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*Research Article*

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# Performance and Challenges of Private Plant Nursery Enterprises in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis, Ekiti State

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**ABSTRACT**

**Private nurseries are crucial for raising seedlings for agricultural, forestry, and urban beautification purposes, while also contributing to employment generation and economic development. This study assesses the operations, profitability, and challenges of private plant nursery enterprises in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Using a structured questionnaire and personal observations, data were collected from 20 nursery operators selected through a multistage purposive sampling technique. The results revealed that most (85%) of the respondents operate all-purpose nurseries, cultivating both indigenous and exotic plant species. The majority (80%) of nursery operators operate full-time, relying on personal savings (50%) and bank loans (25%) as their primary sources of investment. Findings from the study also indicated that private plant nurseries are highly profitable, with most operators (55%) generating over ₦150,000 per month. The study identified several challenges, including inadequate access to quality seeds and seedlings, transportation difficulties, limited financial resources, and pests and disease problems. The study recommends improved access to quality seeds, financial support through low-interest loans, enhanced transportation infrastructure, adoption of integrated pest management strategies, and government intervention through favorable policies and support programs.**

**Keywords:** Performance, Challenges, Private Plant Nursery, Enterprises, Ado-Ekiti Metropolis.

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## Introduction

Private plant nursery enterprises involve the propagation, cultivation, and sale of seedlings, ornamental plants, fruit trees, and other planting materials for commercial, agricultural, and environmental purposes. In Nigeria, these small- and medium-scale businesses play a vital role in supporting agroforestry, horticulture, reforestation, and urban landscaping [1]. They contribute to self-employment, income generation, and the supply of quality planting stock to farmers and institutions.

Nurseries are essential in producing diverse plant species for environmental conservation and urban landscape development [2]. Globally and in Nigeria, the growing awareness of climate change, urban greening, and biodiversity conservation has increased the demand for seedlings. Consequently, private nursery enterprises now play a strategic role in bridging the gap between plant production and end users, including farmers, government agencies, landscapers, and households.

For successful nursery management, certain environmental and technical conditions must be met, including adequate moisture, fertile soil, viable seeds, and appropriate climatic conditions [3]. Private nursery enterprises are favoured by low entry barriers, making them attractive to entrepreneurs. Many operators acquire skills informally or through prior exposure before establishing their businesses.

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Evidence suggests that about 90% of nursery operators in Nigeria had prior knowledge of seedling production before venturing into the enterprise [4].

Nursery establishments are generally classified as private or public based on ownership, size, and primary objectives. A key distinction between these two types lies in their profit orientation; private nurseries prioritize profit maximization, whereas public nurseries focus on serving the welfare of the general populace [5].

In addition to profitability, nursery enterprises contribute significantly to employment generation and income diversification. Many individuals engage in nursery operations as a means of self-employment and livelihood. Studies have shown that the nursery business serves as an important source of income and helps reduce the poverty levels among operators [4]. Nursery enterprises also provide income for essential household needs such as education, healthcare and food [6].

In urban areas, nursery enterprises contribute to improving environmental quality by enhancing air purification, reducing urban heat island effects, and increasing biodiversity. In Ekiti State, studies have shown that trees, shrubs and ornamental plants are widely used for amenity purposes in public places such as schools, hospitals, and markets, providing both aesthetic and ecological benefits [7].

The relevance of private plant nursery enterprises is closely linked to the city's rapid urbanization and increasing demand for environmental services. As the administrative and economic hub of Ekiti State, Ado-Ekiti is experiencing infrastructure development, which has increased the demand for landscaping and urban greening. Private nursery enterprises in the metropolis have the potential to support sustainable urban development by supplying seedlings for tree planting initiatives and environmental restoration projects.

However, there is a notable gap in empirical studies focusing specifically on nursery enterprises in Ado-Ekiti. Most existing research has been conducted in larger cities such as Lagos, leaving a need for localized studies to understand better the dynamics of nursery enterprises in smaller urban centres. This study seeks to address these gaps by assessing the current state of private nursery enterprises in Ado Metropolis, identifying the key challenges they face, and proposing strategies to enhance their productivity and sustainability.

