# ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRO BASED ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESS IN PLATEAU STATE

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## Abstract

*The development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses, such as baking industries, is critical for economic diversification, employment generation, and food security in Nigeria. Despite their potential, the role of innovative culture in fostering growth within these industries remains underexplored. This study examined the impact of innovative culture on the development of baking industries in Nasarawa State, focusing on two dimensions: creative problem-solving and adoption of new technologies. A survey research design was adopted to collect quantitative data from a large sample of industry operators. The study population comprised 1,850 registered baking entrepreneurs obtained from the Nasarawa State Ministry of Commerce and Industry database. Using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, a sample of 360 respondents was selected through a multi-stage sampling technique to ensure representation across the state's three senatorial zones. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire covering innovative culture, resource utilization, knowledge sharing, and enterprise growth. Analysis using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression in SPSS version 27 revealed that creative problem-solving ($\beta = 0.521$, $p < 0.001$) and technology adoption ($\beta = 0.438$, $p < 0.001$) significantly and positively influenced the development of baking industries. The findings highlight the importance of cultivating an innovative culture to enhance operational efficiency, market competitiveness, and sustainability. The study recommends that baking entrepreneurs institutionalize innovation-driven practices, invest in skill development, and leverage digital tools to facilitate knowledge exchange, optimize resources, and expand market reach. Overall, fostering an innovative culture is a crucial driver for the growth and long-term success of baking enterprises in Nasarawa State.*

**Keywords:** Access to resources, Agro-based enterprises, Development, Knowledge sharing, Social networks

## Introduction

Globally, empirical evidence increasingly highlights social networks as vital facilitators of entrepreneurial growth, especially in resource-constrained or emerging economies. For instance, the recent study by Social capital and SME innovations: the importance of knowledge combination and customer demands (2025) demonstrates that both interpersonal and inter-organizational social capital significantly enhance product and process innovations among small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with knowledge sharing and customer demand dynamics amplifying these effects (Hoa, & Manh, 2025). In agribusiness contexts, where resource scarcity and uncertainty are prevalent, the ability of entrepreneurs to leverage their social ties significantly enhances innovation, business sustainability, and access to new market opportunities (Fischer & Reuber, 2022). According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2021), the success of agro-based enterprises globally depends not only on technological innovation and capital investment but also on the density and quality of social connections that facilitate collaboration, knowledge exchange, and access to inputs and consumers.

Social networks have become essential to the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Africa, particularly because they enable farmers and small agribusiness owners to access information, inputs, markets, and financial support more efficiently. In many rural communities, cooperative societies, farmers' groups, and community-based associations serve as platforms for sharing knowledge, coordinating production activities, and strengthening trust among entrepreneurs. These social structures help reduce information gaps, promote collective problem-solving, and support farmers in adopting improved agricultural practices. Evidence shows that such network-driven interactions enhance rural entrepreneurs' capacity to participate competitively in agricultural markets and improve their overall productivity and resilience (FAO, 2020).

In Ghana, for instance, entrepreneurial networks were found to enhance farmers' capacity to access markets, credit, and technical expertise, thereby promoting innovation and value addition in agricultural enterprises (Osei-Assibey, 2020). These findings underscore the broader significance of social capital in stimulating rural enterprise development and improving agrarian productivity on the continent.

In the Nigerian context, agro-based entrepreneurship is fundamental to economic diversification, food security, and employment generation. Yet, despite its potential, the sector remains constrained by limited access to credit, inadequate infrastructure, and weak institutional support (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). Social networks both offline and online have emerged as a strategic means of overcoming these barriers by facilitating access to resources, mentoring, and business opportunities. In Plateau State, which has a rich agricultural base and a growing population of youth-led agro-enterprises, the role of social networks in stimulating entrepreneurial success is increasingly evident.

However, while anecdotal evidence suggests that entrepreneurs use both traditional networks (such as cooperatives, associations, and kinship ties) and digital platforms (like WhatsApp and Facebook groups) to promote business growth, empirical research exploring the impact of these networks on the development of agro-based enterprises remains scarce. Understanding how such networks contribute to enterprise development is therefore vital for informing policy and designing support mechanisms for agropreneurs.

