication, It was stated by [6] that indigenous communication as used in Africa is an admixture of social conventions and practice that have become

67 sharpened and blended into veritable communication modes and systems
68 which have almost become standard practices for society. It can be said to
69 be a complex system of communication, which pervades all aspects of rural
70 life. Indigenous communication was a pre-colonial medium/channel of
71 communication which has its own limitations especially in the area of national
72 commerce, education, politics and government [6]. Indigenous
73 communication is perhaps the most important way by which the rural
74 dwellers communicate among themselves and with others. According to [7],
75 [8] interest in the use of indigenous media is now increasing in less
76 developed countries as a credible and acceptable source of information
77 because mass media have been less successful in promoting rural
78 development.

79 Indigenous communication media such as theatre, drama, puppet shows,
80 drumming, village criers, storytellers, orators, songs, using a bell, folk tales,
81 proverbs, ceremonial occasions like initiations, funerals, wedding,
82 announcements etc [9]; [10] have played and continue to play important roles
83 among rural and poor communities [11]. It is important to note that these
84 indigenous communication systems are peculiar to specific societies; borne out
85 of the people's culture, religious conviction and experiences and so their
86 interpretations may vary from one society to the other. In any case, they do
87 reveal the ethics of each society.[12] defined indigenous media as "any form of
88 endogenous communication system which by virtue of its origin from/and
89 integration into a specific culture, serves as a channel for messages in a way
90 and manner that requires the utilization of the values, symbols, institutions and
91 ethos of the host culture through its unique qualities and attributes" [5] opined
92 that indigenous media should be encouraged because it gives room for local
93 participation in development efforts and since exogenous media fail to reach
94 the rural dwellers.

95 For generations, rural populations living in isolated villages without access to
96 modern means of communication have relied on the spoken word and
97 indigenous forms of communication as a means of sharing knowledge and
98 information and providing entertainment. In some rural places where modern
99 communication systems have not reached, the dwellers make use of the
100 indigenous communication systems and pass same to their offspring through
101 generations by socialisation processes. Coded information, drums, folklores
102 are still being used both in urban and rural areas. These are common among
103 the aged and traditional members of the society. However, these media of
104 communication are phasing out among the youths and elites of the society.
105 In the light of the above, this study seeks to provide answers to the following
106 research questions.

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

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

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

113 **Objectives of the Study**

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

116 Specific objectives include:

117 (i) Describe socio-economic characteristics of the rural dwellers in the
118 study area

119 (ii) Determine the perceived knowledge level of rural dwellers in the use
120 of indigenous communication media in the State.

121 (iii) Identify the indigenous communication media that are often utilized by
122 the rural dwellers in the State.

123 The study also hypothesized that there is no significant relationship
124 between the Use of Indigenous Communication Media and the socio-
125 economic characteristics of among Rural Dwellers and that there is no
126 significant relationship the Use of Indigenous Communication Media and
127 knowledge level of rural dwellers.

128

129 **2. METHODOLOGY**

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131 The study was conducted in the six Administrative zones of Osun State. It is
132 located in the south-western region of the country. The State is believed to
133 be rich in culture and tradition, and the major occupation of the people of the
134 State is farming. The state lies within the rainforest region on Western
135 Nigeria between latitude $6^{\circ}50^1$ and $8^{\circ}10^1$ on the north-south pole and
136 longitude $4^{\circ}05^1$ and $5^{\circ}02^1$ on the east-west pole and is within the tropics
137 bounded by Kwara State in the north, Ogun State in the south, Oyo State in
138 the west and in the east by Ondo State. The population of the study areas
139 consists of rural dwellers either involved in farming or non-farming activities.

140 Multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents from the four
141 states. In first stage, all the six administrative zones, namely; Ife, Ilesa,
142 Ikirun, Osogbo, Ila, and Iwo, were selected for the study. Two rural
143 communities were selected from each zone making a total of twelve
144 communities. Ten households were randomly sampled from each of the
145 community and the household heads were interviewed for the study. A total

146 of one hundred and twenty respondents were interviewed using interview
147 schedule. In addition two key informants were interviewed in the state.

