

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-59140

Title: Socio-economic and technological determinants of mobile-based agricultural information access among smallholder farmers in Kericho County, Kenya.

Recommendation:

Accept as it is
 Accept after minor revision.....
Accept after major revision ...yes.....
 Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality			Y	
Techn. Quality			Y	
Clarity			Y	
Significance			y	

Reviewer's ID: JPR-Dr.Shaweta Sachdeva

Detailed Reviewer's Report

1. The manuscript addresses a relevant topic and has a clearly stated objective. However, the novelty/contribution of the study should be articulated more explicitly, particularly in relation to previous studies on mobile-based agricultural information access in Kenya and other African contexts.
2. The authors should strengthen the research gap in the Introduction/Literature Review. The literature review summarizes several determinants, but it should more clearly explain what remains unknown and how the present study specifically addresses that gap.
3. Please verify the sample-size calculation using Yamane's formula. The manuscript reports a target population of 1,016 and an analytical sample of 287, but the value of the precision/error term used in the calculation should be explicitly stated and the calculation should be shown clearly.
4. The manuscript states that 287 farmers had complete observations. Please explain how the 287 respondents were selected from the target population of 1,016, including the sampling technique, sampling frame, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and any non-response handling.
5. The study area description would be stronger if supported by an appropriate map showing the location of Kericho County and the selected study sites/sub-counties.
6. The operational definitions of "regular," "occasional," and "never" access need greater precision. Please provide the actual frequency/time criteria used to classify respondents into these categories rather than relying only on qualitative descriptions.
7. Please provide information on the development, validation, and reliability of the questionnaire. If the instrument was adapted from previous studies, the sources and modifications should be reported.
8. The manuscript should provide more details regarding ethical approval, informed consent, confidentiality, and data-protection procedures, particularly because the study involved individual farmers and potentially socioeconomic information.

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9. The statistical methodology requires additional clarification. Since the dependent variable has three ordered categories—regular, occasional and never—the authors should explain more fully why bivariate chi-square/Fisher's exact tests were selected as the principal analytical methods.
10. The manuscript appropriately acknowledges that the analysis is bivariate and does not establish causality. Nevertheless, the discussion occasionally uses explanatory language such as “may reflect” and “enhances the opportunity.” These statements should be carefully framed as possible interpretations rather than effects demonstrated by the study.
11. Please report the sample size (n) for every category in the results tables. Percentages alone make it difficult to assess the stability of estimates, particularly for small groups such as graduates and the highest income category.
12. The education results require careful interpretation because the manuscript reports that the graduate category contains only seven respondents. Percentages derived from such a small subgroup should be accompanied by the corresponding n and interpreted cautiously.
13. Similarly, the KES 501,000-and-above income category contains no respondents in the regular-access group. The authors should explain whether this produced sparse/zero cells and whether this affected the validity of the chi-square approximation.
14. Because several analyses involve small expected cell counts, please provide the expected cell-count diagnostics or clearly state the criteria used to determine when Fisher's exact test was required.
15. The manuscript reports both Pearson's chi-square and Fisher's exact test. Please clarify which test was treated as the primary inferential test for each variable and ensure that the conclusions are based consistently on the appropriate test.
16. For the significant age relationship, the reported linear-by-linear association is useful, but the manuscript should explain why this test is appropriate and provide the statistic and degrees of freedom where applicable, rather than reporting only the p-value.
17. Please consider reporting an appropriate effect-size measure for the categorical associations, such as Cramér's V, along with confidence intervals where feasible. Statistical significance alone does not indicate the magnitude of an association.
18. The manuscript would benefit from reporting confidence intervals for the major percentages or effect estimates, particularly given the relatively modest sample size and several small subgroups.
19. The statement that there is a “pronounced age-related digital engagement gap” should be supported by an effect-size measure or moderated to reflect the observational and bivariate nature of the analysis.
20. In the education section, the finding that the overall association is significant while the linear-by-linear association is non-significant ($p=.140$) is important. The authors should explain more explicitly that this indicates association without evidence of a simple monotonic trend.
21. The occupation discussion proposes several possible explanations for higher access among farmers combining agriculture and business. These explanations are plausible, but they should be clearly distinguished from empirically tested findings, since the present analysis does not directly measure information needs, business activity intensity, or time constraints.
22. The interpretation of the landholding result should be made more cautious. A Fisher's exact p-value of .054 is close to the selected $\alpha=.05$ threshold but remains non-significant under the stated decision rule. It should not be described as evidence of a relationship without qualification.
23. The results for device type are interesting because regular-access percentages are relatively similar across basic feature phones, internet-enabled feature phones and smartphones. The authors could strengthen this section by reporting the actual sample size in each device category.
24. Please review the figures carefully for readability and labeling. Several charts appear to present percentages, but the figures should include clear axis titles, units, legends and sufficiently readable category labels.

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25. The figures should use a consistent visual style and terminology throughout. For example, use the same wording for "Regular," "Occasional," and "Never" across all figures and tables.
26. Table 3 is useful, but it should ideally include sample size, effect size and, where appropriate, confidence intervals in addition to p-values.
27. The Discussion is generally well connected to the findings, but some paragraphs introduce factors such as disability, trust, language, electricity access and network quality that were not measured in the present study. These should be explicitly identified as possible explanations from the literature rather than interpretations established by the data.
28. The manuscript should avoid implying that mobile-phone ownership "enhances" access because the cross-sectional bivariate design can demonstrate association but not temporal or causal effects.
29. The conclusion is consistent with the reported statistical findings, but it should emphasize that the results are specific to the sampled smallholder farmers in Kericho County and should not be generalized broadly without additional evidence.
30. The recommendations are practical, but some are broader than the variables actually investigated. Consider linking each recommendation more explicitly to a specific empirical finding and identifying which recommendations require evidence from future research.
31. The limitations section is a strength, but it should additionally discuss sampling representativeness and potential self-report/recall bias, particularly because frequency of mobile information access appears to be based on respondents' reported behavior.
32. The manuscript would benefit from a clearer discussion of gender, especially because the Introduction and study-area description mention differences in access among women and youth, but gender is not included among the analyzed explanatory variables.
33. Please check the consistency of terminology throughout the manuscript: "small-scale farmers" and "smallholder farmers" are both used; one term should preferably be selected and used consistently.
34. Please carefully proofread the manuscript for typographical and formatting errors, such as missing spaces in "productioninformation," "interactive voice response(FAO, 2020)," and inconsistent citation punctuation.
35. The references should be checked for bibliographic consistency, completeness, DOI accuracy, journal details and citation-reference matching. In particular, the two 2026 Cherotich & Kibett references should be carefully verified for publication details and their distinct contributions.
36. The final reference list contains some entries with incomplete author information, such as "& others." Please follow the target journal's prescribed reference style consistently.
37. The authors should verify whether all cited sources are actually used to support the specific statements for which they are cited, and whether all references in the bibliography are cited in the manuscript.
38. Overall, the manuscript has a clearly defined empirical focus and presents potentially useful evidence from Kericho County, but it would benefit from stronger methodological transparency, fuller reporting of sample/category sizes, effect sizes, clearer operationalization of the dependent variable, and more cautious interpretation of bivariate associations before publication.