**Problem Statement**

Despite the acknowledged importance of social networks in supporting business growth, many agro-based entrepreneurs in Plateau State continue to face challenges that hinder their development and competitiveness. These challenges include inadequate access to market information, limited financial resources, poor infrastructure, and weak institutional support for agribusiness. Social networks are expected to fill these gaps by fostering trust, collaboration, and information exchange among entrepreneurs. However, evidence of their actual impact on

business development outcomes such as innovation, profitability, and market expansion remains limited in the Nigerian context.
Empirical studies in other parts of Africa, such as Ghana and Ngaruiya et al., (2020) in Kenya, have demonstrated that strong social ties and networks enhance access to resources and business performance. Yet, these findings cannot be directly generalised to Plateau State, where socio-cultural and infrastructural dynamics differ markedly. Moreover, most existing Nigerian studies on agribusiness focus on access to finance, government policy, or technological innovation, with minimal attention to the role of social capital and networking behaviour in enterprise success. This presents a clear research gap: the specific ways in which social networks influence the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State are not well understood.

Given the growing importance of agriculture in driving Nigeria's post-oil economy, assessing the impact of social networks on the development of agro-based businesses in Plateau State is crucial. Such an assessment would not only provide empirical evidence for policymakers but also offer practical insights for entrepreneurs on how to effectively leverage their networks to enhance productivity, innovation, and market competitiveness.

## Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of social networks on the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State.
The specific objectives are to:

1. To determine the effect of access to resources through social networks on the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State.
2. To examine the impact of knowledge sharing through social networks on the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State.

## Research Hypotheses

In order to evaluate the impact of social networks on the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State. The following assumptions were raised:

**$H_0$1:** Access to resources through social networks has no significant effect on the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State.

**$H_0$2:** Knowledge sharing through social networks has no significant effect on the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State.

## Literature Review

### Development of Agro-Based Entrepreneurial Businesses

Development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses had been described as the process through which agricultural enterprises improved in productivity, innovation, and sustainability to create economic value and employment. According to Eze and Nwali (2022), agro-based enterprise development represented the strategic transformation of agricultural ventures from small-scale, subsistence activities to commercially viable enterprises driven by innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship. Similarly, Osei-Assibey (2020) asserted that the development of agro-based businesses involved integrating value addition, market access, and knowledge application to enhance competitiveness and resilience.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2021) further explained that agro-entrepreneurial development relied on strengthening linkages between production, processing, and distribution systems to promote inclusive growth and sustainable livelihoods. This study sees development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses as the systematic improvement of agricultural enterprises through capacity building, innovation, and market-oriented expansion.

**Social Network**

Social networks had been conceptualised as structures of relationships among individuals, groups, or organisations that facilitated the exchange of resources, information, and support. Fischer and Reuber (2022) defined social networks as webs of interpersonal or inter-organisational connections that entrepreneurs utilised to gain access to information, markets, and resources critical for business development. Likewise, Ngaruiya et al. (2020) indicated that social networks in agribusiness contexts provided essential linkages among farmers, suppliers, and marketers, which improved communication and performance outcomes. In essence, social networks is a mechanism that promotemutual benefit through trust, cooperation, and resource sharing, thereby supporting entrepreneurial development in agriculture and related sectors.

**Access to Resources**

Access to resources had been defined as the extent to which entrepreneurs could obtain financial, informational, human, and material assets necessary for initiating and sustaining business operations. Ngaruiya et al., (2020) described access to resources in agribusiness as the ability of entrepreneurs to secure credit facilities, market information, and productive inputs that supported enterprise performance and innovation. Eze and Nwali (2022) argued that access to productive resources such as capital, land, and technology remained a key determinant of the competitiveness and growth of agro-based ventures.Access to essential resources—such as finance, market information, training, and agricultural inputsremains a central factor influencing the performance of agro-based entrepreneurs. Social networks frequently act as vital channels through which entrepreneurs obtain these resources, helping them enhance productivity, adopt improved technologies, and expand their business operations. Consequently, resource access strengthens entrepreneurial capacity and contributes significantly to the sustainability and competitiveness of agro-based enterprises. This aligns with the argument that strong social and economic linkages enhance small business growth by improving access to the resources required for innovation and expansion (World Bank, 2020).

