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DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract :

This research investigated demographic determinants of labour market participation in Nigeria. The specific objectives were to investigate the effects of age distribution, marital status, gender on labour market participation in Nigeria. Also, the study sought to determine the extent to which socio-economic factors (income level, education, occupation, size of household and geographic location) affects labour market participation in Nigeria. Data were drawn randomly from residents of five States in South East Nigeria using multi-stage sampling technique. The sample size was 363 drawn from a population of 14,322,000 residents of South East Nigeria. The data were coded in SPSS software and analyzed using multiple regression technique. The findings revealed that age and marital status significantly increased labour market participation in Nigeria while gender had decreasing effect on labour market participation in Nigeria. Education, income level and geographic location were the significant socio-economic determinants of labour market participation in Nigeria. While occupation increased labour market participation though not significantly, household size decreased labour market participation. The study concluded that labour market participation in Nigeria is primarily driven by socio-economic factors such as age distribution, marital status, education, income level, and geographic location. There was no clear evidence of gender-based disparities in labour market participation. The study recommended that Government should create policies that will address the disparities between urban and rural areas by improving infrastructure as well as encourage women participation in labour market.

Keywords: *Demographic Determinants, Age Distribution, Marital Status, Labour Market Participation*

INTRODUCTION

Labour market participation in Nigeria has evolved under the influence of significant demographic changes. According to the **National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)** and **International Labour Organization (ILO),** Nigeria's labour force participation rate (LFPR) among the working-age population (15–64 years) fluctuated between **65–72%** during this period, shaped by population growth, urbanization, and shifts in educational attainment (NBS, 2023; ILO, 2024). The early 1990s followed Nigeria's structural adjustment policies of the late 1980s, which triggered economic restructuring and altered labour demand (Ajakaiye & Jerome, 1999). During this decade, labour market participation rate remained above 70%, with male participation at around 77% and female participation significantly lower at 54% (World Bank, 2001). The age structure was heavily skewed toward younger cohorts, with over 60% of the population under 25 years (United Nations, 2000). Limited educational attainment primary completion rates

were below 50% restricted formal sector absorption, pushing the majority into agriculture and informal urban employment (Okafor, 2011).

Between 2001 and 2010, Nigeria experienced rapid urbanization, rising from 36% urban in 1990 to 49% in 2010 (UN-Habitat, 2010). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme launched in 1999 increased primary and secondary school enrolments, gradually raising the average years of schooling (Udu & Agu, 2019). Labour market participation rate for women improved modestly, narrowing the male–female gap by around 4 percentage points (ILO, 2010). The proportion of working-age adults with at least secondary education grew from 24% in 2000 to 34% in 2010, correlating with increased participation in services and trade sectors (Ogunrinola, 2020).

The 2010s saw Nigeria's population exceed 180 million, with a youth bulge over 40% of the working-age population was aged 15–34 (NBS, 2018). Labour market participation rate averaged 69%, but youth unemployment and underemployment rose sharply, reaching a combined 42% in 2018 (NBS, 2018). Gender disparities persisted, especially in rural areas where female participation was constrained by cultural norms and domestic responsibilities (Olawale & Adebayo, 2017). Educational attainment improved further, yet mismatches between skills and labour market demand limited gains in formal employment.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 disrupted labour markets globally, and Nigeria's labour market participation rate dropped to 66% in 2020 from 70% in 2019 (NBS, 2021). Sectors such as hospitality, manufacturing, and informal retail were hardest hit, disproportionately affecting women and younger workers (Akinbami et al., 2022). The post-pandemic recovery was uneven, with digital economy jobs and remote work expanding for educated urban youth, while rural and less-educated workers faced slower reintegration (ILO, 2023). By 2024, labour market participation rate rebounded to 68%, but structural inequalities in access to quality employment persisted. Given the trajectory of demographic distribution and labour market participation in Nigeria, it has become necessary to carry out empirical analysis of the relationship between the variables.

