

The Role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Enhancing Youth Employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Abaikpa, Udeme Anthony¹; Kumbur, Miriam Dooshima²; Otukonyong, Sunday Edet³; Usendia, Ekaette I⁴

¹Department of Business Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

²Department of Business Education, School of Vocational and Technical Education, Federal College of Education Ididep, Ibiono Ibom, Akwa Ibom State

³Department of Business Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

⁴Department of Business Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
Email address: udemeabaiakpa@gmail.com

Abstract—The increasing digitalisation of the global economy has positioned digital entrepreneurship as a potential pathway for addressing youth unemployment. This study examines the influence of digital entrepreneurship—comprising digital skills proficiency, access to digital infrastructure, and adoption of digital business models—on youth employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining a quantitative survey of youth engaged in digital entrepreneurship with qualitative in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Regression analysis revealed a very strong positive relationship between digital entrepreneurship and youth employability ($R = 0.867$). Digital entrepreneurship explained 75.2% of the variation in youth employability ($R^2 = 0.752$), with the model being statistically significant ($F = 1,131.914$, $p < 0.001$). The coefficient of digital entrepreneurship was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.867$, $t = 33.644$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that improvements in digital entrepreneurship are associated with substantial improvements in youth employability. The findings align with the World Bank and International Labour Organisation positions that digital and entrepreneurial skills are essential for workforce development. The study concludes that digital entrepreneurship significantly enhances youth employability. It is recommended that policymakers, educational institutions, and development partners prioritise investments in digital infrastructure, skills training, and entrepreneurship support programmes to improve youth labour-market outcomes.

Keywords— Digital Entrepreneurship, Youth Employability, Akwa Ibom State.

I. INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment persists as one of the most deeply entrenched socio-economic dilemmas confronting Nigeria. With over 68 million citizens between the ages of 15 and 35, the nation faces the prospect of a demographic dividend that could easily devolve into a demographic liability should this population segment remain economically disengaged. The consequences of widespread joblessness among young Nigerians transcend individual deprivation, encompassing sluggish economic performance, heightened social friction, and the attenuation of developmental aspirations. The African Development Bank has highlighted a notable paradox: despite the rapid multiplication of technology-enabled ventures conceived and operated by young Nigerians, unemployment and underemployment rates among this cohort remain stubbornly elevated. This contradiction—vibrant digital activity coexisting with persistent joblessness—signals profound weaknesses in policy frameworks and institutional coordination. In light of this, digital entrepreneurship has garnered considerable attention from governmental bodies, non-profit organisations, and international development partners as a potential remedy for Africa's youth employment predicament. Digital entrepreneurship encompasses the identification and exploitation of business opportunities through internet-based platforms, contemporary technologies, and digitally native operational models. It provides young people with an alternative route to economic integration that

circumvents the constraints of conventional wage employment. The digital environment diminishes entry barriers, curtails transactional expenses, facilitates market access, and enables participation in cross-border commerce from geographically peripheral locations—attributes that render it particularly appealing to youth in developing regions.

Akwa Ibom State, situated in Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone, has distinguished itself as a focal point for digital entrepreneurship and youth capability enhancement. Through the ARISE Agenda, the state administration has elevated innovation, skill cultivation, and enterprise development to central pillars of its development strategy. Flagship programmes including the Ibom-LED Entrepreneurship Accelerator, the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre (DASAC), and several Digital Innovation Laboratories have been instituted to broaden digital literacy and nurture entrepreneurial talent. The Start Innovation Hub in Uyo has reportedly trained over 3,000 young persons in competencies such as software development, digital literacy fundamentals, and techniques for accessing remote work opportunities. Moreover, the deployment of Easy Pay Shop—a locally developed e-commerce solution—represents a concrete step toward deepening the state's digital economy, generating employment, and showcasing indigenous products. Extant scholarship within Akwa Ibom affirms the significance of vocational and technical education in stimulating small business formation. Abaikpa, Enang, Essien and Udom (2026) demonstrated that such educational offerings appreciably strengthen young people's capacity to initiate and maintain