## Methodology

### Study Area

The research was conducted in Ado-Ekiti metropolis, the capital of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Ado-Ekiti metropolis is a rapidly growing urban center known for its agricultural activities. Ado Ekiti is one of the most populous cities in Ekiti State, with an estimated population of over 400,000 people according to the 2022 National Population Commission report. The population is diverse, comprising various ethnic groups, with the Yorubas being the predominant ethnic group. The city has experienced rapid population growth over the years due to urbanization and the influx of people from surrounding towns and villages seeking better economic opportunities, education, and social amenities.

Ado-Ekiti is located in the southwestern region of Nigeria and situated at an elevation of about 455 meters above sea level and is positioned between latitudes 070 18' and 070 30' N and longitudes 050 05' and 050 25' E. The climate is of the West African monsoon type with dry and wet seasons. The wet or rainy season normally runs from late March to October with occasional strong winds and thunderstorms, usually at the onset and end of the season. The dry season normally starts from November to March, and the Harmattan's cold wind characterizes it. The topography is hilly, with many hills of various sizes surrounding the town. The annual rainfall ranged from 1,200 mm to 1,500 mm. Temperature ranges from 210C to 320C throughout the year. The annual average relative humidity is about 90% at 7.00 am and 65% at 4.00 pm.

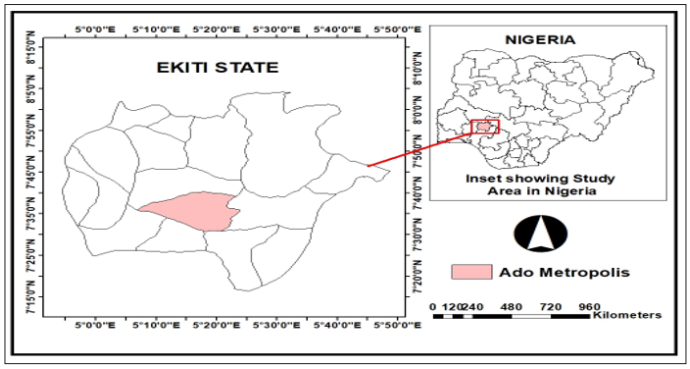


**Figure 1:** Map of Ekiti State showing Ado-Ekiti

### Sampling Techniques

The study used a multistage purposive sampling technique. The first stage involved delineating the Ado-Ekiti metropolis into five zones along the major roads, which include Ajilosun-Ikere Road, Odo-Ado-Ijan Road, Secretariat-Ilawe Road, Basiri-Iyin Road, and Adebayo-Iworoko Road. The second stage involved purposive selection of four (4) nursery gardens from each zone, and the nursery owners were interviewed. Consequently, 20 respondents were sampled and used for the study (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Distribution of selected nurseries in the study area.**

| Zones | Selected Nurseries |
|---|---|
| Ajilosun-Ikere Road | Oreofe horticultural garden |
| | Arowosaye flower garden |
| | Fatoyinbo garden |
| | Mujeed horticultural garden |
| Odo-Ado-Ijan Road | Adeleye flower garden |
| | Ipinyonu garden |
| | Oluwafemi flower nursery |
| | Adegbite nursery |
| Secretariat-Ilawe Road | Ajayi horticultural garden |
| | Olowookere flower garden |
| | Adelabu horticultural garden |
| | Emmanuel flower nursery |
| Basiri-Iyin Road | Adeyemo flower nursery |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Abdulkareem garden |
| | Afiz horticultural nursery |
| | Adeyemi flower garden |
| Adebayo-Iworoko Road | Dare nursery |
| | Faluyi horticultural garden |
| | GADEF nursery |
| | Lawrence garden |
| **Total** | **20** |

### Method of Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from the field using a pre-tested structured questionnaire and personal observations. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on the respondents' socio-economic characteristics, species of plant raised, tending operations, marketing, and challenges. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, i.e., frequency tables, percentage distributions, and charts.

## Results

### Demographic Information of the Respondents

Table 2 presents the results on the respondents' age, gender, educational level, marital status, household size, and religious affiliations in the study area. The results showed that the majority of respondents (55 %) are within the age bracket of 31–40 years, followed by the age bracket 41–50 years (30 %), while 15 % are aged 51 and above. The results showed that 75% of the respondents were male, and 25% were female. The respondent's educational background revealed that 90% had a tertiary education, while 10% had a secondary education. The majority (85%) of the respondents are married, 10% are single, and 5% are widows. The result on household size distribution reveals that the majority (75%) of respondents have a household size of 4–7 members, while 20% have ≤ 3 members and 5% have eight or more members. The results on religion showed that 85% of the respondents are Christians, while 15% practice Islamic religion.