Labour market participation is a vital measure of economic inclusion and productivity, yet in South East Nigeria, participation patterns are shaped and often constrained by complex demographic dynamics. Despite the region's high literacy rates and dense urban–rural linkages, disparities persist along age, education, gender, income, marital status, household size, occupation, and geographic location (Anyanwu, 2022).

The age structure in South East Nigeria is dominated by a youthful working-age population, but graduate unemployment and underemployment remain alarmingly high, especially among those aged 15–34 (NBS, 2023). Education, while being generally more accessible than in some other regions, does not always translate into commensurate job opportunities, with many tertiary graduates facing skill–job mismatches (Okoye & Ezejiofor, 2020). Gender gaps endure, as women particularly in rural communities experience lower participation in formal employment due to cultural norms, unequal access to capital, and concentration in low-paying informal sectors (Ezeh & Nwachukwu,

2018).

Income levels and marital status also shape participation decisions. Low-income earners are more likely to engage in subsistence agriculture or informal trading, while married women often face the dual burden of household care and economic activity, reducing their engagement in more stable, higher-paying jobs (Ike, 2017). Larger household sizes can create both economic necessity for multiple earners and logistical challenges that reduce formal labour participation, especially for women (Chikezie & Onwubuya, 2021).

Occupational distribution in the South East remains polarized: urban centres such as Enugu and Onitsha offer expanding opportunities in trade, services, and small-scale manufacturing, while rural and semi-urban areas remain dominated by low-productivity agriculture and artisanal work (Anyanwu, 2022). Geographic disparities are further compounded by infrastructure gaps, inadequate transport links, and limited industrial clusters outside major cities.

Without targeted labour policies that address these demographic disparities, South East Nigeria risks underutilizing its human capital and missing the potential of its relatively educated population. Bridging these gaps through research is essential for promoting inclusive growth, reducing poverty, and harnessing the demographic dividend in Nigeria with a view to increasing labour market participation.

The main objective is to ascertain the demographic determinants of labour market participation in Nigeria using South East Nigeria as case study. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Investigate the effect of age distribution on labour market participation in Nigeria;
2. Analyze the effect of marital status on labour market participation in Nigeria;
3. Ascertain how gender distribution affects labour market participation in Nigeria;
4. Determine the extent to which socio-economic factors (income level, education, occupation, size of household and geographic location) affects labour market participation in Nigeria

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of age distribution on labour market participation in Nigeria?
2. What is the effect of marital status on labour market participation in Nigeria?
3. How does gender distribution affect labour market participation in Nigeria?
4. To what extent has socio-economic factors (income level, education, occupation, size of household and geographic location) affected labour market participation in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant effect of age distribution on labour market participation in Nigeria.

H_{02}: There is no significant effect of marital status on labour market participation in Nigeria.

H_{03}: Gender has no significant effect on labour market participation in Nigeria.

H_{04}: Socio-economic variables (income level, education, occupation, size of household and geographic location) have no significant effect on labour market participation in Nigeria.

This study focuses on examining the influence of selected demographic variables on labour market participation in Nigeria. The demographic variables include age, marital status, and gender, which are considered critical in shaping individual labour market decisions and opportunities. The socio-economic variables examined are income level, educational attainment, occupation, household size and geographic location. Geographically, the study is bounded to South East Nigeria and it focuses on data within the year 2025 since it is a survey study.

This study holds both academic and practical relevance in understanding the demographic determinants of labour market participation in Nigeria.

First, the research will contribute to the academic literature by providing empirical evidence on how age, marital status, and gender alongside income level, education, occupation, and household size interact to shape labour market outcomes in South East Nigeria. While existing studies often address these factors individually, this study's integrated approach offers a more holistic view, thereby enriching labour economics and development studies scholarship.

Second, the findings will offer policy implications for government agencies, particularly in designing targeted employment strategies and social protection programs. By identifying demographic groups that are underrepresented or disadvantaged in the labour market, policymakers can tailor interventions such as skills training, childcare support, or gender-responsive labour policies to improve participation rates.