small enterprises, thereby establishing a base upon which digital entrepreneurship can subsequently develop. Similarly, Thomas, Abaikpa, Daniel and Akpan (2024) confirmed a favourable correlation between small-scale commercial activities and employment generation in Uyo Local Government Area, reinforcing the proposition that entrepreneurship promotion—including its digitally mediated forms—represents a viable pathway for mitigating youth unemployment at the state level. Notwithstanding these promising developments, rigorous empirical evidence on the actual contribution of digital entrepreneurship to youth employability within Akwa Ibom remains sparse. Although multiple interventions currently equip young people with technological proficiencies, the processes by which these capabilities translate into enduring and sustainable livelihoods have received insufficient scholarly attention. Abaikpa, Thomas and Udom (2022) noted that the swift expansion of service industries and intermediary trading activities in developing economies has rendered the rise of "own account workers" a significant concern, underscoring the imperative for more nuanced inquiry into how digital entrepreneurship might furnish structured and sustainable employment pathways. This study directly addresses that imperative by examining the influence of digital entrepreneurship—conceived as a composite construct encompassing digital competencies, infrastructural access, and business model innovation—on youth employability outcomes in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

A. Objective of the Study

To examine the influence of digital entrepreneurship—comprising digital skills proficiency, access to digital infrastructure and platforms, and adoption of digital business models—on the enhancement of youth employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

B. Research Question

To what extent does digital entrepreneurship—comprising digital skills proficiency, access to digital infrastructure and platforms, and adoption of digital business models—influence the enhancement of youth employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?

C. Hypothesis

Digital entrepreneurship—comprising digital skills proficiency, access to digital infrastructure and platforms, and adoption of digital business models—has no statistically significant influence on the enhancement of youth employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Digital Entrepreneurship

Digital entrepreneurship has attracted substantial scholarly attention as the digital economy continues to reshape business landscapes globally. The concept is generally understood as the pursuit of business or economic opportunities predicated upon the deployment of digital technologies (Elia et al., 2020). This definition encapsulates ventures that leverage internet platforms, emerging technologies, and digitally native

operational models to create and capture value. Scholars have observed that digital entrepreneurship encompasses both the creation of new ventures and the transformation of existing businesses through the development of novel digital technologies or the experimental application of such technologies (Nambisan, 2017). The conceptualisation of digital entrepreneurship, however, remains considerably diverse across the literature. Some researchers adopt a broad interpretation, framing digital entrepreneurship as a synthesis of digital technology and entrepreneurial innovation (Hull et al., 2007). Others delimit the concept to the achievement of entrepreneurial objectives through digital technological applications (Giones & Brem, 2017). The definitional diversity extends to characterising digital entrepreneurship as a subcategory of entrepreneurship in which elements that would traditionally be physical are digitised through digital media and technologies (Kollmann, 2016). This perspective emphasises the transformative capacity of digitalisation in reconfiguring conventional business operations.

Furthermore, digital entrepreneurship is conceptualised as the practice of seizing digitally-enabled innovative opportunities discovered in everyday life to build new business ventures (Sussan & Acs, 2017). This characterisation underscores the democratising potential of digital technologies, which lower barriers to entry and enable participation from previously excluded populations. The process involves entrepreneurial creation of digital value through socio-technical digital enablers that support the effective acquisition, processing, distribution, and consumption of digital information (Berger et al., 2021). For the purposes of this study, digital entrepreneurship is operationalised as a composite construct encompassing three interrelated dimensions: digital skills proficiency, access to digital infrastructure and platforms, and adoption of digital business models. Digital skills proficiency refers to the competencies required to effectively utilise digital technologies for entrepreneurial purposes, including coding, digital literacy, and remote work capabilities (Oyedemi, 2012). Access to digital infrastructure encompasses the availability of internet connectivity, digital platforms, and innovation hubs that facilitate entrepreneurial activity (Aker & Mbiti, 2010). Adoption of digital business models pertains to the utilisation of digitally native operational frameworks such as e-commerce, freelancing, and technology-enabled service delivery (Teece, 2010).

Youth Employability

Employability refers to the combination of skills, knowledge, competencies, and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to secure and maintain employment, as well as to progress in their career. For youth, employability encompasses not only technical and vocational skills but also soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and entrepreneurial mindset. In the digital age, employability increasingly requires digital literacy—the ability to use digital tools effectively for work, communication, and problem-solving. The concept of employability is thus dynamic and context-dependent, shaped by labour market demands, technological change, and individual agency. Research in Akwa Ibom State has

highlighted the importance of entrepreneurial skills in enhancing employability. Thomas et al. (2024) found a significant relationship between small-scale enterprise activity and employment outcomes in Uyo Local Government Area, suggesting that equipping youth with entrepreneurial competencies—particularly in the digital domain—can substantially improve their labour market prospects.

