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EFFECTS OF GROUP PARTICIPATION ON AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF YOUTHS IN AGRICULTURAL ZONE ONE OF RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT----------
This study examined the effects of group participation on agricultural activities among youths in Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, it described the socio-economic characteristics of youths, identified agricultural activities youth groups participate in, assessed their level of participation, examined the effects of group participation, determined constraints to participation and analyzed the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and group participation. A multistage sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents from 10 youth associations across two Local Government Areas. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and binary logit regression. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents (42.0%) were aged 20-29 years, 66.0% were single, 76.0% had attained formal education and 53.0% were engaged in farming as their primary occupation. The most common agricultural activities among youth groups were fish rearing (73%), processing and packaging of agricultural produce (70%) and sales of agricultural produce (67%). Youths demonstrated moderate participation in these activities, with the highest involvement in sales of agro inputs (mean = 2.73) and agro-supportive services (mean = 2.56). Group participation significantly enhanced communication (mean = 3.25), improved problem-solving capacity (mean = 3.05) and fostered skill acquisition (mean = 3.05). However, key constraints to participation included high uncertainty in agriculture (mean = 3.24), poor leadership (mean = 3.21) and inadequate extension services (mean = 3.16). Binary logit regression analysis showed that socio-economic characteristics such as age, gender, education, marital status and livelihood source significantly influenced participation. The study concluded that youth participation in agricultural groups positively impacted their agricultural engagement, skill development and problem-solving capacity, despite challenges related to leadership and financial constraints. Based on the findings, it was recommended that relevant stakeholders strengthen youth agricultural groups through capacity-building and training programs to enhance their skills, productivity and long-term participation in agriculture.

KEYWORDS: *Youth Participation, Agricultural Activities, Group Participation, Skill Acquisition, Socio-Economic Characteristics, Constraints, Rivers State, Nigeria.----------*

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture remains a fundamental sector in economic development, food security and employment generation, particularly in developing countries (Pawlak and Kołodziejczak, 2020). Youth participation in agricultural activities is crucial for ensuring sustainability and innovation in the sector. However, despite the potential of agriculture to provide livelihoods and drive economic transformation, youth engagement in the sector remains relatively low (Geza *et al*., 2021). Several factors, including unfavorable perceptions of agriculture, lack of access to resources and socio-economic constraints, have hindered youth participation in farming and agribusiness ventures (Boye *et al*., 2024). Encouraging youth participation in agricultural activities has become a focal point of policy discussions and development initiatives to address issues of rural unemployment and food insecurity (Msangi *et al*., 2024).

One of the approaches used to enhance youth involvement in agriculture is through group participation. Agricultural groups, cooperatives and associations provide a platform for knowledge exchange, access to credit facilities and market linkages, thereby improving productivity and income generation among young farmers (Madende *et al*., 2023).

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Studies have shown that youth involved in organized agricultural groups are more likely to adopt improved farming techniques and engage in agribusiness opportunities compared to those operating individually (Henning *et al*., 2022). Participation in agricultural groups also fosters social capital, enabling young farmers to share resources and collectively tackle agricultural challenges (Giwu *et al*., 2024). Despite these advantages, youth participation in agricultural groups is still limited due to several constraining factors.

Constraints to youth participation in agricultural group activities include limited access to finance, inadequate extension services and socio-cultural barriers (Ifeanyi-Obi and Asuquo, 2023). Many young farmers lack collateral for loans, making it difficult to invest in agricultural enterprises. Additionally, insufficient access to agricultural training and extension services limits their ability to adopt modern farming techniques and increase productivity (Gebremariam *et al*., 2021). Societal perceptions that associate agriculture with drudgery and low economic returns further discourage youth engagement in the sector (Girdziute *et al*., 2022). Addressing these constraints requires targeted interventions such as skill development programs, financial support and policies that create an enabling environment for youth participation in agriculture.

In Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State, youth participation in agricultural activities remains a pressing issue. Despite the existence of agricultural groups and cooperatives aimed at fostering engagement in the sector, many young people still struggle to fully participate. A major concern is the extent to which group participation influences agricultural activities and whether it contributes to improved productivity and income among youth in the region. Existing studies have examined youth involvement in agriculture at national and regional levels (Aphunu and Atoma, 2011; Adebayo and Joshua, 2024), but there is limited empirical evidence specifically focusing on the effects of group participation on agricultural activities in Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State. Furthermore, while studies such as Fasakin *et al*. (2022) have assessed the impact of youth participation on rural household revenue, they do not explicitly address the role of group participation as a mechanism for enhancing youth engagement in agriculture. This study aims to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on the effects of group participation on agricultural activities among youths in Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State.

