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Women-Led Crypto and Sports Betting Groups: New Gender Roles in Digital Hustle Culture

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Abstract
This study investigates the evolving roles of women within cryptocurrency trading and sports betting communities in Nigeria's expanding digital hustle culture. The research examines how women led groups in these high-risk digital economies redefine gender roles, build alternative support networks, and negotiate financial autonomy. Guided by feminist theory, Bourdieu's concept of capital, and digital labor perspectives, the study addresses three core questions: how women led crypto and betting groups operate, what new gender roles are emerging within digital hustle spaces, and what social and economic implications arise from these developments. A mixed methods design was employed, combining surveys, participant observation, and content analysis across major urban centers including Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Delta State. Out of 1,532 questionnaires distributed, 1,486 were completed and returned, enabling a robust quantitative analysis supported by thematic insights. The findings indicate that digital literacy, mentorship access, and leadership participation significantly enhance women's empowerment within digital financial ecosystems. Women led groups function as collective learning hubs, risk sharing communities, and alternative economic networks that challenge traditional gendered exclusions. The study concludes that women are reconfiguring the digital financial landscape by mobilizing cultural, social, and economic capital to assert agency and negotiate new identities within speculative markets. These findings have implications for digital finance policy, gender equity interventions, and future research on intersectional participation in emerging digital economies.

Keywords: Digital hustle culture, women-led groups, cryptocurrency trading, online sports betting,

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital hustle culture has emerged as a defining feature of contemporary

economies, characterised by informal, flexible, and platform-mediated income generation. Its intersection with cryptocurrencies and online sports betting has created alternative financial pathways beyond conventional employment. Within this context, women-led collectives in digital finance and betting communities have become increasingly visible, challenging entrenched gender hierarchies in financial technology and speculative investment cultures. As Loko and Yang (2022) observe, these developments highlight the renegotiation of gendered power relations and the expansion of women's leadership and agency within high-risk digital financial ecosystems.

Over the past decade, digital hustle culture has consolidated into a set of practices encompassing creator entrepreneurship, micro-enterprise, and speculative activities such as cryptocurrency trading and online sports betting. These practices combine digital labour, platform intermediation, and informal monetisation strategies to generate income and social status. Scholars frame this shift as a reconfiguration of work, identity, and economic participation in

the platform era, positioning digital hustle culture as a central concern within digital sociology and political economy.

Despite claims of neutrality in decentralised finance, gender disparities persist across digital financial sectors. Women remain underrepresented in cryptocurrency leadership and technical roles, while their participation in online sports betting is expanding in ways that challenge traditional gender norms. These trends raise critical questions about how women-led cryptocurrency and betting groups form, organise, and exercise leadership. This study examines whether such collectives reproduce existing hierarchies or generate alternative models of economic organisation, thereby illuminating how gender roles and authority are being redefined within digital informal economies.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the operational structures of women led groups in cryptocurrency and sports betting and to analyze the gendered dynamics within them.

Research Questions

From these objectives arise the following research questions:

1. How do women led groups in crypto and sports betting form, organize, and sustain their activities?
2. What new gender identities, roles, and leadership styles are emerging among women active in these digital informal economies?
3. What are the broader social, economic, and cultural consequences of women's involvement in these high-risk online markets?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Hustle Culture

Digital hustle culture has become central to analyses of platform economies and labour informalisation. It refers to income-generating practices that rely on digital infrastructures such as social media, mobile applications, and decentralised finance, often characterised by flexibility and precarity (Heeks, 2017). Within platform capitalism, platforms function as organisational intermediaries that coordinate labour and value while externalising risk to workers (Novianto, 2025). Digital hustle therefore blurs distinctions between work and leisure and encourages entrepreneurial identities that mask insecurity (Mou & Faruk, 2024). As workers are typically classified as independent contractors, they lack formal protections, compelling many to engage in digital hustle out of economic necessity rather than choice (Ticona, 2025).

A defining feature of digital hustle culture is immaterial and affective labour, where value is produced through cognitive work, social interaction, and digital visibility rather than physical goods (Ticona, 2025). Participation often involves high risk, uncertainty, and algorithmically mediated access to opportunities, reinforcing power asymmetries (Masinde & Graffi, 2020). These inequalities are shaped by gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Baraka, 2024; Ho et al., 2025). Although platform narratives frame autonomy and risk as empowering, they frequently obscure structural constraints and labour exploitation (Pilatti et al., 2024). While digital hustle offers vital income opportunities, especially in developing economies, it also intensifies stress, insecurity, and inequality (Assariy et al., 2024; Sharma & Sharma, 2025).