Digital Entrepreneurship and Employability Nexus

The relationship between digital entrepreneurship and employability is multifaceted. Digital entrepreneurship can enhance employability through several mechanisms: (a) direct income generation through digital ventures; (b) development of market-relevant digital skills that are transferable to formal employment; (c) cultivation of entrepreneurial competencies including creativity, opportunity recognition, and adaptability; (d) expansion of professional networks and social capital; and (e) demonstration of initiative and self-efficacy that signals employability to potential employers.

B. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three complementary theoretical perspectives: Institutional Theory, the Capability Approach, and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT).

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory provides a lens for understanding how formal and informal rules, norms, and structures shape entrepreneurial behaviour and outcomes. In the context of digital entrepreneurship and youth employability, institutional theory helps explain how government policies, regulatory frameworks, and institutional support mechanisms influence the opportunities available to young digital entrepreneurs. Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2025) applied institutional theory to examine Nigerian digital entrepreneurship policy, finding that incoherent policies, weak institutions, limited access to finance, and inadequate digital competencies impede the effectiveness of government initiatives. In Akwa Ibom State, institutional factors such as the ARISE Agenda, the Startup Act (2022), and the presence of innovation hubs shape the ecosystem within which youth engage in digital entrepreneurship. Empirical work in Akwa Ibom State has underscored the institutional challenges facing entrepreneurs. Abaikpa et al. (2026) identified outdated curriculum, limited access to finance, and poor infrastructural support as significant institutional constraints that negatively affect the performance, establishment, growth, development, and sustainability of small business startups. Thomas et al. (2024) further observed that simplified loan application processes, reduced collateral requirements, and regular maintenance of existing infrastructure are essential for encouraging entrepreneurship and employment generation.

This study draws on institutional theory to examine how the institutional environment in Akwa Ibom State facilitates or constrains youth digital entrepreneurship and its impact on employability. The interaction between institutional structures and individual outcomes is critical: while institutional factors set the structural stage, they do not automatically translate into individual success. The study therefore examines how institutional constraints—including policy incoherence,

limited financing, and inadequate infrastructure—mediate the relationship between digital entrepreneurship and employability outcomes.

The Capability Approach

The Capability Approach, developed by Amartya Sen, focuses on what individuals are able to do and be—their capabilities—rather than merely on their resources or utilities. Applied to digital entrepreneurship and youth employability, the capability approach emphasises how digital entrepreneurship expands young people's agency, skills, and livelihood opportunities. Atsue and Adasu (2025), framing their study of digital entrepreneurship in Benue State by the Capability Approach, found that digital entrepreneurship significantly enhances participants' economic agency, skills, and self-worth. The approach is particularly relevant for understanding how digital entrepreneurship enables young people in Akwa Ibom to convert digital skills and opportunities into meaningful livelihoods, thereby enhancing their employability. Abaikpa et al. (2026) provided empirical support for this perspective, demonstrating that vocational and technical education—which forms the foundation for digital entrepreneurship—enhances individuals' capabilities to establish and sustain small business ventures. In applying the Capability Approach, this study acknowledges that having resources (such as a smartphone or training certificate) is insufficient; the critical issue is whether youth possess the agency and opportunity to convert these into the "functioning" of meaningful employment. This conversion is heavily dependent on the institutional environment (as highlighted by Institutional Theory) and the individual's perception of the technology's utility (as highlighted by UTAUT). Even with high digital capability, a youth may fail to achieve employability if institutional support—such as affordable data or accessible financing—is missing, or if they perceive digital tools as too complex to use effectively.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

The UTAUT model, developed by Venkatesh et al., explains technology adoption and use through four key constructs: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. In the context of digital entrepreneurship, UTAUT helps explain why some young people adopt digital entrepreneurial activities while others do not. Performance expectancy—the degree to which individuals believe that digital entrepreneurship will improve their employment outcomes—is particularly relevant. This study employs UTAUT to examine the factors that influence youth participation in digital entrepreneurship in Akwa Ibom State and how this participation affects employability outcomes. The theory guides the analysis of individual-level factors—including perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, social norms, and available support—that shape engagement with digital entrepreneurial activities. The integrative strength of UTAUT in this research lies in its connection to the other two frameworks. The "facilitating conditions" construct of UTAUT is directly shaped by the institutional environment—such as the availability of internet infrastructure and government-backed hubs in Akwa Ibom State. Similarly, the "performance expectancy" construct is inherently tied to the

Capability Approach, as it measures the individual's belief that engaging in digital entrepreneurship will expand their livelihood capabilities. By situating UTAUT within this broader theoretical ecosystem, the study moves beyond simple technology adoption metrics to examine how perceived usefulness and ease of use, moderated by institutional realities, ultimately shape the tangible employability of youth in the state.

C. Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between digital entrepreneurship and youth employment outcomes in Nigeria and other developing contexts. Atsue and Adasu (2025) investigated the role of legitimate digital entrepreneurship as a catalyst for youth empowerment, social cohesion, and future-building in Benue State, Nigeria. Employing a mixed-methods approach with a survey of 384 digital entrepreneurs across Makurdi, Gboko, and Otukpo, complemented by 25 in-depth interviews and 3 focus group discussions, the study found that digital entrepreneurship significantly enhances participants' economic agency, skills, and self-worth. The research also revealed that collaborative digital hubs and online communities foster new, non-ascriptive identities that bridge ethnic divides, particularly between the Tiv, Idoma, and Iggede youth. Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2025) appraised evolving policy strategies promoting youth empowerment through digital innovation in Nigeria. Using a qualitative research design guided by institutional theory and the theory of change, the study found that incoherent policies, weak institutions, limited access to finance, and inadequate digital competencies impede the effectiveness of government initiatives. The study recommended integrated digital policy frameworks, strengthened public-private partnerships, and targeted investments in digital skills and innovation ecosystems.

Abaikpa, Enang, Essien and Udom (2026) examined the role of vocational and technical education in promoting small business startups in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods approach with a population of 11,990 small business startups and a sample of 387 drawn using Taro Yamane's formula, the study found that outdated curriculum, limited financing, and poor infrastructure have a significant negative impact on the performance, establishment, growth, development, and sustainability of small business startups. The study recommended updating VTE curricula to align with current startup needs, designing accessible financing options, and prioritising infrastructural improvements. Thomas, Abaikpa, Daniel and Akpan (2024) examined the relationship between small-scale enterprises and employment generation in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. Adopting a cross-sectional survey research method with a sample of 361 respondents drawn from a population of 3,725, the study found a positive relationship between small-scale enterprises and employment generation. The study recommended simplified loan application processes, reduced collateral requirements, government policies promoting infrastructure maintenance, and the development of entrepreneurship and business management training programmes.

Abaikpa, Thomas and Udom (2022) observed that the rapid rise of the service industry and "buying and selling" as an ever-increasing trend in developing countries has made the creation of "own account workers" a prominent problem. This observation highlights the need for more structured approaches to entrepreneurship that move beyond subsistence activities to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for youth. Despite these valuable contributions, a significant gap remains in empirical research specifically focused on the relationship between digital entrepreneurship and youth employability in Akwa Ibom State. While the state has witnessed substantial investment in digital infrastructure and youth training programmes, the extent to which these initiatives translate into enhanced employability remains under-researched. This study addresses this gap by providing empirical evidence on the role of digital entrepreneurship in enhancing youth employability in Akwa Ibom State.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The mixed-methods design was appropriate for this study as it allowed for the triangulation of findings and provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between digital entrepreneurship and youth employability. The quantitative component involved a survey of youth engaged in digital entrepreneurship, while the qualitative component involved in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to capture the lived experiences and perceptions of participants.

B. Study Area

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Akwa Ibom is located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria and has a population of approximately 5.5 million people. The state capital is Uyo. Akwa Ibom was selected as the study area because of its significant investment in digital infrastructure and youth empowerment programmes under the ARISE Agenda. The state hosts several innovation hubs, including the Start Innovation Hub in Uyo, the Ibom-LED Entrepreneurship Accelerator, and the Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre, making it an ideal location for studying digital entrepreneurship and youth employability. The study focused on Uyo Local Government Area as the primary site, given its status as the state capital and the concentration of digital entrepreneurship activities, with supplementary data collected from other selected LGAs where digital entrepreneurship initiatives are active.

C. Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised all youth (aged 18–35) engaged in digital entrepreneurship activities in Akwa Ibom State. This included young people involved in e-commerce, app development, digital marketing, social media content creation, freelancing, software development, and other technology-enabled entrepreneurial ventures. Based on data from the Start Innovation Hub, which has trained over 3,000 youths, and other digital entrepreneurship programmes in the state, the estimated population of youth engaged in digital

entrepreneurship in Akwa Ibom State was approximately 5,000.

D. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. Stage 1 (Stratified Sampling): The study area was stratified into three strata based on the concentration of digital entrepreneurship activities: (a) Uyo (highest concentration), (b) other urban centres (Ikot Ekpene, Eket), and (c) rural areas with digital entrepreneurship initiatives. Stage 2 (Purposive Sampling): From each stratum, specific digital entrepreneurship hubs, training centres, and co-working spaces were purposively selected. These included the Start Innovation Hub, Ibom-LED Centre, Dakkada Skills Acquisition Centre, and ARISE ICT Hub. Stage 3 (Convenience Sampling): From each selected hub and centre, youth engaged in digital entrepreneurship were conveniently sampled. For a population of 5,000, the required sample size at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error was approximately 357. To account for non-response, the sample size was increased to 400.

E. Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "The Role of Digital Entrepreneurship in Enhancing Youth Employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria Questionnaire" (TRDEEYEQ), developed by the researcher.

F. Method of Data Analysis

This study employed a dual-method statistical approach to analyze the questionnaire data. Descriptive statistics—

including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. For inferential analysis, simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis examining the effect of entrepreneurial networking on business survival, as this method is appropriate for assessing the relationship between an independent variable (entrepreneurial networking) and a dependent variable (business survival). All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 25.0, with the significance level set at $p < 0.05$.

IV. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A. Presentation of Data

This section is basically designed to present, analyse and interpret the primary data obtained via the questionnaire which was purposively administered to the respondents. These are shown in the Table I.

TABLE I. Number of questionnaire copies administered and returned

		Percentage
Copies of Questionnaire Administered	400	
Copies of Questionnaire Retrieved	375	93.7
Copies of Questionnaire not Retrieved	25	6.3
Total		100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

From the Table, out of 400 questionnaires administered, 375 representing 93.7% were successfully returned. Twenty-five (25) copies of questionnaire representing 6.3 % were not returned.

TABLE II. Percentage analysis of the Responses on Digital Entrepreneurship

Digital Entrepreneurship Dimension	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
I have the digital skills (e.g., social media management, graphic design, coding) needed to earn income online.	151 (40.3%)	127 (33.9%)	29 (7.7%)	45 (12.0%)	23 (6.1%)	375 (100%)
I have consistent access to affordable internet and a functional digital device in my locality.	149 (39.7%)	106 (28.3%)	43 (11.5%)	50 (13.3%)	27 (7.2%)	375 (100%)
I use digital platforms (e.g., social media, freelancing sites, e-commerce apps) to market or sell products/services.	147 (39.2%)	126 (33.6%)	29 (7.7%)	48 (12.8%)	25 (6.7%)	375 (100%)
I have adopted digital payment systems (e.g., POS, bank apps, online transfers) for my business or work transactions.	139 (37.1%)	109 (29.1%)	45 (12.0%)	52 (13.9%)	30 (8.0%)	375 (100%)
I regularly update my digital business strategies based on online trends or analytics.	151 (40.3%)	124 (33.1%)	35 (9.3%)	43 (11.5%)	22 (5.9%)	375 (100%)

Source: Researcher's computation (2026)

Table II presents the percentage analysis of respondents' views on the various dimensions of digital entrepreneurship. The results indicate that the respondents generally demonstrated a high level of digital entrepreneurial engagement and capability, as the majority of respondents selected either *Strongly Agree* or *Agree* across all five statements.

For the statement "I have the digital skills (e.g., social media management, graphic design, coding) needed to earn income online," 151 respondents (40.3%) strongly agreed, while 127 (33.9%) agreed. Thus, 74.2% of the respondents expressed a positive response. Conversely, 29 respondents (7.7%) were undecided, 45 (12.0%) disagreed and 23 (6.1%) strongly disagreed. This result suggests that a substantial proportion of the respondents possess digital skills that can be applied to income-generating activities, indicating that digital

competencies constitute an important foundation for youth participation in the digital economy.

Regarding consistent access to affordable internet and a functional digital device, 149 respondents (39.7%) strongly agreed and 106 (28.3%) agreed, producing a combined positive response of 68.0%. However, 43 respondents (11.5%) were undecided, while 50 (13.3%) disagreed and 27 (7.2%) strongly disagreed. Although the majority reported adequate access to digital infrastructure, the relatively higher proportion of respondents who disagreed or were undecided suggests that affordability, internet availability and access to functional digital devices remain challenges for a notable segment of the respondents.