Third, the study will benefit non-governmental organizations, development partners, and labour unions by providing evidence-based insights for advocacy and program design.

Finally, the study is positioned to enhance labour market efficiency, promote equitable participation, and contribute to socio-economic development in the region in particular and Nigeria in general.

Literature Review

Conceptual Literature Review

Labour market participation is a fundamental indicator of economic engagement, reflecting the proportion of the working-age population that is either employed or actively seeking work. In the Nigerian context, particularly in its regional subdivisions, participation is influenced by a complex interplay of demographic and socio-economic factors (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS],

2023).

Age is a primary determinant of labour supply, with participation rates typically increasing from late adolescence, peaking in mid-adulthood, and declining towards retirement age (Okonkwo & Okoye, 2018). Young adults often face structural barriers, including limited job opportunities and skills mismatches, while older workers may withdraw from active participation due to health constraints or retirement norms.

Gender remains a significant variable, as socio-cultural expectations, household responsibilities, and discriminatory hiring practices often limit women's access to formal employment. In Nigeria, female labour force participation rates are consistently lower than those of males, with the gap widening in rural areas (Adebayo & Olayemi, 2020).

Marital status influences participation patterns through its association with household roles and responsibilities. Married women, in particular, may experience reduced labour market engagement due to childcare and domestic obligations (Ogunleye & Olapade, 2019). Conversely, married men often exhibit higher participation rates, partly due to societal expectations as primary breadwinners.

Among the socio-economic determinants, income level plays a dual role: low-income households may increase participation through necessity, especially in informal sectors, while higher-income individuals may have the resources to withdraw temporarily from the labour market for education or personal reasons (Ezeh & Nwachukwu, 2018).

Education is consistently identified as a strong predictor of labour market participation and quality of employment. Higher educational attainment increases employability and access to better-paying, formal sector jobs, although graduate unemployment remains a pressing concern in Nigeria (Anyanwu, 2022).

Occupation type also reflects socio-economic positioning. Formal sector employment tends to offer more stability, social protection, and higher wages than informal work, which dominates much of Nigeria's economy (Ike, 2017).

Household size affects participation through dependency ratios—larger households may necessitate multiple earners, but childcare responsibilities may simultaneously reduce the capacity of some members, especially women, to participate in paid work (Chikezie & Onwubuya, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Labour market participation can be examined through human capital theory, which posits that individuals' education, skills, and experience increase their productivity and earning potential (Becker, 1993). In the context of Nigeria, this theory provides a framework for understanding how demographic variables (age, gender, marital status) and socio-economic variables (income, education, occupation, household size) influence employment outcomes. For instance, higher educational attainment equips individuals with market-relevant skills, increasing their chances of securing formal sector jobs with better remuneration. Similarly, occupational specialization resulting from training or work experience

can enhance productivity and lead to higher labour force retention. Integrating these perspectives within the Nigerian socio-economic context reveals how demographic and socio-economic variables jointly influence labour supply decisions and employment outcomes.

Empirical Review

Eneji, Mai-Lafia, and Weiping (2013) studied the socioeconomic impact of graduate unemployment on Nigeria and the vision 20:2020. Variables used were education level, gender, age, income level. Method of Analysis was Descriptive statistics and logistic regression on NBS Labour Force Survey data. Findings revealed that education strongly influenced labour market participation, with tertiary graduates more likely to secure formal employment. Gender disparities persisted, with socio-cultural barriers limiting women's participation.

Oluwatobi and Ogunrinola (2011) investigated the effect of government expenditure on human capital development: Implications for economic growth in Nigeria. Variables used were household size, marital status, gender, income level. Method of Analysis was multiple regression using national household survey data. Findings revealed that married women had lower participation rates than unmarried women. Larger households had higher participation due to economic necessity, especially in low-income groups.

The study of Oladipo and Fabiyi (2015) analyzed the determinants of informal sector employment in Nigeria. Variables used were geographic location (urban/rural), occupation type, education level. Method of Analysis was binary logistic regression on Nigeria General Household Survey data. Findings revealed that urban residents were more likely to participate in the labour market due to greater job opportunities, while rural dwellers were predominantly in informal or agricultural employment.