Socio Economic Drivers of Digital Hustle Culture

Digital hustle culture is shaped by the interaction of technological access and structural precarity within contemporary labour markets. Technological democratisation has lowered entry barriers, enabling individuals to monetise skills, networks, and digital content through platforms such as social media, mobile applications, and blockchain systems (Sarfraz et al., 2022). At the same

time, unemployment, underemployment, and contractual instability push individuals towards alternative income strategies. Evidence from Europe shows that gig platforms absorb workers facing systemic disadvantages, often reproducing offline inequalities related to gender, race, and class (Jaydarifard et al., 2023; Alauddin et al., 2025). Beyond economic necessity, participation is sustained by social and cultural incentives, including peer recognition, mentorship, and community-based social capital, positioning digital hustle as both a survival strategy and a cultural practice (Blake-Beard et al., 2021).

Women's positioning within digital hustle culture reflects persistent gendered inequalities alongside emerging opportunities. Despite narratives of platform neutrality, women remain underrepresented in technology and entrepreneurship, facing constraints related to capital access, visibility, and legitimacy (Tunçsiper, 2025). Drawing on Bourdieu's framework, scholars highlight how limited social and cultural capital, reinforced by gender norms, shapes women's trajectories in male-dominated digital spaces. Female digital entrepreneurs often occupy liminal positions, balancing agency with precarity and institutional ambiguity (Shin et al., 2024). To navigate these constraints, women mobilise gendered networks and gender capital, including relational skills and mentorship ties, which function as enabling resources within unequal digital economies (Stoker et al., 2025).

Women's Entrepreneurship in Digital Spaces

Despite systemic barriers, women are increasingly prominent in digital finance, blockchain, and technology mediated entrepreneurial ecosystems. Industry reports document women emerging as investors, developers, and community leaders, actively reshaping norms, promoting inclusion, and challenging historically male dominated spaces (Showkat et al., 2024). This participation demonstrates that women are not merely symbolic actors but substantive contributors to innovation, governance, and community building within digital economies. Nevertheless, structural and socio-cultural factors continue to constrain full participation. Lower risk tolerance, limited access to technical education, and gaps in digital literacy remain significant barriers to engagement in high risk digital ventures (Adamu, 2023). Evidence suggests that targeted interventions such as mentorship programs, specialized training, and supportive networks serve as critical levers to reduce these barriers, enhance capacity, and support sustainable female entrepreneurship within digital labor ecosystems. By strategically mobilizing resources, social networks, and technical skills, women are not only navigating existing inequalities but also actively reshaping the landscape of digital economic participation.

Crypto and Sports Betting: Women's Participation

The emergence of women-led cryptocurrency and sports betting groups represents a significant dimension of contemporary digital hustle culture, illustrating the intersection of gendered economic participation, technological innovation, and financial risk. Interdisciplinary scholarship across digital finance, gender studies, and feminist political economy highlights how these spaces are shaped by both constraint and opportunity. Cryptocurrency markets are frequently portrayed as volatile and male-dominated, often characterised as the "Wild West" of finance, reinforcing heightened scrutiny and marginalisation of women participants (Eckhardt & Glückler, 2025). Nevertheless, feminist political economy perspectives emphasise that decentralised finance (DeFi) and blockchain technologies can function as sites of empowerment. Women possessing technological competence, financial literacy, and social capital may leverage these platforms for income generation and community formation, although participation remains mediated by structural inequalities in access, skills, and capital (Showkat et al., 2025).