148 Two variables were investigated in the study, dependent and the
149 independent. The dependent variable is the use of indigenous
150 communication media. This was measured using regularly used and not
151 used. Also the knowledge level was measured with four point scale of high
152 knowledge, moderate knowledge, low knowledge and no knowledge. These
153 were appropriately scored. Mean $\pm$ standard deviation was used to
154 categorized knowledge level into high, medium and low. The independent
155 variables in the study include sex, level of education, marital status, religion
156 and occupation of the respondents. Descriptive statistics such as frequency,
157 mean, percentage, standard deviation were used to summarize the data.

158

159 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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161 Results in Table 1 show that majority (65.8%) of the respondents were male.
162 About 12.5% were below the age of 26 years with 31.7% between 26 and 45
163 years while 45.8% were between 46 and 65 years and 10% were above 65
164 years. Inspite of the fact that most of the rural dwellers are still in their prime
165 age with old people also dwelling in the study area it is expected that the
166 indigenous knowledge will be encouraged but reversed is the case. The
167 mean age of the respondents was 47 years with standard deviation of 7. The
168 implication of this is that rural dwellers in the study area were still in their
169 productive ages. The results in the table further show that about 72% of the
170 respondents were married, 13.8% were single with 11.7% widowed. This
171 result support the report of [12] and [13] that majority of responsible adults in
172 rural areas were married. The mean household size of the respondents was
173 7.1 with standard deviation of 2.4. A little above average (55.8%) had
174 household size of between 6 and 8 members while 28.3% had household
175 size between 1 and 5 members.

176 All members of the household belong to one religious group or the other.
177 Only 4.2% practiced traditional religion, 42.5% practiced Christianity while
178 51.6% were practicing Islamic religion. The implication of this is that majority
179 practiced foreign religion which might have influence on the use of
180 indigenous communication in negative ways because of culture of
181 assimilation. This is in-line with [5] assertion that westerners believed most of
182 the indigenous communication media have a religious background and were
183 thus condemned with traditional religion. Above average (53.3%) of the
184 respondents were indigenous members of their respective communities while
185 44.2% were non-members. This shows that rural communities were
186 accommodating and that they allowed strangers in their mist. The mean
187 years of residence of the respondents in their various communities were 24.3

188 years with a standard deviation of 7.2. About 26.7% had lived between 11
189 and 20 years while 18.3% lived between 1 and 10 years and 4.2% lived
190 above 50 years in their various communities. The educational status of the
191 respondents showed that 18.3% of the respondents had no formal education,
192 22.5% had only primary education, and 35.0% had secondary education
193 while 22.5% had education at the tertiary level. The educational status of the
194 respondents might influence their perception towards indigenous
195 communication because western education might have changed their
196 orientation about indigenous communication.

197

198 **Table 1: Distribution of respondents by socio-economic characteristics.**
199 **n=120**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Central Tendency (Mean)	
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		

Perceived Knowledge level of respondents in the use of indigenous communication media

Results in Table 2 show that 24.8% of the respondents had high knowledge level, 57.3% had moderate level of knowledge and 17.9% had low knowledge level in the use of song as an indigenous communication medium. Results in the table also show that 17.1% of the respondents had high knowledge level in the use of various indigenous communication media. Dances, 36.8% of the respondents had moderate knowledge level, and 45.3% of the respondents had low knowledge while 0.9% of the respondent had no knowledge in the use of dances as a communication medium. The results show that 55.6% of respondents had high knowledge level in the use of Parable/proverb as a medium of communication while 40.2% had moderate knowledge and 4.3% had low knowledge level. The table further shows that 38.8% of respondents had high knowledge level in the use of Folklores as a medium of communication while 37.1% had moderate knowledge level and 21.6% had low knowledge level in the use of Folklores. Only 2.2% of the respondents had high level of knowledge in the use of Masquerade as a communication medium while 5.7% had moderate level of knowledge and 42.2% had low knowledge level while 50.0% had no knowledge at all in the use of Masquerade.

