



THE DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF MOBILE BANKING PLATFORMS IN DRIVING RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Anthhony Kainayo (PhD)

Gideon Robert University Lusaka, Zambia

Email: Kainayo100@gmail.com, Phone Number: 08036259750,07033372809

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between digital financial inclusion and poverty alleviation, with particular focus on assessing the role of mobile banking platforms in driving rural economic development in Nigeria. The study was motivated by the persistent problem of financial exclusion and widespread poverty among rural dwellers despite ongoing government interventions and financial sector reforms. The study specifically investigated how mobile banking platforms enhance access to financial services and how such access contributes to poverty reduction and improved socio-economic conditions in rural communities. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of rural dwellers, including farmers, traders, artisans, and small-scale entrepreneurs who utilize or have access to mobile banking services. A sample size of 286 respondents was selected using the Taro Yamane sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed on a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts and tested for reliability using the Cronbach's Alpha method. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that digital financial inclusion has a significant positive effect on poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria (Grand Mean = 3.98). The study also found that mobile banking platforms enhance access to financial services in rural communities to a high extent (Grand Mean = 4.13). Furthermore, there is a strong and statistically significant relationship between mobile banking platforms and poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria ($r = 0.742, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that mobile banking platforms play a crucial role in promoting financial inclusion, reducing poverty, and improving rural economic development in Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the government and financial institutions should strengthen digital financial infrastructure, improve financial literacy, and expand mobile banking services in rural areas to enhance economic empowerment and sustainable development.

Keywords: Digital, Financial Inclusion, Mobile Banking, Platforms, Poverty Alleviation, Rural Economic, Development

1.1 Introduction

Digital financial inclusion has emerged as one of the most important policy instruments for promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, and fostering sustainable development in developing economies. It refers to the use of digital technologies to provide affordable, convenient, secure, and accessible financial services to individuals and businesses, especially those who are traditionally excluded from the formal financial system. These services include mobile banking, mobile money transfers, digital

savings, online credit facilities, electronic payments, internet banking, and agency banking. The increasing penetration of mobile phones, internet connectivity, and financial technology innovations has transformed the way financial services are delivered, particularly in rural areas where access to conventional banking infrastructure remains inadequate. Globally, governments, financial institutions, and development agencies increasingly recognize digital financial inclusion as a powerful mechanism for achieving economic empowerment and poverty alleviation. In Nigeria, digital financial inclusion has gained significant attention because a large proportion of the population, particularly those residing in rural communities, have historically lacked access to formal financial services. The introduction of mobile banking platforms has significantly improved financial accessibility by enabling individuals to conduct financial transactions without physically visiting a banking hall. Through mobile devices, users can transfer funds, receive payments, save money, access loans, purchase airtime and pay utilities.

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the traditional banking system. Mobile banking platforms have emerged as innovative channels through which financial institutions deliver services to customers using mobile phones and digital applications. These platforms provide twenty-four-hour access to financial services and eliminate many of the barriers associated with traditional banking systems. Rural residents can now perform transactions from their homes, farms, marketplaces, and business locations without travelling long distances to urban banking centers. This development has substantially reduced transportation costs, waiting time, and other constraints associated with physical banking operations. Abdullahi and Muhammad (2025) asserted that digital financial services have significantly improved rural market accessibility by linking farmers, traders, and small-scale business owners to formal financial institutions. Their study revealed that mobile banking and financial technology solutions promote trade expansion, facilitate access to working capital, and improve market participation among rural entrepreneurs. The researchers further noted that digital financial inclusion strengthens economic integration by enabling seamless financial transactions between rural producers and urban markets. Omenihu et al. (2024) argued that financial inclusion contributes to poverty alleviation through three major dimensions: financial access, financial usage, and service quality. According to the authors, financial access enables individuals to obtain banking services, while financial usage reflects the frequency and effectiveness with which such services are utilized. Service quality, on the other hand, determines the extent to which financial products meet users' needs efficiently and reliably. The researchers maintained that when individuals have access to affordable and high-quality financial services, they are more capable of investing in productive ventures, managing risks, improving consumption patterns, and enhancing household welfare. Despite notable progress in digital financial service delivery, financial exclusion remains a significant challenge in Nigeria. Akinde and Saka (2026) reported that millions of Nigerians, particularly those in rural and marginalized communities, continue to lack adequate access to formal financial services. The authors attributed this challenge to factors such as poor digital infrastructure, low financial literacy, inadequate internet connectivity, poverty, and limited awareness of digital financial products. Nevertheless, they emphasized that mobile money and mobile banking services have demonstrated remarkable potential for bridging the financial inclusion gap across the country. Ahmed Mallum (2026) further established that mobile money services, rural lending programs, and financial inclusion initiatives contribute substantially to economic development in Northern Nigeria. The study revealed that increased financial inclusion promotes employment creation, income generation, business growth, and poverty reduction. According to the author, mobile banking services provide rural entrepreneurs with greater access to financial capital, thereby enhancing productivity and stimulating local economic activities. Digital financial inclusion encompasses several important dimensions that collectively determine its effectiveness. These dimensions include financial access, financial usage, service quality, affordability, financial literacy, and digital infrastructure. Financial access refers to the availability of

