

DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN OBI LOCAL GOVERNMENT, BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined digital entrepreneurship education and its influence on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The research population comprised 5,672 youths across 12 council wards in Obi Local Government Area. Using simple random sampling technique, the study randomized 562 unemployed youths as respondents. Digital Entrepreneurship Education and Youth Employment Questionnaire (DEE-YEQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded a reliability coefficient of 92.6. Mean and standard deviation were adopted to answer the research question while chi square was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Results reviewed a significant influence of digital literacy on youth employment in Obi Local Government area of Benue State, it was also found that there was a significant influence on innovation/creativity on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. Based on the findings, it was concluded that Digital Entrepreneurship Education skills are fundamental tools for empowering unemployed youth. The study therefore, recommended frequent seminars and conferences on digital entrepreneurship education skills to sponsored by grassroot government and leaders in enhancing youth empowerment and employability.

Keywords: Digital Entrepreneurship Education, Digital literacy, Innovation/Creativity, Youth and Employment

Introduction

There is a far increasing level of unemployment in Nigeria. Nigeria's youth unemployment crisis is substantial and continuous, with far-reaching socio-economic consequence. Several efforts by the governmental and private sectors on youth unemployment in Nigeria remains unresolved. The youthful population is rapidly growing, exacerbating the challenge by adding to an already constrained labor market. Among the several alternatives proposed, the creative industries' ability to minimize youth unemployment has emerged as a feasible area of focus (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Youth unemployment has emerged as one of the most critical socio-economic challenges in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Despite robust macro growth, large numbers of young people enter the labor market each year without finding decent work. The phenomenon is compounded by skills mismatches, gender gaps, and a large informal sector (UNICEF, 2019). High unemployment among educated youth, a widening skill mismatch, and slow job creation have intensified concerns regarding the country's ability to transform its youthful population into a productive workforce.

In this 21st century, there is a paradigm shift to technological based skills. Empowering youths in digital skills such as artificial intelligence (AI), digital literacy, digital marketing, cybersecurity and digital safety, innovation/creativity, data analysis and interpretation are skills of high demand for self-reliance of individuals in the society. This suggests a need for digital entrepreneurship education in Nigeria and other part of the world to meet up with the demand of the society. Digital entrepreneurship education is a process of learning technological base skills needed to succeed in online businesses. It deals with creating and selling digital products, marketing, innovation/ creativity and data analysis and interpretation using technological tools (Hu, Jabor, Royo & Wu, 2024).

Digital entrepreneurship education (DEE) plays a crucial role in fostering vocational skills. It reflects a comprehensive focus that meets the needs of the current society (Hagger & Hamilton, 2022). However, despite the growing demand for Digital entrepreneurship education they remain a notable gap in research regarding its impact on vocational skills among youths in Nigeria in general and obi local government area in particular. The authors further identify 6 indices of Digital entrepreneurship education that includes digital literacy, innovation/creativity, Data analysis and creativity, digital marketing, online business model, and cyber security/digital safety. This study sort to investigate the influence of digital literacy and innovation/creativity (Nurhayati, 2021).

No nation has ever survived successive high rate of unemployment because of the attendant waste of human resources which it breeds. Nigerian's future prosperity is a function of producing youths who are well prepared and well equipped to take their place in tomorrow's society. This involves implementing educational system that will equip youths with saleable skills which can enable them become gainful employed or self-employed. Such a system should provide for entrepreneurship education geared towards the production of potential entrepreneurs. But Nigeria today is plagued with poverty and related social ills as a result of preponderance portion of the population (especially the youths) not doing anything. They are seen roaming about the street doing irregular things. There is high rate of social ills such as

armed robbery, rape cases, house breaking, political thuggery, car snatching assassination, kidnapping, human trafficking, begging, corruption malnutrition and so on. Hence, the need for digital entrepreneurship education and its influence on youths' employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. This study focused on two indices of digital entrepreneurship education such as digital literacy and innovation/creativity influences on youth employment.

Digital literacy encompasses media literacy, technology literacy, computer literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) literacy. It is a complex technology-based learning and skill that concerns individual's capacity to adapt to a digital environment through a self-directed learning and productive skills acquisition using digital technologies (Adewale & Tahir, 2021). A digitally literate individual is a tool for problem solving in today's society. This suggests the importance of digital literacy to individuals seeking independence and employment in a highly demanding job seeking society like Nigeria. In spite of the benefits of digital literacy, most youths in Nigeria and Obi, Benue State in particular are not digitally literate. They find it difficult to cope with all activities relating to computer operation. This has caused digital divide among the growing youths in a digitalized society of today.

