



# STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING YOUTHS INTO RURAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES IN ORUMBA-NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

The study explored the strategies for incorporating youths into rural extension services in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. The study specifically described the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, ascertained the relevant rural extension services for youths in the study area and identified the strategies for incorporating youths into rural extension services in the study area. Data for the study was obtained through a structured and validated questionnaire administered to a sample size of one hundred and twelve (112) respondents randomly selected from the registered youth associations in the study area. Data obtained were analyzed using frequency, percentage and mean. The result on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that majority of the members of the youth associations in the study area were male (76.3%), within the ages of 20 – 30 years (68.8%) and single (73.8). The relevant extension services available to the respondents include: skill training and acquisition schemes (mean=3.63), rural youth employment scheme (mean=3.36), health and immunization awareness (mean=3.2). The strategies to incorporate youths in rural extension services include: encouraging their participation in agribusiness ventures (mean=3.88), organizing recreational activities and social events (mean=3.86), encouraging self-employment scheme (mean=3.84), and organizing field trips to established agricultural station and farms (mean=3.79). The study concludes that youths' participation in relevant rural extension services could be enhanced through the use of appropriate strategies. Based on the findings it is recommended that extension agents should adopt variety of strategies to effectively incorporate youth associations in the study area into rural extension services since such associations are the platforms through which the youths can be organized and made functional.

**KEYWORDS:** Strategies, Youth, Youth Associations, Rural Extension Service.

## INTRODUCTION

Rural extension services have the responsibility to achieve rural development through the provision of updated information in on-farm and off-farm activities for people living in rural climes. In practice, rural extension services, which are advisory in nature, utilizes a wide range of communication and teaching methods. Learning activities are organized for rural people by field extension professionals with generalist view in disciplines including agriculture, agricultural marketing, health, home economics and agribusiness management and other aspects of rural life. These services are intended to address the needs of the entire household in the family in the rural area, which, according to Nwaogwugwu and Emordi as referenced in Nwaogwugwu & Angba (2021), is functionally divided into four key groups, men, women, youths, and children, each playing distinct roles in contributing to productive activities within the homestead.

Young people have been the subject of recent research among the aforementioned family members (Nwaogwugwu & Taekor, 2016; Akpokighe & Ejovi, 2023; Falola et al., 2023; Nwanmuoh et al., 2024). This might be because young people continue to play an important role in the growth of a country and serve as a link between the present and the future in any given society. That's why Eze et al. (2024) characterize youth as individuals who serve as catalysts for social growth, technical innovation, and social change—all of which are crucial domains in which youth can exert a transformational influence. The National Policy on Youth Development defines youth as persons who are between the ages of 18 and 35 (Osabohien et al., 2021), while the African Union (AU) defines youth as those who are between the ages of 15 and 35. Youths are considered a powerful force to be reckoned with in the pursuit of economic progress.



According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) statistics, there are about 1.3 billion youth aged 15–24 globally, accounting for one out of every four people (17.6%) worldwide, while in Nigeria, the youth comprise 34% of its population (Bello et al., 2021). According to the United Nations estimate, 51.7% of Nigerians live in rural areas (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2022), while as of 2023, another report estimates that 53.4% now live in Urban settlements, making 46.6% living in rural areas (Yeboua & Cilliers, 2025).

However, Edoke noted that more young people reside in these rural areas, as mentioned in Nwaogwugwu & Angba (2021). No matter where they reside, young people are still distinguished by their vitality, intelligence, and qualities that support activities that foster developmental growth. Consequently, a key component of agricultural and rural development is the inclusion of young people in rural extension activities. According to Oludare & Amuda (2022), youngsters continue to be one of a country's most valuable resources since they have the strength, knowledge, curiosity, behavior, skill set, and capacity for quick learning that are necessary for sustainable development.

According to Vasanthi & Preethi (2023), young people working in extension services have the potential to transform conventional farming landscapes through innovation, technological integration, and sustainable practices. Maisule et al. (2023) suggested that in order to promote active youth involvement in agricultural production and food security initiatives, youth extension should be incorporated into each state's agricultural extension intervention programs. This recommendation was based on their findings.

Since young people are considered to be the foundation and future of any country, Adegboye et al., as cited in Nwaogwugwu & Angba (2021), noted that ongoing extension services are essential for young people since they serve as a labor pool for all productive endeavors and a bridge connecting the present and the future. Therefore, a key component of rural development is the inclusion of youth associations in extension activities.