**Knowledge Sharing**

Knowledge sharing had been viewed as the process through which individuals or groups exchanged skills, experiences, and expertise to improve performance and innovation. World Bank. (2020) described knowledge sharing as a dynamic interaction that enabled entrepreneurs to learn from one another and apply collective insights to solve business challenges. Fischer and Reuber (2022) further noted that in entrepreneurial ecosystems, knowledge sharing facilitated innovation diffusion and collaboration, enabling business actors to access strategic information and develop new solutions. Therefore, knowledge sharing is a social and cognitive process that strengthened learning and improved decision-making, particularly among agro-based entrepreneurs operating in competitive and resource-constrained environments.

**Access to Resources and Agro-Based Entrepreneurial Businesses**

Ngaruiya et al., (2020) investigated the role of social networks in improving agribusiness performance in Kenya, employing a quantitative research orientation to examine how network ties influence access to productive inputs, market information and credit and, in turn, firm outcomes. The study is positioned in the Kenyan agribusiness context and according to the bibliographic entry focuses on agribusiness enterprises, using measures of social capital and enterprise performance to test hypothesised relationships. The study report using survey-based data collection and inferential analysis to examine the associations between network characteristics and business performance, concluding that stronger and more diverse social networks significantly improve access to resources and positively affect firm performance. This result reinforces the idea that social ties substitute for weak formal institutions by enabling resource mobilisation and market linkages. A major shortcoming from the study is that the concise reference in the source list does not provide full sampling details (exact population frame, sample size and sampling technique) or the precise statistical models used; therefore, while the study is useful for establishing the generalised positive link between networks and access to resources in a Kenyan context, practitioners and researchers would benefit from consulting the full article for the precise methodological parameters and robustness checks.

Ugwu, Igweh, Odoh, and Ezeaku (2024) examined the effect of access to formal financial services on the productivity of small-scale cassava farmers in Enugu State, Nigeria, using a predominantly quantitative survey approach to determine how financial inclusion and access to productive inputs influence farm output. The study is significant for the Nigerian context because it highlights financial access as a key factor that moderates entrepreneurial outcomes in agribusiness. Structured questionnaires were administered to 162 cassava farmers, and regression analysis was employed to test hypothesized relationships between access to financial services and productivity indicators such as output level, efficiency, and investment in farm inputs. Their principal finding is that better access to formal financial services, including banking facilities and savings mechanisms, has a statistically significant and economically meaningful effect on farm productivity. The study contributes to the evidence base that resource access is a primary pathway through which social networks and institutional support translate into enterprise-level outcomes. Nonetheless, the study does not fully report some methodological details, such as sampling frame or response rate, which limits the ability to fully assess external validity and potential bias.

**Knowledge SharingandAgro-Based Entrepreneurial Businesses**

Unegbu and Diyaolu (2022) examined knowledge exchange as a predictor of business innovation among SMEs in Ogun State, Nigeria, providing evidence that active collaboration, communication, and training within firms significantly enhance innovation outcomes. The study, published in a peer-reviewed outlet, employed a quantitative, survey-based research design involving 204 respondents across 55 SMEs in Ogun State and applied inferential statistics to determine how different dimensions of knowledge exchange predict innovation performance. Their principal finding is that firms actively engaging in knowledge exchange practices record higher levels of product and process innovation, which in turn supports competitiveness and overall business performance. The study’s contribution lies in its operationalisation of knowledge exchange components in a developing-economy SME context and its empirical demonstration that knowledge-sharing practices are central to innovation capability. A notable limitation is that, as a cross-sectional survey, the study cannot definitively establish causality between knowledge exchange and innovation outcomes.