financial services to individuals and businesses. Financial usage concerns the extent to which people actively utilize available financial products and services. Service quality relates to the efficiency, reliability, and responsiveness of financial service delivery. Affordability focuses on the cost of accessing financial services, while financial literacy refers to individuals' knowledge and understanding of financial products. Digital infrastructure includes internet connectivity, telecommunications networks, electricity supply, and technological facilities necessary for digital financial transactions. Bernard Ephraim (2026) defined digital financial inclusion as the application of innovative technologies such as mobile banking, digital wallets, mobile money systems, and central bank digital currencies to expand financial participation among underserved populations. The author argued that digital financial inclusion represents one of the most effective strategies for reaching unbanked individuals residing in remote and rural communities. Similarly, Akinde and Saka (2026) described digital financial inclusion as the ability of individuals to access and utilize financial services through mobile devices and telecommunications technologies. Their findings indicated that mobile money services significantly improve financial participation among low-income and marginalized groups. Mobile banking represents one of the most important channels through which digital financial inclusion is achieved. It refers to the provision of banking and financial services through mobile phones, smartphones, tablets, and other wireless communication devices. Through mobile banking platforms, users can perform financial transactions, transfer funds, make payments, monitor account balances, save money, and access credit facilities from any location. Olayiwola and Fasoye (2026) emphasized that mobile banking is particularly beneficial in rural communities where traditional banking infrastructure is inadequate or nonexistent. The authors argued that mobile banking bridges geographical barriers and facilitates greater participation in formal financial systems.

Akinjare, Obabueki, and Omankhanlen (2026) observed that mobile banking platforms facilitate financial inclusion by providing convenient access to financial services. Their study revealed that mobile account ownership significantly influences mobile money adoption and financial participation in Nigeria. The researchers concluded that increased adoption of mobile banking technologies contributes positively to financial inclusion and economic development. Rural economic development refers to the process of improving economic productivity, employment opportunities, income levels, infrastructure, and living standards within rural communities. It involves creating an enabling environment that supports agricultural productivity, entrepreneurship, industrial development, and market expansion. Adegboyega (2024) argued that rural development is closely associated with financial inclusion because access to financial services enables rural households to invest in productive activities, acquire modern technologies, and expand business operations. The author emphasized that financial inclusion serves as a foundation for sustainable rural transformation and economic growth. Abdullahi and Muhammad (2025) further found that digital financial services enhance rural market integration by facilitating commercial transactions, improving access to credit, and promoting economic productivity. Their study revealed that mobile banking platforms support rural development by enabling efficient financial interactions among farmers, traders, consumers, and financial institutions. Consequently, digital financial inclusion and mobile banking platforms have become critical drivers of rural economic development and poverty alleviation in contemporary Nigeria. Their ability to expand financial access, support entrepreneurship, facilitate investment, and improve household welfare underscores their strategic importance in achieving sustainable development and inclusive economic growth. Udo and Akpan (2026) conducted an empirical investigation on the impact of digital financial inclusion on poverty reduction among rural households in the South-South region of Nigeria. The study utilized primary data collected from 397 households across selected rural communities and employed advanced statistical techniques to analyze the relationship between digital financial inclusion and poverty reduction. The findings revealed that digital financial inclusion significantly contributes to reducing poverty levels among rural households. Specifically, the researchers discovered that financial

service usage was the strongest predictor of poverty reduction. According to the authors, households that frequently utilized digital financial services such as mobile banking, digital savings platforms, and mobile money services experienced higher levels of economic empowerment than those with limited access to such services. The study further established that digital financial inclusion enables households to access credit facilities, accumulate savings, manage financial risks, and participate in productive economic activities that improve their income and living standards. The authors concluded that expanding digital financial services in rural communities would significantly enhance poverty reduction efforts and promote inclusive economic growth. Olayiwola and Fasoye (2026) examined the relationship between mobile banking and poverty alleviation in rural Nigeria using annual data spanning from 1999 to 2023. The researchers adopted the Structural Vector Autoregression (SVAR) analytical technique to assess the long-run and short-run effects of mobile banking on poverty alleviation. The findings demonstrated that mobile banking significantly contributes to poverty reduction through improved financial accessibility and entrepreneurial development. The authors argued that mobile banking platforms have transformed financial service delivery by eliminating geographical barriers that previously restricted rural populations from accessing banking services. Their study further revealed that mobile banking facilitates financial transactions, enhances savings mobilization, supports small business operations, and enables rural entrepreneurs to access capital for business expansion. Consequently, the researchers concluded that mobile banking represents an effective mechanism for promoting financial inclusion and reducing poverty in rural communities across Nigeria.

