

# The Attitude of Young Generation towards Traditional Communication: The Case of Niger

Hima Oumarou Souleymane<sup>1,\*</sup>, Mohamedou Cheibany Bnejjeck<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Student of College of Journalism and Communication, Hebei University, Baoding, China  
<sup>2</sup>Nouakchott University Mauritania

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**Abstract** In Niger, youth seem to be more focused on modern tools of communication, thanks to the development of information and communication technologies (ICT), while abandoning traditional means of communication. Thus, this paper aims to highlight the views of young generations towards traditional communication tools. The study was conducted through a survey of young students from universities and/or high schools, those who have already finished their studies (graduated students), and from the main cities of Niger. The results revealed the attachment of young people to new communication and information technologies and, especially, the use of modern platforms such as social media.

**Keywords** Attitude, Young generation, Niger, Traditional communication

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## 1. Introduction

The development of information and communication technologies impacts the lives of young people in Niger. Social media are the main focus of this new generation. Even modern tools such as books, newspapers, radio, and television have become traditional. Thus, the young generation in Niger is in a transition between modernity and tradition. As in the rest of Africa, Niger, in particular, has seen the advent of modern communication and information sciences, leading to a major evolution and transformation in the way we communicate and receive information. However, traditional communication still plays a crucial role in the dissemination of information in rural and urban areas. Nevertheless, this communication form faces great challenges that hinder its development, and it remains unknown to young people who are submerged in modern times with smartphones and the Internet.

In spite of all the problems facing this traditional form of communication, it is, however, an integral part of the Nigerien cultural identity and a means of social cohesion and peace between the different ethnic groups in Niger. The young generation has to be taught the importance of this form of communication. They have not fully mastered the traditional communication tool, which is a cultural symbol and a cultural heritage handed down from one generation to the next. This document, therefore, focuses on young people's attitudes toward traditional communications. The objective

is two fold: to understand the attitudes of the younger generation towards traditional communication and to highlight the socio-bibliography of young people in Niger and their knowledge of traditional communication tools. This document is structured as follows: literature review, study methodology, main results, discussion, and conclusion.

## 2. Literature Review

African youth in general and those of Niger in particular have rapidly integrated the virtual world. The literature on the attitude of African youth towards traditional communication is vast and diverse. Some authors have focused their analysis on the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) on traditional communication in Africa and the attitudes of youth toward these new forms of media (Mudhai, Tettey, and Banda, 2009; Meyer, 2017; Prah, 2004; Sounaye, 2011; Bussotti, 2015). In this aspect, Meyer (2016) explores how African youth use traditional communication to negotiate their relationship with religion and spiritual practices. While others focus on the functions of traditional communications. Nyamnjoh (2005) examines how traditional communication can be used to strengthen democracy and citizenship in Africa. Ngwainmbi (2019) explores the interaction between traditional African religion and African youth, focusing on the way young people are engaged in practices and traditional beliefs. Middleton (1999) examines how traditional African thought systems can be used to inform current debates about science and technology in Africa and how this may be perceived by African youth. Prah (2004) examines how traditional communication systems in Africa influence the identity and self-perception of African youth. The theory of persuasion can be used to influence the attitude of the

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\* Corresponding author:

wushuraul@gmail.com (Hima Oumarou Souleymane)

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young generation towards traditional communication. In fact, this theory stresses that to persuade an audience, it is necessary to create a message adapted to the audience and to use effective communication techniques (Festinger, 1962; Becker, 1960; and Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Thus, actors in traditional communication can adopt this theory in order to transmit cultural heritage to the next generation.

### 3. Methodology of the Study

This section presents the methodology of the study: research method and data collection. This paper has focused on researchers' contributions to quantitative research methodology, mainly on research design, data collection, and analysis used in social science research (Ivankova, Creswell, and Stick, 2006; Creswell et al., 2007; Trochim and Donnelly, 2001; and Jackson and Trochim, 2002). This study uses quantitative research, mainly a survey carried out among young students from Niamey, the capital city, and Maradi, the economic capital city, two main cities of Niger. The choice of respondent was guided by the criteria of being a student aged between 18 and 35 years old. The study used questionnaires to collect data from a sample of young people to find out about their perceptions and knowledge of traditional communication (Clark et al., 2008; Jackson and Trochim, 2002; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

In this study, "numerical data" was collected using closed-ended questions, mainly multiple-choice questions. As the target audience is a part of the youth population, responses for each option are easily quantified. Excel software was used to analyze survey results.