The broad objective of this study is to assess the effect of group participation on agricultural activities among youths in Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to describe the socio-economic characteristics of youths in the study area, identify the agricultural activities in which youth groups participate, ascertain the level of youth participation in the agricultural activities performed by the groups, assess the effects of group participation on agricultural activities, determine the constraining factors to youth participation in group activities and analyse the relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of youths and their participation in group activities in Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State. This study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on youth participation in agriculture and provide valuable insights for policymakers and development practitioners seeking to enhance youth engagement in the agricultural sector.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State, Nigeria, which comprises eight Local Government Areas: Port Harcourt, Obio/Akpor, Khana, Gokana, Oyigbo, Tai, Eleme and Ogu-Bolo. The zone is predominantly engaged in crop production and serves as a key economic hub in the Niger Delta. While most parts of the zone are upland, Ogu-Bolo is in the riverine area. The region experiences an annual rainfall of approximately 1,862 mm, with temperatures ranging from 25°C to 28°C. The primary languages spoken include Pidgin English, English, Ikwerre, Ogoni and Wakirike. Agriculture has historically been a major occupation in the state, with policies aimed at promoting food production and employment for young people. The main crops cultivated include cassava, oil palm, plantain, maize, cowpea, yam, banana, fruits and vegetables. The Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) office in Zone One, headquartered in Bori, Khana Local Government Area, keeps records of various agricultural activities organized through youth groups.

The study population comprised all youth associations involved in agricultural activities in Agricultural Zone One. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select respondents. First, two Local Government Areas, Khana and Tai, were randomly selected. Next, five youth associations were randomly chosen from each, resulting in ten associations. Finally, ten youths were selected from each association, giving a total sample size of 100 respondents.

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Data were obtained from primary sources using a structured questionnaire and an interview schedule for illiterate respondents. The questionnaire captured socio-economic characteristics, levels of participation and other relevant aspects. The research instrument was validated by specialists in agricultural research at the University of Port Harcourt.

Both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyze the data. Frequency counts, percentages and mean scores were used to analyze specific objectives. Youth participation levels were measured using a three-point Likert-type scale with categories of highly participate (3), moderately participate (2) and participate (1). A midpoint of 2.0 was established, where mean scores of 2.0 and above indicated high participation, while scores below 2.0 indicated low participation. The effects of group participation on agricultural activities and constraints to youth participation were assessed using a four-point Likert-type scale with response options of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). A mean score of 2.5 and above signified agreement with the statement, while scores below 2.5 signified disagreement. The model definition for the Binary Logit regression analysis is implicitly given as follows:

$Cij = \beta0 + \beta1X1 + \beta2X2 + \beta3X3 + \beta4X4 + \beta5X5 + \beta6X6 + u$

where:
Cij = Level of participation (1 = high, 0 = low)
X1 = Age (Years)
X2 = Gender (Male = 1, Female = 2)
X3 = Level of education (No formal education = 1, Formal education = 2)
X4 = Marital status (Single = 1, Married = 2)
X5 = Major source of livelihood (Non-agricultural = 1, Agricultural = 2)
X6 = Religion
u = Error term.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents in the Study Area

The results from Table 1 highlight key socio-economic characteristics of youths in Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State. The age distribution shows that the highest proportion of respondents (42.0%) falls within the 20-29 age bracket, indicating a relatively young population engaged in agricultural activities, while the lowest percentage (19.0%) is in the 40-49 age group. This aligns with findings by Osabohien *et al*. (2021), who noted that younger individuals are more likely to engage in agricultural activities when provided with adequate support and incentives.

Regarding marital status, the majority (66.0%) are single, while 34.0% are married. The dominance of unmarried youths in agricultural groups may suggest that single individuals have fewer domestic responsibilities, allowing them to participate more actively. Adebayo and Joshua (2024) also reported that single youths tend to show greater interest in agricultural activities due to their flexibility in decision-making and mobility.