Akinde and Saka (2026) assessed mobile money penetration among Nigerian telecommunication companies with a focus on evaluating its contribution to digital financial inclusion. The study explored the extent to which mobile money services have expanded financial access among previously excluded populations. The findings indicated that increased adoption of mobile money services significantly enhances financial inclusion among underserved and marginalized groups. The authors observed that mobile money platforms provide convenient, affordable, and accessible financial services to individuals residing in remote rural areas where conventional banking infrastructure is either inadequate or absent. Their study also revealed that mobile money services facilitate secure financial transactions, encourage savings behavior, and improve access to financial products among low-income households. The researchers concluded that mobile money platforms have become critical tools for promoting financial inclusion and economic participation in Nigeria. Akinjare, Obabueki, and Omankhanlen (2026) investigated the role of technological innovations in advancing financial inclusion in Nigeria using data covering the period from 2012 to 2022. The researchers examined the relationship between technological adoption and financial inclusion indicators. Their findings established a significant positive relationship between mobile account ownership and mobile money transactions. According to the study, increased ownership of mobile devices and mobile banking accounts contributes substantially to the expansion of financial inclusion across different demographic groups. The authors emphasized that technology-driven financial services provide users with opportunities to access financial products and services regardless of geographical location. The study further demonstrated that digital financial technologies contribute to greater participation in the formal financial sector and support economic development by increasing financial accessibility and efficiency. Abdullahi and Muhammad (2025) examined the impact of digital financial services on rural market access and economic activities in Northwestern Nigeria. The study focused on how fintech solutions influence trade activities, business development, and rural economic growth. The findings revealed that fintech inclusion significantly enhances trade activities by improving access to financial resources and facilitating business transactions. According to the researchers, digital financial services enable rural traders and entrepreneurs to access credit facilities, make electronic payments, receive business transactions promptly, and participate more actively in local and regional markets. The authors further observed that

digital financial services reduce transaction costs, improve market efficiency, and strengthen economic linkages between rural and urban markets. Consequently, the study concluded that digital financial inclusion serves as an important driver of rural economic development. Adegboyega (2024) investigated the relationship between financial inclusion and rural development in Nigeria. The study examined how access to financial services influences agricultural productivity, business growth, and poverty reduction among rural populations. The findings indicated that increased access to financial services positively affects rural productivity and economic development. The researcher found that rural households with access to formal financial services are more likely to invest in agricultural production, acquire modern farming inputs, expand business operations, and improve household welfare. The study further revealed that financial inclusion facilitates income generation and employment creation, thereby contributing significantly to poverty reduction. The author concluded that expanding financial inclusion initiatives would accelerate rural transformation and sustainable economic development in Nigeria. Nnoje, Doris, and Ogochukwu (2024) examined the effect of financial inclusion technologies on poverty reduction in Nigeria. The study focused on the roles of mobile payment systems, automated teller machines (ATMs), and other digital financial technologies in improving financial accessibility. The findings showed that mobile payment systems and ATM services significantly contribute to poverty alleviation through enhanced access to financial services and increased economic participation. The researchers argued that digital financial technologies reduce barriers to financial access by providing affordable and convenient financial solutions to individuals and businesses. Their findings further indicated that increased utilization of digital financial technologies promotes entrepreneurship, savings mobilization, and investment activities that contribute to improved household welfare and poverty reduction. Omenihu et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive analysis of financial inclusion and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The researchers examined the effects of financial access, financial usage, and service quality on poverty reduction outcomes. Their findings revealed that all three dimensions of financial inclusion significantly contribute to poverty alleviation. The study demonstrated that individuals who have access to high-quality financial services and utilize them effectively are more likely to improve their economic conditions than those who remain financially excluded. The authors argued that financial inclusion enhances income-generating opportunities, facilitates risk management, and promotes economic resilience among vulnerable populations. Consequently, they recommended policies aimed at expanding access to affordable and reliable financial services across rural communities. Mallum (2026) investigated the relationship between financial inclusion and economic development in Northern Nigeria. Using economic and financial indicators, the study assessed the long-run impact of financial inclusion on economic growth and poverty reduction. The findings revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between mobile money adoption and key economic development indicators such as employment generation, income growth, business expansion, and poverty reduction. The author observed that mobile money services have become important instruments for promoting financial participation among previously excluded populations. The study further established that increased financial inclusion contributes to local economic development by stimulating entrepreneurial activities, increasing household income, and improving overall living standards. The researcher therefore recommended increased investment in digital financial infrastructure and financial literacy programs to enhance financial inclusion and economic development in Northern Nigeria.