**Table 2: Demographic information of the respondents**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Age** | | |
| Below 30 | 0 | 0 |
| 31–40 | 11 | 55 |
| 41–50 | 6 | 30 |
| 51 and above | 3 | 15 |
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 15 | 75 |
| Female | 5 | 25 |
| **Level of Education** | | |
| None | 0 | 0 |
| Primary | 0 | 0 |
| Secondary | 2 | 10 |
| Above Secondary | 18 | 90 |
| **Marital Status** | | |
| Single | 2 | 10 |
| Married | 17 | 85 |
| Divorced | 0 | 0 |
| Widowed | 1 | 5 |
| **Household Size** | | |
| ≤ 3 | 4 | 20 |
| 4-7 | 15 | 75 |
| ≥ 8 | 1 | 5 |
| **Religion** | | |
| Christian | 17 | 85 |
| Islamic | 3 | 15 |
| Traditional | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **20** | **100** |

### Nursery Operations

Table 3 shows that quite a number of the respondents (45%) have been in the nursery business for 6–10 years, followed by 25% each for those operating for 11–15 years and 16 years or more. Only 5% have been in the business for less than 5 years. The results also showed that 80% of respondents are full-time operators, while 20% operates on a part-time basis. The respondents' scale of operation showed that 75% operate at both subsistence and commercial levels, while 25% operates exclusively on a commercial scale. The results on the type of nursery showed that 85% of the respondents operate all-purpose nurseries, while another 90% of the respondents operate on 1 or fewer acres of land, with only 10 % operating on 2 acres or more (Table 3).

Figure 2 shows that 90% of the respondents cultivate both indigenous and exotic plant varieties, while only 5% focused on planting both indigenous and exotic plants. Results on respondents' sources of water revealed that well water accounted for 75%, boreholes (15%), while streams and other sources accounted for 5% each (Figure 2). The respondents' reasons for involvement in the nursery business showed that the majority (85%) inherited it as a family business, while training and apprenticeship accounted for 10% and 5%, respectively (Table 4). The results in Table 4 also showed that the majority of the respondents (90%) acquired their land through inheritance, while 10% acquired land through purchase. The result further revealed that 80% of the respondents make use of hired labour.

**Table 3: Nursery practices by the respondents**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Year of Experience** | | |
| 0-5 years | 1 | 5 |
| 6-10 years | 9 | 45 |
| 11-15 years | 5 | 25 |
| 16 years and above | 5 | 25 |
| **Level of Engagement** | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Full-time | 16 | 80 |
| Part-time | 4 | 20 |
| **Scale of Nursery Farm** | | |
| Subsistence | 0 | 0 |
| Commercial | 5 | 25 |
| Both | 15 | 75 |
| **Type of Nursery** | | |
| Agriculture | 1 | 5 |
| Forestry | 1 | 5 |
| Horticulture | 1 | 5 |
| All-purpose | 17 | 85 |
| **Size (Area)** | | |
| ≤ 1 Acre | 18 | 90 |
| ≥ 2 Acres | 2 | 10 |
| **Total** | **20** | **100** |