The statement "I use digital platforms (e.g., social media, freelancing sites, e-commerce apps) to market or sell products/services" attracted strong positive responses. A total of 147 respondents (39.2%) strongly agreed and 126 (33.6%)

agreed, giving a combined agreement of 72.8%. Meanwhile, 29 respondents (7.7%) were undecided, 48 (12.8%) disagreed and 25 (6.7%) strongly disagreed. This finding demonstrates that many young people are actively using digital platforms to promote and commercialize products and services. It also suggests that social media, freelancing platforms and e-commerce applications are increasingly becoming avenues for entrepreneurial participation.

Similarly, the adoption of digital payment systems such as POS, banking applications and online transfers received positive responses from the majority of respondents. Specifically, 139 respondents (37.1%) strongly agreed and 109 (29.1%) agreed, resulting in a combined positive response of 66.2%. On the other hand, 45 respondents (12.0%) were undecided, 52 (13.9%) disagreed and 30 (8.0%) strongly disagreed. Although this represents a majority, it is the lowest level of agreement among the five indicators. This may

suggest that some young entrepreneurs still experience barriers to fully adopting digital financial technologies for business and work transactions.

The final statement, "I regularly update my digital business strategies based on online trends or analytics," recorded one of the strongest positive responses. A total of 151 respondents (40.3%) strongly agreed and 124 (33.1%) agreed, representing a combined agreement of 73.4%. In contrast, 35 respondents (9.3%) were undecided, 43 (11.5%) disagreed and 22 (5.9%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that many respondents recognize the importance of monitoring online trends and analytics and adjusting their digital business strategies accordingly. Such adaptability is important in a rapidly changing digital environment where consumer preferences, technologies and online market conditions continuously evolve.

TABLE III. Percentage analysis of the Responses on Adoption of youth employability

Youth employability	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
My involvement in digital entrepreneurship has improved my chances of getting hired for a formal job.	151 (40.3%)	123 (32.8%)	38 (10.1%)	44 (11.7%)	19 (5.1%)	375 (100%)
I have created my own source of income or self-employment through digital entrepreneurial activities.	146 (38.9%)	130 (34.7%)	48 (12.8%)	36 (9.6%)	15 (4.0%)	375 (100%)
Digital entrepreneurship has made me more confident in my ability to compete in the labour market.	137 (36.5%)	127 (33.9%)	31 (8.3%)	54 (14.4%)	26 (6.9%)	375 (100%)
I have gained relevant work experience through digital entrepreneurship that employers find valuable.	149 (39.7%)	133 (35.5%)	29 (7.7%)	41 (10.9%)	23 (6.1%)	375 (100%)
My overall financial stability has improved as a result of engaging in digital entrepreneurship.	147 (39.2%)	104 (27.7%)	49 (13.1%)	48 (12.8%)	27 (7.2%)	375 (100%)

Source: Researcher's computation (2026)

Table III presents the respondents' views on the extent to which digital entrepreneurship has contributed to their youth employability. The results generally indicate a positive perception of youth employability among the respondents, as the majority selected either *Strongly Agree* or *Agree* across all the items.

For the statement that involvement in digital entrepreneurship has improved respondents' chances of getting hired for a formal job, 151 respondents (40.3%) strongly agreed and 123 (32.8%) agreed, giving a combined positive response of 73.1%. In contrast, 38 respondents (10.1%) were undecided, while 44 (11.7%) disagreed and 19 (5.1%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that a substantial majority of the respondents perceive digital entrepreneurship as improving their attractiveness to formal employers.

Regarding the statement that respondents have created their own source of income or self-employment through digital entrepreneurial activities, 146 respondents (38.9%) strongly agreed and 130 (34.7%) agreed, resulting in a combined agreement of 73.6%. Meanwhile, 48 respondents (12.8%) were undecided, 36 (9.6%) disagreed and 15 (4.0%) strongly disagreed. This result indicates that digital entrepreneurship is not only perceived as a pathway to formal employment but also as an avenue through which young people can create independent sources of income.

