



An Appraisal of *Asiko Awa Youth* and Empowerment Narratives on OGBC 2 90.5 FM Nigeria

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Abstract. Radio is everywhere and remains a tool for youth mobilization in developing countries. It serves that need by reaching out to a specific group, class, or category of people. This study examined the effectiveness of *Asiko Awa Youth*, an indigenous radio programme from OGBC 2 Abeokuta, on youth empowerment and whether such a programme is capable of mobilising both literate and illiterate youths to become self-reliant. It also identified the contributions of indigenous radio programme to youth empowerment within a society. This study is anchored on Development Media Theory, which provides a rationale for how to use the media for the development of people in underdeveloped societies. Using Focus Group Discussions, data was collected from youths who are listeners to the programme. For proper representativeness, the participants included both male and female, white-collar and blue-collar jobs, and all educational levels. The study found that youths have achieved some level of empowerment through information provided by indigenous radio programme. In addition, indigenous radio programme positively impacts youths' attitudes toward culture, work, and school. The study recommends that indigenous youth programmes be used to mobilize the target listeners toward empowerment and development by educating and enlightening them about significant community issues. It also recommends a national media policy on the inclusion of indigenous language content targeted towards the youth for youth empowerment.

Keywords: Broadcasting, Indigenous Language, National Development, Radio, Youth Empowerment.

1. Introduction

The media industry has experienced continuous technological advancement in the 20th and 21st centuries. The growth of Information and

Communication Technology (ICT), especially the Internet, gave birth to digital media, which offers a vast array of opportunities for using the media to reach the public. Digital media opened varied channels through which the public could get information. It also allowed for the building of social relationships among people of different backgrounds and provided employment opportunities for the youth, in particular. In all these advancements, radio stands as the most accessible and affordable medium of mass communication in developing countries (Olumuji & Onabajo, 2022). As a mass medium, it is an effective tool for youth mobilization and the development of any society.

Radio is now heard everywhere: in taxis, in the countryside, on farms, in creeks, and at sea. It has remained people's companion and provides a link to the world. Regardless of a person's location at a given time, radio serves and meets the information need. Different phases of development in the media did not erode the relevance of radio to society (Danos & Turin, 2021). Its cost-effective characteristics make it more accessible and an effective tool for community mobilization. It is an effective medium for disseminating information to the audience in every setting. Radio serves that need by reaching out to a specific group, class, or category of people. It is used to reach artisans, (petty) traders, and even technocrats. Radio is also used to teach children, youths, adults, and the aged, both illiterate and semi-illiterate, as well as literate. It serves as a potent medium to sensitize and mobilize the citizenry towards achieving set developmental goals (Akanbi & Aladesanmi, 2014).

As a result of its wide reach and continued popularity, radio can be considered to be Nigeria's most important and most widely used mass communication medium. Its extensive reach much surpasses that of other mass

communication mediums and goes beyond illiteracy barriers. One of radio's main advantages is its ability to broadcast in native tongues; unlike newspapers, which require some level of literacy to read and comprehend their contents, or digital media, which requires an Internet-enabled device and technical know-how to learn its uses, radio does not require any level of literacy to understand its content. Radio programmes are available in a variety of languages, most commonly English, but occasionally native languages specific to the country or region where the radio is broadcast.

Broadcasting in an indigenous language will result in a better understanding of a programme compared to communicating in an official language. Adeyeye et al. (2021) affirm that communicating information on issues will be less demanding by utilising indigenous languages in media messages. Nigeria is a multilingual country with over 500 languages. Nevertheless, only a small number of these languages are national, regional, or state. Only Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo are considered regional indigenous languages; the rest are local languages spoken by a small number of people in minority groups.

Asiko Awa Youth is an indigenous radio programme that airs every Sunday between 1:30pm and 2pm on OGBC 90.5fm in Yoruba. The programme is aimed at correcting the anomalies in the youth community. It is also aimed at improving the social, economic, political, and cultural lives of Nigerian youth around the world. Issues relating to youth are discussed, digging deep into vices and how youth can overcome them towards a better society in the language they understand.