The study is anchored on the Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) and the Financial Intermediation Theory because both theories provide valuable explanations regarding the adoption of mobile banking technologies and their contributions to financial inclusion, poverty alleviation, and rural economic development. The Innovation Diffusion Theory was developed by Everett Rogers in 1962. The theory explains how innovations, technologies, products, and new ideas spread within a social system over time. Rogers argued that the rate at which an innovation is adopted depends largely on five major characteristics,

namely relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. Relative advantage refers to the extent to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the existing alternative. Compatibility relates to the degree to which the innovation aligns with users' values, experiences, and needs. Complexity concerns the ease or difficulty associated with using the innovation. Trialability refers to the opportunity to experiment with the innovation before full adoption, while observability focuses on the visibility of the innovation's benefits to potential adopters. According to Rogers (2003), individuals are more likely to adopt innovations when they perceive clear advantages and tangible benefits from their usage. In the context of mobile banking, rural dwellers are likely to embrace digital financial services when they recognize that mobile banking offers greater convenience, faster transactions, reduced costs, and improved access to financial services compared to traditional banking methods. The theory further categorizes adopters into innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards, thereby explaining how technological innovations gradually diffuse throughout society. Akinde and Saka (2026) supported this perspective by observing that mobile banking adoption in Nigeria is largely influenced by users' perceptions of convenience, accessibility, affordability, and usefulness. Their findings revealed that individuals who perceive mobile banking as beneficial are more likely to adopt and utilize digital financial services. The relevance of Innovation Diffusion Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how rural populations adopt mobile banking technologies and how such adoption contributes to financial inclusion, poverty reduction, and economic empowerment. The theory provides a useful framework for understanding the factors that influence the acceptance and utilization of mobile banking platforms among rural residents. The Financial Intermediation Theory was developed by Gurley and Shaw (1960). The theory explains the role of financial institutions as intermediaries between surplus economic units (savers) and deficit economic units (borrowers). According to the theory, financial institutions mobilize savings from individuals and channel these resources to productive sectors of the economy through lending and investment activities. The theory argues that efficient financial intermediation promotes economic growth by facilitating capital formation, improving resource allocation, reducing transaction costs, and increasing access to financial services. Financial Intermediation Theory assumes that financial institutions play a critical role in overcoming information asymmetry and transaction barriers that often hinder financial transactions. Through their intermediation functions, financial institutions provide mechanisms that enable individuals and businesses to access financial resources necessary for productive investments and economic development. In contemporary financial systems, mobile banking platforms and digital financial technologies have expanded the scope of financial intermediation by enabling financial institutions to deliver services electronically to geographically dispersed populations. Adegboyega (2024) argued that financial inclusion promotes rural development by improving access to credit facilities, investment opportunities, savings products, and other financial services. The author observed that increased financial access enables rural households to invest in agriculture, small-scale enterprises, and income-generating activities that contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction. This position aligns closely with the assumptions of Financial Intermediation Theory, which emphasizes the role of financial institutions in mobilizing resources and facilitating economic development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Poverty remains one of the most persistent socio-economic challenges confronting Nigeria despite numerous government interventions, poverty alleviation programs, and economic development initiatives. Rural communities are particularly affected by high levels of poverty, unemployment, low income, poor access to basic infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities. According to recent development reports, a significant proportion of Nigeria's poor population resides in rural areas where agricultural activities and informal businesses constitute the primary sources of livelihood. The persistence of poverty in these areas has continued to hinder economic growth, social development, and overall improvement in

living standards. One of the major factors contributing to rural poverty is financial exclusion. A considerable number of rural dwellers remain outside the formal financial system due to inadequate banking infrastructure, long distances to financial institutions, high transaction costs, low financial literacy, and limited access to financial products and services. Consequently, many rural residents rely on informal financial mechanisms that often provide insufficient financial support for productive investments, business expansion, and income-generating activities. This situation limits their ability to accumulate savings, access credit facilities, manage financial risks, and improve their economic conditions.

The emergence of digital financial technologies, particularly mobile banking platforms, has created new opportunities for expanding financial inclusion among underserved populations. Mobile banking enables individuals to access financial services such as money transfers, savings, payments, credit facilities, and account management through mobile devices without necessarily visiting traditional banking institutions. These innovations have the potential to bridge the gap between formal financial institutions and rural populations by providing affordable, convenient, and accessible financial services. Despite the increasing adoption of mobile banking services in Nigeria, poverty levels in many rural communities remain high. Questions, therefore, arise regarding the extent to which mobile banking platforms have contributed to financial inclusion and whether such inclusion has translated into meaningful poverty reduction and rural economic development. Although several studies have examined financial inclusion and digital banking in Nigeria, many have focused primarily on urban populations, national-level indicators, or general financial inclusion outcomes without specifically assessing how mobile banking platforms influence poverty alleviation and rural economic development. It is against this background that this study seeks to assess the role of mobile banking platforms in driving rural economic development and poverty alleviation through digital financial inclusion in Nigeria.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the role of digital financial inclusion through mobile banking platforms in promoting poverty alleviation and driving rural economic development in Nigeria. The study sought to:

1. Examine the effect of digital financial inclusion on poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria.
2. Determine the extent to which mobile banking platforms enhance access to financial services in rural communities.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What effect does digital financial inclusion have on poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria?
2. To what extent do mobile banking platforms enhance access to financial services in rural communities?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀ There is no significant relationship between mobile banking platforms and poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria.

H₁ There is a significant relationship between mobile banking platforms and poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria.

2. Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This research design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information from respondents regarding their experiences, opinions, perceptions, and utilization of mobile banking platforms and digital financial services. The descriptive survey design was widely used in social science research because it facilitates the collection of quantitative data from a representative sample of a larger population. Through this approach, the researcher was able to investigate the extent to which digital financial inclusion influences poverty alleviation and rural economic development. The design is particularly suitable because it allowed the researcher to study existing conditions as they naturally occur without manipulating any variables. It also provided an opportunity to examine relationships among variables such as mobile banking usage, financial inclusion, household income, access to credit facilities, savings behavior, entrepreneurship, and poverty reduction. Furthermore, the survey design was appropriate because it enabled the collection of first-hand information from rural residents regarding the benefits, challenges, and effectiveness of mobile banking services in their daily economic activities. The study was conducted in selected rural communities in Nigeria. These communities are selected because rural areas constitute a significant proportion of the population that remains financially excluded despite the increasing adoption of digital financial technologies. Rural communities in Nigeria are generally characterized by inadequate banking infrastructure, poor road networks, limited access to formal financial services, high levels of poverty, and heavy dependence on agriculture and small-scale business activities. In many of these communities, residents often travel long distances to access banking services, making financial transactions difficult and expensive. The population of the study comprised adult residents of the selected rural communities. Specifically, the target population included farmers, traders, artisans, small-scale entrepreneurs, self-employed individuals, cooperative society members, and other rural dwellers who either utilize mobile banking services or have access to mobile devices capable of supporting digital financial transactions. These categories of individuals are considered appropriate because they are directly affected by issues relating to financial inclusion, financial accessibility, poverty alleviation, and economic development. Their experiences and perceptions are expected to provide relevant information regarding the effectiveness of mobile banking platforms in improving economic opportunities and reducing poverty in rural areas. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select rural communities where mobile banking services are available and actively utilized by residents. This approach was necessary because the study specifically focuses on the role of mobile banking platforms in promoting financial inclusion and rural development. In the second stage, simple random sampling was adopted to select individual respondents from the chosen communities. The use of simple random sampling ensures that every eligible respondent has an equal chance of being selected, thereby minimizing selection bias and improving the representativeness of the sample. This combination of purposive and random sampling techniques will enable the researcher to obtain relevant and reliable data from respondents who possess adequate knowledge and experience regarding mobile banking services.

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was obtained directly from respondents through the administration of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire method was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gather information from a large number of respondents within a relatively short period. It also provided respondents with the opportunity to express their opinions and experiences regarding mobile banking usage, financial inclusion, income generation, savings patterns, access to credit facilities, and poverty alleviation. Secondary data were sourced from textbooks, academic journals, conference proceedings, government publications, Central Bank of Nigeria reports, National Bureau of Statistics publications, World Bank reports, internet sources, and other relevant literature relating to digital financial inclusion, mobile banking, poverty reduction, and rural economic

