ASSESSMENT OF DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ONLINE REMOTE JOBS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study seeks to investigate the assessment of digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs on the academic performance of undergraduate students. For this study, four research questions and objectives was structured for this study. The study is anchored on the Expectancy Value Theory, (EVT). Also the study made use of the survey research design with a sample size of 380. A structured questionnaire was administered virtually via Google form to the respondents in other to determine their response. Findings from the study indicate that digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs have become a significant aspect of over 30% of undergraduate student's lives with many dedicating 10 to 14 hours daily to online activities. These activities exert both positive and negative influences on academic performance. On the positive side, students develop valuable skills like time management, problem-solving and communication which enhance academic performance. The financial support gained from work

alleviates academic - related financial pressures, while increased self-confidence positively impacted their academic engagement. The study recommends that the school should consider implementing flexible academic schedules or online learning options to accommodate students who work remotely or engage in digital entrepreneurship. Also, students should set clear boundaries between work and study time.

Introduction

The integration of digital technologies has significantly reshaped contemporary human life, particularly in the domains of communication, work, and education (Stranbar & LaRose, 2016). The widespread diffusion of internet technologies has facilitated the emergence of online remote work and digital entrepreneurship, thereby creating unprecedented opportunities for economic participation beyond traditional workplace settings.

Internet-based work platforms have become increasingly popular due to their accessibility and flexibility, enabling individuals to engage in income-generating activities irrespective of geographical constraints. These developments have provided diverse populations, including undergraduate students, with new pathways for career advancement and financial independence while simultaneously pursuing academic goals (Bennett & Lemoine, 2020). Digital entrepreneurship refers to the creation and management of business ventures through digital tools and platforms, often requiring minimal physical infrastructure (Nambisan, 2017).

For undergraduate students, participation in digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment offers numerous advantages. Students can engage in activities such as freelancing, e-commerce, content creation, and virtual assistance, which allow them to earn income while developing practical skills aligned with the demands of the digital economy. These opportunities are particularly significant in the context of saturated labor markets and persistently high youth unemployment rates worldwide (World Bank, 2022). The flexibility inherent in remote work arrangements enables students to schedule work commitments around academic responsibilities, thereby affording them greater autonomy in managing their time.

Globally, the utilization of digital platforms for business creation and management has gained prominence due to low entry barriers and high scalability potential. Entrepreneurs increasingly leverage e-commerce

platforms, social media, and gig economy applications to access global markets with limited financial capital (Nambisan, Wright, & Feldman, 2019).

This trend has democratized entrepreneurship, allowing individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, including students, to pursue business ventures without reliance on physical infrastructure. In regions such as Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America, digital entrepreneurship has emerged as a viable response to youth unemployment, with students engaging in innovative digital ventures alongside their academic pursuits (Berg, Furrer, Harmon, Rani, & Silberman, 2018).

Similarly, online remote employment has expanded rapidly with the growth of digital labor platforms such as Upwork, Fiverr, and Freelancer, which facilitate cross-border service provision and redefine conventional notions of work. In Europe and North America, many undergraduate students utilize remote jobs to finance their education and gain relevant professional experience (Eurofound, 2020). In countries such as India, the Philippines, and Bangladesh, where the freelance economy is well-established, students are increasingly participating in the global digital labor market (Kässi & Lehdonvirta, 2018).

Despite these opportunities, the global impact of digital entrepreneurship and online remote work on students' academic performance remains mixed. In several regions, students engaged in remote work report heightened stress levels and difficulties in balancing academic and work-related responsibilities (Lederer, Hoban, Lipson, Zhou, & Eisenberg, 2021). These challenges are particularly evident in contexts where students are compelled to work long hours due to economic pressures, often resulting in reduced academic focus and lower academic performance. Conversely, students involved in digital entrepreneurship may benefit from enhanced experiential learning, improved time management, and increased career readiness, which can positively influence academic outcomes (Giunta, 2019).

In more developed economies, including the United States, Europe, and Australia, institutional support structures for student engagement in digital work are relatively strong. Universities frequently provide entrepreneurship programs, incubators, and innovation hubs that enable students to integrate academic learning with practical digital business experience. Within these contexts, digital entrepreneurship is often perceived as complementary to academic success and is actively

encouraged as part of students' personal and professional development (Bennett & Lemoine, 2020).