Amoo *et al.* (2019) investigated the nexus between gender inequality and labour market participation in Nigeria. Gender, education level, occupation, household size were the variables used. Chi-square tests and multivariate regression were used to analyze the survey data collected from across South West and South East Nigeria. Findings revealed that education reduced gender gaps in participation, but cultural and household constraints still limited women's entry into certain sectors.

Eze and Okonkwo (2021) studied rural labour market participation and livelihood outcomes in South East Nigeria Variables used were geographic location (rural), education, occupation, household size. Method of Analysis was Descriptive statistics and regression analysis on South East rural labour data. Findings revealed that rural isolation and low education levels limited participation in formal markets, pushing households towards subsistence agriculture.

Okeke and Nwachukwu (2025) studied demographic factors and formal labour market engagement in Nigeria: Variables used were age, marital status, gender, education, income level. Method of Analysis was bBinary logistic regression using 2024 Nigerian Labour Force Survey data from the National Bureau of Statistics. Findings showed that age and education remain the

strongest predictors of labour market participation, with older adults (50+) and those with tertiary education showing higher participation rates in formal sectors. Gender gaps persist, particularly in rural employment.

Adediran and Yusuf (2024) did a work on socioeconomic disparities in Nigerian labour market participation. Variables adopted were household size, income, occupation type, geographic location (urban/rural). Data from World Bank–sponsored Nigeria Jobs Diagnostic Survey 2024 were analyzed using Multinomial logistic regression. They found that urban households have greater access to wage employment, while rural large households rely more on informal self-employment. Income level mediates the effect of geographic location on labour market choice.

Ezeh and Chika (2024) analyzed gendered patterns of labour participation in Nigeria. Variables used were gender, marital status, education, occupation. Method of analysis was Panel data regression on Nigeria General Household Panel Survey 2024 data. Findings revealed that education reduces the gender gap in labour market participation, but married women in rural areas remain underrepresented in formal employment.

Onyema and Abdulrahman (2025) modeled the pathways from education to employment in Nigeria. Variables adopted were age, occupation, education, geographic location. Method of data analysis was structural equation modeling and the study used data on 2025 labour market survey data for South East and North Central Nigeria. Findings revealed that geographic location significantly moderates the relationship between education and occupation type, with urban residents benefitting more from education in accessing formal jobs.

Bassey and Ibrahim (2024) carried out a research on household composition and labour market outcomes in Nigeria. Variables used were age, gender, household size, income. Ordered probit regression was used to analyze the data obtained from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics Q3 2024 Labour Force data. They found that household size has a nonlinear effect on participation; moderate household sizes (4–6 members) had higher economic activity rates than very small or large households.

Gap in Literature

Although numerous studies have examined the demographic and socio-economic determinants of labour market participation in Nigeria, significant gaps remain. Most existing works (e.g., Anyanwu, 2022; Okeke & Nwachukwu, 2025) employ national-level datasets that mask regional variations, thereby overlooking the unique demographic and economic characteristics of South East Nigeria.

While variables such as age, gender, education, and income have been consistently identified as predictors of labour force engagement, few studies integrate these with other critical factors like household size, marital status, and geographic location (urban, rural, suburban) in a single analytical framework.

Moreover, the majority of prior research relies heavily on cross-sectional analyses, which, while informative, cannot fully capture the dynamic interplay between demographic changes and labour market trends over time. There is also

a paucity of research exploring how socio-economic variables mediate or moderate the effects of demographic factors, especially within the context of South East Nigeria's mixed formal–informal labour market.