Educational status shows that 76.0% of respondents attained formal education, while 24.0% did not. Among those with formal education, the highest qualification attained by most respondents is the O'level certificate (53.0%), while the lowest proportion (1.0%) holds a PhD. This educational distribution suggests that most youths in the study area have at least basic literacy, which is essential for understanding and adopting modern agricultural techniques. This is consistent with the findings of Alabi *et al*. (2023), who emphasized that educational attainment positively influences youth participation in agribusiness.

The occupational distribution reveals that 53.0% of the respondents are primarily engaged in farming, while 47.0% are in non-farming occupations. The slight dominance of farming as the main occupation suggests that agricultural activities remain a significant source of livelihood. However, non-farming occupations still attract a considerable proportion of youths, which could be linked to factors such as limited access to resources and financial constraints, as highlighted by Fasakin *et al*. (2022).

Christianity is the predominant religion among the respondents, with 76.0% identifying as Christians and 24.0% as non-Christians. While religion may not directly influence agricultural participation, cultural and social norms associated with religious beliefs can shape youths' engagement in farming activities, as discussed by Mthi *et al*. (2021).

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In terms of income levels, the highest percentage (30.0%) of respondents earns between ₦21,000-₦60,000 monthly, whereas the lowest proportion (16.0%) earns between ₦61,000-₦100,000. The relatively low income levels among youths in agriculture could be a discouraging factor, limiting their investment in agricultural ventures. This aligns with findings by Boye *et al*. (2024), who noted that financial constraints and limited access to credit are major barriers to sustained youth engagement in agriculture.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of youths in the study area (n = 100)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20 - 29	42	42.0
30 - 39	39	39.0
40 - 49	19	19.0
Marital status		
Single	66	66.0
Married	34	34.0
Edu. status attained		
Non-formal education	24	24.0
Formal education	76	76.0
Main occupation		
Non-farming	47	47.0
Farming	53	53.0
Edu. attained		
FSLC	4	4.0
O'level	53	53.0
B.Sc.	25	25.0
M.Sc.	17	17.0
Ph.D.	1	1.0
Religion		
Christianity	76	76.0
Non-Christian	24	24.0
Monthly income level		
Below ₦20,000	28	28.0
₦21,000 - ₦60,000	30	30.0
₦61,000 - ₦100,000	16	16.0
Above ₦100,000	26	26.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Agricultural Activities Youth Groups Participate in the Study Area

The findings presented in Table 2 reveal that the top three agricultural activities youth groups participate in within the study area are fish rearing (73.0%), processing and packaging of agricultural produce (70.0%) and the sale of agricultural produce (67.0%). Conversely, the least three activities participated in by youth groups include beekeeping (25.0%), snail rearing (38.0%) and horticulture (46.0%). These results suggest that youth group participation is concentrated in activities that are perceived as commercially viable and less technically demanding, while engagement in specialized agricultural ventures such as beekeeping and horticulture remains relatively low.

The findings of this study align with those of Adereti *et al*. (2020), who found that fish farming was a dominant agricultural activity among youths due to its relatively quick turnover rate and profitability. Similarly, Osabohien *et al*. (2021) emphasized that agro-processing and marketing remain attractive agricultural activities for youth, as they require less land and physical labor than traditional farming. This corroborates the present study's findings, indicating that youth groups gravitate towards agribusiness opportunities with direct financial returns.

On the other hand, the low participation in beekeeping and horticulture is consistent with the observations of Aphunu and Atoma (2011), who noted that certain agricultural activities fail to attract youth due to high initial investment costs, limited technical knowledge and a lack of supporting infrastructure. Likewise, Mthi *et al*. (2021) highlighted that snail rearing and beekeeping suffer from low youth engagement due to inadequate extension services and market

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uncertainties. The findings of this study support these claims, demonstrating that youth participation is influenced by the perceived economic viability and accessibility of agricultural enterprises.

Furthermore, the results resonate with the work of Fasakin *et al*. (2022), which identified marketing as a critical area of youth participation in agriculture. The high involvement in the sale of agricultural produce in this study underscores the importance of value chain activities in attracting young people to agriculture. Similarly, studies such as Dimelu *et al*. (2020) and Thomas and Eforuoku (2016) have suggested that agribusiness-oriented activities, including processing and sales, provide youth with immediate financial incentives, thus encouraging greater participation.