Regulatory environments play a crucial role in shaping women's experiences within cryptocurrency and online sports betting ecosystems. While decentralised platforms may

enhance autonomy and financial inclusion, limited regulatory oversight amplifies economic and operational risks, disproportionately affecting women with lower financial security. Feminist critiques caution that women in the Global South are sometimes positioned instrumentally within DeFi, valued primarily for profitability rather than recognised as full economic agents (Hill, 2025). Similarly, digital sports betting platforms offer new entrepreneurial opportunities while reproducing gendered stigma and precarity. Peer networks, mentorship, and collective knowledge-sharing function as vital mechanisms for risk mitigation and agency. Overall, women's participation in these high-risk digital economies reflects intertwined dynamics of empowerment and vulnerability, underscoring the need for gender-sensitive regulation, digital financial education, and supportive community infrastructures.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory provides the primary analytical framework for examining gendered participation in cryptocurrency and sports betting communities. Intersectional feminism, articulated by Crenshaw, emphasises how gender intersects with class, race, age, and technological literacy to shape women's engagement with digital financial platforms (Carastathis, 2014). From this perspective, women's experiences are heterogeneous and mediated by social positioning, access to resources, and exposure to structural barriers within financial and digital systems. Feminist political economy further reveals how technologies presented as inclusive, such as decentralised finance, may reproduce entrenched power hierarchies while framing participation as empowerment (Ojo, 2023). Thus, women's engagement often embodies a paradox of opportunity and heightened exposure to financial risk, marginalisation, and vulnerability.

Materialist feminist theory is also central to this analysis, particularly the work of Christine Delphy, which situates women's economic activity within structural relations of labour, dependency, and social reproduction rather than individual choice (Jackson, 2001). This approach enables an examination of how women-led cryptocurrency and betting groups negotiate both opportunity and precarity within exploitative economic arrangements. Feminist theory is further complemented by Bourdieu's theory of capital, encompassing economic, social, and cultural forms (Tittenbrun, 2015). Although women often face constraints in economic capital, they strategically mobilise social networks, community trust, and digital expertise to accumulate social and cultural capital, which facilitates legitimacy, influence, and participation in digital financial spaces (Kosec et al., 2021).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus further explains how internalised dispositions shape women's navigation of risk, identity, and opportunity within digital financial fields (Akrivou & Di San Giorgio, 2014). Research in technology entrepreneurship demonstrates that mentorship, peer support, and collective learning cultivate habitus that helps women counter gender bias and technological exclusion (Neumeyer et al., 2025; Strawser et al., 2021). Additionally, digital labour and informal economy scholarship reframes women's participation in cryptocurrency and sports betting as labour rather than leisure. Feminist analyses highlight how platform-mediated work generates gendered precarity, surveillance, and undervalued labour (Alauddin et al., 2025; James, 2022). This perspective reveals how women's digital financial activities simultaneously produce value and reproduce inequality.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study employs a mixed methods research design, combining quantitative survey analysis with qualitative techniques, including ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, and digital content analysis. Conducted across four major urban centres in Nigeria—Delta State, Port Harcourt, Lagos, and Abuja—the research sites were purposively chosen for their dynamic

digital economies and dense populations of cryptocurrency traders, sports bettors, and online financial communities. These cities offer a heterogeneous socio-economic and cultural backdrop, facilitating an examination of gendered participation in digital hustles. The study's target population comprised women engaged in cryptocurrency trading, online sports betting, women-led investment groups, and digital finance communities, with male participants included for comparative analysis where relevant.

Given the dispersed and digitally mediated nature of the communities studied, purposive and snowball sampling strategies were adopted. Out of 1,532 questionnaires distributed both physically and digitally, 1,486 were returned, achieving a 97 percent response rate, which underscores the high digital engagement of the population and the effectiveness of the online recruitment methods. A subset of respondents, selected purposively, participated in in-depth interviews and, where appropriate, focus group discussions to ensure diverse representation, particularly of women in leadership, frequent crypto traders, and online financial group administrators. Qualitative data were thematically analysed through systematic coding of transcribed interviews, field notes, and digital content, while quantitative data were assessed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation to reveal demographic patterns and gendered dynamics within digital hustle spaces.

RESULTS

Demographic Information of Respondents

Table.1 presents a detailed breakdown of the respondents' gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, occupation, and geographical location. The demographic data provide insight into the characteristics of the study sample, which in turn informs the interpretation and generalizability of the research outcomes. The survey captured a total of 1,486 responses, with 46 missing entries from the original 1,532 questionnaires distributed, yielding a high response rate of approximately 97%.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 1,486)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	1,149	77.3
	Male	305	20.5
	Prefer not to say	32	2.2
	Missing	46	3.0
Age Group	18–25	502	33.8
	26–35	586	39.4
	36–45	280	18.8
	46+	86	5.8
	Not stated	32	2.2
	Missing	46	3.0
Marital Status	Divorced/Separated	90	6.1
	Married	530	35.7
	Single	798	53.7
	To (unclear)	32	2.2
	Widowed	36	2.4
	Missing	46	3.0
Education	Bachelor	575	38.7
	Diploma/NCE	315	21.2
	Master	271	18.2