This present study addresses these gaps by providing a region-specific, multi-variable analysis using recent data, thereby offering a nuanced understanding that can inform targeted policy interventions for the South East region.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The choice of this design is informed by the need to systematically collect, analyze, and interpret data from a representative sample of the population in order to examine the relationship between demographic variables (age, marital status, gender) and socio-economic variables (income, education, occupation, household size) as they influence labour market participation. The design allows for both quantitative analysis of trends and patterns, and inferential examination of associations among variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Model Specification

To examine the effect of demographic and socio-economic factors on labour market participation in South East Nigeria, the study adopts a binary logistic regression model, since the dependent variable labour market participation is dichotomous (participates = 1, does not participate = 0). The model is specified as:

$$LMP_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AGE_i + \beta_2 GEND_i + \beta_3 MAR_i + \beta_4 EDU_i + \beta_5 INC_i + \beta_6 OCC_i + \beta_7 HHSZ_i + \beta_8 LOC_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Where:

LMP = Labour Market Participation (1 = participates, 0 = does not participate)
AGE = Age of respondent (years)
GEND = Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)
MAR = Marital status
EDU = Educational attainment (years of schooling or categorical levels)
INC = Monthly/annual income level (₦)
OCC = Occupation type
HHSZ = Household size (number of household members)
LOC = Geographic location (urban = 1, rural = 0, suburban = 2)
β_0 = Intercept
β_1–β_8 = Coefficients of independent variables
ε_i = Error term

Only the dependent variable is represented in logit form, and the model becomes:

$$log\left(\frac{P_i}{1-P_i}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AGE_i + \beta_2 GEND_i + \beta_3 MAR_i + \beta_4 EDU_i + \beta_5 INC_i + \beta_6 OCC_i + \beta_7 HHSZ_i + \beta_8 LOC_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Where P_i is the probability that individual i participates in the labour market.

Population of the Study

The study population comprises residents of the five states in South East

Nigeria — Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo who are within the working-age bracket as defined by the National Bureau of Statistics (15–64 years). According to the 2023 projected population data from the National Population Commission and NBS, South East Nigeria has an estimated 23.1 million residents, with approximately 62% (about 14.322 million) falling within the working-age category (NPC, 2023; NBS, 2023).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for finite populations:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size; N = Population size (14,322,000); e = Margin of error (5% or 0.05)

$$n = \frac{14{,}322{,}000}{1 + 14{,}322{,}000(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{14{,}322{,}000}{35{,}806} = 400$$

Thus, 400 respondents will be selected proportionately across the five states based on their working-age population share. The study will employ a multistage sampling technique:

- **Stage 1:** Stratification by state.
- **Stage 2:** Selection of Local Government Areas (LGAs) through simple random sampling.
- **Stage 3:** Purposive selection of urban, suburban, and rural communities to capture geographic diversity.
- **Stage 4:** Systematic sampling of households, and random selection of respondents within households.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into three sections:

Section A: Demographic data (age, gender, marital status, household size).

Section B: Socio-economic variables (income, education, occupation).

Section C: Labour market participation indicators (employment status, job search activity, type of employment).

The instrument used a combination of close-ended questions and a 5-point Likert scale to measure perceptions and experiences.

Validity of the Instrument

Content validity was ensured by subjecting the questionnaire to expert review by three scholars in Labour Economics and Social Statistics from Imo State University. Feedbacks from the reviews were incorporated to improve question clarity, comprehensiveness, and relevance. Face validity was checked during a pilot test with 20 respondents in Enugu State to identify ambiguous items.

Reliability of the Instrument

The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha. A reliability coefficient for each of the questionnaire sections

was above 0.70 and it was considered acceptable for each section (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The test of reliability was analyzed using SPSS.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher, assisted by trained enumerators fluent in English and local languages, administered the questionnaires in person to maximize response rates. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and their informed consent was obtained. For urban respondents with internet access, an online version of the questionnaire (Google Forms) was used to complement in-person data collection. Data collection lasted for about four weeks.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were coded and entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 26 for analysis. The analysis involved:

Descriptive statistics: Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarize respondents' demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

Inferential statistics**:** Multivariate multiple regression analysis was used to determine the predictive influence of demographic and socio-economic factors on labour market participation. The significance level was *5% or* 0.05 critical value.