In Africa, the growth of digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment has been particularly transformative for young people, including university students. With over 60% of the continent's population under the age of 25, many African nations are witnessing increased youth-driven entrepreneurial activity aimed at addressing unemployment, limited access to formal employment, and economic instability (World Bank, 2020). Digital entrepreneurship and remote work have thus become attractive alternatives, enabling students to earn income and acquire practical experience while pursuing academic qualifications. However, in emerging economies where educational institutions often lack robust digital infrastructure, balancing academic demands with digital work can be especially challenging. In countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Brazil, unreliable internet connectivity and infrastructural deficits constrain students' ability to effectively engage in both academic and entrepreneurial activities (Adeoye, Adanikin, & Adanikin, 2020).

The expansion of digital technologies across Africa has further accelerated the rise of digital entrepreneurship. Increased mobile phone penetration and improved internet access have enabled students to participate in various online business activities, including e-commerce, digital marketing, and freelancing on global platforms such as Upwork and Fiverr. Platforms like Jumia have expanded market access for young entrepreneurs, including students, while social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are widely used to market products, deliver services, and build personal brands (Munyaka, 2021).

Nevertheless, the influence of digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment on academic performance among African students remains ambivalent. On the one hand, the flexibility of online work allows students to manage their schedules more effectively and earn income without necessarily undermining academic commitments (Adeniran & Oseni, 2022). Students in technology-driven urban centers such as Lagos, Nairobi, and Cape Town often report acquiring transferable skills—including time management, problem-solving, and financial literacy—that enhance academic performance. On the other hand, infrastructural deficiencies such as unstable electricity supply, poor internet connectivity, and high data costs pose significant challenges. In rural areas, these constraints often disrupt both academic

activities and digital work participation (Mothobi, Gillwald, & Rademan, 2021). Additionally, financial pressures may compel students to prioritize work over academics, resulting in stress, fatigue, and diminished academic outcomes (Kinyua, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the global adoption of digital entrepreneurship and remote work. As educational institutions transitioned to online learning, students were required to adapt to digital technologies for both academic and economic survival (Hussein, Daoud, Alrabaiah, & Badawi, 2020). Remote work became a critical income source, particularly in developing economies where post-pandemic recovery was slow (ILO, 2020). Consequently, many students simultaneously managed online learning and remote employment, blurring the boundaries between academic and professional life (Chung, Noor, & Mathew, 2020).

For African students, the pandemic intensified the need to adopt digital income strategies. The concurrent shift to e-learning and online work created unique challenges, as students struggled to adapt to new learning environments while supporting themselves and their families financially (UNESCO, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the expansion of digital entrepreneurship and the proliferation of online remote employment have significantly altered the employment landscape for undergraduate students. Studies indicate that a growing number of students engage in freelance and entrepreneurial activities to supplement their income, largely due to rising educational and living costs (Duffy & Sweeney, 2018). Although these activities offer opportunities for income generation, skill acquisition, and professional experience, their implications for academic performance remain inconclusive (Baker, 2020).

As undergraduate students increasingly attempt to balance academic responsibilities with participation in digital entrepreneurship and remote work, concerns have emerged regarding the potential academic consequences of such engagement. Conversely, other studies indicate that work experience can enhance competencies such as problem-solving and time management, thereby supporting academic success. The relationship between digital entrepreneurship, online remote employment, and academic performance is therefore complex and multifaceted. While benefits such as financial independence,

entrepreneurial skill development, and experiential learning are evident, challenges including workload pressure, stress, and inconsistent academic outcomes persist. Institutional support mechanisms, effective time management, and flexible academic policies are critical in enabling students to succeed academically while engaging in digital work. However, empirical research—particularly within developing country contexts—remains limited, highlighting the need for further investigation into infrastructural, economic, and policy-related constraints faced by students.

Accordingly, this study seeks to examine the influence of participation in digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment on the academic performance of undergraduate students, with particular emphasis on time management, academic engagement, and overall grade point average (GPA). The limited availability of empirical evidence in this area poses challenges for educators, policymakers, and students in understanding the academic implications of balancing work and study (Jones, 2022). By exploring this relationship, the study aims to identify both the benefits and drawbacks of these modern work arrangements and to contribute to strategies that support students' academic and professional development.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment on the academic performance of undergraduate students. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the extent to which undergraduate students participate in digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs.
2. Examine the impact of digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs on the academic performance of undergraduate students.
3. Assess the positive and negative contributions of digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs to undergraduate students' academic performance.
4. Identify the key factors influencing the academic performance of undergraduate students in relation to their participation in digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment.