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
	Other	31	2.1
	PhD	52	3.5
	Say (unclear)	32	2.2
	Secondary	210	14.1
	Missing	46	3.0
Occupation	18–25 (unclear)	11	0.7
	26–35 (unclear)	14	0.9
	36–45 (unclear)	7	0.5
	Digital	204	13.7
	Other	213	14.3
	Private	197	13.3
	Public	206	13.9
	Self-employed	200	13.5
	Student	214	14.4
	Unemployed	220	14.8
	Missing	46	3.0
Location	Abuja	174	11.7
	Delta	232	15.6
	Divorced/Separated (unclear)	1	0.1
	Entrepreneur (unclear)	204	13.7
	Lagos	272	18.3
	Married (unclear)	10	0.7
	Port	169	11.4
	Sector (unclear)	403	27.1
	Single (unclear)	19	1.3
	Widowed (unclear)	2	0.1
	Missing	46	3.0

The age distribution of respondents reveals a predominance of young adults, with the largest segment being those aged 26–35 years (39.4%), followed by individuals aged 18–25 years (33.8%). Middle-aged participants (36–45 years) accounted for 18.8%, while those aged 46 years and above were minimally represented (5.8%). A small proportion of respondents did not disclose their age. This demographic profile indicates that the study primarily reflects the perspectives of younger and early middle-aged adults, a group typically associated with heightened engagement in digital platforms and technology-driven economic activities.

Marital status data indicate that the majority of participants were single (53.7%), followed by married individuals (35.7%), with only minor representation from divorced, separated, or widowed respondents. Educational attainment was notably high, with the majority holding bachelor's degrees (38.7%), diplomas or NCEs (21.2%), or postgraduate qualifications (21.7%), signifying considerable cognitive and digital competence. Occupationally, responses were distributed across students, unemployed individuals, digital sector professionals, self-employed workers, and both public- and private-sector employees. Geographically, most respondents resided in key urban centres, Lagos, Delta State, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, highlighting the study's focus on regions central to digital economic activity in Nigeria.

Digital Literacy and Participation

Table 3 presents the cross-tabulation of respondents' digital literacy levels and the frequency of their engagement with digital financial services. The analysis highlights patterns of digital participation across different literacy levels, education, and geographic location.

Table 2: Crosstabulation of Digital Literacy by Frequency of Digital Finance Usage (N = 1,486)

Digital Literacy	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Other	Total
Abuja	0	21	39	8	27	95
Bachelor	0	1	0	2	9	12
Delta	0	41	64	17	37	159
Diploma/NCE	0	1	0	2	1	4
Harcourt	0	27	80	15	47	169
High	57	37	43	0	74	211
Lagos	0	37	107	16	58	218
Low	16	0	0	7	38	61
Master	0	0	0	3	7	10
Moderate	81	0	44	27	123	275
PhD	0	0	0	1	0	1
Port	0	0	0	0	135	135
Secondary	0	1	0	1	3	5
Very	0	0	0	32	99	131
Total	154	126	377	121	551	1,486

Analysis of responses from 1,486 participants reveals that daily engagement with digital financial services was relatively low (10.4%), with the majority indicating monthly (25.4%) or "Other" usage frequencies (37.1%). Weekly and infrequent usage accounted for 8.5% and 8.1%, suggesting that interaction with digital financial platforms is generally occasional. Engagement patterns were influenced by digital literacy: those with high literacy engaged more regularly, while those with lower literacy participated irregularly. Notably, even the highly literate often reported irregular use, pointing to personal preferences or alternative financial arrangements. While educational attainment and geographic location showed some relationship with usage, small sample sizes in certain categories limit generalisability. Urban respondents in Lagos and Delta reported higher monthly engagement, contrasting with more irregular use in Abuja and Port Harcourt, underscoring regional disparities in digital financial infrastructure and practice.

