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Social media usage and participation in off-farm work among Rural Youths in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined social media use and off-farm work participation among rural youths in Oyo State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed to select 180 respondents using an interview schedule. Data were analysed using percentages, means, and Pearson's product-moment correlation. The findings revealed that the majority had limited knowledge of social media, resulting in low participation in off-farm activities. Annual income (r=0.159), years of education (r=0.184) and knowledge scores (r=0.257) significantly increased participation in off-farm activities at p<0.05 level. The study concludes that rural youths generally participated lowly in off-farm activities due to poor knowledge of social media, resulting from poor electricity supply and low digital literacy in managing social media. Both the Federal and State governments should provide a more reliable power supply and digital literacy training to enable rural youths to use social media more effectively for accessing information on off-farm activities.

Keywords: social media, off-farm work, rural youth

Introduction

Social media (SM) has undoubtedly become an essential tool in modern society, serving not only communication purposes but also as a transformative instrument for economic empowerment across various sectors (Udoye & Madukwe, 2025). Social media platforms such as the YouTube are widely used by farmers to access information, upload videos of their farming activities for the benefit of others, and showcase or advertise their farm produce (Ramavhale et al., 2024). Sutherland et al. (2025) observed that social media is more widely used and accepted among urban elites than rural settlers, and also among men than women. However, the use of the

internet in pursuit of various goals has recently become an important avenue for youth development, improved productivity, and a response to the stereotypical seclusion of women among the elites, according to Ahmad et al. (2024).

Off-farm work in agriculture provides people with alternative income sources to reduce overdependence on farming, farm produce, or agriculture in its entirety for sustenance, and it also contributes to economic resilience (Bruce et al., 2025). Off-farm work is highly relevant in the rural labour market, as opportunities exist across different sectors, and they are not gender limited (Bai et al., 2024). Studies (Islam et al., 2022; Li et al., 2025) suggest that promoting participation in off-farm work is one of the most helpful ways to increase individual income and alleviate their overdependence on farm yields Off-farm work dynamics vary significantly by region due to differences in socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural contexts (Maro et al., 2025). For instance, in Northern Ghana, off-farm employment is often seasonal and informal, while in Southern Nigeria, it tends to be more diversified and includes formal employment opportunities (Aremu et al., 2024). Rural youth in peri-urban areas are more likely to engage in ICT-based jobs because of better connectivity and proximity to urban markets compared to those in remote villages. Agro-ecological variations also shape opportunities; in arid regions, off-farm income is often necessary due to unreliable rainfall, whereas fertile zones may offer more stable agricultural income, reducing off-farm dependency in more agriculturally productive zones (Asfaw et al., 2021). Among rural youths, male youths are often more involved in off-farm activities (Daudu et al., 2023). In many rural areas, childcare, spousal care, and eldercare are viewed as women's responsibility, and it significantly impacts rural women's off-farm labor supply and also influences their decisions in consideration of the adoption of off-farm work or the kind of off-farm work to venture into (Obetta et al., 2025).

The use of social media and the internet has had a notable impact on shaping economic opportunities, both concerning and not concerning farming or agriculture (Hamza et al., 2025). Despite this influence, it is yet to be fully explored in the employment and promotion of off-farm work in rural areas, especially for women in the case study. However, there has been a significant improvement in the use of the internet amongst women of recent times, both in rural and urban areas, compared with previous decades, which supports the relevance of this study. The limited research on how rural youths utilize social media for accessing and promoting sustainable off-farm work leave knowledge gaps on the nexus between social media usage and participation in off-farm work among rural youths in Oyo State, Nigeria.

The broad objective of the study was to examine social media usage and participation in off-farm work among rural youths in Oyo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to: (i) assess the knowledge level of social media use among the respondents (ii) examine the kinds of off-farm information accessed from social media (iii) determine the level of participation in off-farm activities (iv) investigate the factors hindering the use of social media for off-farm activities, and the socio-economic variables influencing youths' off-farm work participation.