Data Presentation, Analysis And Discussion Of Results

Data Presentation

The participants' demographics are summarized in the Table below**.**

Table 4.1: Analysis of Participants' Demographics

Variable	Frequency (n = 363)	Percentage
AGE		
Below 20 years	55	15.2
20-29 years	86	23.7
30-39 years	124	34.2
40-49 years	98	27.0
Above 50 yrs	0	0.0
GENDER		
Male	241	66.4
Female	122	33.6
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	211	58.1
Married	130	35.8
Divorced	22	6.1
Separated	0	0.0
EDUCATION LEVEL		
No Formal Education	15	4.1
Fist School Leaving Certificate	56	15.4
WAEC/NECO/NABTEB	54	14.9
Diploma/OND	22	6.1
B.Sc./HND	183	50.4
Postgraduate Degree	33	9.1

INCOME LEVEL		
Below Minimum Wage	163	44.9
Slightly Above Minimum Wage	138	38.0
High Above Minimum Wage	62	17.1
TYPE OF OCCUPATION		
Business/Trader	144	39.7
Civil/Public Servant	104	28.7
Unemployed	78	21.5
Student	37	10.2
SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD		
Living alone	65	17.9
Living with my Wife only	38	10.5
Living with my Wife and Children	194	53.4
Large household (with grandparents, Aunties, Uncles etc.)	66	18.2
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION		
Rural	114	31.4
Urban	169	46.6
Suburb	80	22.0

Source: Field work (2025)

The bio-data of the respondents shows that 66.4% are male while 33.6% are females. Thus, there were more male participants in the study than female participants. Again, the majority age group that participated in the study are those within the age category of 30-39 years (34.2%). This is closely followed by the age category of 40-49 years with 27% participants. The lowest age category is below 20 years with 15.2% of the participants in this category.

Furthermore, 58.1% are single, 35.8% are married while 50.4% have fist degree qualifications (B.Sc./HND). While 44.9% of the participants earn income below the minimum wage of N70,000, 38% earn slightly above the minimum wage. The respondents comprised mostly of Business/traders who make up 39.7% while civil/public servants made up 28.7% of the participants in the survey. In terms of the household size, majority representing 53.4% live with their wife and children with 46.6% residing in urban settlements.

4.1.2 Presentation of Data on Labour Force Participation Variables

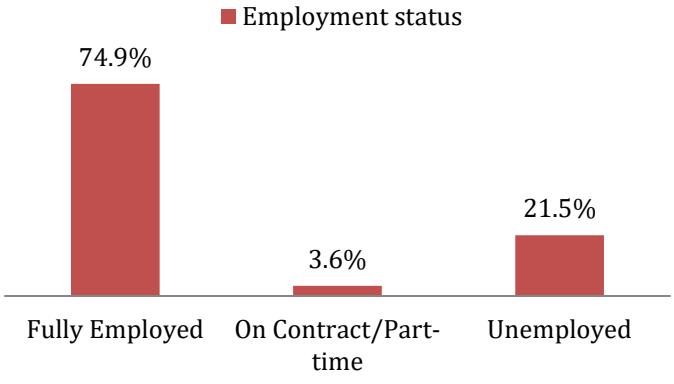

Fig. 4.1: Employment status of the Respondents

Figure 4.1 show that 74.9% of the total participants in the survey are fully employed while 21.5% are unemployed. Also, only 3.6% are employed on contract or part-time basis.

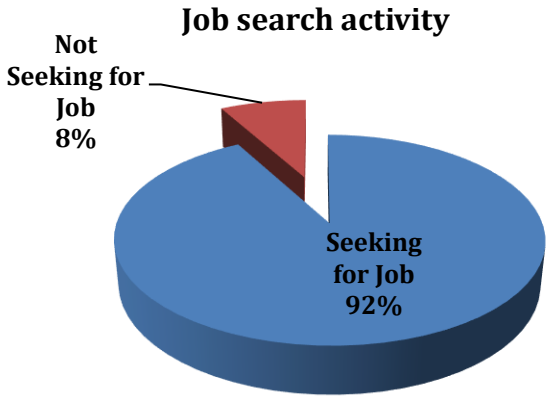

Fig. 4.2: Job Search Activity of the Respondents

Figure 4.2 reveals that 92% of the respondents are actively seeking for job while 8% are not seeking for job. Thus, the respondents displayed an appreciable job seeking activity/behaviour.