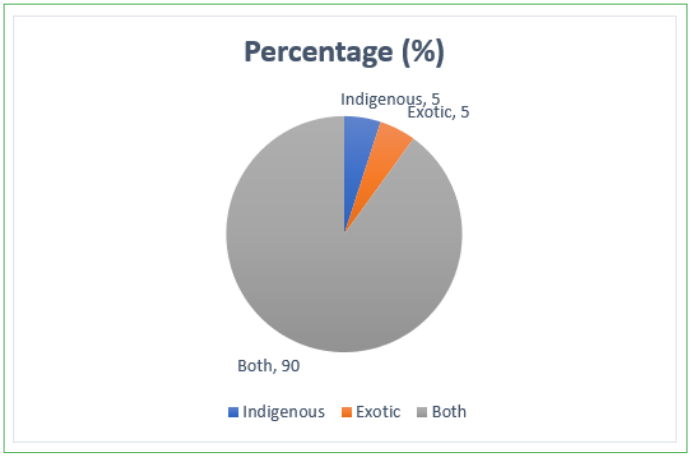


**Figure 2:** Types of plants raised by the respondents

## Species of Seedling Raised and Tending Operations by the Respondents

Table 5 highlights the distribution of various species raised by nursery operators. Orange ranked highest, with 8.16%. Cocoa followed closely with 17.35%, while Madagascar almond accounted for 6.94% and ranked third. Methods of propagation revealed that 60% of the respondents propagate their seedlings by seed, 25% use stem cutting, 10% employ root cutting, while grafting accounted for only 5%. Respondents' tending operations revealed that watering and shading have 26% each, followed by tilling the ground (20.8%) and thinning (18.2%). (Table 6).

Pest control measures revealed that 40% of the respondents use poisoning, and another 22% adopt hand-picking, while 12% of the respondents spray with chemicals (Figure 4).

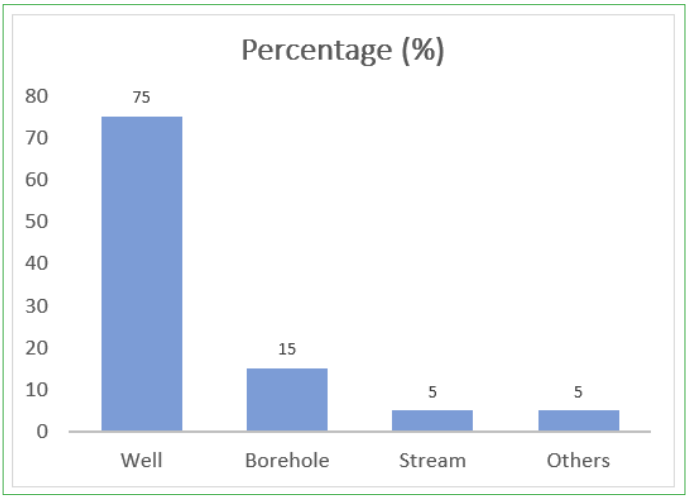


**Figure 3:** Respondents' sources of water

**Table 4: Respondents' level of involvement in nursery business**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Why Get Involved in Nursery?** | | |
| Family business | 17 | 85 |
| Apprenticeship | 1 | 5 |
| Training | 2 | 10 |
| Unemployment | 0 | 0 |
| **Land Acquisition** | | |
| Inheritance | 18 | 90 |
| Gift | 0 | 0 |
| Leasehold | 0 | 0 |
| Purchase | 2 | 10 |
| **Source of Labour** | | |
| Self | 1 | 5 |
| Family | 3 | 15 |
| Hired | 16 | 80 |
| **Total** | **20** | **100** |