Innovation/creativity is another index of digital entrepreneurship education. Innovation/creativity are two related but different concepts that one feeds the other. Creativity is the ability to generate ideas that are both new and useful with no market test yet and no rules. Innovation on the other hand is the process of turning creative ideas into something real that creates value (Hu, Jabor, Royo & Wu, 2024). This suggests that individuals with these skills are liable to exploit their environment productively. Olalekun, Bello and Kajo (2020) revealed that creativity and innovation are effective tools for youth employment in Nigeria.

The empirical studies reviewed showed the significant influence of digital entrepreneurship education skills such as digital literacy and innovation/creativity on youth employment. Oloyede (2025) revealed that digital literacy has a positive impact on reduction of out-of-school children. In the same vein, Bashir (2024) revealed that 76.3% of Nigerian population applied for jobs requiring digital literacy skills with 66.8% believing it is crucial for employment. This shows that there is a homogeneous relationship between digital entrepreneurship education skills and youths' employment. In another study, Olalekun, Bello and Kajo (2020) revealed that creativity and innovation are significant tools for youth employment in Nigeria. The benefits of digital entrepreneurship education skills suggest need for further investigation. It is based on these findings this study investigated the influence of

digital entrepreneurship education on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In Obi Local Government, a large number of youths who graduated from various higher institution of learning between 2021-2024 are currently idle in their communities due to unemployment. Some of them sit all day complaining about bad government and inability to employ them, while others lack the skills to be employed. They do not have the required skills to function independently and survive on their own because of the kind of education practiced in Nigeria that promotes theoretical based learning rather than practical based skills.

Wealth creation requires ability to solve problems, research experts identified so many factors for wealth creation and self-employment of youth, such as small and medium enterprises, venturing into Agribusiness like poultry farming, snail farming, bee keeping, cane rat production. The focus of this study is on digital entrepreneurship education. Youth who are digitally and literacy sound minded may not wait on government or individuals for employment. They could explore available options within digital literacy and innovation/creativity to be relevant to themselves and the society. The problem of this study therefore, pose as a question is: what would be the relationship between digital entrepreneurship in (digital literacy and innovation/creativity) and youth employment in obi local government of Benue State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study included:

1. Determine the influence of digital literacy on youth employment in obi local government area of Benue state, Nigeria
2. Determine the influence of innovation/creativity on youth employment in obi local government area of Benue state, Nigeria

Research questions

1. What is the influence of digital literacy on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State?
2. What is the influence of innovation/creativity on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue state?

Hypotheses

1. Digital literacy has no significant influence on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State
2. Innovation/Creativity have no significant influence on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A population of 5,672 comprised the study. Using simple random sampling technique, 562 unemployed youths in Obi Local Government Area were randomised. Digital Entrepreneurship Education and Youth Employment Questionnaire (DEE-YEQ) was used for data collection based on 4-point modified Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A= 3), Disagree (D = 2) and Strongly Disagree (SD= 1). The instrument was validated by three experts, two lecturers from ICT/computer science department while one is in psychology department all in Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi (formerly known as Benue State University Makurdi) and trial tested on 30 youths in Oju Local Government in Benue State, who were not part of sample and area of study. The respondents were not part of the sample and area of study but had similar characteristics with the study area. Their responses were analysed using Cronbach Alpha that yielded a reliability coefficient 92.6. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while chi-square was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule is that any mean above 2.50 ($4+3+2+1=10 \div 4= 2.5$) is accepted, while mean below the bench mark is rejected. In same vein, the null hypothesis is rejected if the p-value is less than the specified alpha level ($p < 0.05$), but if proven otherwise, it will not be rejected ($p > 0.05$).

Results

Research Question One

What is the influence of digital literacy on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State?