The finding that digital entrepreneurship has made respondents more confident in their ability to compete in the labour market also received substantial support. Specifically, 137 respondents (36.5%) strongly agreed and 127 (33.9%)

agreed, producing a combined positive response of 70.4%. However, 31 respondents (8.3%) were undecided, 54 (14.4%) disagreed and 26 (6.9%) strongly disagreed. The result indicates that participation in digital entrepreneurship may enhance young people's confidence and perceived competitiveness in the labour market.

Similarly, the statement that respondents have gained relevant work experience through digital entrepreneurship that employers find valuable attracted strong agreement. A total of 149 respondents (39.7%) strongly agreed, while 133 (35.5%) agreed, giving a combined agreement of 75.2%, the highest positive response recorded across the five indicators. Only 29 respondents (7.7%) were undecided, while 41 (10.9%) disagreed and 23 (6.1%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that respondents particularly recognize the practical work experience acquired through digital entrepreneurial activities as an important component of their employability.

Finally, the statement that overall financial stability has improved as a result of engaging in digital entrepreneurship received 147 (39.2%) strongly agreeing and 104 (27.7%) agreeing, representing a combined positive response of 66.9%. On the other hand, 49 respondents (13.1%) were undecided, 48 (12.8%) disagreed and 27 (7.2%) strongly disagreed. Although this item recorded the lowest level of agreement among the five indicators, the result still demonstrates that approximately two-thirds of respondents perceive digital entrepreneurship as contributing positively to their financial stability.

B. Testing of Hypothesis

Hypothesis One

Digital entrepreneurship—comprising digital skills proficiency, access to digital infrastructure and platforms, and adoption of digital business models—has no statistically significant influence on the enhancement of youth employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.867 ^a	.752	.751	.41283

a. Predictors: (Constant), Digital Entrepreneurship

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	192.914	1	192.914	1131.914
	Residual	63.571	373	.170	.000 ^a
	Total	256.485	374		

a. Dependent Variable: Youth employability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Digital Entrepreneurship

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.770	.095	8.139	.000
	Digital Entrepreneurship	.808	.024	33.644	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Youth employability

The model summary shows an R-value of 0.867, indicating a very strong positive relationship between digital entrepreneurship and youth employability. The R^2 of 0.752 means that digital entrepreneurship explains 75.2% of the variation in youth employability, while the remaining 24.8% is attributable to other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 of 0.751 confirms that the model has strong explanatory power.

The ANOVA result further demonstrates that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 1131.914$, $p < 0.001$). This means that digital entrepreneurship significantly predicts youth employability and that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

The coefficient result provides further evidence of the positive effect. Digital entrepreneurship has an unstandardized coefficient of 0.808, with a standard error of 0.024 and a standardized beta coefficient of 0.867. The corresponding t-value of 33.644 and p-value of 0.000 indicate that the effect is statistically significant. Thus, a one-unit increase in digital entrepreneurship is associated with an estimated 0.808-unit increase in youth employability, holding other factors constant.

Therefore, if the hypothesis states that digital entrepreneurship has no significant effect on youth employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, the null hypothesis should be rejected.

C. Discussion of Finding

The regression result indicates that digital entrepreneurship has a positive and statistically significant effect on youth employability. The model produced an R-value of 0.867, indicating a very strong positive relationship between digital entrepreneurship and youth employability. The R^2 value of 0.752 shows that digital entrepreneurship explains 75.2% of the variation in youth employability, while the remaining

24.8% is attributable to other factors not included in the model. The model was also statistically significant, as indicated by the F-statistic of 1,131.914 and probability value of 0.000. Furthermore, the coefficient of digital entrepreneurship was positive and significant ($B = 0.808$, $\beta = 0.867$, $t = 33.644$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that improvements in digital entrepreneurship are associated with substantial improvements in youth employability. The finding can be explained by the fact that digital entrepreneurship equips young people with skills that are increasingly relevant to contemporary labour markets. Digital entrepreneurship involves the ability to identify opportunities, develop and market products or services through digital platforms, use online technologies, manage digital businesses and exploit emerging technologies for economic purposes. These capabilities can improve employability because they provide young people with both technical and entrepreneurial competencies that can be applied in conventional employment, self-employment and freelance work. The World Bank emphasizes that digital skills are essential for individuals to participate effectively in an increasingly digital economy and identifies digital and entrepreneurial skills as important components of workforce development. The finding is also consistent with the position of the International Labour Organization (ILO) that entrepreneurship and skills development are important mechanisms for improving youth labour-market outcomes. The ILO's *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024* reports that interventions involving skills training and entrepreneurship tend to produce relatively strong improvements in youth labour-market outcomes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. This also result collaborate with the study and finding of (Atsue, & Adasu, 2025).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that digital entrepreneurship has a positive and statistically significant effect on youth employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The findings confirm that digital skills proficiency, access to digital infrastructure, and adoption of digital business models substantially enhance young people's capacity to secure employment, engage in self-employment, and participate effectively in the digital economy. Based on these findings, it is recommended that government agencies and policymakers invest in expanding access to digital infrastructure, including affordable internet and digital devices, across Akwa Ibom State. Training institutions and youth development organisations should implement comprehensive digital entrepreneurship programmes that combine technical skills with business management competencies. Financial institutions and development partners should provide accessible funding and mentorship opportunities for young digital entrepreneurs. Additionally, curricula at tertiary institutions should be revised to integrate digital entrepreneurship education, preparing graduates for both conventional employment and self-employment in the digital economy.