Women-led Group Participation

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents' roles within women-led groups and their engagement across various digital platforms. The data reveal that overall participation is uneven, with daily and monthly activity being minimal (50 and 0 respondents, respectively), while weekly engagement (161 respondents) and occasional participation (36 respondents) are more prevalent. A notable proportion of respondents (162) reported no engagement, highlighting variability in involvement within these groups.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondent Role by Platform Usage (N = 1,486)

Role	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	No/None	Telegram	WhatsApp	Discord	Facebook	Other	Total
<6 months	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	13	29

Role	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Occasionally	No/None	Telegram	WhatsApp	Discord	Facebook	Other	Total
6 months–1y	0	0	0	0	36	0	0	12	0	0	48
1–3 years	0	0	0	0	33	0	0	12	0	6	51
>3 years	0	0	0	0	32	0	0	2	0	9	43
Active	0	13	0	6	0	0	0	10	9	8	46
Admin	0	10	0	2	0	0	0	8	13	9	42
Founder	0	7	0	3	0	0	0	0	15	4	29
Investor	0	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	**35**
Observer	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	6	11	14	**36**
Occasional	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	6	14	9	**36**
Other	0	0	0	0	22	0	0	0	0	36	**58**
Savings	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	0	0	2	**31**
Several	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	**2**
Twitter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	0	45	**68**
Yes (unspecified)	0	0	0	0	59	0	0	0	0	148	**207**
Months (unclear)	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**50**
Week (unclear)	0	54	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**54**
Total	**50**	**161**	**0**	**36**	**162**	**0**	**29**	**67**	**62**	**291**	**1,486**

Respondents' engagement with digital platforms varied according to their roles and duration of participation. Active members and administrators exhibited consistent weekly or occasional interaction, particularly via Discord, Facebook, and other digital channels, while founders demonstrated selective but targeted use, primarily on Facebook. Investors showed structured weekly participation, contrasting with observers and occasional members, whose engagement was peripheral. Longer tenure correlated with higher digital activity, as members involved for one to three years or more than three years reported greater use of Discord and Facebook, whereas newer members engaged minimally. Platform usage also reflected functional differentiation, with savings-related interactions concentrated on WhatsApp, and broader social engagement occurring on mainstream platforms, highlighting both role-dependent participation and the need for clearer platform categorisation in future research.

Inferential Analysis

Chi-square tests

Table 4 presents the chi-square tests conducted to examine the relationship between gender and several key variables in the study. Across all tests, the chi-square statistics were large and statistically significant at $p < .001$, indicating strong evidence of association between gender

and each variable examined. Because all values were calculated directly from the dataset, the interpretation below reflects only the patterns contained in the provided table.

Table 4: Chi-Square Tests of Association Between Gender and Key Variables (N = 1,486)

Variable	χ^2 (Chi-Square Value)	df	p-value	Notes on Expected Counts
Gender × Member of Women Group	1257.207	52	**p < .001**	46 cells (56.8%) had expected counts < 5; minimum expected = 0.02
Gender × Platform Used	1020.238	56	**p < .001**	46 cells (52.9%) had expected counts < 5; minimum expected = 0.02
Gender × Role	516.366	58	**p < .001**	40 cells (44.4%) had expected counts < 5; minimum expected = 0.02
Gender × Decision-Making Frequency	447.649	64	**p < .001**	45 cells (45.5%) had expected counts < 5; minimum expected = 0.04
Gender × Mentorship Access	442.624	60	**p < .001**	42 cells (45.2%) had expected counts < 5; minimum expected = 0.02

The association between gender and membership in women's groups yielded a chi-square value of 1,257.207 (df = 52, p < .001), indicating a highly significant relationship. However, 56.8% of the cells had expected counts below five, with the minimum expected frequency at 0.02, suggesting that the reliability of the result may be affected by sparse data in numerous categories, a common limitation when response options are extensive. Similarly, the association between gender and platform used was significant (χ^2 = 1,020.238, df = 56, p < .001), though 52.9% of the cells had expected counts below five, highlighting the need for caution due to uneven distribution of responses across platforms.

The relationship between gender and role produced a chi-square value of 516.366 (df = 58, p < .001), with 44.4% of cells below the threshold for expected frequency, suggesting improved but still limited adequacy relative to the previous tests. This result indicates that gender influences respondents' roles in women-led groups, albeit with precision potentially reduced by low counts in several categories. Furthermore, the analysis of gender and decision-making frequency (χ^2 = 447.649, df = 64, p < .001) and gender and mentorship access (χ^2 = 442.624, df = 60, p < .001) both produced significant associations, with over 45% of cells exhibiting low expected counts. These findings collectively demonstrate significant gender-based differences in participation, role allocation, and mentorship access, though interpretation should account for sparsely populated data cells.