## 4. Findings and Interpretations

### 4.1. Demographically Characteristics of Respondents

The young people who participated in this study are generally students from high school and universities earning bachelor, master, and PhD degrees.

#### 4.1.1. Gender Distribution

The proportion of women was low compared to men, this can be explained by the fact that educated women are few in Niger. Table 1 present the distribution of gender

**Table 1.** Gender distribution

	Number	Percentage
Male	93	69.9
Female	40	30.07
Total	133	100.0

Source: author own elaboration from surveys

#### 4.1.2. Major of Study

All study levels were included Bachelors (50.37%), Masters (27.07%) and Doctorates (1.5%) and high school as presented

in table 2.

**Table 2.** Major of Study

	Number	Percentage
Bachelor	67	50.37
Master	36	27.07
Hight school	28	21.05
PhD	2	1.50
Total	133	100.0

Source: author own elaboration from surveys

#### 4.1.3. Place of Residence

Respondents are coming from two places, cities and villages as presented in table 3.

**Table 3.** Place of residence

	Number	Percentage
From cities	88	66
From villages	45	33
Total	133	100.0

Source: author own elaboration from surveys

#### 4.1.4. Age Distribution

Age distribution reveals a weak proportion of adult people whose age is between 30 and 35 years, as presented in table 4.

**Table 4.** Age distribution

	Number	Percentage
18-20 years old	29	21.80
20-25 years old	65	48.87
27-30 years old	32	24.06
30-35 years old	7	5.26
Total	133	100

Source: author own elaboration from surveys

#### 4.1.5. Marital Status

Responses indicate that single are more dominant than married this can be explained by the fact that major respondents are young as presented in table 5.

**Table 5.** Marital status

	Number	Percentage
Married	10	7.51
Single	123	92.48
Total	133	100

Source: author own elaboration from surveys

#### 4.1.6. Money Spends by Month

The young people who took part in this research used their income (financial resources provided by their parents or from their student grants) to take out Internet packages in order to be able to connect to the service offered by foreign or local mobile phone companies. On the mobile

phone market, you can find very affordable prices for new handsets manufactured in China or on the local second-hand market. The young people said that these two markets have greatly facilitated access to the Internet, even for young people in the village. Despite the electricity problems, which are an obstacle to better use of mobile devices. Table 6 presented the amount of money spent on modern communications per month.

**Table 6.** Money spends by month

	Number	Percentage
38 USD	78	58.64
77 USD	38	28.57
155 USD	15	11.27
Total	133	100.0

Source: author own elaboration from surveys

#### 4.2. The Attitude of Young Generation Towards Traditional Communication

**Table 7.** Knowledge of traditional communication forms by youth

TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION FORM	YES	%	NO	%
HORN	7	7.29	89	92.70
DRUM	20	2.06	77	79.38
SENDING OF EMISSARY	37	37.37	62	62.63
GRIOTS	31	32.29	65	67.70
JOKING RELATIONSHIP	69	62.16	42	37.83
NOMADIC TELEPHONE	30	29.41	72	70.58
VILLAGE YOUTH ASSOCIATION SAMARIA	45	44.56	56	55.44
TRADITIONALCHIEFS	23	25	69	75
PROVERB	64	62.14	39	37.86
BODY LANGUAGE	40	40	60	60
DRESS	48	45.28	58	54.72
MARKS	10	10.75	83	89.25
RIDING	10	10.53	85	89.47

Source: author own elaboration from surveys

The results of the research through our questionnaires clearly showed the attitude of young Nigeriens towards traditional means of communication. Many of these young people do not feel concerned by this form of communication, which continues to be used in several regions of Niger, not only in the villages, but even in the large districts of the capital, Niamey, where the traces of traditional communication still serve the population. There is a generational conflict between the years 50 and the year 2000, who have no knowledge of traditional means of communication or traditional communication players. Few people are familiar with traditional tools and the role of traditional communication players, who are the guardians of tradition in Niger society. The young people who have some knowledge of traditional communication and the tools of traditional communication are mostly those who were

born in the village. Table 7, present the results collected in the field.

#### 4.3. The Attitude of Young Generation Towards Modern Communication Tools

An analysis of table 8 shows the attachment of these young people to new communication and information technologies, and especially their use of modern platforms, especially WhatsApp (99.2%), which for the young people taking part in this research is an essential means of receiving and transmitting information.

The results show us a different reality with regard to so-called modern media such as radio and television, which, thanks to the challenge posed by the rise of new technologies among young people in Niger, have now become traditional tools. Even books and newspapers are confronted with this modern phenomenon (ICTs), which means that young people are facing a transition between modernity and tradition.