Table 1 shows the influence of digital literacy on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. The items have the mean of 3.34, 2.63, 3.24, 2.95 and 3.39. The cluster mean is 3.11 with standard deviation of 0.96. All the mean ratings and cluster mean are above the bench mark of 2.50. This implies that digital literacy positively influenced youth

employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. Youth with digital literacy skills were found to be self-employed and industrious.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Influence of Digital literacy on youth employment

S/n	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	I can effectively use job sites, email, and professional platforms like LinkedIn to find and apply for work	3.34	0.92	Accept
2	I know how to check if online information or news is trustworthy before I use or share it.	2.63	1.11	Accept
3	I am comfortable using digital tools such as Word, Excel, Google Docs, or Canva for work-related tasks	3.24	0.85	Accept
4	I understand how to protect my personal data online through strong passwords, privacy settings, and safe browsing.	2.95	1.21	Accept
5	When faced with new software or apps, I can teach myself to use them through tutorials or exploring features.	3.39	0.82	Accept
	Cluster	3.11	0.96	Accept

Research Question Two:

What is the influence of innovation/creativity on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue state?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Influence of Innovation/Creativity on Youth Employment in Obi LGA

S/n	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Digital entrepreneurship education has enhanced my ability to generate innovative business ideas using digital tools.	3.37	0.92	Accept
2	The training I received improved my creative problem-solving skills for online business challenges.	2.71	1.11	Accept
3	Exposure to digital entrepreneurship education increased my capacity to develop new digital products or services for employment	3.32	0.85	Accept
4	Knowledge gained from digital entrepreneurship education helps me creatively identify and exploit online market opportunities	3.12	1.12	Accept
5	Digital entrepreneurship education has equipped me with creative competencies that improve my chances of self-employment.	3.39	0.82	Accept
	Cluster	3.20	0.89	Accept

Table 2 shows the influence of innovation/creativity on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. The items have mean of 3.37, 2.71, 3.32, 3.12 and 3.39. All the mean ratings with the cluster mean of 3.20 and standard deviation of 0.89 are above the bench mark of 2.50 for decision making. This implies that innovation/creativity have high positive influence on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. Youth with innovation and creativity had one small or medium scale business.

Hypothesis One

Digital literacy has no significant influence on youth employment in Obi Local Government of Benue State

Table 3: Chi-square Test for Influence of Digital Literacy on Youth Employment

Respondents	N	X ² cal	df	p	Remark
Youth	562	175.51	12	0.00	Rejected

Table 3 shows that the p-value= 0.00, df = 12 and Cal= 175.51. Since the p-value is less than the specified alpha level, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant influence of digital literacy on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. This means that youth with digital literacy skills were self-employed with one small or medium scale business in the area.

Hypothesis Two

Innovation /Creativity have no significant influence on youth employment in Obi Local Government of Benue State

Table 4: Chi-square Test for Influence of Innovation/Creativity on Youth Employment

Respondents	N	X ² cal	df	p	Remark
Youth	562	136.51	12	0.00	Rejected

Table 4 shows that p-value= 0.00, df = 12 and Cal= 136.51. Since the p-value is less than the specified alpha level ($p = 0.00 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that

innovation/ creativity has significant influence on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State.

Discussion

The discussion of findings in this study is based on two findings.

The result of findings revealed that digital literacy has significant influence on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. This means that youth with digital literacy skills are self-employed and independent. This is because digital literacy skills equip unemployed youths to be resourceful, innovation and creativity in solving digital based problems. This agrees with Oloyede (2025) who found that digital literacy has positive impact on reduction of out-of-school children. This is because digital literacy skills make individuals resourceful. The result also validates the findings of Bashir (2024) that 76.3% of Nigerian population applied for jobs requiring digital literacy skills with 66.8% believing it is crucial for employment. This means that there has been a consistent and positive influence of digital literacy on children and unemployed individuals in Nigerian society.

The findings further revealed that innovation/creativity have significant influence on youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. This means all those who are innovative and creative in digital space were found to be self-employed with problem solving skills. This is because digital entrepreneurship education is a 21st century requirement for meeting needs of individuals. The result consolidates the findings of Olalekun, Bello and Kajo (2020) that innovation and creativity are tools for youth employment in Nigeria. This implies that digital entrepreneurship education skills need to be made part of the 21st skills for every school child.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that Digital Entrepreneurship Education skills are fundamental tools for empowering unemployed youth in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State. It was also concluded that digital literacy and innovation/ creativity are effective tools for enhancing youth employment in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State.

Recommendations

1. Frequent seminars and conferences on digital entrepreneurship education skills should be sponsored by grassroot government and leaders in enhancing youth empowerment and employability.

2. Digital entrepreneurship education should be made part of the curriculum content for teaching secondary school students for hand-of-activity skills empowerment.

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