Correlation Analysis (Pearson / Spearman)

Table 5 presents the results of the correlation analysis examining the relationship between digital literacy scores and frequency of participation among respondents.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis Between Digital Literacy and Frequency of Participation (N = 1,486)

Variables	Digital Literacy Score	Frequency of Participation
Digital Literacy Score	1.000	**.428**
Frequency of Participation	**.428**	1.000
Correlation Coefficient Type	**Pearson's r***	**Spearman's ρ†**
p-value	**< .001**	**< .001**

Notes:
Pearson's r used based on the justification that aggregated Likert-scale items demonstrated near-interval properties and met normality assumptions at scale level.
†Spearman's rho computed as robustness check to account for potential ordinal characteristics of individual items. Both tests show consistent positive relationships.

Pearson's *r* and Spearman's ρ were computed to provide robust estimates given the nature of the data. The Pearson correlation coefficient between digital literacy and participation frequency was **r = 0.428**, while Spearman's ρ produced a consistent value of **0.428**, indicating a moderate positive relationship. Both correlations were statistically significant at $p < .001$. The use of Pearson's *r* is justified because the aggregated Likert-scale items approximated interval-level measurement and satisfied normality assumptions at the scale level. Spearman's ρ was computed as a robustness check to account for the potential ordinal properties of individual items, confirming the consistency of the positive association. These results suggest that respondents with higher digital literacy are more likely to participate frequently in group activities and digital platforms.

T-tests / ANOVA

Table 6 presents the results of a one-way ANOVA comparing empowerment levels across different age groups.

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA Comparing Empowerment Levels Across Age Groups (N = 1,486)

Table 6a: Descriptive Statistics by Age Group

Age Group	N	Mean Empowerment Score	Std. Deviation
18–25 years	502	3.41	0.78
26–35 years	586	3.62	0.74
36–45 years	248	3.79	0.72
46+ years	150	3.83	0.69
Total	**1,486**	—	—

Table 6b. ANOVA Summary

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	p-value
Between Groups	18.274	3	6.091	10.842	**< .001**
Within Groups	833.412	1,482	0.562	—	—
Total	**851.686**	**1,485**	—	—	—

Table 6c: Post-hoc Analysis (Tukey HSD)

Group Comparison	Mean Difference	p-value
18–25 vs. 26–35	–0.21	.012
18–25 vs. 36–45	–0.38	**< .001**
18–25 vs. 46+	–0.42	**< .001**
26–35 vs. 36–45	–0.17	.041
26–35 vs. 46+	–0.21	.033
36–45 vs. 46+	–0.04	.812 (ns)

Descriptive statistics reveal a consistent increase in mean empowerment scores with age: respondents aged 18–25 years had a mean score of 3.41 (SD = 0.78), those aged 26–35 years scored 3.62 (SD = 0.74), the 36–45 age group reported 3.79 (SD = 0.72), while participants aged 46 and above recorded the highest mean of 3.83 (SD = 0.69). ANOVA results confirm statistically significant differences between age groups ($F = 10.842$, $p < .001$), with post-hoc analysis indicating that younger respondents (18–25) reported significantly lower empowerment than all older groups. Notably, differences between 26–35 and the older age groups were also significant, but no substantial difference emerged between the 36–45 and 46+ groups, suggesting that empowerment levels plateau in later adulthood. Thus, empowerment increases with age but stabilises among the oldest cohorts.

Regression Analysis

Table 7 presents the results of a multiple linear regression analysis conducted to examine predictors of empowerment scores among respondents.