Methodology

Oyo State lies along the coordinates of 8.1574° N, 3.6147° E (Bello et al., 2025). Population of the study comprised all youths aged 18-35 in the study area. A four-stage random sampling procedure was employed for this study. The first stage involved a proportionate random selection of 50% of the four (4) ADPs in the State. The selected ADP zones were Ogbomoso and Saki. The second stage involved a random selection of two (2) LGAs from each of the selected zones making a total of four (4) LGAs (Orelope; Olorunshogo; Ogbomoso North; Orire). The third stage involved a random selection of three communities from each of the selected LGAs giving a total of twelve (12) villages (Igbope; Oke ayinta; Isale ogba; Tesi apata; Oke imore; Olopoto; Ikoyi; Iluju; Saamo; Isale afun; Oni panu; Masifa). The fourth stage involved a proportionate random selection of 50% of the registered rural youths and women involved in off-farm work participation in each of the selected villages making a total of 180 respondents (Igbope – 27; Oke ayinta – 9; Isale ogba – 12; Tesi apata – 8; Oke imore – 14; Olopoto – 11; Ikoyi – 13; Iluju – 14; Saamo – 15; Isale afun – 19; Onipanu – 21; Masifa – 17).

Data collection was done using interview schedule. The instrument consisted of questions to examine the effects of social media use and identify barriers to accessing off-farm information through social media among selected rural youths. The instrument was subjected to close examination by 7 experts in related fields at the University of Ilorin and the Oyo State Ministry of Agriculture to ensure the content validity. Knowledge was measured using the scale Yes (1), and No (0). A total of 9 knowledge areas were presented to respondents. A respondent having 0-3 score was considered as low knowledge, scores between 4-6 was considered moderate and scores between 7-9 was considered high knowledge.The respondents' level of participation was rated arbitrarily as low (0-4), medium (5 – 8), and high (9-11). Ratings of challenges hindering access to social media for off-farm information used a 4-point scale with scores of 4, 3, 2, and 1, corresponding to Very Severe, Severe, Slightly Severe, and Not Severe. The average score was 2.5 thus, variables with 2.5 and above were considered factors, otherwise, not factors. A test-retest reliability method was carried out among 10 rural youths who were not included in the sampling. A Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) coefficient of 0.81 was obtained to affirm the reliability of the instrument. Data obtained from field survey were analyzed using percentages, means, standard deviation and PPMC.

Results and Discussion

Knowledge about Social Media

The majority (65.0%) of the respondents were familiar with Facebook while 51.7% were with WhatsApp. This finding implies that Facebook and WhatsApp were the most widely known social media platforms for accessing agricultural information among rural youths in the study area. This result is consistent with Mulaudzi et al. (2024) and Yakubu et al. (2023) who reported that Facebook and WhatsApp were major platforms known by youths to obtain information on off-farm activities.

Table 1: **Knowledge of the respondents about social media types**

Social media types	Yes, I know Percentage
Facebook	65.0
Instagram	15.6
X (Twitter)	13.9
Whatsapp	61.7
Youtube	35.0
Tik tok	21.1
Snapchat	10.0
LinkedIn	0.6
Telegram	7.2

Source: Field survey, 2025

Knowledge Level of Social Media

The aggregation of the knowledge score in Table 2 shows that most (78.9%) of the rural youths had low knowledge of social media, while a few (8.3%) had high knowledge. Low level of knowledge of social media is capable of limiting the level of usage most importantly the use of LinkedIn, Telegram, Snapchat and X (Twitter). Agricultural extension information shared through these media may not reach youths or accessing those information for their off-farm activities. This supports report by Okocha and Dogo (2023) who earlier found that several rural dwellers do not have adequate knowledge of social media and other digital technologies which can reduce their ability to utilize social media platforms.