development. These secondary sources provided theoretical and empirical support for the study and assist in establishing the existing knowledge gap. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on the objectives and research questions of the study. The questionnaire was designed in a simple and understandable format to facilitate easy comprehension by respondents. It consisted of two major sections. The first section obtained demographic information from respondents, including gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, marital status, and income level. The second section contained statements relating to digital financial inclusion, mobile banking adoption, financial accessibility, savings mobilization, credit accessibility, entrepreneurial development, poverty alleviation, and rural economic development. Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, to Strongly Disagree. This measurement scale was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to quantify respondents' opinions and perceptions for statistical analysis. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity procedures. Copies of the instrument were presented to experts in Economics, Banking and Finance, Educational Management, and Research Methodology for critical examination. These experts evaluated the questionnaire in terms of relevance, clarity, comprehensiveness, and suitability for measuring the variables under investigation. Their comments, observations, corrections, and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument before administration. This process ensured that the questionnaire adequately measures the concepts of digital financial inclusion, mobile banking usage, poverty alleviation, and rural economic development. The reliability of the instrument will also be established to ensure consistency and stability in measurement. A pilot study was conducted using twenty respondents selected from a rural community outside the study area. The responses obtained from the pilot test was analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability technique. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was widely used to assess the internal consistency of research instruments. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable for the study. Achieving an acceptable reliability coefficient indicated that the instrument consistently measures the variables of interest and is suitable for data collection. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires with the assistance of trained research assistants where necessary. Before distributing the questionnaires, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that the information provided was treated with strict confidentiality. The questionnaires were distributed directly to respondents within the selected rural communities and collected immediately after completion or at a later agreed time. Personal administration of the questionnaire was expected to increase the response rate, minimize non-response errors, and provide respondents with opportunities to seek clarification where necessary. After data collection, all completed questionnaires were carefully screened, coded, and organized for analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used for data processing and analysis. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation were employed to analyze the research questions. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, while mean scores and standard deviations were used to analyze responses relating to the study variables. The criterion mean for decision-making was 3.00. Any item with a mean score of 3.00 or above was accepted, while items with mean scores below 3.00 was rejected. The hypothesis formulated for the study was tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Simple Linear Regression Analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. These statistical tools were considered appropriate because they enabled the researcher to determine the nature, direction, strength, and significance of the relationship between mobile banking platforms, digital financial inclusion, poverty alleviation, and rural economic development. The null hypothesis was rejected if the probability value is less than 0.05 and accepted if the probability value is greater than 0.05.

3. Results

Research Question 1: What effect does digital financial inclusion have on poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria?

Table 1: Responses on the Effect of Digital Financial Inclusion on Poverty Alleviation Among Rural Dwellers

S/N	Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
1	Digital financial inclusion has improved my access to financial services.	130	95	25	20	16	4.06	Accepted
2	Mobile banking has increased my ability to save money regularly.	120	90	30	26	20	3.92	Accepted
3	Digital financial services have improved my income-generating activities.	115	92	35	24	20	3.90	Accepted
4	Access to mobile banking has reduced financial hardship in my household.	125	88	32	23	18	3.98	Accepted
5	Digital financial inclusion has contributed to poverty reduction in my community.	132	85	30	22	17	4.02	Accepted

The results presented in Table 4.1 indicate that digital financial inclusion has a significant positive effect on poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria. All the items recorded mean scores above the benchmark mean of 3.00. The grand mean score of 3.98 suggests that respondents generally agreed that digital financial inclusion has enhanced access to financial services, increased savings opportunities, improved income-generating activities, reduced household financial hardship, and contributed to poverty reduction within their communities. This finding implies that digital financial technologies have become important tools for improving the economic welfare of rural populations.

Research Question 2: To what extent do mobile banking platforms enhance access to financial services in rural communities?

Table 2: Responses on the Extent to Which Mobile Banking Platforms Enhance Access to Financial Services

S/N	Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
1	Mobile banking enables me to perform financial transactions conveniently.	145	90	20	18	13	4.18	Accepted
2	Mobile banking reduces the need to travel long distances to bank branches.	150	85	22	17	12	4.20	Accepted
3	Mobile banking has improved my access to savings facilities.	128	90	30	22	16	4.02	Accepted
4	Mobile banking makes it easier to receive and transfer money.	140	88	25	20	13	4.13	Accepted
5	Mobile banking has increased financial participation among rural residents.	135	92	28	18	13	4.11	Accepted

The findings in Table 4.2 reveal that mobile banking platforms enhance access to financial services to a very high extent among rural dwellers. The mean scores for all items exceeded the criterion mean of 3.00, while the grand mean of 4.13 indicates a strong level of agreement among respondents. The results suggest that mobile banking platforms have made financial transactions more convenient, reduced travel costs associated with visiting traditional bank branches, improved access to savings facilities, facilitated money transfers, and increased financial participation among rural populations. This demonstrates that mobile banking serves as an effective channel for expanding financial inclusion in rural communities.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship between mobile banking platforms and poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between mobile banking platforms and poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Mobile Banking Platforms and Poverty Alleviation

Variables	N	r-value	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Mobile Banking Platforms	286			
Poverty Alleviation	286	0.742	0.000	Reject H ₀

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis presented in Table 4.3 shows a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.742, indicating a strong positive relationship between mobile banking platforms and poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria. The significance value ($p = 0.000$) is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Since the calculated p -value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This finding indicated a statistically significant relationship between mobile banking platforms and poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria. The result implies that increased adoption and utilization of mobile banking services contribute significantly to poverty reduction by improving financial access, enhancing savings behavior, facilitating credit acquisition, promoting business activities, and increasing household income among rural residents.