**Table 8.** Attitude of young generation towards Medias

MEDIA TYPE		YES	%	NO	%
TRADITIONALE	BOOK	95	81.89	21	18.11
MEDIA	NEWSPAPER	41	39.42	63	60.57
	TV	111	86.10	17	13.28
	RADIO	71	59.16	49	40.83
NEW MEDIA	INTERNET	112	91.80	10	8.99
	FACEBOOK	95	81.89	21	18.10
	WHATAPP	124	99.20	1	0.89
	TWITER	27	27.55	71	72.44
	INSTAGRAM	44	42.00	60	51.69
	TIKTOK	27	26.77	74	73.26

Source: author own elaboration from surveys

### 5. Discussion

Nigerien youths aged 19 to 20 are completely unaware of the existence of this traditional communication; for them, ICT answers their daily needs (Ngwainmbi, 2019). The above results highlight the opinions of the young generation and are in line with some authors who argue that, nowadays, youth are not more aware of the existence of traditional media (Mudhai et al., 2009; Meyer, 2016). Despite the fact that traditional means of communication are neglected by the youth, they not only play the role of informing (Nyamnjoh, 2005). Meanwhile, the new technologies should be a means of popularizing traditional communication; value them and consider their actors, who are holders of knowledge on ethics, good behavior, and living together (Maria. M. 2021).

These values can be transmitted to young people, especially with the affordable prices of smart phones. Almost all the Nigerien youth have these tools to connect; it's a reality in Africa, not only in Niger. With the products made in China, especially cell phones, the Nigerien youth, thanks to their source of income, can afford these devices to communicate.

It is important to note that in our traditional African society, the young people go through an initiation or a transmission of values, thanks to the channels of the wise men, or the members of the family. In this aspect, the results of this study are in line with the works of Mudhai et al. (2009). The author makes a very interesting and in-depth analysis of the impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on traditional communication in Africa and on the attitudes of young people towards these new forms of media (K. Madhusudan, 2006).

Traditional communication is often neglected in the literature on digital media. However, it is important to emphasize this aspect that constitutes a real problem for traditional communication, especially since the influence of new technologies has greatly affected the youth by disconnecting them from their cultural values T. Mathiyazhagan and Jagjyot et al (2015). Therefore, some issues arise as cybercrime arises, and it is not to be neglected in many countries in Africa. Young people are used to it, especially those in big cities (Sounaye, 2011). This thesis analysis showed us that the rise of modernization in our cities is not bad at all; however, the use that the youth make of the Internet negatively impacts the value of traditional communication that teaches cultural values to this youth.

These analyses are in line with the work of Prah (2004), who stresses the impact of traditional communication on the self-perception of youth. Thus, this paper highlights the importance of teaching youth traditional communication, especially in the transmission of ancestral knowledge that comes from traditional communication. During our research on the field, many of these young Nigerien do not know the name of some traditional means of communication, such as the sending of an emissary or the existence of samaria, which are houses of youth and places of sharing information before the coming of the internet. So, to diffuse the knowledge of traditional communication, it is necessary to first target how to make it. In this case, ICT is requested, and the academics and experts in communication studies will have to play a role in the transmission and safeguarding of this form of communication, which is always functional for other layers of Nigerien society. Hence, traditional communication is still the main means of communication in some parts of Niger due to the financial means to offer a smart phone or the non-knowledge of the use of modern tools of communication, especially in zones where the coverage of the network is weak, there is the absence of internet, or there are problems with alphabetization.

## 6. Conclusions

The main objective of this paper was to highlight the attitude of the young generation towards traditional communication. The study focused on surveys to collect data from the young generation. The results revealed the sociodemographic profiles of youth in Niger. This young generation is aged between 18 and 35 and is mainly made

up of students. Young people in Niger have little or no knowledge of traditional communication tools. Meanwhile, this paper advocates the dissemination of knowledge about traditional communication by the various players (government, parents, community leaders, etc.) to young people through training programs in schools and universities, as well as social and cultural activities. The relationship between new communication technologies and traditional communication in Niger is complex and constantly evolving. While ensuring that all citizens have access to effective communication tools that are compatible with modern society, traditional communication should be preserved as a cultural value and heritage for future generations. This paper has made a solid contribution to communication in Niger by highlighting the attitude of the young generation towards traditional communication in this country. However, the paper has one main limitation: the survey was conducted mainly in two towns in Niger. Future research on traditional communication in Niger could survey a large sample of respondents in many Niger towns.

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