In recent years, governments have failed to sustainably integrate rural youths into the mainstream of the many rural development projects, and youth, aside from women, have remained underrepresented in many agencies (Aina et al., 2024). Because of institutional barriers, young income is often excluded from mainstream economic activity, while agriculture remains a major industry. Empowering underrepresented groups, such as youth, has become crucial to achieving equitable growth (Umoh, 2024).

As a result, young people now generally show little interest in and concern for local and national development. As their true contributions and roles in national development are lost, the repercussions are extensive and include a variety of social vices, crimes, restlessness, mass unemployment, lack of sustainable livelihoods, and migration among young people (Usman et al., 2014; Nwaogwugwu & Taekor, 2016; Nwaogwugwu & Angba, 2021). According to Aina et al. (2024), Nigerian rural dwellers are also familiar with the country's demographic pressures, including the youth bulge and population expansion, which have had a negative impact on agriculture. In view of the above background, this study explored the strategies for incorporating youths into rural extension services in Orumba-North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. In specific terms, the study described the socio-demographic characteristics of the youths, ascertained the relevant extension services for the youths, and identified the strategies for incorporating youths into rural extension services in the study area.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. Orumba North Local Government is one of the 21 Local Governments in Anambra State. It lies between longitudes 6° 37 E and 7° 27 E and latitudes 5° 40 N and 6° 48 N. It is bounded in the North by Awka South L.G.A, in the West by Aguata L.G.A, in the South by Orumba South L.G.A, and the East by Enugu State. Its estimated population is about 172,405 (National Population Commission (NPC), 2006). The population of the study is composed of 1,655 (one thousand six hundred and fifty-five) youths in the sixteen registered youth organisations in the study area. A multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 112 youths from the 16 youth associations in the study area. The first stage involved a random selection of 8 associations from the 16 youth associations in the study area. In the second stage, a random selection of 14 youths from each of the selected youth associations was made to give a sample size of 112 subjects. Data for the study was collected with the aid of a structured questionnaire designed and validated by the researchers. The questionnaire was designed in two Sections. Section A sought for responses on the socio-demographic characteristics of members of the youth associations in the study area. Section B was divided into two parts. Part 1 contained list of items that solicited responses on relevant extension services for youths while Part 2 contained cluster of items on strategies to incorporate youths into rural extension services. Likert-type 4 point summated rating scale of agreement (strongly agreed (SA) = 4, Agreed (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1) was used to measure the responses on the items. The mean



of the sum total of values of the scale (Mean=2.50) was the basis for accepting or rejecting any item. Data analysis was done using frequency, percentage and mean.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-demographic Characteristics of Youths in the Study Area.

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The result shows that of the 112 respondents, 76.3 percent are males while 23.8 percent are females. This implies that the youth associations in the study area constitute of more males than females and the engagement of females in domestic activities could account for the greater number of male members in the youth associations in the study area. This agrees with Onuekwusi (2013) that females are not often given the same opportunities in involvement in rural development activities. On age distribution of the youths, the result in Table 1 showed that 27.5 percent and 41.3 percent of the respondents are in the age categories of 21 and 25 years; 26 and 30 years respectively. This suggests that majority of the youths are between the age range of 20 and 30 years (68.8 percent). This shows that they are young, enthusiastic and energetic which makes the youths suitable to carry out various activities attached to extension services. Also, the result indicate that majority of the respondents (75.0 percent) are single, which implies that most of them may not have divided attention and conflicting interests that may arise from having family responsibilities. The result in Table 1 further showed that majority of the youths in the study area had formal education (90 percent) (38.7 percent secondary and 51.3 percent tertiary). This implies that members of the youth associations in the study area are educated enough to read and write, which enhances their effectiveness in participation and contribution in the agricultural information system and sharing. Results on the major occupation of youths in the study area (Table 1) revealed that the majority of youths (47.5 per cent) are engaged in farming. The majority of the respondents have source of livelihood with a major occupation in farming. This makes their involvement in agricultural extension activities relevant for improved productivity and income, which could enhance their contribution to youth association activities in the area. The results are consistent with Abayomi et al. (2024), who found that youth farming activities significantly influence the country's level of development. This will give the extension agents the platform to work with the youth. Results on tenure of membership indicate that the majority (51.2 percent) have been members of the youth association in the study area for 6-10 years. Within the period, youths are supposed to have had relevant orientation on the activities and running of agricultural extension youth associations to enhance their maximum participation in future extension programmes.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Youths in the Study Area.**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	61	76.3
Female	19	23.7
Age		
15-20 years	4	5.0
21-25 years	22	27.5
26-30 years	33	41.2
31-35 years	14	17.5
36-40 years	6	7.5
40 years and above	1	1.3
Marital Status		
Single	19	23.7
Married	60	75.0
Divorced	1	1.3
Widow/Widower	-	0.0
Educational level		
No formal education	1	1.3
Primary	7	8.7
Secondary	31	38.7
Tertiary	41	51.3
Major occupation		
Fishing	2	2.5
Farming	38	47.5
Civil service	14	17.5
Trading	26	32.5
Tenure of membership		
1-5 years	33	41.3
6-10 years	41	51.2