Olayemi and Akinsanya (2023) investigated knowledge transfer as a driver of innovative performance among SMEs in Lagos State, demonstrating that social networking, mentorship, and research & development significantly foster firm innovation. The study, published in a peer-reviewed outlet, used an empirical, survey-based research design with a sample of 386 SMEs registered in Lagos State and applied multivariate analysis to examine the effects of various knowledge transfer mechanisms on innovation performance. Their key finding is that firms engaging in structured knowledge transfer activities achieve higher innovation rates and improved performance metrics relative to less networked peers, underscoring the role of knowledge transfer beyond internal HR processes and across inter-firm networks. The study's contribution is its context-specific insight into the mechanisms through which knowledge transfer enhances innovation in SMEs. However, the research does not detail the precise model diagnostics for its multivariate analysis, and as with many cross-sectional studies, reverse causality cannot be fully ruled out.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored on the Social Capital Theory, which has been widely applied in entrepreneurship, sociology, and development studies to explain how social relationships facilitate access to resources and opportunities. The theory was first popularised by Pierre Bourdieu (1986), who viewed social capital as the sum of actual or potential resources linked to the possession of a durable network of institutionalised relationships of mutual recognition. Coleman (1988) further developed the concept by highlighting how social structures and trust among individuals enable the achievement of collective goals that would otherwise be unattainable. Later, Putnam (1993) conceptualised social capital as the norms, trust, and networks that foster cooperation for mutual benefit, especially within communities and organisations.

In the context of entrepreneurship, social capital theory posits that relationships within a network create opportunities for resource access, information flow, and collaboration that enhance enterprise performance (Fischer & Reuber, 2022). Through social networks, entrepreneurs gain social legitimacy, market information, and credit access, which are vital for innovation and growth. For agro-based entrepreneurs, these networks often take the form of cooperatives, farmer associations, and digital communication groups that reduce market barriers and promote knowledge exchange. Hence, the theory provides a suitable foundation for this study, as it explains how social networks, through mechanisms such as access to resources and knowledge sharing, can drive the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State.

**Materials and Method**

This study adopted a survey research design, which was deemed appropriate for collecting quantitative data from a large group of respondents to identify patterns, relationships, and causal effects. The design facilitated the use of a structured questionnaire to measure the relationship between social networks (independent variable) and the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses (dependent variable), consistent with prior research on entrepreneurship and agribusiness development (Eze & Nwali, 2022; Fischer & Reuber, 2022). The population comprised registered agro-based entrepreneurs operating in Plateau State, including those involved in production, processing, marketing, and input supply. Using the Yamane (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a sample size of 327 was determined, which was adjusted by 10% to account for non-response, resulting in a final sample of 360 respondents. A multi-stage sampling technique was applied, stratifying the state into three senatorial zones, purposively selecting two LGAs from each zone based on agro-business concentration, and applying proportionate stratified random sampling within LGAs to ensure representative coverage.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into four sections: demographics, social networks (frequency of interaction, trust, diversity of relationships), access to resources (financial, informational, market), knowledge sharing (information exchange, training, collaborative learning), and development of agro-based businesses (innovation, productivity, market growth, profitability). Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The instrument was adapted from validated scales in prior studies (Ngaruiya et al., 2020; Eze & Nwali, 2022) to ensure contextual relevance while maintaining psychometric integrity. Content validity was established through expert review, construct validity via factor analysis, and reliability using Cronbach's alpha, with all constructs exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019).

Data were coded and analysed using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression with SPSS version 27 to estimate the linear relationship between independent variables (access to resources and knowledge sharing through social networks) and the dependent variable (development of agro-based businesses). The regression model, $DEV = \beta 0 + \beta 1AR + \beta 2KS + \varepsilon$, produced coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and $R^2$ values for hypothesis testing and prediction at a 5% significance level. Ethical considerations were strictly observed: participation was voluntary, respondents were informed of the study's purpose, confidentiality was assured, data were anonymised, and approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review committee.