Empirical Review

Entrepreneurial digital skills in the 21st century encompass competencies such as technological operations, information management, communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving (van Laar & Deursen, 2018). These skills play a crucial role in stimulating business activities, particularly in online and information and communication technology (ICT)-enabled services. The acquisition of entrepreneurial digital skills enhances research development, innovation, and effective business communication (Anckar, 2016; Mühlbacher, 2016).

Enang (2023) examined digital entrepreneurial skills and competencies required by Business Education students to function effectively in the digital era. The study identified key entrepreneurial digital competencies and emphasized the need for appropriate teaching and assessment strategies to prepare students for the modern labor market. The findings indicated that business education students must be equipped with digital entrepreneurial skills to remain relevant after graduation. The study recommended that governments provide adequate resources and supportive environments for the integration of digital entrepreneurial competencies across all educational levels in Nigeria. Additionally, the inclusion of digital entrepreneurship content in business education curricula was advocated to enhance self-reliance and national development.

Ukata and Amini (2022) investigated digital entrepreneurial skills acquired by Business Education undergraduates for decent work in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The study revealed that students exhibited a low level of digital marketing and social media skills. Variations in skill acquisition were attributed to personal factors such as prior ICT exposure, entrepreneurial experience, and access to funding, as well as institutional factors including government policies, learning environments, and funding availability. The authors recommended that students pursue private ICT certification programs with a focus on digital marketing and social media skills to enhance employability during their studies.

Kehinde and Olatunde (2022) explored digital skills required by Business Education graduates for unemployment reduction in the 21st century. Their findings indicated that e-commerce, digital business analysis, and digital communication skills are essential for addressing graduate unemployment. Hypothesis testing revealed no significant

differences based on gender, institutional ownership, or institutional type regarding the acquisition of these skills. The study recommended equal access to digital skill training for all students to enhance competitiveness in the digital economy.

Osiesi et al. (2024) assessed entrepreneurial digital skills, knowledge, and utilization among Business Education undergraduates at the Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. The findings showed that students possessed a moderate level of entrepreneurial digital skills and a high level of digital entrepreneurial knowledge, which they applied effectively. The study recommended that universities create enabling environments for digital skill development and integrate compulsory digital education courses into university curricula.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the **Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT)**, originally proposed by Atkinson (1957) and later expanded by Eccles in the 1980s. EVT explains human motivation and decision-making as a function of individuals' expectations of success and the value they attach to anticipated outcomes.

The core components of EVT include:

- **Expectancy**: Individuals' beliefs regarding their likelihood of success in a task (self-efficacy).
- **Value**: The perceived importance, usefulness, or attractiveness of the task outcome.
- **Cost**: The perceived negative aspects of engagement, including effort, time, emotional strain, or opportunity loss.

Expectancies are shaped by prior experiences and self-concept, while values are influenced by cultural, social, and personal factors. Costs may be emotional, physical, or opportunity based.

In relation to this study, EVT provides a useful framework for understanding undergraduate students' decisions to engage in digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment alongside their academic responsibilities. Students' beliefs in their ability to successfully balance work and study influence their motivation to participate in digital work. Additionally, perceived benefits such as financial rewards and skill acquisition are weighed against costs such as

stress, time constraints, and academic pressure. Where students perceive that benefits outweigh costs and believe they can manage both domains effectively, academic performance may be positively influenced. Conversely, excessive work demands may undermine academic outcomes.

Methodology

A **survey research design** was adopted for this study due to its effectiveness in examining real-life phenomena and capturing respondents' perceptions within natural settings (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The survey method was considered appropriate for assessing the relationship between digital entrepreneurship, online remote jobs, and academic performance among undergraduate students.

Population of the Study

The population comprised all undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). According to records from the Academic Planning Unit for the 2023/2024 academic session, the total undergraduate population was 35,130 students.