Data Analysis

Table 4.2: Summary of the Regression Estimates

Dependent variable: Labour Market Participation (participates = 1, does not participate = 0)

	Coefficient	**Std. Error**	**t-statistic**	**Remark**
Constant	0.536 (0.004)	*0.185*	--	--
Age	0.018 (0.044)	*0.005*	*3.600**	*Positive and Significant*
Gender	-0.018 (0.738)	*0.054*	*-0.333*	*Negative and not significant*
Marital Status	0.023 (0.037)	*0.004*	*5.750**	*Positive and significant*
Education Level	0.078 (0.017)	*0.015*	*5.200**	*Positive and significant*
Income Level	0.099 (0.007)	*0.033*	*3.000**	*Positive and significant*
Current Occupation	0.015 (0.533)	*0.024*	*0.625**	*Positive and significant*
Household Size	-0.044 (0.067)	*0.024*	*-1.833**	*Negative and not significant*
Geographic Location	0.081 (0.013)	0.031	2.613*	*Positive and significant*
Adjusted R-squared	0.805			
F-statistic	5.649			
DW-statistic	1.971			

Source: Extracted from SPSS result

Excerpts from Table 4.2 above indicate that age, marital status, education level, income level, current occupation and geographic location of the participants have positive effect on labour market participation. In other words, these variables increase their level of participation in the labour market. However, age, marital status, education, income and geographic location were the demographic variables that have significant positive effect on labour market participation. Gender and household size exerted negative effects on labour market participation but the negative effects were not statistically significant at 5% level. Collectively, the demographic factors accounted for up to 80.5% of the changes in labour market participation.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypotheses	**t-statistic**	***p-value***	**Decision Rule**
H_{01}: There is no significant effect of age distribution on labour market participation in Nigeria	*3.600*	0.044	Reject H_{01} since *p-value* is less than 0.05 critical value
H_{02}: There is no significant effect of marital status on labour market participation in Nigeria.	*5.750*	0.037	Reject H_{02} since *p-value* is less than 0.05 critical value
H_{03}: Gender has no significant effect on labour market participation in Nigeria	*-0.333*	0.738	Accept H_{03} since *p-value* is greater than 0.05 critical value
H_{04}: The socio-economic variables (income level, education, occupation, size of household and geographic location) have no significant effect on labour market participation in Nigeria.			
• *Education Level*	*5.200*	0.017	Positive and significant effect
• *Income Level*	*3.000*	0.007	Positive and significant effect
• *Current Occupation*	*0.625*	0.533	Positive but not a significant effect
• *Household Size*	*-1.833*	0.067	Negative and not significant effect
• *Geographic Location*	2.613	0.013	Positive and significant effect

Source: SPSS result (See Appendix 1)

The test of hypothesis above reveals that there is significant effect of age distribution on labour market participation in Nigeria (*p=0.044*), there is significant effect of marital status on labour market participation in Nigeria (*p=0.037*), but gender has no significant effect on labour market participation in Nigeria (*p=0.738*). Among the socio-economic factors, education, income and geographic location were the significant socio-economic determinants of labour market participation in Nigeria.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion is centered on the specific objectives of the study. The first objective tried to ascertain the effect of age distribution on labour market participation in Nigeria. The results showed that age increases labour market participation in Nigeria significantly in Nigeria. This implies that the age of an individual is a factor that drives such individual to seek for job and get engaged in order to make ends meet. Thus, given the fact that the participants are mostly in the age category of 20-49 years, it implies that this age category significantly increases labour market participation and so they can be referred to as the active years of labour participation. Okeke and Nwachukwu (2025), Eneji, Mai-Lafia, and Weiping (2013) and Bassey and Ibrahim (2024) also found age to be the strongest predictor of labour market participation in Nigeria.