REFERENCES

- [1]. U. A. Abaikpa, I. B. Enang, I. I. Essien, and E.-O. E. Udom, "The role of vocational and technical education in promoting small business startups in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria," *African Journal of Commercial Studies*, vol. 7, issue 3, pp. 278-286, 2026. <https://doi.org/10.59413/ajocs/v7.i3.34>
- [2]. U. A. Abaikpa, C. D. Thomas, and S. D. Udom, "Imperatives of small-scale businesses and employment generation in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State," *African Journal of Commercial Studies*, 2022.
- [3]. T. E. Atsue and M. O. Adasu, "Beyond 'Yahoo' and subsistence: Digital entrepreneurship as a catalyst for youth empowerment, social cohesion, and future-building in Benue State, Nigeria," *Jurnal Alpamet*, pp. 1-48, 2025.
- [4]. V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, issue 2, pp. 77-101, 2006.
- [5]. A. P. Chiamogu, and U. P. Chiamogu, "Public policy and digital entrepreneurship in Nigeria: Evolving strategies for enhancing youth empowerment for inclusive economic growth," In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Sustainable Business and Entrepreneurship (ICSBE 2025)*, pp. 313-327, Springer, 2025.
- [6]. R. V. Krejcie and D. W. Morgan, "Determining sample size for research activities," *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, vol. 30, issue 3, pp. 607-610, 1970.
- [7]. C. D. Thomas, U. A. Abaikpa, U. S. Daniel, and O.-O. O. Akpan, "Imperatives of small-scale businesses and employment generation in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State," *African Journal of Commercial Studies*, vol. 5, issue 4, pp. 186-202, 2024.
- [8]. V. Venkatesh, M. G. Morris, G. B. Davis, and F. D. Davis, "User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view," *MIS Quarterly*, vol. 27, issue 3, pp. 425-478, 2003.

APPENDIX I

Questionnaire

Please read carefully each of the statement below and tick to indicate your agreement or disagreement to each item. Each item has to do with the influence of digital entrepreneurship—comprising digital skills proficiency, access to digital infrastructure and platforms, and adoption of digital business models—on the enhancement of youth employability in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The level or degrees of your responses are: Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D) and Neutral (N).

S/N	INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP—COMPRISING DIGITAL SKILLS PROFICIENCY, ACCESS TO DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLATFORMS, AND ADOPTION OF DIGITAL BUSINESS MODELS—ON THE ENHANCEMENT OF YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA.	SA	A	SD	D	N
A	Influence of Digital Entrepreneurship					
1	I have the digital skills (e.g., social media management, graphic design, coding) needed to earn income online.					
2	I have consistent access to affordable internet and a functional digital device in my locality.					
3	I use digital platforms (e.g., social media, freelancing sites, e-commerce apps) to market or sell products/services.					
4	I have adopted digital payment systems (e.g., POS, bank apps, online transfers) for my business or work transactions.					
5	I regularly update my digital business strategies based on online trends or analytics.					
B	Adoption of Digital Business Models					
6	My involvement in digital entrepreneurship has improved my chances of getting hired for a formal job.					
7	I have created my own source of income or self-employment through digital entrepreneurial activities.					
8	Digital entrepreneurship has made me more confident in my ability to compete in the labour market.					
9	I have gained relevant work experience through digital entrepreneurship that employers find valuable.					
10	My overall financial stability has improved as a result of engaging in digital entrepreneurship.					