The term "indigenous radio programmes" is used in this study to refer to development radio programmes that are produced in the various native languages spoken in Nigeria. These are languages other than the English language that are native to the people and mostly spoken by those who are within a given community. These radio programmes are produced and aired in the community's mother tongue and are capable of addressing peculiar issues in the community. Empowerment in this study refers to helping youths achieve self-sufficiency through information or education. An informed youth is an empowered youth.

The number of unemployed and illiterate youths in society is rising at an alarming rate. This high level of poverty and illiteracy is caused by youths' lack of skills, and this pattern encourages social vices that increase crime, conflicts, drug misuse, and street rascality or gang activity. While other societal issues

like prostitution, peddling, and early marriage are more particular to young women, these vices are primarily present among male youths. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported a 42.5 percent unemployment rate for 2021, confirming the existence and persistence of these issues. Worse still, most of the radio stations operating in Nigeria use English as their major language of communication.

Political and religious programmes in indigenous languages on radio have received so much attention. Youth programmes in indigenous languages, on the other hand, have yet to get the desired attention in scholarship. Therefore, this study seeks to ascertain whether or not indigenous radio programmes are successful in helping youths achieve self-sufficiency through information or education.

1.1 Objectives of the study

- Examine youth perception of indigenous radio programme.
- Determine the effect(s) of the indigenous radio program on the attitudes of youths toward work.
- Identify the contributions of indigenous radio programme to youth empowerment.

2. Indigenous Radio Programme

Indigenous knowledge is a body of information which is characterised by specific standards, values, and mental constructs that structure and control people's lives and their world views (Mpofu & Salawu, 2020). The BBC's efforts to promote African indigenous languages cannot be overstated, as numerous African languages such as Hausa, Somalia, Swahili, Afaan Oromo, Amharic, Tigrinya, Igbo, and Yoruba have benefited. (Nwammuo & Salawu, 2019)

Tshabangu & Salawu (2022) aver that indigenous media use language peculiar to a particular community determined by geographical location and interest. Akanbi & Aladesanmi (2014) add that if particular information is to be passed across and appropriate language familiar with the people is not used, then such information may not reach the audience in an understandable manner. Language plays a major role in the usefulness of electronic media to the populace.

Radio's usefulness in bringing the desired changes and development to communities depends largely on the type of programme packaged. Most radio programmes, however, are not designed to bridge the knowledge gap between the elite and the masses, thereby relegating the role of the media to inform, educate, and enlighten the masses, especially the

youths who are the nation's future (Olumuji & Onabajo, 2022). Nwammuo and Salawu (2019) attest that the use of local dialects in broadcasting, particularly radio, to broadcast information is better and can produce the anticipated outcome more than any other media. This puts radio ahead of other media in development communication.

Radio programmes in indigenous languages should be created specifically to teach youths how to find profitable employment and become contributing members of society. Such programmes will discourage vices and explain to them the many advantages of being creative, diligent, and informed. It is said that an idle hand is the devil's weapon.

Radio (programmes) should be a source of progress and a means of combating underdevelopment; these development programs can be broadcast in indigenous languages to reach the illiterate and rural dwellers. Successful indigenous radio programmes usually appeal to the interests and tastes of the target audience (Olumuji & Onabajo, 2022). Salawu (2019) advocates for the development and sustenance of African indigenous media content. Communicating in indigenous languages improves social attachment and encourages acceptable and participation (Adeyeye, 2021).

It is safe to say from the forgoing that people's exposure to the media influences how they form their cognition, attitudes, and behavioral patterns. The media played, and will continue to play, a significant role in influencing how people perceive the world and how they behave. This study will lend credence to the idea that because indigenous programmes on radio address listeners in their mother tongue, non-literate English speakers have a favorable opinion of them. But it's not clear whether that impression always results in a shift in their attitude.

Radio and youth empowerment

A nation's level of development is directly correlated with its level of empowerment. The ability of a developed country to increase empowerment through information and job creation for the majority of her population appears to be what separates her from a developing or underdeveloped country (Ayeeni et al., 2021).

Every country's youths are thought to be her most energetic and engaged group, making them one of its greatest assets. They are the backbone of any community and, in addition to being rightfully recognized as the next generation of leaders, they represent both the greatest potential and actual investment in the advancement of a nation. Therefore, a programme like *Asiko Awa Youth* aims to refocus the

attention of young people in Ogun State and its surroundings on education and skill development for community development. Therefore, any indigenous radio programme addressing the problem of how to best harness the energy of youths for empowerment and development must actively engage the youths.