Results in Table 2 show that 24.8% of the respondents had high knowledge level in the use of Festivals as a communication medium, 36.8% had moderate and low knowledge levels, respectively and 1.7% had no knowledge at all in the use of Festivals. The table also shows that 7.7% of the respondents had high knowledge level in the use of Drama as a communication medium, 15.4% had moderate knowledge level, and 70.9% had low knowledge level while 6.0% had no knowledge in the use of Drama. The table further show that 19.0% of the respondents had high knowledge level in the use of Poetry as a communication medium while 13.8% had moderate knowledge level and 49.1% had low level while 18.1% had no knowledge in the use of Poetry. Only 17.2% of respondents had high knowledge level in the use of Coded message as a communication medium while 31.0% had moderate knowledge level and 34.5% had low knowledge and 17.2% had no knowledge in the use of Coded messages. Knowledge level in the use of Symbol as a communication medium was high among 9.8% of the respondents, 18.8% had moderate knowledge level while 34.8% had low knowledge level and 36.6% had no knowledge.

Use of some indigenous communication media

Results in Table 3 show that respondents still make use of the indigenous communication media. For example more than 90% of the respondents make use of these media regularly; Songs (98.3%), Proverb/ Parables (99.1%), Festival (97.4%), Folklores (90.5%), also more than 80% of the respondents used the following media regularly, Dance (86.8%), Poetry (80.2%). About

245 63% regularly use drama as a medium of indigenous communication and
246 49.6% of the respondents regularly used town crier. Mass media are
247 regularly used to communicate information which drama and town criers
248 could have been used in rural communities. This may account for the low use
249 of indigenous communication media.

250 Furthermore, those indigenous communication media that are not regularly
251 used include the use of Masquerade (91.5%), Coded message (87.2%),
252 Movement of sun/shadow (98.3%), Sound of insects/Birds (87.7%) and
253 symbols (72.6%). The findings revealed that majority had low knowledge
254 about indigenous communication and more so, most of this communication
255 had gone to extinction. That view was in line with key informant report from
256 various rural areas.

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Report of the key informant

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

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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 groups and 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.

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

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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 title holder, Obas, some chiefs as well as the herbalists
(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 practice the native cultures and

283 adhere to the traditions. It is also to be noted that erosion of the indigenous
284 media is also touching the source of tradition, which is the palace.
285

286

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

Variable	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

289 **Source:** Field survey, 2011

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

Variable	Regularly used		Not regularly used	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
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

293 **Source:** Field survey, 2011

294 **Hypotheses of the study**

295 Table 4 shows that there were negative and significant relationship at $P \leq 0.5$
 296 between use of indigenous communication media and some socio-economic
 297 characteristics of the respondents such as educational status ($r = -0.52$) and
 298 age ($r = -0.33$). It indicates that younger the age of rural dwellers the less the
 299 usage of indigenous communication and vice versa. Moreover, the higher the
 300 level of rural dwellers education status, the less the usage of indigenous
 301 communication. The implication of the finding is that rural dwellers with high
 302 educational level and younger age were not conversant with the use of
 303 indigenous communication. However, significant relationship exists between
 304 source of information ($r = 0.61$) and use of indigenous communication. This
 305 indicted that availability of reliable source of information about indigenous
 306 communication usually had positive influence on level of usage. Furthermore,
 307 there is a significant relationship between the usage of indigenous
 308 communication and rural dwellers knowledge level ($r = 0.42$). Implication of
 309 the finding is that when rural dwellers were knowledgeable about indigenous
 310 communication they tend to use it often.

Correlation analysis between socio-economic characteristics, knowledge level and use of indigenous knowledge

Variables	Correlation (r)
Source of information	0.61**
Educational status	-0.52*
Age	-0.33*
Knowledge level of rural dwellers	0.42**

Source: Field survey, 2011.

** Positive Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ * Negative significant

Conclusion and Recommendations

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

Recommendations

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

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

Indigenous communication media that are often used should not be abandoned 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.

In addition, indigenous communication media should be introduced in the school curriculum so as to encourage the young ones to see value in the use of indigenous communication.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

No competing interests exist.