Table 1: Population of undergraduate students in the selected university

University	No. of students	Type	Session	Source
University of Nigeria, Nsukka	35,130	Federal	2023/2024	Academic planning unit

Table 2: Details of the Population of UNN Undergraduate Students (2022/2023)

Faculties	Number of Male students	Number of Female students	Total
Agriculture	787	2240	3027
Arts	1560	3673	5233
Biological	2402	3299	5701

sciences			
Education	972	3217	4189
Engineering	2820	337	3157
Pharmaceutical Sciences	706	635	1341
Social Sciences	2535	2656	5191
Veterinary Medicine	1559	2269	3828
Physical Sciences	1699	1037	2736
Vocational and Technical Education	236	491	727
Total	**15,276**	**19,854**	**35,130**

Source: Academic Planning Unit, UNN, 2023

Sample Size

A sample size of 380 respondents was determined using the Australian Sample Size Calculator, ensuring adequate representation of the study population.

Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed:

- **Stage One**: Cluster sampling was used to group students into ten faculties.
- **Stage Two**: Simple random sampling was applied to select one department from each faculty.
- **Stage Three**: Purposive sampling was used to distribute questionnaire to students using an online platform, specifically through Google Forms.

- **Stage Four**: Accidental sampling was employed, with questionnaire distributed through departmental online class groups based on availability and willingness to participate.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered electronically via Google Forms. The instrument consisted solely of close-ended questions to ensure uniformity and ease of analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question One: What is the extent of participation in digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs among undergraduate students?

Table 3: Extent of participation in digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs n=380

		Frequency	Percent	M±SD
How often do you stay online daily?				3.10±0.93
	- 2hrs	14	4	
	- 6hrs	74	19	
	- 10hrs	169	45	
	- 14hrs	123	32	
Can you describe yourself as a high internet user?				1.16±0.37
	- Yes	317	83	
	- No	63	17	
Are you engaged in any digital entrepreneurship?				1.23±0.43

	- Yes	289	76	
	- No	91	24	
Are you engaged in any online remote jobs?				1.33±0.47
	- Yes	251	66	
	- No	129	34	
How long have you been engaged in digital entrepreneurship or remote work?				2.68±1.10
	- Less than 6 months	45	12	
	- 6 months to 1 years	126	33	
	- 1-2 years	114	30	
	- More than 2 years	95	25	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 indicated that majority of the respondents stay online for up to 10 hours (45%) and 14 hours (32%) respectively, and most affirmed that were high internet user (83%). Majority engaged in digital entrepreneurship (76%) and online remote jobs (66%). Most had been engaged in digital entrepreneurship or remote work for 6 months to 1 years (33%), and 1-2 years (30%).

Research Question Two: What is the impact of digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs on the academic performance of undergraduate students?

Table 4: Impact of digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs n=380

ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M±SD
It has made me miss lectures	101 (27)	188 (49)	14 (4)	41 (11)	36 (9)	2.27± 1.33
I find myself sacrificing school time for work related activities	78 (21)	211 (55)	13 (3)	22 (6)	56 (15)	1.86± 1.64
The workload from my work has negatively impacted my mental ability to focus on academics	123 (32)	211 (56)	6 (2)	17 (4)	23 (6)	1.96± 1.15
I feel distracted during academic activities because of work-related responsibilities	118 (31)	162 (43)	23 (6)	48 (13)	29 (5)	2.23± 1.33
I noticed improvement in my ability to manage time due to balancing academics and work	94 (25)	194 (51)	23 (6)	52 (14)	17 (4)	2.22± 1.21

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 indicated that majority of the respondents affirmed that as a result of their digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs, it has made them miss lectures (49%), sacrificed school time for work related activities (55%), the workload from their work had negatively impacted their mental ability to focus on academics (56%), they felt distracted

during academic activities because of work-related responsibilities (43%). Although, they have noticed improvement in their ability to manage time due to balancing academics and work (51%).

Research Question Three: How do digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs contribute positively or negatively on the academic performance of undergraduate students?