## Results and Discussion

Before the commencement of data analysis, a total of 360 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to agro-based entrepreneurs across Plateau State. Out of these, 340 copies were correctly completed and returned, while 20 were excluded due to incomplete or inconsistent responses, yielding a valid response rate of 94.4%. This high retrieval rate demonstrates strong participation and interest among respondents in the research topic, as well as the effectiveness of the data collection strategy employed.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

| Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Questionnaires Distributed | 360 | 100% |
| Excluded Questionnaire | 20 | 5.6% |
| Usable Questionnaires | 340 | 94.4% |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The exclusion rate of only 5.6% indicates that the instrument design was clear, well-structured, and easily comprehensible to the respondents. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a response rate above 70% is considered highly satisfactory for survey research; therefore, the 94.4% obtained in this study enhances the reliability and representativeness of the data collected. Consequently, the large usable sample strengthens the statistical validity of subsequent analyses and provides a sound empirical basis for drawing meaningful conclusions regarding the role of social networks in agro-based business development.

Table 2: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .812 | .659 | .656 | 0.38721 |

Source: SPSS Output

The model summary revealed a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.812, indicating a strong and positive association between the independent variables — Access to Resources (AR) and Knowledge Sharing (KS) — and the dependent variable, Development of Agro-Based Entrepreneurial Businesses (DEV). The coefficient of determination ($R^2$) stood at 0.659, implying that approximately 65.9% of the variation in the development of agro-based businesses was explained by the combined effect of the two predictors. The adjusted $R^2$ value of 0.656 shows minimal shrinkage from the $R^2$, confirming the model's robustness and reliability in explaining the observed relationship. The standard error of the estimate (0.38721) suggests a small dispersion of observed values around the regression line, thereby validating the accuracy of the predictive model. This finding aligns with the assertion of Hair et al. (2019) that models with high R and $R^2$ values reflect strong predictive power and good model fit. Thus, the results indicate that access to resources and knowledge sharing through social networks significantly predict the growth and sustainability of agro-based enterprises in Plateau State.

**Table 3: ANOVA**

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regression | 105.234 | 2 | 52.617 | 351.284 | .000*** |
| Residual | 54.396 | 337 | 0.161 | | |
| Total | 159.630 | 339 | | | |

Source: SPSS Output

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) output provides further evidence of the model's statistical significance. The regression model yielded an F-statistic value of 351.284 with degrees of freedom (2, 337) and a p-value less than 0.001. This result confirms that the overall regression model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, meaning that the combined influence of Access to Resources and Knowledge Sharing has a substantial effect on the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State. The large F-value indicates that the model provides a better fit than would be expected by chance, and the very small p-value ($<0.001$) suggests that the likelihood of obtaining such a result randomly is extremely low. This outcome corroborates the findings of Ngaruiya et al., (2020), who reported that social capital and networks have significant predictive power on entrepreneurial success and business development. Therefore, the ANOVA results confirm that the regression equation significantly explains variations in the dependent variable and that social networking activities play a crucial role in agro-entrepreneurial development.

**Table 4: Coefficients**

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients (B) | Std. Error | Standardized Beta | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0.742 | 0.102 | — | 7.274 | .000*** |
| Access to Resources (AR) | 0.536 | 0.042 | 0.578 | 12.762 | .000*** |
| Knowledge Sharing (KS) | 0.394 | 0.039 | 0.462 | 10.085 | .000*** |

**Dependent Variable:** Development of Agro-Based Entrepreneurial Businesses
Source: SPSS Output

The constant ($\beta_0$ = 0.742) indicates that when both access to resources and knowledge sharing are held constant, the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses would still record a baseline value of 0.742 units. Access to Resources (AR) had an unstandardized coefficient ($\beta_1$) of 0.536 with a t-value of 12.762 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a statistically significant positive effect on business development. This suggests that a unit increase in access to resources through social networks leads to an estimated 0.536-unit improvement in the development of agro-based enterprises.

Similarly, Knowledge Sharing (KS) recorded an unstandardized coefficient ($\beta_2$) of 0.394, with a t-value of 10.085 and a p-value of 0.000, signifying a strong and significant positive influence. This implies that a unit increase in knowledge sharing activities contributes to a 0.394-unit increase in enterprise development. Both predictors were significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$), indicating their critical role in explaining business performance. These findings reinforce the arguments of Unegbu and Diyaolu (2022) and Olayemi and Akinsanya (2023), who demonstrated that entrepreneurs and SMEs actively engaging in knowledge exchange, mentorship, and social networking within business networks experience higher innovation, productivity, and overall performance. Therefore, the regression coefficients affirm that the more entrepreneurs leverage social networks for resources and knowledge, the more their agro-based ventures thrive in Plateau State.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study empirically establish that social networks, through mechanisms of access to resources and knowledge sharing, significantly influence the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State. The regression results revealed that the independent variables jointly explained 65.9% of the variation in business development, indicating a strong predictive power of social networking activities on enterprise performance. This finding aligns with the core tenets of the Social Capital Theory, which posits that entrepreneurs derive economic and social benefits from the relationships, trust, and networks they cultivate (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993). In essence, entrepreneurs who effectively leverage their social ties are more capable of overcoming structural barriers, mobilising capital, and accessing vital information for business growth.