11-15 years	3	3.7
16-20 years	2	2.5
21 years and above	1	1.3

**Relevant Agricultural Extension Services for Youths in the Study Area.**

The relevant agricultural extension services for youths in the study area are presented on Table 2. The result revealed that skill training and acquisition in farming (mean=3.63) is among the agricultural extension services the youths are exposed to in the study area. This implies that the youths have the tendency to learn new skills that will improve their lives and prepare them adequately for a successful career in agriculture. The result also showed rural youth employment scheme (mean=3.63) as another extension services available for the youths in the study area. This implies that the youths are recognized to be resourceful and if provided with source of livelihood, will improve their welfare and contribution to the development in their community. This result agrees with Maisule et al. (2024) that youths are found to be very innovative, have greater physical strength as well as high learning ability. Health and immunisation awareness (mean=3.28) was revealed as relevant extension services for youths in the study area. Table 2 revealed healthcare and sanitization projects (mean=3.24), which implies that the respondents are exposed to health benefit activities that will enhance their healthy living. From the findings, the community sign post erecting scheme (mean=3.16), since the youth are full of energy, which makes them suitable to engage in such a project. This confirms the view of Nwaogwugwu & Angba (2021) that involving youth in extension services provides them the opportunity to collaborate and engage in sustainable development. Results in Table 2 further revealed that youths are involved in environmental and beautification activities (mean=2.85) in the study area. The result therefore implies that the youths have initiative and are creative to respond positively to activities to improve the aesthetic value of their environment. The result in Table 2 also revealed fundraising/capital mobilizing schemes (mean=2.75) as an extension service to which the youths are involved in the study area. It is practical evidence that the youths are resourceful and relevant in mobilizing capital for personal and community projects in the study area. Furthermore, tree planting and beautification schemes (mean = 2.66) is a relevant aspect in which the youths are involved in the study area. The result is a proof that the youths in the study area are responsible and are exposed to community development. Also Table 2 revealed that youths in the study area are exposed to social development and home making activities (mean = 2.56). This confirms the fact that youths are seen to be the future of any society in terms of leadership and the future of the families, hence the need to equip them with leadership skills.

**Table 2: Respondents Rating of Relevant Agricultural Extension Services for Youths in the study Area.**

Variables	Mean	Remark
Skill training and acquisition schemes	3.63	Accept
Rural youth employment schemes	3.36	Accept
Health and immunization awareness	3.28	Accept
Healthcare and sanitation projects	3.24	Accept
Community sign post erecting scheme	3.16	Accept
Environmental and beautification schemes	2.85	Accept
Fundraising/capital mobilization scheme	2.75	Accept
Tree planting and beautification activities	2.66	Accept
Social development and home making activities	2.56	Accept
Awareness campaigns	2.40	Reject
Holiday/vacation job placement	1.89	Reject
Organizing holiday/vacation lessons	1.81	Reject

Items with mean score  $\geq 2.50$  were accepted while items with mean score  $\leq 2.50$  were rejected.