The second objective analyzed the effect of marital status on labour market participation in Nigeria. The analysis revealed that marital status of the individual significantly influences their decision to participate in the labour market. Since 58% of the respondents are single and 36% are married, it follows that this distribution has strong influence on the decision to participate in the labour market. Thus, one who is married is propelled to seek for employment to cater for his family. On the other hand, a single individual can decide to engage in employment to secure his/her finances. Oluwatobi and Ogunrinola (2011) put this finding in a better perspective by stating that that married women had lower participation rates than unmarried women while Ezeh and Chika (2024) posited that married women in rural areas remain underrepresented in formal employment.

The third objective determined how gender distribution affects labour market participation in Nigeria. The study found that gender decreases labour market participation but not significantly. This implies that belonging to a certain gender (usually female in most labour market studies) is associated with lower probability of participating in the labour force compared to the reference group (often male). This corroborates the work of Amoo *et al*. (2019) who concluded that there is gender gap in labour market participation as female participation has maintained negative consequences on labour market participation. Similarly, Okeke and Nwachukwu (2025) found that gender gaps persist, particularly in rural employment.

The fourth objective determined the extent to which socio-economic factors (income level, education, occupation, size of household and geographic location) affects labour market participation in Nigeria. The result revealed that education, income and geographic location were the significant socio-economic determinants of labour market participation in Nigeria. What this implies is that education level spurs or encourages an individual's decision to engage in employment likewise income level and geographic location. Rural dwellers strive to move to urban areas for greener pastures while urban dwellers search for better employment etc. Onyema and Abdulrahman (2025) made similar finding that geographic location significantly moderates the relationship between education and occupation type, with urban residents benefitting more from education in accessing formal jobs. Okeke and Nwachukwu (2025) also found that education significantly determines participation rates in formal sectors. Oladipo and Fabiyi (2015) also posited that geographic location (urban or rural) significantly affects the decision to participate in the labour market.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

1. There was significant effect of age distribution on labour market participation in Nigeria
2. Marital status significantly increased labour market participation in Nigeria

3. Gender had no significant effect on labour market participation in Nigeria. Also, gender had decreasing effect on labour market participation in Nigeria.
4. Education, income level and geographic location were the significant socio-economic determinants of labour market participation in Nigeria. Occupation increases labour market participation but not significantly while household size decreased labour market participation in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Labour market participation in Nigeria is primarily driven by socio-economic factors such as age distribution, marital status, education, income level, and geographic location. While gender showed a decreasing influence, this effect was not statistically significant, suggesting no clear evidence of gender-based disparities in participation. Occupation type tended to increase participation and larger household sizes reduced it, though these effects were also not significant. Overall, the most consistent predictors are age, marital status, education, income, and location.

Recommendations

1. Since education significantly boosts labour market participation, expanding access to quality formal and vocational training will equip more Nigerians especially youth and women with employable skills.
2. Addressing the disparities between urban and rural areas is paramount. This can be done by improving infrastructure, transportation, and job creation initiatives in underserved regions to enhance equal labour force participation.
3. Government should create policies and incentives for both younger entrants and older workers to remain active in the labour market, such as flexible work arrangements and retraining programs.
4. The Nigerian government should provide affordable childcare, family support programs, and flexible work options to reduce the negative impact of larger household sizes on participation.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study adds to the body of knowledge on labour market dynamics in Nigeria by empirically demonstrating that socio-economic factors particularly age distribution, marital status, education, income level, and geographic location are the strongest determinants of labour market participation. While gender showed a decreasing effect, its lack of statistical significance challenges common assumptions of gender-based disparities in labour force engagement in Nigeria. The findings also reveal that occupation type and household size influence participation trends, albeit insignificantly, highlighting the need for further investigation into structural and cultural factors underlying these patterns.

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