Since youths appear to be the most affected demographic when it comes to unemployment, most nations strive to concentrate on initiatives and programmes for youth empowerment in the belief that this will have a significant impact on job creation. The idea of empowerment has traditionally been applied to the creation of new jobs, which Ayeeni et al. (2021) argued as not always leading to unemployment in other sectors as a result of the jobs already generated. In order for young people to be gainfully employed, there is a need to give more attention to the informative component of disseminating these opportunities to youths who need them in both rural and urban centres. Again, the use of radio and radio programmes to fill the communication gap comes to the fore – which is the purpose of this study– to help youths achieve self-sufficiency through information or education.

Radio can be used not only to inform and educate the people, but also to mobilize them to participate effectively in a development process. By doing so, the illiterate and the majority of people living in poverty can be reached with the information they need to empower, educate, and ultimately close the development gap between Africa and the rest of the world (Olumuji & Onabajo, 2022). But Mpofu and Salawu (2021) lament that radio stations have relegated their role as a social function of the cultural industry. They have taken to the production of content that enhances revenue generation through attracting audiences and advertisers.

Nwammuo and Salawu (2019) aver that radio programmes can be useful for improving knowledge because they have an exclusive impact on the process of learning. The use of indigenous media content shared on digital platforms can attract young audiences who are frequent users of social media (Tshabangu & Salawu, 2022).

In addition to being a great tool for mobilization and motivation, radio has the capability to inform its broad audience to innovative approaches, methods, and even the most recent ideas that require urgent public attention. Even community workers can attest to the effectiveness of indigenous radio programmes in motivating people to support development. The regular immunization programme comes to mind as one such. The level to which such communication is

based on knowledge of the society's culture, particular system of values, and attitudes will affect the effectiveness of such programme message. This demonstrates unequivocally that a programme that is packaged with the language and cultural norms of the target audience's immediate environment in mind will be best suited in effecting any desired change.

The trending notion that radio programmes should largely focus on entertainment, religious and political matters, has led to the paucity of programmes on youth empowerment and development (Olumuji & Onabajo, 2022). Radio meets these criteria because newspapers are predominantly published in English (Adeyeye et al., 2021). The radio can be used to launch an empowerment campaign targeted at the youths, and such a campaign will be more effective if it is done in the indigenous language of the people.

3. Theoretical scaffolding

A justification for media use in the development of rural or undeveloped societies is provided by Development Media Theory. The Development Media Theory was put up by Dennis McQuail in 1987 to offer a justification and plan for using mass media to advance and assist underdeveloped nations worldwide. The United Nations Economic Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) MacBride commission, which was established in 1979, is credited with giving birth to the notion. The idea aims to explain the press's normative behavior in developing nations. According to Asemah (2011), the media can aid in the process of development in poor nations. He added that the media are viewed as facilitators of social change and development.

The guiding principles of the theory, according to Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso (2008), are that the media should accept and complete responsibilities that will positively advance society in accordance with stated national policy. The media should prioritize using the indigenous language and culture in their content. Technology coexists with the culture it influences, and similarly, dramas and other broadcast programmes are made with those countries' cultural backgrounds in mind. The media should prioritize connecting with other countries that are close to them culturally, economically, politically, or geographically while reporting news and providing information. Journalists and other media professionals are free to obtain information, but they also have obligations.

The theory is anchored on communication for development, which sees the mass media as ready to champion the social, economic, and political

developments of developing nations. The use of the development media theory in this study will show how indigenous radio programmes on youth empowerment can be used by the media to mobilize youths to become self-sufficient, thereby complementing and assisting the government to achieve its plan of reducing unemployment, especially among youths.

4. Methodology

The study is a qualitative study that adopted an interpretive research paradigm to understand youth empowerment via indigenous radio programme (Mpofu & Salawu, 2021). Data for this study was collected from FocusGroupDiscussion of youths who are listeners to the programme. Using FGD provided us with a unique opportunity to interact with the programme's audience and obtain first-hand information. Two FGDs with eleven participants each were conducted, and to improve the representativeness of the participants, we ensured that the characteristics of the listeners included both male and female participants, white-collar and blue-collar jobs, as well as participants of different educational levels.