**Table 5: Species raised by the respondents**

| Species | Scientific names | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Orange | Citrus sinensis | 20 | 8.16 | 1st |
| Cocoa | Theobroma cacao | 18 | 7.35 | 2nd |
| Madagascar almond | Terminalia mantaly | 17 | 6.94 | 3rd |
| Mango | Mangifera indica | 16 | 6.53 | 4th |
| Traveller palm | Ravenala madagascarensis | 15 | 6.12 | 5th |
| Rain Tree | Samanea saman | 15 | 6.12 | 5th |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Oil Palm | Elaeis guineensis | 12 | 4.90 | 6th |
| Coconut | Cocos nucifera | 12 | 4.90 | 6th |
| Hoop pine | Araucaria cunninghamii | 11 | 4.49 | 7th |
| Tropical Almond | Terminalia catappa | 10 | 4.08 | 8th |
| Dwarf apple | Angophora hispida | 10 | 4.08 | 8th |
| Breadfruits | Artocarpus altilis | 10 | 4.08 | 8th |
| Teak | Tectona grandis | 10 | 4.08 | 8th |
| Cashew | Anacardium occidentale | 9 | 3.67 | 9th |
| Lemon | Citrus limon | 9 | 3.67 | 9th |
| Pawpaw | Carica papaya | 9 | 3.67 | 9th |
| Guava | Psidium guajava | 8 | 3.27 | 10th |
| Afara | Terminalia superba | 8 | 3.27 | 10th |
| Gmelina | Gmelina arborea | 8 | 3.27 | 10th |
| Tangerine | Citrus reticulate | 7 | 2.86 | 11th |
| Parlour palm | Chamaedorea elegans | 6 | 2.45 | 12th |
| African Pear | Dacryodes edulis | 5 | 2.04 | 13th |
| Lime | Citrus aurantifolia | 3 | 1.95 | 14th |
| Flamboyant tree | Delonix regia | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Eucalyptus | Eucalyptus spp. | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Yellow elder | Tecoma stans | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Jasmine flower | Jasminum officinale | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| African Locust Bean | Parkia biglobosa | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Marigold flower | Tagetes | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Garden croton | Codiaeum variegatum | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Cactus / Cacti | Cactaceae | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Jackfruit | Artocarpus heterophyllus | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Kola Nuts | Cola nitida | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| African Oil Bean | Pentaclethra macrophylla | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Avocado | Persea Americana | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Crown of thorns flower | Euphorbia milii | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Turmeric | Curcuma longa | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Neem | Azadirachta indica | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Moringa | Moringa oleifera | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| African Star Apple | Chrysophyllum albidum | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Soursop | Annona muricata | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Cherimoya | Annona cherimola | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| African Tulip Tree | Spathodea campanulate | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Passion Fruit | Passiflora edulis | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Hibiscus flower | Hibiscus rosa –sinensis | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Snake plant | Dracaena trifasciata | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Golden palm | Chrysalidocarpus lutesens | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Peacock plant | Calathea makoyana | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| Tamarind | Tamarindus indica | 3 | 1.95 | 14 |
| **Total** | | **311*** | **100** | |

***Multiple responses**

**Table 6: Tending operations by the respondents**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Propagation Methods** | | |
| Seed | 12 | 60 |
| Stem cutting | 5 | 25 |
| Root cutting | 2 | 10 |
| Grafting | 1 | 5 |
| **Total** | **20** | **100** |
| **Tending operations** | | |
| Tilling of the ground | 16 | 20.8 |
| Thinning | 14 | 18.2 |
| Pruning | 5 | 6.4 |
| Watering | 20 | 26 |
| Shading | 20 | 26 |
| Others | 2 | 2.6 |
| **Total** | **77*** | **100** |

*** Multiple responses**

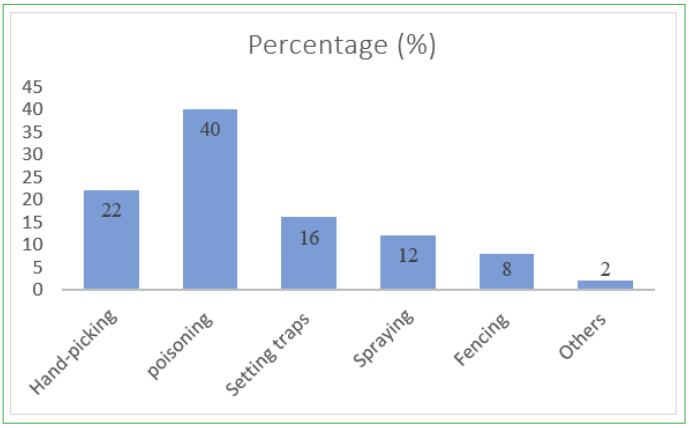


**Figure 4: Pest and insect control**

**Marketing Information and Economic Performance of the Nursery Enterprise**

Table 7 showed that the majority of the respondents (60%) strongly agreed that the nursery business is highly profitable, while 50% agreed that only the rich patronize the business and 40% each strongly agreed and agreed that the nursery business is seasonal. The result showed that 35% of the respondents agreed that the nursery business is a side hustle. Most respondents (55%) earn over ₦150,000 per month from their nursery business, while 70% spend between ₦20,000 and ₦50,000 monthly on maintenance (Table 8). The results in Figure 5 revealed that the majority (50%) of the respondents rely on personal savings for their investment funds. Figure 6 shows that personal marketing (36.4%) was the most popular marketing strategy used by the respondents.