Table 2: Knowledge level of social media

Obtained knowledge cores	Percentage
0 – 3	78.9
4 – 6	12.8
7 – 9	8.3
Total	100

Possible score range 0 - 9

Kinds of Off-farm Information Accessed on Social Media

Table 3 presents the results on various kinds of off-farm information accessed on social media by the respondents. Findings showed that majority of the respondents used social media to access current trends in agriculture (64.4%). This implies a favourable information-seeking behaviour among youths on updates and for current news affecting them through social media. By implication, information disseminated via social media on improved technologies targeted at improving livelihoods will be highly accessed by youths using such platforms. This may reflect a desire to learn about and adopt modern agricultural practices, as referenced in a study conducted by Olatinwo et al. (2026). Additionally, an appreciable number of respondents utilized social media to access current government agricultural policies (55.6%), agricultural marketing ideas (53.3%), Networking opportunities in agriculture (47.2%), consumer preferences and feedback (45.0%), and loans and grants for farming (43.9%). These findings further emphasize youths' utilization of social media to acquire knowledge on government agricultural policies and marketing opportunities. Other notable uses of social media were its use to

access online courses and trainings (30.0%), new techniques, equipment, and practices (32.8%), and agribusiness strategies and implementation (36.1%).

Table 3: Kinds of off-farm information accessed on social media

Off-farm information accessed	Percentage (Yes)
Current trends in agriculture	64.4
Current government agricultural policies	55.6
Agricultural marketing ideas	53.3
Networking opportunities in agriculture	47.2
Consumer preferences and feedback	45.0
Loans and grants for farming	43.9
Weather forecasts	40.6
Agribusiness strategies and implementation	36.1
New techniques, equipment, and practices	32.8
Online courses and trainings	30.0

Source: Field survey, 2025. Multiple responses recorded

Types of Off-Farm Activities Participated In

As shown in Table 4, the leading off-farm activity participated in by the respondents was small scale trading (37.2%). This implies that small scale trading is the most prominent off-farm activity engaged by youths for livelihood in the study area. This may be attributed to low capital investment and resources needed to operate small-scale trade.

Furthermore, noticable percentage (26.1%) of the respondents were engaged in carpentry, transportation services, and commercial cooking respectively. This indicate that commercial transportation, cooking and carpentry works are known off-farm activities participated in by youths in the study area. This is similar to a report by Bello et al. (2025).

Table 4: **Types of off-farm activities participated in**

Off-Farm Activities	Percentage (Yes)
Small scale trading	37.2
Carpentry	26.1
Transportation services	26.1
Selling of agro-produce	26.1
Food processing	10.0
Commercial cooking	9.4
Engaging in wage labor in nearby towns	7.8
Working in a factory	5.6
Teaching	4.4
Craft production	3.9
Phone charging	0.6

Source: Field survey, 2025

Participation Level in Off-Farm Activities

The level of engagement in off-farm activities shown in Table 5 indicates that the majority (90.0%) of respondents had low participation, a few (10.0%) had moderate

participation while no respondent was grouped as having high participation level. This suggests that the participation in off-farm activities among rural youths was low. Low youth engagement in off-farm activities highlights possible low participation in the future. This suggests that youths may participate more in farming and non-farm-based activities for their livelihood. This assertion is consistent with a study showing that most youths depend on agriculture as their major means of livelihood, and their diversification into other sources of income is limited (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Table 5: **Level of participation in off-farm activities**

Scores	Level	`Percentage
0 – 4	Low	90.0
5 – 8	Moderate	10.0
Total		100

Possible score range: 0 – 11

Factors Hindering the Use of Social Media for Off-farm Activities

The results of factors hindering the use of social media for off-farm activities in Table 6 show that most of the variables' mean values were above the cut-off point of 2.5 and were thus considered as factors affecting the use of social media for off-farm activities among youths in the study area. Poor electricity supply ($\bar{x}$=3.44) was considered a factor. Constant electricity is important for accessing off-farm information on social media. Thus, when electricity provision is poor, more rural youths tend to move away from social media as they will not be able to get information for their off-farm activities. This finding is similar to a report by Yasin et al. (2026) who found out that poor energy supply is a continuous challenge in rural areas.

Low digital literacy in managing social media ($\bar{x}$ = 2.66) and lack of technical knowledge about gadget usage ($\bar{x}$ = 2.66) were considered factors. This shows that rural youths' risk aversion to the effects of digital illiteracy may lead them to avoid using digital technology, thereby resulting in missing out on other non-farm income-generating opportunities.