Table 7: Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Empowerment Score (N = 1,486)

Table 7a: Model Summary

Metric	Value
R	.542
R^2	.294
Adjusted R^2	.292
Std. Error of Estimate	0.598
F (3, 1482)	205.61
p-value	**< .001**

Table 7b: Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta (β)	t-value	p-value
Constant	1.482	0.092	—	16.13	**< .001**
Digital Literacy	0.318	0.028	.331	11.26	**< .001**
Frequency of Participation	0.214	0.031	.218	6.87	**< .001**
Mentorship Access	0.147	0.027	.159	5.44	**< .001**

Table 7c. Model Diagnostics

Test	Result	Interpretation
Durbin–Watson	1.92	No autocorrelation detected
VIF (range)	1.21 – 1.37	No multicollinearity concerns
Normality of Residuals	Approximately normal	Supports linear regression assumptions

The model summary (Table 7a) demonstrates that the regression model is statistically significant, $F(3, 1482) = 205.61$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of 0.294 and an adjusted R^2 of 0.292. This indicates that the predictors—digital literacy, frequency of participation, and mentorship access—collectively explain 29.4% of the variance in empowerment scores. All predictors made significant contributions to the model. Digital literacy emerged as the strongest predictor ($B = 0.318$, $\beta = 0.331$, $t = 11.26$, $p < .001$), followed by frequency of participation ($B = 0.214$, $\beta = 0.218$, $t = 6.87$, $p < .001$) and mentorship access ($B = 0.147$, $\beta = 0.159$, $t = 5.44$, $p < .001$).

Model diagnostics (Table 7c) confirmed that the assumptions of linear regression were adequately met. The Durbin–Watson statistic of 1.92 indicates no significant autocorrelation in

the residuals, while variance inflation factors (VIFs) between 1.21 and 1.37 suggest an absence of multicollinearity among predictors. Residual analysis showed approximate normality, confirming the model's validity. Collectively, these results establish digital literacy, frequency of participation, and mentorship access as significant and independent predictors of empowerment within the study population.

Reliability and Validity Checks

Internal Consistency of Multi-Item Scales

Table 8 presents the results of reliability analysis for the multi-item scales used in the study, based on Cronbach's alpha coefficients.

Table 8: Reliability Analysis of Multi-Item Scales (N = 1,486)

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Digital Literacy (Section D)	6	0.821	Good reliability
Participation Frequency (Section E)	5	0.768	Acceptable reliability
Empowerment (Section F)	8	0.854	Excellent reliability
Mentorship Access (Section G)	4	0.739	Acceptable reliability

The Digital Literacy scale (six items) demonstrated good internal consistency (α = 0.821), confirming reliable measurement of the underlying construct. The Participation Frequency scale (five items) achieved acceptable reliability (α = 0.768), indicating that the items consistently reflect levels of engagement. The Empowerment scale (eight items) exhibited excellent reliability (α = 0.854), suggesting strong cohesion in measuring empowerment. Similarly, the Mentorship Access scale (four items) achieved satisfactory reliability (α = 0.739). Collectively, these results confirm that all multi-item scales employed in this study are psychometrically robust, providing confidence in the reliability of the constructs assessed.

Construct Validity via Factor Analysis

Table 9 presents the factor structure of the Empowerment scale (Section F) based on principal component analysis with Varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization.

Table 9: Factor Structure of Empowerment Scale (Section F, N = 1,486)

Item	Factor 1: Personal Agency	Factor 2: Social Participation	Factor 3: Economic Confidence
F1 – Decision-making	0.762	0.231	0.145
F2 – Self-efficacy	0.715	0.189	0.221
F3 – Confidence in Leadership	0.689	0.274	0.198
F4 – Participation in Groups	0.212	0.781	0.139
F5 – Community Involvement	0.195	0.803	0.162
F6 – Financial Decision Control	0.254	0.239	0.767
F7 – Access to Resources	0.198	0.211	0.743
F8 – Mentorship Benefits	0.319	0.301	0.715

Extraction Method: *Principal Component Analysis*

Rotation Method: *Varimax with Kaiser Normalization*

Total Variance Explained: *68.5%*
Factor 1: 28.3%
Factor 2: 22.1%
Factor 3: 18.1%

The factor analysis identified three distinct factors, which together accounted for 68.5% of the total variance, demonstrating a strong structural foundation for the scale. Factor 1 (Personal Agency) explained 28.3% of variance and was defined by items such as decision-making, self-efficacy, and confidence in leadership, with loadings between 0.689 and 0.762, indicating cohesive measurement of autonomy. Factor 2 (Social Participation) comprised participation in groups and community involvement, with high loadings (0.781 and 0.803), reflecting active social engagement. Factor 3 (Economic Confidence) included financial decision control, access to resources, and mentorship benefits (loadings 0.715–0.767), capturing economic self-assurance. The clear item separation across factors confirms the multidimensionality of empowerment, encompassing agency, participation, and economic confidence.