However, the limited engagement in specialized agricultural activities raises concerns regarding the diversification of youth agricultural involvement. Akinnagbe and Ogundele (2019) noted that challenges such as lack of technical training and access to capital significantly constrain youth participation in certain agricultural ventures. This study's findings reinforce this perspective, as activities requiring specialized skills and higher capital investment tend to have lower youth participation rates.

Table 2: Agricultural activities youth groups participate in the study area (n = 100)

Variables	Yes	Percentage
Provision of agro supportive service	58	58
Organizes agro skill acquisition program	55	55
Dissemination of agro information and innovation	53	53
Provision of farm labour	67	67
Transportation of agric products	62	62
Animal production	66	66
Crop production	64	64
Sale of agricultural produce	67	67
Processing and packaging of agric. Produce	70	70
Sales of agro inputs	63	63
Savings and loan	36	36
Planting of trees	73	73
Rearing of fish	56	56
Horticulture	46	46
Rearing of snail	38	38
Bee keeping	25	25

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Youth Level of Participation in Agricultural Activities Performed by Their Groups

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the three agricultural activities with the highest level of youth participation were sales of agro inputs (mean = 2.73), provision of agro-supportive services (mean = 2.56) and sales of agricultural produce (mean = 2.54). Conversely, the activities with the lowest participation were transportation of agricultural products (mean = 1.42), horticulture (mean = 1.54) and provision of farm labour (mean = 1.71). The cluster mean of 2.18 suggests that overall youth participation in agricultural activities within their groups was moderate, as it exceeds the cut-off mean of 2.0.

The high participation in the sales of agro inputs and agricultural produce aligns with findings by Alabi *et al*. (2023), who reported that youth are more inclined toward agribusiness activities that require less physical labour and offer quicker financial returns. Similarly, the provision of agro-supportive services ranking among the top activities is consistent with Sennuga *et al*. (2023), who found that youth tend to engage in roles that provide advisory, technical and managerial services within agricultural value chains. This suggests that youth groups in the study area prefer agricultural activities that offer economic incentives, require less manual effort and align with their skill sets.

On the other hand, the low participation in transportation of agricultural products, horticulture and provision of farm labour aligns with the findings of Fasakin *et al*. (2022), who noted that youth are less interested in activities that are labour-intensive or require significant physical exertion. Similarly, Owigho *et al*. (2023) reported that youth often avoid traditional farming roles in favour of value-added and marketing activities, as seen in this study where sales and supportive services were prioritized.

The moderate overall participation in agricultural activities corresponds with the findings of Mthi *et al*. (2021), who observed that while youth show interest in agriculture, their engagement is often limited by factors such as lack of financial support, inadequate infrastructure and market uncertainties. This finding suggests that despite interest in agriculture, several constraints may still hinder full participation in all aspects of the sector.

Table 3: Youths level of participation in the agricultural activities performed by their groups (n=100)

Variables	Highly Participate F (%)	Moderately Participate F (%)	Participate F (%)	Mean
Provision of agro supportive service	68 (68.0)	20 (20.0)	12 (12.0)	2.56
Organizes agro skill acquisition program	39 (39.0)	32 (32.0)	29 (29.0)	2.10
Dissemination of agro information and innovation	54 (54.0)	37 (37.0)	9 (9.0)	2.45
Provision of farm labour	20 (20.0)	31 (31.0)	49 (49.0)	1.71
Transportation of agric products	12 (12.0)	18 (18.0)	70 (70.0)	1.42
Animal production	14 (14.0)	65 (65.0)	21 (21.0)	1.93
Crop production	22 (22.0)	64 (64.0)	14 (14.0)	2.08
Sale of agricultural produce	67 (67.0)	20 (20.0)	13 (13.0)	2.54
Processing and packaging of agric. produce	64 (64.0)	23 (23.0)	13 (13.0)	2.50
Sales of agro inputs	80 (80.0)	13 (13.0)	7 (7.0)	2.73
Savings and loan (cooperatives)	22 (22.0)	61 (61.0)	17 (17.0)	2.05
Planting of trees	61 (61.0)	25 (25.0)	14 (14.0)	2.47
Rearing of fish	34 (34.0)	23 (23.0)	43 (43.0)	1.89
Horticulture	17 (17.0)	20 (20.0)	63 (63.0)	1.54
Rearing of snail	61 (61.0)	25 (25.0)	14 (14.0)	2.47
Bee keeping	67 (67.0)	16 (16.0)	17 (17.0)	2.50
Cluster Mean				**2.18**
Cut-off mean				**2.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Effects of Group Participation On Agricultural Activities Among Youths