Another factor is household responsibilities ($\bar{x}$ =2.65). Household responsibilities include cleaning, cooking, fetching firewood and water, washing dishes, and clothes. These activities are known to affect social media utilization (Olaitan et al., 2024; Sarker et al., 2026). Rural youths engaged in these activities may be reluctant to use social media, whose benefits depend on stable conditions or on the social media knowledge they do not possess. Lack of time to use social media can reduce the visibility of their off-farm work activities and lower their income (Fadipe et al., 2024).

Additionally, limited access to smarter devices ($\bar{x}$ =2.63), high illiteracy level ($\bar{x}$ =2.61), lack of awareness of the importance of social media regarding off-farm activities ($\bar{x}$ =2.61), high cost of browsing data ($\bar{x}$ =2.53). These findings imply that access to smarter devices, education, and knowledge of social media possesses severe threat to the use of social media for engagement in off-farm activities in the study area. Findings agree with studies indicating digital and ICT literacy as factor affecting the utilization of social media (Nwoye et al., 2026; Gelani et al., 2025). Only finding on limited access to

the internet ($\bar{x}$ =2.16) was not considered a factor. This shows that accessing internet is not a challenge to utilize social media among youths in the study area.

Table 6: Factors hindering the use of social media for off-farm activities

Challenges	Mean	Std. deviation
Limited access to the internet	2.16	0.73
Poor electricity supply	3.44	0.77
Lack of awareness of the importance of social media regarding off-farm activities	2.61	1.07
High illiteracy level	2.61	1.11
Lack of technical knowledge about gadget usage	2.66	1.07
Low digital literacy in managing social media	2.66	1.08
Household responsibilities	2.65	1.04
Limited access to smarter devices	2.63	1.06
High cost of browsing data	2.53	0.97

Source: Field survey, 2025

Factors Influencing Off-Farm Work Participation

Table 7 reveals that years of education (r=0.184) is significantly positive. This implies that the more educated the youths are, the more they participate in off-farm work. Studies have confirmed that education is a determinant of participation, as more educated farmers have greater knowledge of productivity and welfare (Bello et al., 2025; Daudu et al., 2023). Also, education enhances the livelihoods of rural youths by increasing income diversification and improving economic decision-making (Anyachukwudinarum et al., 2024).

Annual income (r=0.159) of the respondents shows a positive and significant association. This positive coefficient implies that higher annual income increases rural youths' access to social media, enabling them to participate more in off-farm activities. This finding is expected as access to social media requires financial commitment, including the purchase of a phone and payment for data subscription, which are influenced by the socio-economic background of the youths (Atoni et al*.,* 2021; Padmanathan et al., 2020).

Knowledge of social media (r = 0.257) was significantly related to respondents' participation in off-farm work. This indicates that greater knowledge of social media is associated with higher participation in off-farm work among rural youths in the study area, as access to and effective use of digital platforms can improve information sharing, networking, and opportunities for employment or business engagement (Osuji et al., 2023; Yuan et al., 2025).

Table 7: **Factors influencing off-farm work participation**

Off-farm work participation	Correlation (r)
Age (Years)	0.055
Household size (Persons)	-0.061
Years of education	0.184*
Membership of association	0.127
Marital status	-0.093
Annual income (Naira)	0.159*
Knowledge score	0.257*

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-level)

Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings show that the knowledge level of social media use among rural youths was low, with only Facebook and WhatsApp being highly known. The social media were mainly used social media by the rural youths to access current trends in agriculture, current government agricultural policies, and agricultural marketing ideas. Furthermore, rural youths' participation in off-farm activities was low, as small-scale trading activities lead participation. The topmost factors hindering the use of social media for off-farm activities were poor electricity supply, low digital literacy in managing social media, and lack of technical knowledge about gadget usage.

To address these challenges, the study recommends that the government and relevant development agencies improve rural electricity supply and internet connectivity to support effective social media use among rural youths. Digital literacy training by concerned agencies should also be organized to strengthen youths' ability to use social media platforms for accessing livelihood opportunities. In addition, youth-focused awareness campaigns should be intensified to demonstrate how social media can be used for business promotion, networking, and access to off-farm income opportunities. Telecommunication firms and other stakeholders should provide affordable data plans and low-cost smart devices to reduce access barriers. Rural youths should also be encouraged to use social media more strategically for learning, marketing, and entrepreneurship.

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