**Table 7: Marketing information of the respondents**

| Variables | SA | A | UD | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nursery business is highly profitable | 12(60%) | 6(30%) | 1(5%) | 1(5%) | 0(0%) |
| Only the rich patronize the business | 4(20%) | 6(30%) | 5(25%) | 3(15%) | 2(10%) |
| Nursery business is seasonal | 8(40%) | 8(40%) | 2(10%) | 2(10%) | 0(0%) |
| Nursery business is city-based | 3(15%) | 4(20%) | 7(35%) | 4(20%) | 2(10%) |
| Nursery business is a side hustle | 6(30%) | 7(35%) | 3(15%) | 2(10%) | 2(10%) |

**SA=Strongly Agreed, A= Agreed, UD= Undecided, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree**

**Table 8: Income and expenditure of the respondents**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Average Sales Per Month** | | |
| < ₦20,000 | 0 | 0 |
| ₦20,000 - ₦50,000 | 0 | 0 |
| ₦51,000 - ₦100,000 | 3 | 15 |
| ₦101,000 - ₦150,000 | 6 | 30 |
| > ₦150,000 | 11 | 55 |
| **Total** | **20** | **100** |
| **Average Monthly Expenditure** | | |
| < ₦20,000 | 2 | 10 |
| ₦20,000- ₦50,000 | 14 | 70 |
| ₦51,000- ₦100,000 | 4 | 20 |
| ₦101,000- ₦150,000 | 0 | 0 |
| > ₦150,000 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **20** | **100** |

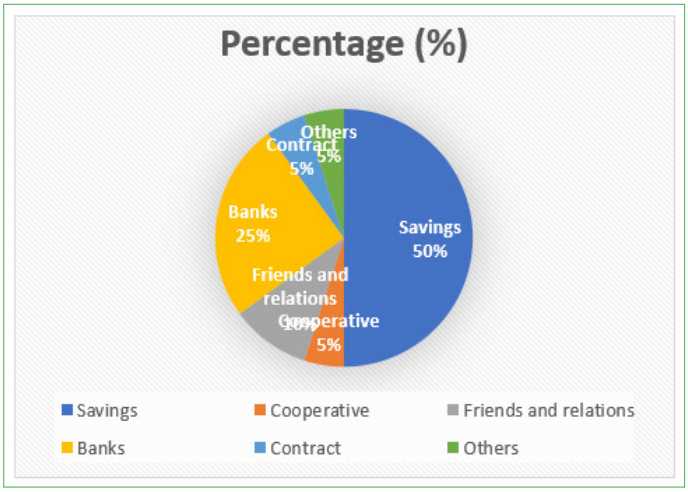


**Figure 5: Source of investment fund by the respondent**

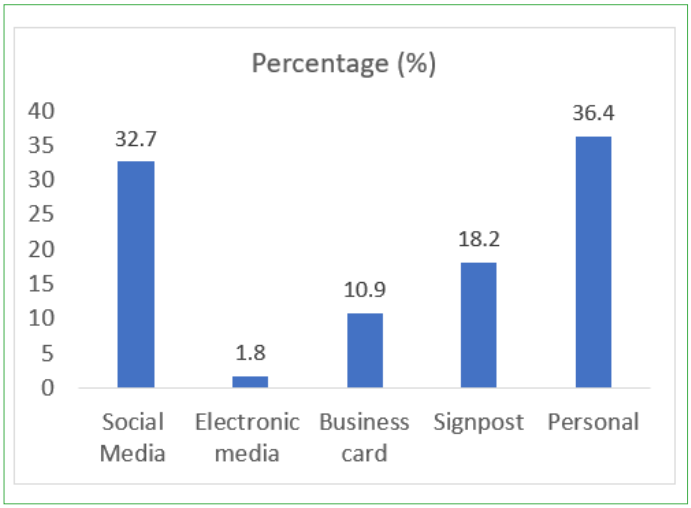


**Figure 6: Marketing methods by the respondents**

## Marketing Problems and Operational Challenges

Table 10 showed that transportation accounted for 50% of the problems encountered, while access to quality seeds for planting material (35%) constitutes the greatest challenge faced by the respondents (Table 9).