**Strategies for Incorporating Youths into Rural Agricultural Extension Services in the Study Area.**

The strategies for incorporating youths into extension services in the study area are presented in Table 3. The result revealed that integrating youths into rural development activities (mean=3.64) is a strategy for incorporating youths into rural extension services in the study area. This could be to enable them to have a sense of responsibility towards their community. This confirms the view of Rufai et al. (2021) and Osabohien et al., (2021), that in Nigeria, youths form a very significant proportion in rural communities where their existence and potential are well known. It was also revealed in Table 3 that encouraging youth agribusiness ventures (mean=3.88) is an important strategy for incorporating youths into rural extension services in the study area. This is because most of the respondents are engaged in farming and are interested in improving their occupation and means of livelihood. This agrees with ElDidi et al., (2020), Daudu et al. (2023) and Osabohien & Al-Faryan (2025) that youths possess the energy and a significant number that provides tremendous opportunities for increasing agricultural productivity. The result showed that organizing recreational activities and social events (mean=3.86) is a strategy. This implies that the youths have the potential to socialize and are more productive among their peers. This agrees



with Onuekwusi and Effiong, cited in Agbugba & Isukul, (2020), that the inclination to socialize exists more among the youths than adults, where youths socialize largely to learn, avoid boredom, engage in group activities for mutual assistance and device socio-emotional support from the group. The result also indicated that organizing field trips to established agricultural stations and farms (*mean*=3.79) as one of the strategies for incorporating youths into rural extension services. This is borne out of their desire to improve their farming by learning from advanced agricultural firms if provided the opportunity, which will enhance their exposure to more productive farming techniques, and if adopted, it will improve their income as well as the economy of their society. This supports the claim made by Ikebuaku (2021) that young people prefer to receive instruction in agricultural pursuits like growing arable crops. The result indicated that self-employment schemes (*mean*=3.84) are also a strategy to incorporate youths into rural extension services. This realization could be to reduce youth unemployment in the area which at large is common in our society. results revealed that organizing demonstration projects for the youths (*mean*=2.60) as one of the strategies. This is obviously because of their desire to learn through demonstration and also for community development. The result further revealed appointing them as members of rural extension planning community (*mean*=3.33) as a strategy. This may be due to the fact that youths know very well the type of extension activities they can easily adopt and adapt to since most of them are educated and are exposed. The result in Table 3 revealed that involving youth in deciding and selecting appropriate extension services in their areas (*mean*=2.58) is among the strategies for incorporating youth into rural extension services. This could be because the respondents have a perfect idea about the type of projects that will improve their standard of living and also they have the abilities to serve as resources and partners in community development. It was also found that for youths to serve as members of extension service implementing committee (*mean*=3.58) is one of the strategies for incorporating youth rural extension services. This could be to enable the youths participate fully to extension services available in the study area since they are predisposed to bringing about new changes for personal, occupational and community development. Finally, the result revealed that involving youths in extension service monitoring and evaluation team (*mean*=3.43) is another strategy. This may be to ensure that the extension projects embarked on in their community are being carried out to the later without abandonment that is associated with such projects in recent times.

**Table 3: Respondents Rating of Strategies for Incorporating Youths into Rural Agricultural Extension Services in the Study Area.**

Variables	Mean	Remark
Encouraging youth agribusiness ventures	3.88	Accept
Organizing recreational activities and social events (sports, field days, etc.)	3.86	Accept
Self – employment schemes	3.84	Accept
Integrating youths into rural development activities	3.64	Accept
Organizing field trips to established agricultural station and farms	3.79	Accept
Serve as members of extension service implementing committee	3.58	Accept
Involved in extension service monitoring and evaluation team	3.43	Accept
Appoint them as members of rural extension service planning committee	3.33	Accept
Organizing demonstration projects for youths	2.60	Accept
Involved in deciding and selecting appropriate extension services	2.58	Accept
Encouraging club-based projects within youth associations	2.48	Reject
Mobilizing youth through club-based activities	2.36	Reject
Play advisory roles for rural extension activities	2.21	Reject
Engaging youth in club-based projects	2.11	Reject

Items with mean score  $\geq 2.50$  were accepted while items with mean score  $\leq 2.50$  were rejected.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it is concluded that rural youth engage actively in available extension services in their community through their association. Evidently, some strategies such as, encouraging youth agribusiness ventures, organizing recreational activities and social event, self-employment scheme, organizing field trip to established agricultural station and farms, integrating youth into rural development activities, serve as members of extension services implementing committee among others are been adopted by extension agents to incorporate youths into rural extension services in the study area.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study it is recommended that:

- Extension agencies should carry out effective orientation targeted at female youths in rural areas to encourage them to participate as members of the youth association to provide them equal opportunity to contribute to the development of their community.



- Extension service agencies with the assistance of government should encourage more youths to engage actively in the relevant extension services available for the youths in the study area.
- Extension agents should adopt variety of strategies to effectively incorporate youth associations into rural extension activities implemented in the various communities since such associations are the platforms through which the youths can be organized and made functional.

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