



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

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### Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration with the authors. The work was designed by the author SAA, carried out the statistical analyses and wrote first draft. Author SIO managed the analyses, corrected the draft by improving on the literature. Both author read and approved the final manuscript.

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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  $47 \pm 7$  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

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

Indigenous communication media such as theatre, drama, puppet shows, drumming, village criers, storytellers, orators, songs, using a bell, folk tales, proverbs, ceremonial occasions like initiations, funerals, wedding, announcements etc have played and continue to play important roles among rural and poor communities [9,10,11]. It is important to note that these indigenous

communication systems are peculiar to specific societies; borne out of the people's culture, religious conviction and experiences and so their interpretations may vary from one society to the other. In any case, they do reveal the ethics of each society. [12] defined indigenous media as "any form of endogenous communication system which by virtue of its origin from/and integration into a specific culture, serves as a channel for messages in a way and manner that requires the utilization of the values, symbols, institutions and ethos of the host culture through its unique qualities and attributes" [5] opined that indigenous media should be encouraged because it gives room for local participation in development efforts and since exogenous media fail to reach the rural dwellers.

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

- (i). Are the indigenous communication media in use again in the rural communities of Osun State?
- (ii) What is the knowledge level of rural dwellers in the use of indigenous communication media?
- (iii) Which of the popular communication media are still been used in the rural communities of the state?

### 1.1 Objectives of the Study

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

Specific objectives include:

- (i) Describe socio-economic characteristics of the rural dwellers in the study area
- (ii) Determine the perceived knowledge level of rural dwellers in the use of indigenous communication media in the State.
- (iii) Identify the indigenous communication media that are often utilized by the rural dwellers in the State.

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

## 2. METHODOLOGY

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

Multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents from the four states. In first stage, all the six administrative zones, namely; Ife, Ilesa, Ikirun, Osogbo, Ila, and Iwo, were selected for the study. Two rural communities were selected from each zone making a total of twelve communities. Ten households were randomly sampled from each of the community and the household heads were interviewed for the study. A total of one hundred and twenty respondents were interviewed using interview schedule. In addition, two key informants were interviewed in the state.

Two variables were investigated in the study, dependent and the independent. The dependent variable is the use of indigenous communication media. This was measured using regularly used and not used. Also the knowledge level was measured with four point scale of high knowledge, moderate knowledge, low knowledge and no knowledge. These were appropriately

scored. Mean  $\pm$  standard deviation was used to categorize knowledge level into high, medium and low. The independent variables in the study include sex, level of education, marital status, religion and occupation of the respondents. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, percentage, standard deviation were used to summarize the data.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results in Table 1 show that majority (65.8%) of the respondents were male. About 12.5% were below the age of 26 years with 31.7% between 26 and 45 years while 45.8% were between 46 and 65 years and 10% were above 65 years. In spite of the fact that most of the rural dwellers are still in their prime age with old people also dwelling in the study area it is expected that the indigenous knowledge will be encouraged but reversed is the case. The mean age of the respondents was 47 years with standard deviation of 7. The implication of this is that rural dwellers in the study area were still in their productive ages. The results in the table further show that about 72% of the respondents were married, 13.8% were single with 11.7% widowed. This result support the report of [12,13,14] that majority of responsible adults in rural areas were married. The mean household size of the respondents was 7.1 with standard deviation of 2.4. A little above average (55.8%) had household size of between 6 and 8 members while 28.3% had household size between 1 and 5 members.

All members of the household belong to one religious group or the other. Only 4.2% practiced traditional religion, 42.5% practiced Christianity while 51.6% were practicing Islamic religion. The implication of this is that majority practiced foreign religion which might have influence on the use of indigenous communication in negative ways because of culture of assimilation. This is in-line with [5] assertion that westerners believed most of the indigenous communication media have a religious background and were thus condemned with traditional religion. Above average (53.3%) of the respondents were indigenous members of their respective communities while 44.2% were non-members. This shows that rural communities were accommodating and that they allowed strangers in their mist. The mean years of residence of the respondents in their various communities were 24.3 years with a standard deviation of 7.2. About 26.7% had lived between 11 and 20 years

while 18.3% lived between 1 and 10 years and 4.2% lived above 50 years in their various communities. The educational status of the respondents showed that 18.3% of the respondents had no formal education, 22.5% had only primary education, and 35.0% had secondary education while 22.5% had education at the tertiary level. The educational status of the respondents might influence their perception towards indigenous communication because western education might have changed their orientation about indigenous communication.

#### 3.1 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.

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

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Central tendency (mean)
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	79	65.8	
Female	41	34.2	
<b>Age</b>			
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	
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	19	13.8	
Married	86	71.7	
Widowed	14	11.7	
Divorced	1	0.8	
<b>Household size</b>			
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	
<b>Religion</b>			
Christian	51	42.5	
Islam	62	51.6	
Traditional	5	4.2	
Missing	2	1.7	
<b>Indigenous status</b>			
Yes	64	53.3	
No	53	44.2	
<b>Years of residence</b>			
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	
<b>Educational status</b>			
Primary	27	22.5	
Secondary	42	35.0	
Tertiary	27	22.5	
No formal education	22	18.3	
Missing	2	1.7	

### 3.2 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 63% regularly use drama as a medium of indigenous communication and 49.6% of the respondents regularly used town crier. Mass media are regularly used to communicate information which drama and town criers could have been used in rural communities. This may account for the low use of indigenous communication media.

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

### 3.3 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 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.

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.

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.

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

### 3.4 Hypotheses of the Study

Table 4 shows that there were negative and significant relationship at  $P \leq 0.5$  between use of indigenous communication media and some socio-economic characteristics of the respondents such as educational status ( $r = -0.52$ ) and age ( $r = -0.33$ ). It indicates that younger the age of rural dwellers the less the usage of indigenous communication and vice visa. Moreover, the higher the level of education status of rural dwellers, the less the usage of indigenous communication. The implication of the finding is that rural dwellers with high educational level and younger age were not conversant with the use of indigenous communication. However, significant relationship exists between source of information ( $r = 0.61$ ) and use of indigenous communication. This indicted that availability of reliable source of information about indigenous communication

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

Variable	High knowledge		Moderate knowledge		Low knowledge		No knowledge at all	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
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

**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

Source: Field survey, 2011

**Table 4. Results of correlation analysis showing relationship between use of indigenous communication and some socio- economic characteristics and knowledge level of rural dwellers**

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

usually had positive influence on level of usage. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between the usage of indigenous communication and rural dwellers knowledge level ( $r=0.42$ ). Implication of the finding is that when rural dwellers were knowledgeable about indigenous communication they tend to use it often.

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

#### 4. 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.

##### 4.1 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.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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