The results in Table 4 indicate that group participation significantly impacts agricultural activities among youths in Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State. The top three effects, as reported by respondents based on mean scores, include the enhancement of communication (mean = 3.25), tackling complex agricultural problems better as a group than individually (mean = 3.05) and self-improvement through skill acquisition (mean = 3.05). These findings suggest that group participation fosters knowledge exchange, collaboration and skill development among youths engaged in agricultural activities. Conversely, the least three effects, with the lowest mean scores, include facilitating the provision of supportive services (mean = 2.68), encouraging commercial farming (mean = 2.73) and cost-saving benefits of group participation (mean = 2.86). The cluster mean of 2.82, which is above the cut-off mean of 2.5, indicates that overall, group participation positively influences agricultural activities among youths in the study area. These findings align with the study by Fasakin *et al*. (2022), which emphasized that intensive youth participation in agriculture contributes to skill acquisition and improved communication, thus leading to enhanced agricultural productivity. Similarly, Alabi *et al*. (2023) noted that participation in agribusiness groups significantly improves access to training and extension services, reinforcing the role of group collaboration in skill development and information exchange. The result is also consistent with the findings of Sennuga *et al*. (2023), who reported that youth participation in agriculture-based livelihood activities fosters teamwork and knowledge-sharing, enabling young farmers to overcome farming challenges more effectively.

The findings further corroborate those of Owigho *et al*. (2023), who highlighted that youths in organized agricultural groups gain more exposure to modern farming techniques, improving their ability to handle agricultural challenges. Likewise, the study by Dimelu *et al*. (2020) found that youth participation in organized agricultural activities enhances their technical know-how and increases their ability to adopt innovations. However, the relatively lower mean scores recorded for commercial farming encouragement and cost-saving benefits suggest that, while group participation has a positive influence on skill acquisition and communication, it does not necessarily translate to large-scale commercial agricultural engagement among youths. This is in line with the study by Akinnagbe and Ogundele (2019), which

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reported that despite active participation in agricultural groups, youths still face financial constraints that hinder the transition from subsistence to commercial farming.

The relatively lower influence of group participation in facilitating the provision of supportive services aligns with the findings of Adereti *et al*. (2020), who found that youth groups in agricultural activities often struggle with inadequate institutional support, limiting their access to essential agricultural services. Similarly, Ogunremi *et al*. (2023) noted that while farmer groups enhance knowledge-sharing, they do not always guarantee increased access to resources such as credit facilities and input subsidies. This suggests that although group participation enhances communication and problem-solving, structural constraints such as inadequate support services and financial barriers may limit its overall impact on youth agricultural engagement.

Table 4: Effects of group participation on agricultural activities among youths (n=100)

Variables	**Strongly Agree F (%)**	**Agree F (%)**	**Disagree F (%)**	**Strongly Disagree F (%)**	**Mean**
Group helps in tackling more complex problems better than on individual basis	36 (36.0)	40 (40.0)	17 (17.0)	7 (7.0)	3.05
Adoption of innovations are made easier through group activities	26 (26.0)	49 (49.0)	16 (16.0)	9 (9.0)	2.92
Group enhances learning new agro skills	36 (36.0)	43 (43.0)	7 (7.0)	14 (14.0)	3.01
Group activities encourage commercial farming	28 (28.0)	30 (30.0)	29 (29.0)	13 (13.0)	2.73
Group participation enhances communication	44 (44.0)	40 (40.0)	13 (13.0)	3 (3.0)	3.25
Group participation facilitate provision of supportive services	24 (24.0)	32 (32.0)	32 (32.0)	12 (12.0)	2.68
Group participation leads to self-improvement due to skill acquisition	37 (37.0)	40 (40.0)	14 (14.0)	9 (9.0)	3.05
Group participation save cost	28 (28.0)	41 (41.0)	20 (20.0)	11 (11.0)	2.86
Group participation make it easy to disseminates information to farmers	28 (28.0)	41 (41.0)	20 (20.0)	11 (11.0)	2.86
Cluster mean					**2.82**
Cut-off mean					**2.5**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Constraining Factors to Youth Participation in Group Activities

The results indicate that the top three constraining factors to youth participation in group activities were high uncertainty in agriculture making it difficult to manage (mean = 3.24), poor leadership style of the group leader (mean = 3.21) and poor extension services, lack of capital and poor income from agric-based livelihood (mean = 3.16 each). Conversely, the least three constraining factors were a disconnect between agricultural education and practice (mean = 1.65), intimidation by other group members (mean = 1.77) and ineffective career guidance (mean = 1.86). The cluster mean of 2.78, which is above the cut-off mean of 2.5, suggests that the constraints presented were largely perceived as barriers to youth participation in group activities (Table 5).