Table 5: Contribution of digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs on academic performance

ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M±SD
I have developed skills that improved my academic performance	89 (23)	167 (44)	21 (6)	43 (11)	60 (16)	2.52± 1.46
My work provided me financial support that positively impacts my academics	91 (24)	147 (39)	27 (7)	63 (17)	52 (5)	2.57± 1.46
My work positively influenced my self-confidence in approaching academic tasks	112 (29)	167 (44)	12 (3)	34 (9)	55 (15)	2.35± 1.45
I feel stressed balancing work and school	73 (19)	168 (44)	33 (9)	49 (13)	57 (15)	2.60± 1.43
My work schedule occasionally interfere with my academic making me miss classes	143 (38)	184 (48)	31 (8)	7 (2)	15 (4)	1.86± 1.06
My work commitments have reduced the time available for academic study or preparation	96 (25)	211 (56)	16 (4)	24 (6)	33 (9)	2.17± 1.25

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 indicated that majority of the respondents highlighted that they had developed skills that improved their academic performance (44%), their work provided them financial support that positively impacts their academics (39%), and their work positively influenced their self confidence in approaching academic tasks (44%). Also, most respondents indicated that they felt stressed balancing work and school (44%), their work schedule occasionally interfered with their academic making them miss class (48%), and their commitments to work have reduced the time available for academic study and preparation (56%).

Research Question Four: What are the factors that affect academic performance of undergraduate students in relation to digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs?

Table 6: Factors that affect academic performance in relation to digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs

ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M±SD
Physical health	117 (31)	139 (37)	24 (6)	36 (9)	64 (17)	2.45±1.52
Stress from academic activities	127 (33)	163 (43)	12 (3)	48 (13)	30 (8)	2.18±1.34
Finance	101 (27)	198 (52)	14 (4)	32 (8)	35 (9)	2.21±1.30
Family expectations	147 (39)	169 (45)	28 (7)	9 (2)	27 7	1.95±1.20
Study environment	89 (23)	171 (45)	29 (8)	54 (14)	37 (10)	2.41±1.36

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 6 indicated that majority of the respondents indicated that the following factors affected their academic performance in relation to

digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs. They include physical health (37%), stress from academic activities (43%), finance (52%), family expectations (45%), and study environment (45%).

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One revealed a high level of participation in digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment among undergraduate students. Most respondents were heavy internet users, with many students dedicating between 10 and 14 hours daily to online activities., with engagement periods ranging from six months to two years. This finding aligns with Mamat et al. (2023), who reported positive student attitudes toward digital entrepreneurship, and with Sadiq, Raza, and Baig (2022), who observed enhanced entrepreneurial skills through digital platforms in higher education institutions.

However, **Research Question Two** indicated a dual impact of digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs on academic performance. While many students reported missing lectures, sacrificing academic time, and experiencing reduced concentration due to work demands, others reported improved time management skills. This reflects the complexity of balancing academic and work responsibilities and supports findings by Osiesi et al. (2024) on moderate digital skill proficiency among undergraduates.

Research Question Three showed that digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment contribute both positively and negatively to academic performance. Positively, students reported enhanced academic skills, financial support, and increased self-confidence. Negatively, students experienced stress, missed classes, and reduced study time. These findings corroborate Enang (2023), who emphasized the importance of structured digital entrepreneurship education to maximize benefits and mitigate risks.

Finally, **Research Question four** revealed that the academic performance of undergraduate students is influenced by factors related to digital entrepreneurship and online remote jobs, including physical health, academic stress, financial challenges, family expectations, and study environment. These factors impact students' focus, time management, and work-academic balance. This aligns with Gunaseelan et al. (2022), who noted challenges in digital entrepreneurship like inadequate staff skills and facilities. Similarly, Ukata and Amini (2022) found low digital marketing and social media skills due to personal and

governmental factors, such as ICT background, funding, policies, and learning environment

Conclusion

The study concludes that digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment have become significant components of undergraduate students' economic activities. These opportunities provide financial support, practical work experience, and valuable skill development. However, excessive engagement in such activities may negatively affect students' academic performance through missed lectures, reduced study time, and increased stress levels. Achieving a sustainable balance between academic responsibilities and digital work is therefore essential. Universities should consider implementing flexible learning systems, providing academic counseling, and introducing time-management programs that support students who combine academic study with digital economic activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Universities should implement flexible academic schedules and expand online learning options to accommodate students engaged in digital entrepreneurship and online remote employment.

2. Institutions should strengthen counseling, wellness, and mental health services to support students managing academic and work-related stress.

3. Students should establish clear boundaries between work and academic commitments to prevent role conflict and burnout.

4. Universities should introduce targeted stress management and time management programs for students engaged in digital work to enhance both academic success and personal well-being.

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