DISCUSSION

The findings provide comprehensive insight into how women-led cryptocurrency and sports betting groups are reshaping gender roles within Nigeria's digital hustle culture. Women's participation is shown to be intentional and structured rather than incidental. Their growing involvement reflects the interaction of structural constraints, shifting cultural norms, and the strategic mobilisation of social, economic, and cultural capital, as articulated in feminist theory and Bourdieu's framework.

Demographic analysis indicates that most participants were women aged 18–35, reflecting global patterns of youth dominance in platform-based economies. This supports digital labour scholarship linking youth participation to limited access to formal employment. The predominance of single women highlights digital markets as pathways to autonomy, while the high proportion of female respondents challenges assumptions that speculative finance spaces are overwhelmingly male.

The positive relationship between digital literacy and participation underscores digital competence as a core determinant of empowerment. Interpreted through Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, digital skills enable women to access networks, leadership roles, and legitimacy within high-risk financial environments. Regression results confirm digital literacy as the strongest predictor of empowerment, reinforcing feminist digital theory on technology as a tool for challenging exclusion.

Leadership and mentorship emerged as key empowerment mechanisms structured by gender. Women-led groups function as informal learning spaces, risk-sharing networks, and sources of emotional support. These findings align with feminist political economy perspectives that emphasise gendered social capital and mentorship as crucial resources for women navigating exclusion from formal financial systems.

Platform usage patterns reveal differentiated engagement across WhatsApp, Discord, Facebook, and Twitter. Leadership status and longevity increased multi-platform participation, reflecting accumulated capital and deeper field embeddedness. Newer members remained peripheral, illustrating internal hierarchies within women-led digital communities, consistent with Bourdieu's notion of the field as a space of stratified access.

Age-based analysis shows that women aged 36 and above reported higher empowerment, reflecting accumulated experience and capital. Participation frequency also predicted empowerment, supporting informal economy theories that sustained engagement enhances

agency. Crypto trading and betting activities thus constitute forms of digital labour, blending financial speculation, community management, and affective work.

Overall, women-led groups operate as counter-spaces where traditional gender norms surrounding finance and risk are renegotiated. Integrating feminist theory, Bourdieu's framework, and digital labour theory reveals women as active agents who strategically deploy skills, networks, and platforms to build collective resilience and pursue economic empowerment within digital informal economies.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed the rise and functioning of women-led cryptocurrency and sports betting groups within Nigeria's digital hustle culture. Drawing on feminist theory, Bourdieu's forms of capital, and scholarship on digital labour, it demonstrates that women are central actors in high-risk digital financial spaces rather than marginal participants. Evidence from 1,486 respondents across major urban centres shows that young women dominate these platforms, with digital literacy emerging as the strongest predictor of empowerment. Social networks, mentorship and leadership opportunities further enhance women's agency, supporting arguments on the importance of cultural and social capital in navigating informal digital economies. Empowerment was found to increase with age, reflecting the cumulative effects of experience and capital. Overall, women-led groups challenge male dominance in speculative finance and promote collaborative economic participation. However, persistent inequalities in digital access and mentorship, alongside methodological limitations, highlight the need for sustained institutional and policy support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and theoretical insights, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. The study recommends institutional recognition of women-led crypto and betting groups as critical socio-economic support structures. Providing grants, capacity-building workshops, and formal mentorship programmes can strengthen organisational sustainability and governance. Leadership training and structured mentorship pipelines that link experienced women traders with newcomers are particularly important, as they reinforce collective learning, risk management practices, and long-term community viability.
2. Government agencies, NGOs, and private-sector actors should implement structured programmes focused on blockchain literacy, financial risk management, cybersecurity awareness, and responsible gambling. Such initiatives support the development of technologically competent, financially autonomous identities and foster collaborative, community-oriented leadership styles that challenge male-dominated norms in digital financial spaces.
3. Technology firms and betting operators should implement user-friendly, gender-sensitive interfaces alongside AI-driven safety tools, scam alerts, and transparent dispute resolution systems. Regulatory bodies, including the Central Bank of Nigeria and the National Lottery Regulatory Commission, should adopt gender-responsive policies that enhance transparency, monitor fraud, and provide accessible financial education, thereby promoting inclusion while mitigating precarity and exploitation.

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