The prominence of high uncertainty in agriculture as a major constraint aligns with the findings of Mthi *et al*. (2021), who reported that the unpredictable nature of agriculture due to climate variability and market fluctuations discourages youth involvement. Similarly, Sennuga *et al*. (2023) found that youth perceive agriculture as a risky venture, limiting their participation. The poor leadership style of group leaders as a barrier is consistent with Adekunle *et al*. (2010), who highlighted how ineffective leadership weakens youth engagement in agricultural cooperatives and extension programs. Furthermore, the challenge of poor extension services, lack of capital and low income from agriculture corroborates the findings of Khanal and Omobitan (2020), who emphasized that limited access to credit and extension support hinders youth agricultural activities. This is also in agreement with Izuogu *et al*. (2025), who noted that financial and advisory constraints limit youth participation in rice cultivation.

On the other hand, the finding that the disconnect between agricultural education and practice was the least significant constraint does not align with Geza *et al*. (2021), who stressed that the weak link between agricultural education and practical fieldwork is a major reason for low youth participation in the sector. Similarly, the low mean score for

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intimidation by other group members contrasts with the findings of Owigho *et al*. (2023), who reported that social conflicts and power struggles within agricultural groups discourage youth participation. The minimal influence of ineffective career guidance contradicts the findings of Fasakin *et al*. (2022), who suggested that the absence of clear career pathways in agriculture is a significant limitation to youth engagement in the sector.

Table 5: Constraining factors to youth participation in group activities (n=100)

Variables	Strongly Agree F (%)	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Strongly Disagree F (%)	Mean
Access to communication and internet services	30 (30.0)	36 (36.0)	22 (22.0)	12 (12.0)	2.84
Poor extension services	37 (37.0)	46 (46.0)	13 (13.0)	4 (4.0)	3.16
Poor land tenure system limiting access to agricultural lands	25 (25.0)	42 (42.0)	25 (25.0)	8 (8.0)	2.84
Poor social values placed on agric based livelihood	28 (28.0)	33 (33.0)	29 (29.0)	10 (10.0)	2.79
Labour intensive system of agricultural production	35 (35.0)	46 (46.0)	13 (13.0)	6 (6.0)	3.10
Poor leadership style of the group leader	47 (47.0)	31 (31.0)	18 (18.0)	4 (4.0)	3.21
High uncertainty in agriculture making it difficult to manage	52 (52.0)	29 (29.0)	10 (10.0)	9 (9.0)	3.24
Industrialization	25 (25.0)	30 (30.0)	19 (19.0)	26 (26.0)	2.54
Lack of capital	43 (43.0)	40 (40.0)	7 (7.0)	10 (10.0)	3.16
Poor income from agric-based livelihood	46 (46.0)	31 (31.0)	16 (16.0)	7 (7.0)	3.16
Intimidation by other group members	20 (20.0)	49 (49.0)	13 (49.0)	4 (4.0)	1.77
Ignorance of the benefits of the group participation	24 (24.0)	49 (49.0)	12 (12.0)	15 (15.0)	2.82
Exclusion of youth from policy making processes	24 (24.0)	42 (42.0)	15 (15.0)	19 (19.0)	2.71
Poor marketing and media relation	15 (15.0)	39 (39.0)	32 (32.0)	14 (14.0)	2.55
Ineffective career guidance	26 (26.0)	44 (44.0)	20 (20. 0)	10 (10.0)	1.86
Disconnect between agriculture education and practice	28 (28.0)	26 (26.0)	29 (29.0)	17 (17.0)	1.65
Cluster mean					**2.78**
Cut-off mean					**2.5**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Relationship Between the Socio-Economic Characteristics of Youths and Their Participation in Group Activities

The results in Table 6 indicate that several socio-economic characteristics significantly influence youth participation in group activities in the study area. Age, gender, educational level, marital status and major source of livelihood were found to have a significant relationship with participation in group activities at a 1% level of significance. The positive coefficient of age suggests that older youths are more likely to participate in group activities, which aligns with the findings of Fasakin *et al*. (2022), who reported that as youths mature, they develop more interest in structured agricultural engagements. Similarly, the positive influence of marital status on participation is consistent with the observations of Sennuga *et al*. (2023), who found that married individuals often engage more in collective agricultural ventures due to increased household responsibilities and the need for financial stability.