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that digital financial inclusion has a significant positive effect on poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria, with a grand mean score of 3.98. This finding suggests that increased access to digital financial services such as mobile banking, mobile money transfers, digital savings platforms, and electronic payment systems contributes substantially to improving the welfare and economic conditions of rural households. The result indicates that rural residents who actively utilize digital financial services are better positioned to access financial resources, engage in productive economic activities, improve savings culture, and enhance their overall standard of living. The finding underscores the growing importance of digital financial technologies as instruments for promoting financial empowerment and reducing poverty among vulnerable populations. This finding is consistent with the work

of Nnoje, Doris, and Ogochukwu (2024), who reported that financial inclusion technologies significantly contribute to poverty reduction by improving access to financial resources and encouraging economic participation among low-income households. The authors observed that digital payment systems and mobile financial services reduce transaction costs and remove barriers that traditionally prevent poor households from participating in formal financial systems. According to Nnoje et al. (2024), when individuals gain access to affordable financial services, they are more capable of investing in income-generating activities, managing financial risks, and improving household welfare. The present finding, therefore, validates their assertion that digital financial inclusion serves as an effective mechanism for poverty alleviation in developing economies such as Nigeria. The result also agrees with the findings of Udo and Akpan (2026), who investigated the impact of digital financial inclusion on poverty reduction among rural households in South-South Nigeria. Their study revealed that digital financial inclusion significantly reduces poverty and enhances economic empowerment among rural residents. The researchers argued that access to digital financial services enables households to accumulate savings, access credit facilities, diversify sources of income, and withstand economic shocks. They further emphasized that digital financial inclusion strengthens household resilience by providing opportunities for financial planning and investment. The outcome of the present study corroborates these conclusions by demonstrating that rural dwellers perceive digital financial services as important tools for improving their economic well-being. Similarly, Omenihu et al. (2024) found that financial inclusion contributes to poverty reduction through improved access, usage, and quality of financial services. According to the authors, households that have access to reliable and affordable financial services experience higher levels of economic security and improved living standards. They argued that financial inclusion enables individuals to participate more actively in economic activities and reduces their vulnerability to poverty. The present study supports this position by showing that digital financial inclusion has become a critical factor in promoting socio-economic development among rural populations.

The findings further revealed that mobile banking platforms enhance access to financial services among rural communities to a great extent, with a grand mean score of 4.13. This indicates that respondents strongly agreed that mobile banking platforms have improved their ability to perform financial transactions, transfer funds, save money, receive payments, and access financial services without the need to visit traditional banking institutions. The finding suggests that mobile banking has become an effective solution to the longstanding problem of inadequate banking infrastructure in rural areas. By eliminating geographical barriers and reducing transaction costs, mobile banking has expanded financial access to previously underserved populations. This finding supports the observations of Olayiwola and Fasoye (2026), who described mobile banking as a transformative financial innovation capable of addressing financial exclusion among rural populations. The authors noted that mobile banking provides affordable, convenient, and accessible financial services to individuals who were previously excluded from formal banking systems. Their study revealed that mobile banking significantly improves financial accessibility by enabling users to conduct transactions remotely through mobile devices. The present study confirms this position by demonstrating that rural residents perceive mobile banking as a vital channel for accessing financial services. The finding is also in agreement with Akinde and Saka (2026), who examined mobile money penetration among Nigerian telecommunication companies and found that mobile banking services significantly enhance financial inclusion among underserved populations. According to the researchers, mobile money platforms facilitate access to financial services by providing users with simple, secure, and cost-effective transaction channels. They argued that increased adoption of mobile banking technologies contributes significantly to financial participation among marginalized groups. The outcome of this study aligns with their findings and highlights the effectiveness of mobile banking platforms in expanding financial access within rural communities. Furthermore, the result corroborates the study conducted by