For ethical consideration, eligible respondents were given a chance to comprehend the study's goals and ask questions about the research and participants' rights, and they gave their consents to join the FGDs. Participation in the FGD was voluntary. Participants were not required to disclose their names or any other traceable identity to ensure that their responses could not be traced back to them. The discussion-building technique was used as the method of data presentation. In using this technique, the researcher elicited responses derived from the FGD with the aim of interpreting and extracting meaning from the answers (Nwammuo & Salawu, 2019). Data were analysed thematically in relation to the study's research questions.

5. Youth Perception of Indigenous Radio Programme

The responses from the FGDs revealed that *Asiko Awa Youth* programme is interesting, and the majority said the vox pop and advice segments of the programme were the most interesting parts of the programme. Both FGD groups confirmed that the use of indigenous languages for a youth programme is a good initiative because it will give the programme more acceptance as not every youth understands the English language, and this generation of youths are fast losing touch with their cultural heritage. Here are some of the FGD responses:

FGD 1: to reach these large number of people, the indigenous language is prescribed. There's also the belief that the Yoruba Language is gradually fading away especially among we the youths, which is why some radio youth programmes should be aired in the local language

FGD 1: Using indigenous languages would increase audience participation because not every young person is educated enough to speak English.

FGD 2: The use of indigenous languages to broadcast can ensure continuous transmission of culture, customs, and history

FGD 2: I would prefer a programme where a particular language is chosen, rather than mixing two languages.

This finding supports Akanbi and Aladesanmi (2014) submission that the language employed by a media house goes a long way in determining the listenership strength and effectiveness of its services. The use of language in a broadcasting programme should be in tandem with the set objectives of the programme, the targeted audience, and the language of communication in such a locality. Audience tend to bond more with programmes that reflect their roots or origins. Here are more responses that support the use of indigenous language:

FGD 1: The episode about greetings in Yoruba culture was the most interesting.

FGD 2: We will feel more connected to our roots if radio programmes for youth are broadcast in our native tongue. Most youths just know their names and have no idea of their origins

The responses of FGDs align with Danos and Turin(2021) that indigenous radio serves as a tool for reclamation and maintenance of indigenous languages, particularly if the programme teaches basic knowledge and etiquette about the culture of the people. Indigenous radio programs provide youths who otherwise would not have the opportunity to learn about their culture.

Indigenous language radio programmes are a welcome addition to the idea of promoting native language for indigenous people who live in primarily rural areas because they enable effective communication among the indigenous groups and allow their value systems to permeate within the localities.

6. Indigenous radio programme and youths' attitude to work

There was a consensus among the participants of the two Focus Groups that the programme *Asiko Awa Youth* had greatly impacted the youths' attitude toward work and how they view the world at large. They also

mentioned that the program had improved their attitude toward academics for participants who were still in school. Here are some excerpts:

FGD 1: The episode dealing with dealing with "yahoo-yahoo" helped change my attitude toward making quick money and following legitimate methods.

FGD 1: The programme has helped change some negative attitudes of the youths, especially when advice is given towards the end of the programme to imbibe positive virtues in academics and work.

FGD 2: The choice of Yoruba language makes it explicit to both literate and illiterate that being an apprentice and becoming your own boss in the future is the solution to poverty.

FGD 2: Everyone in this room will agree that this indigenous program has improved their attitude toward work and academics for those of us who are still in school.

The finding that indigenous radio programmes have the potential of influencing youths' attitudes toward work positively aligns with Adeyeye (2021) submission, that communicating in indigenous radio programmes brings about productivity. Radio programming in indigenous languages appeals more to the conscience of youths, especially if it is to motivate them to work. This also validates the Media Development Theory, which holds that radio can be used for campaigning and advocacy in changing people's attitudes toward work and contributing to national development in their own small way.

Moreso, for a developing nation like Nigeria, all hands must be on deck, and the youths constitute the largest part of the workforce for national development. Proprietors, programme sponsors, content and programme producers have to be more intentional about the use of indigenous language in broadcasting. More indigenous language radio programmes should be produced expressly to instruct youths on how to find rewarding employment and become contributing members of society. These programmes will educate viewers about the various benefits of creativity, diligence, and knowledge while discouraging vices.