Gender also significantly influenced participation, with males showing higher involvement in group activities. This is in line with Mthi *et al*. (2021), who found that male youths in South Africa had higher engagement in agricultural groups than their female counterparts. However, the negative coefficient for educational level suggests that higher levels of education reduce the likelihood of participation in group activities, which corroborates the findings of Adekunle *et al*. (2010). They observed that as youths attain higher education, they often seek alternative employment opportunities outside agriculture, thereby reducing their involvement in group-based farming activities.

The major source of livelihood also had a negative and significant impact on participation, implying that youths whose primary income source is non-agricultural are less likely to be involved in agricultural group activities. This is consistent with the findings of Sosina and Holden (2014), who reported that the availability of alternative income sources often discourages youth participation in agricultural initiatives. On the other hand, religion did not have a significant effect on participation, which aligns with the findings of Alabi *et al*. (2023), who concluded that religious affiliation does not necessarily dictate youth engagement in agricultural groups.

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The Omnibus Test Chi-Square value of 81.042 and a probability value of 0.000 confirm that the model is statistically significant, while the Nagelkerke R-square value of 0.620 indicates that the model explains approximately 62% of the variation in youth participation in group activities. This level of explanatory power is similar to the findings of Izuogu *et al*. (2025), who reported an R-square value of 0.63 in their study on youth participation in rice cultivation in Southeastern Nigeria, suggesting that socio-economic factors play a crucial role in shaping participation patterns in agricultural group activities.

Table 6: Relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of youths and their participation in group activities

Variables	Coeff	Std. Error	Z-Stat	P-Values
Age (X_1)	.282	.065	17.538*	.000
Gender (X_2)	1.532	.848	7.263*	.001
Level of Educational (X_3)	-4.368	1.332	10.750*	.001
Marital status (X_4)	1.740	.696	7.241*	.002
Major source of livelihood (X5)	-1.794	.403	18.793*	.000
Religion (AX_7)	3.999	1.008	2.712	.070
Stochastic (u)	20.709	16965.387	.000	.999
Constant	**-49.349**	**33930.774**	**.000**	**.999**
Omnibus Test Chi Square	**81.042**			
Prob > Chi Square	**0.000**			
Nagelkerke R-square	**.620**			

**Significant at 1% level*

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study revealed that youth participation in agricultural group activities in Agricultural Zone One of Rivers State has a significant positive impact on their engagement in agricultural activities. Youth groups play a vital role in enhancing communication, fostering collaboration and improving skill acquisition. However, participation levels vary across different agricultural activities, with higher engagement in agribusiness-related activities such as sales of agricultural inputs and produce, while more labor-intensive tasks like farm labor and transportation of agricultural products recorded lower participation. The study also identified several constraints to participation, including high uncertainty in agriculture, poor leadership styles, inadequate extension services and limited access to capital. Additionally, socio-economic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, marital status and major source of livelihood significantly influenced youth participation in group activities. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Strengthen Youth Agricultural Groups through Capacity Building and Training: Since group participation enhances skill acquisition and knowledge exchange, relevant stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs and agricultural extension services should organize regular training and capacity-building programs to further empower youth in agriculture.
2. Improve Access to Financial and Institutional Support: Given that lack of capital and poor extension services were major constraints, policymakers should implement financial assistance programs such as low-interest loans, grants and subsidies. Additionally, strengthening extension services will improve youth access to agricultural innovations and resources.
3. Promote Agribusiness Opportunities to Increase Youth Participation: The study found that youths are more inclined toward agribusiness-related activities. Therefore, stakeholders should encourage youth entrepreneurship in agribusiness by providing incentives, market linkages and digital platforms for agricultural product marketing.
4. Enhance Leadership and Governance in Youth Groups: Poor leadership was identified as a key constraint to effective participation. To address this, leadership training programs should be introduced to improve group governance, promote inclusivity and ensure transparency in decision-making within agricultural youth groups.

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