Bridging the Digital Divide: An Assessment of Agricultural Extension Personnel's Usage of Digital Technology in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed the utilization of digital technologies by public agricultural extension agents in Ondo State, Nigeria, for disseminating agricultural information. Data were collected from all (60) the extension personnel working with Ondo State Agricultural Development Programme using a structured questionnaire. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, means, percentages) and inferential statistics (Chi-square tests, Pearson Product Moment Correlation) to test the study's hypotheses. The results revealed that mobile phone (100%), social media platform (98.3%), e-mail and SMS messaging tools (98.3%) were most available digital tools. Social media platform ($\bar{x}$ = 6.97) and television and radio broadcast ($\bar{x}$ = 6.97) were mostly utilised digital tools by the extension personnel for extension service delivery. The majority (66.7%) of the respondents had high knowledge in the use of digital technology for their extension work. Unstable power supply ($\bar{x}$ =1.98, high cost of Information Technology gadgets ($\bar{x}$ =1.83) and inadequate income to undertake digital technology training ($\bar{x}$ =1.78) were major constraints to the utilization of digital technology. Also, significant relationship existed between respondents' knowledge of digital technology (r=0.660) and the usage of digital technology (r=0.660). The study concluded that majority of the extension personnel utilised digital tools at high level for documentation, dissemination and information gathering purposes. To enhance the effectiveness of digital technology in agricultural extension services, it is recommended to stabilize power supply and provide continuous training to improve digital literacy among extension agents.

Key Words: *Digital technology, Agricultural extension, Information dissemination, Extension personnel*