7. Contributions of indigenous radio programme to youth empowerment

Findings from the FGDs revealed that youths have achieved some level of self-sufficiency through information and education provided by *Asiko Awa Youth*. This affirms that an informed and/or educated youth is an empowered youth. Here are some of the FGD responses:

FGD 1: Knowledge gained from the programme has made youths more self-reliant and

FGD 1: The program has opened my eyes to other productive vocational skills such as fashion, make-up, and textiles (Adire) that will help me become self-sufficient.

FGD 2: I have learned to be self-reliant, respectful, and well-behaved

FGD 2: The program has encouraged young people to be gainfully engaged in vocational skills rather than waiting for white-collar jobs, and young people can venture into entrepreneurship.

Youths affirmed that Indigenous radio programme has met their information needs; this finding corroborates Olumuji and Onabajo (2022) position that the media, as the fourth estate of the realm, if given space in broadcasting radio programme will aid youth empowerment for national development. The nation needs youths to be part of her development hence the need to garner their input through the media with the use of indigenous programmes in order to reach the youths at all levels and locations, as no nation can develop without her youth's resourcefulness. It is also in tandem with Danos and Turin (2021) suggestion that indigenous and non-indigenous communities alike should take advantage of the transformative and creative roles the radio plays in the development of society. Ayeni et al. (2021) avers that the radio can be used to focus more on the informational aspect of providing these chances to youths who need them in both rural and urban centers if we want young people to be gainfully employed.

The target audience is essentially engaging in the programme and the growth of their communities when they are given the opportunity to talk about their circumstances and solutions for improving them. This type of engagement may take the form of audience suggestions beginning with the programme implementation stage, throughout the programme, or during programme evaluation in the form of phone calls for feedback. *Asiko Awa Youth* airs for 30 minutes, however, we discovered that no one calls in or sends messages during that time because it is a recorded programme. This is a limitation for this programme that is also peculiar to other recorded radio programmes. Live programming enables instant feedback and audience involvement. Live programmes allow for immediate feedback and participation in the programme. It suggests that the programme is reaching the intended audience and that there is hope for a desired outcome when a program is created in a way that will encourage participation from the target audience.

Successful indigenous radio programmes typically need to capture the attention and taste of their intended

listeners. A fundamental tenet of the Development Media Theory states that programmes with a large audience are more likely to have a significant impact on audience loyalty, which may lead to involvement and eventually a change in attitude or behaviour.

Therefore, the idea of indigenous programmes goes beyond simply creating excellent radio programmes in native language. Through these programmes, important topics for the community, like ideas for generating income and strategies for enhancing education, are also covered.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that OGBC 90.5FM's conception and broadcast of *Asiko Awa Youth* is a positive step toward youth empowerment through indigenous language. It has positively impacted youths' attitude to work and school. But OGBC and other broadcast stations alike will write their names in gold if they invest more in empowerment ideas and air more youth-oriented programmes in indigenous languages in order to reach more rural dwellers, artisans, and illiterate and semi-illiterate youth.

Based on the findings of the research, it is recommended that:

In order to promote indigenous culture to a global audience, there is a need for a national policy on the institutionalisation of indigenous languages in broadcast programmes especially in radio targeted to youth. Radio stations should devote a certain percentage of programmes to broadcasting in indigenous languages. By so doing, there will be a revitalization of national consciousness on the need for youths to promote their indigenous culture; and local radio stations like OGBC 90.5fm have the potential to have a significant impact on young people's lives in their respective states. These radio stations should be intentional about influencing young people to modify or strengthen existing characteristics because they are familiar with the community in which they work and can speak to its residents in their own language. Local and national radio stations should use indigenous youth programmes to mobilize the target listeners toward empowerment and development by educating and enlightening them about significant community issues. Youth is one of the most untapped growth drivers. The time has come for the government and other stakeholders to either focus on youth development and enjoy significant developmental gains, or to do otherwise at the risk of the country.

For greater impact on youth empowerment, more interviews of successful entrepreneurs, especially those from humble beginnings, should be aired. Future episodes of the programme should focus more on skills, craft, and blue-collar jobs.

In addition, the programme episodes should be shared with youths on different social media platforms; so that more youths would listen to them and be empowered for their own and national development.

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