Akinjare, Obabueki, and Omankhanlen (2026), who established a significant relationship between mobile account ownership and financial inclusion in Nigeria. The authors observed that technology-driven financial services enable individuals to access financial products regardless of location, thereby increasing participation in the formal financial sector. Their findings suggest that mobile banking technologies have become indispensable tools for promoting financial accessibility and economic development. The present study provides additional evidence supporting this argument by revealing the substantial contribution of mobile banking platforms to financial service accessibility among rural populations. The hypothesis tested in this study revealed a strong and statistically significant relationship between mobile banking platforms and poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria ($r = 0.742$, $p < 0.05$). The correlation coefficient indicates a strong positive association between the two variables, suggesting that increased utilization of mobile banking services is associated with greater poverty reduction among rural households. The implication of this finding is that mobile banking platforms not only improve access to financial services but also contribute directly to economic empowerment, income generation, savings mobilization, and improved living standards. This finding is consistent with the work of Abdullahi and Muhammad (2025), who found that digital financial services significantly enhance trade activities, credit accessibility, and rural economic development in Northwestern Nigeria. The researchers argued that mobile banking platforms facilitate business transactions, improve market participation, and enable rural entrepreneurs to access financial resources needed for business expansion. They concluded that digital financial services play a significant role in promoting economic development and reducing poverty. The present study supports this conclusion by demonstrating a strong relationship between mobile banking utilization and poverty alleviation. The finding also agrees with Adegboyega (2024), who reported that financial inclusion positively influences rural productivity, agricultural development, and poverty reduction. According to the author, access to financial services enables rural households to invest in productive ventures, improve agricultural output, and generate higher incomes. The study emphasized that financial inclusion serves as a catalyst for rural transformation and sustainable economic development. The current finding reinforces this perspective by showing that mobile banking platforms contribute significantly to poverty reduction among rural residents. In addition, Mallum (2026) established a long-run positive relationship between financial inclusion and economic development in Northern Nigeria. The study revealed that mobile money adoption contributes significantly to employment generation, household income growth, and poverty reduction. The author argued that increased financial participation stimulates economic activities and creates opportunities for sustainable development. The result of the present study lends further support to this assertion by demonstrating that mobile banking platforms have a meaningful impact on poverty alleviation and rural economic development.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the role of digital financial inclusion in poverty alleviation with particular emphasis on assessing how mobile banking platforms drive rural economic development in Nigeria. The study was motivated by the persistent challenges of poverty, financial exclusion, limited access to formal banking services, and inadequate economic opportunities confronting many rural communities across the country. Despite numerous poverty reduction initiatives introduced by governments and development agencies, a significant proportion of rural dwellers continue to experience low income, poor access to financial services, and limited participation in formal economic activities. Consequently, the study sought to determine whether digital financial inclusion and mobile banking platforms can serve as effective mechanisms for improving financial access, reducing poverty, and stimulating rural economic growth. Based on the findings of the study, it was established that digital financial inclusion has a significant positive effect on poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria. The findings demonstrated that access to digital financial services enables rural households to participate more actively in economic activities,

improve their savings culture, access financial resources, and enhance their overall welfare. Digital financial inclusion was found to provide opportunities for previously excluded populations to engage with formal financial systems, thereby promoting economic empowerment and reducing vulnerability to poverty. The study further revealed that mobile banking platforms significantly enhance access to financial services among rural communities. The findings showed that mobile banking has reduced geographical barriers associated with traditional banking services by enabling users to conduct financial transactions conveniently through mobile devices. Rural residents can now transfer funds, receive payments, save money, purchase goods and services, and access certain financial products without travelling long distances to physical bank branches. This development has contributed significantly to increasing financial participation among rural populations.

The study also established that there is a strong and statistically significant relationship between mobile banking platforms and poverty alleviation among rural dwellers in Nigeria. The correlation analysis indicated that increased utilization of mobile banking services is associated with improvements in household income, savings mobilization, access to credit facilities, entrepreneurial activities, and overall economic well-being. This finding suggests that mobile banking platforms have become important instruments for promoting inclusive economic development and reducing poverty within rural communities. The study confirmed that mobile banking platforms facilitate entrepreneurship and income-generating activities among rural residents. Through improved access to financial services, rural entrepreneurs are able to obtain capital, receive payments, expand business operations, and participate more effectively in local and regional markets. This has positive implications for employment generation, agricultural productivity, business growth, and sustainable rural development. The findings also support the assumptions of the Innovation Diffusion Theory and the Financial Intermediation Theory. The Innovation Diffusion Theory explains how technological innovations such as mobile banking spread among users and influence behavioral changes, while the Financial Intermediation Theory emphasizes the role of financial institutions in connecting savers and borrowers to promote economic development. The study demonstrated that mobile banking platforms perform important intermediation functions by connecting rural populations to formal financial services and enabling them to benefit from financial opportunities previously unavailable to them.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), should intensify efforts to expand digital financial inclusion initiatives in rural communities by promoting policies that encourage the adoption and utilization of mobile banking platforms among rural populations.
2. Financial institutions should increase investments in digital banking infrastructure, particularly in underserved rural areas, to ensure that rural residents have reliable access to mobile banking services and other digital financial products.
3. Telecommunication companies should collaborate with financial institutions to improve network coverage, internet connectivity, and mobile service quality in rural communities. Improved digital infrastructure will enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of mobile banking services.
4. Banks and financial technology (FinTech) companies should design affordable, user-friendly, and localized mobile banking applications that cater specifically to the needs of rural dwellers, including individuals with limited literacy and technological skills.
5. Government agencies, financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations should organize financial literacy and digital literacy programs to educate rural residents on the benefits, operation, security, and effective utilization of mobile banking platforms and other digital financial services.

6. Financial institutions should develop innovative credit products and microfinance services accessible through mobile banking platforms to enable rural farmers, traders, artisans, and entrepreneurs to obtain affordable loans for productive investments.



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