The analysis showed that Access to Resources had the strongest individual influence on business development. This implies that entrepreneurs with strong social networks have better access to financial, informational, and material resources necessary for sustaining and scaling their enterprises. This result corroborates the findings of Ngaruiya et al., (2020) who found that social networks provide entrepreneurs with unique opportunities to access credit facilities, market information, and technological support, thereby enhancing their operational capacity and competitiveness. The implication is that social networks serve as informal yet effective mechanisms for resource mobilisation in environments where institutional support and credit markets are weak, such as in many developing economies.

The second assumption, Knowledge Sharing, also exhibited a positive and statistically significant relationship with business development. This finding highlights the importance of information exchange, collaboration, and collective learning in driving innovation and productivity among agro-entrepreneurs. Unegbu and Diyaolu (2022) and Olayemi and Akinsanya (2023) similarly found that knowledge exchange and knowledge transfer among entrepreneurs enhance creativity, innovation, and decision-making, thereby contributing to improved business outcomes. The strong positive coefficient further indicates that when entrepreneurs interact through cooperatives, digital platforms, and farmer associations, they not only gain access to relevant business knowledge but also develop the ability to adapt to market dynamics and technological changes. Thus, knowledge sharing acts as a strategic enabler for continuous learning and problem-solving in the agro-enterprise ecosystem.

The ANOVA result confirmed the joint significance of the predictors, demonstrating that social networking activities collectively exert a substantial effect on the development of agro-based enterprises. This is consistent with the findings of Fischer and Reuber (2022), who emphasised that entrepreneurial success and innovation are deeply embedded in the strength and diversity of social connections. Moreover, the high model fit values ($R = 0.812$, $R^2 = 0.659$) attest to the robustness of the regression model, further reinforcing the argument that social networks constitute vital assets for enterprise development

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

**Conclusion**

This study assessed the impact of social networks on the development of agro-based entrepreneurial businesses in Plateau State, focusing on two key dimensions: access to resources and knowledge sharing. The findings demonstrated that both dimensions significantly and positively influence the growth and sustainability of agro-enterprises. Specifically, access to resources through social networks was found to have a stronger effect, indicating that entrepreneurs who cultivate diverse and trust-based connections are more capable of mobilising critical inputs for business expansion. Knowledge sharing also played an essential role, facilitating innovation, collaboration, and adaptability among agro-entrepreneurs. The results collectively validate the Social Capital Theory, confirming that social ties and interactions are not merely social constructs but strategic assets that foster economic outcomes. Consequently, social networks serve as an indispensable mechanism for mitigating structural and financial barriers that typically constrain agribusiness growth in developing regions.

**Recommendations**

Based on the key findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for agro-based businesses in Plateau State:

1. Agro-based businesses are encouraged to actively cultivate and maintain strong strategic relationships with cooperatives, suppliers, financial institutions, and input providers. Entrepreneurs should leverage membership in farmers' associations and business clusters to pool resources, access credit, and share logistics and equipment. Building mutual trust and collaborative linkages, agro-enterprises can overcome the challenges of limited financing, inadequate farm inputs, and infrastructural constraints that often hinder productivity and expansion.
2. Agro-based businesses should institutionalise mechanisms for continuous learning and information exchange within their operational systems. This can be achieved by organising regular peer-learning workshops, joint training sessions, and farmer field schools where members exchange experiences and innovative farming or processing practices. Businesses should also use digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram groups for real-time information dissemination on market trends, weather updates, and new agricultural technologies.

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