**Table 9: Problems and challenges of the respondents**

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Marketing Problems** | | |
| Availability | 2 | 10 |
| Storage | 4 | 20 |
| Poor market structure | 2 | 10 |
| Transportation | 10 | 50 |
| Price fluctuation | 2 | 10 |
| **Total** | **20** | **100** |
| **Operational Challenges** | | |
| Access to quality seeds/ seedlings | 7 | 35 |
| Pests and diseases | 5 | 25 |
| Limited access to finance | 3 | 15 |
| Transportation | 3 | 15 |
| Insecurity | 1 | 5 |
| Theft | 1 | 5 |
| **Total** | **20** | **100** |

## Discussion

The findings in this study revealed that the majority of respondents operate all-purpose nurseries to raise seedlings for agricultural, forestry, and horticultural purposes. The observed interest of the nursery operators in raising both indigenous and exotic species for agricultural, forestry, and horticultural purposes indicates high demand for both categories of plant species by the people in the study area. These results aligned with the submissions of, that nursery operators in South-West Nigeria usually raise different plant seedlings in their nurseries to meet the varied demands of urban and peri-urban residents [8]. Similarly, reported the role of an all-purpose nursery in providing planting stock for farmers and foresters, thereby promoting environmental sustainability and urban beautification in developing regions [9].

The study revealed that the nursery business in the metropolis is a growing enterprise, as most of the nursery owners have operated for 6-10 years at both subsistence and commercial levels on a full-time basis. Although most nursery gardens are operated on a small piece of land, which is usually acquired through inheritance, the study revealed that most operators depend on hired labour for various tending operations, indicating the demanding nature of the enterprise.

The study revealed that most nursery operators market their products through personal interaction with prospective buyers, supported by online marketing through social media, signposts, and business cards. These marketing strategies reflect modern trends in business. This assertion corroborates, who emphasized the growing importance of digital marketing in expanding market reach and enhancing profitability in small-scale enterprises [10]. The study revealed that the respondents' sources of investment were mainly through personal savings and bank loans. This observation corroborates, who reported the role of the banking sector in the development of small-scale enterprises in Nigeria [11].

The observed average monthly sales of over N150,000 by the majority of the respondents suggest that the nursery business is highly profitable, and this could be attributed to high demand for ornamental plants by the rich, who are mostly city dwellers. Mailumo similarly observed significant profitability in small-scale nursery enterprises in North-Central Nigeria [5]. Similarly, reported that nursery businesses generate significant financial returns, with favorable benefit-cost ratios of 2.79, indicating high profitability and investment potential [12].

Nursery owners in the study area faced challenges such as access to quality planting stock, pest and disease management, limited access to finance and transportation problems. It is always difficult for nursery operators to get a vehicle to transport large consignments, such as oil palm, to the farm. This assertion agrees with who identified logistic challenges as primary barriers to growth in agricultural enterprises [13]. The observed limited access to finance by nursery owners in this study is a common trend that significantly affects the growth of small-scale businesses in Nigeria, as most people do not have access to bank loans due to a lack of collateral.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study assessed the operations, performance, and challenges of private plant nursery enterprises in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis, Ekiti State. The findings revealed that private nursery enterprises contributed significantly to economic growth, employment generation, and environmental sustainability. The nursery business is a profitable venture, with operators earning substantial income from the sale of various plant species, including both indigenous and exotic varieties.

Despite the profitability and benefits of private nurseries, several challenges hinder their optimal performance. These

include inadequate access to quality seeds and seedlings, limited financial resources, transportation difficulties, and pest and disease management issues. The study concludes that private plant nurseries are crucial to the agricultural, forestry and environmental sectors, playing a vital role in providing seedlings for reforestation, afforestation, and urban beautification. Addressing the identified challenges will enhance the productivity and sustainability of this enterprise, ultimately leading to increased economic and environmental benefits in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis. Consequently, it is recommended that government and research institutions should collaborate to provide training programs on plant propagation techniques with the aim of enhancing the production of high-quality seeds and seedlings.

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**Plate A = Tectona grandis seedlings (Teak)**

**Plate B= Elaeis guineensis seedlings (Oil Palm)**

**Plate C= The researcher interviewing a nursery owner**

**Plate D= Araucaria columnaris seedlings (Christmas tree)**

**Plate E= Terminalia Superba seedlings.**