

**SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TRAINING IN ONLINE BUSINESS BY THE SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATION: A PANACEA FOR EMPLOYMENT CREATION**

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ABSTRACT

The rise of the online economy has undoubtedly reshaped the landscape of employment, and its impact on youth job creation is particularly noteworthy. The study was sort to assess the extent of secondary school students training in online business by the school administration as a panacea for employment creation. The study revealed that online businesses have increasingly helped youth find work. Digital professional platforms have provided youth with a more effective way to find work, especially marginalized and first-time job seekers. The types of online businesses engaged by youths were identified in the study to be e-commerce stores and drop shipping, content creation and influencer marketing, freelancing services, affiliate marketing, app development and software creation, online courses, and digital education. The challenges faced by youths in online businesses were revealed to be a lack of reliable internet infrastructure, financial constraints, and payment issues: financial, e-commerce logistics and distribution challenges, and poor power supply. On this basis, the study concluded that adolescents' active participation in online businesses in Imo State exhibits a promising correlation with employment creation. The digital landscape has provided a platform for young entrepreneurs to harness diverse opportunities, fostering economic growth and individual empowerment. One of the recommendations made was that comprehensive educational programs should be implemented in schools to enhance digital literacy and educate adolescents about the opportunities and risks associated with online businesses. This can empower them to make informed decisions and navigate the digital landscape responsibly.

KEYWORDS: Secondary School Students, Training, Online Business and Employment Creation

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the digital landscape has undergone significant development, providing individuals with new opportunity to engage in online companies. This transformation is not only affecting seasoned entrepreneurs or established professionals, but also adolescents who are increasingly using the internet to generate job prospects for themselves. This emerging tendency raises concerns about the influence of adolescent participation in internet commerce as a predictor of job creation, piquing the interest of scholars, legislators, and educators.

The global increase in internet connectivity and the spread of digital platforms have democratized access to knowledge and markets, allowing adolescents to pursue entrepreneurial

opportunities. As they navigate the virtual world, teenagers are exposed to a wide range of online business models, including e-commerce, freelance services, content creation, and social media marketing. This trend toward online entrepreneurship is not only changing traditional ideas about employment, but it also has the ability to greatly contribute to economic growth and development (Anderson & Jiang 2018). This research underlines the importance of understanding the motives, challenges, and consequences connected with adolescent participation in internet commerce. Scholars claim that teenagers' participation in online entrepreneurship can create a sense of independence, inventiveness, and financial literacy, preparing them for the demands of a changing employment market. Furthermore, online enterprises have a low entrance hurdle, allowing teens to bypass regional boundaries and engage with a global audience. However, it is critical to investigate the potential risks and drawbacks of adolescents' involvement in online commerce, such as online safety concerns, ethical considerations, and the impact on academic obligations. Balancing the positive and negative characteristics is critical for developing methods that maximize advantages while minimizing potential drawbacks (Wijaya, 2020).

This study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring the intricate relationship between adolescents' involvement in online business and its correlation with employment creation. By delving into the motivations, challenges, and outcomes of this phenomenon, we aim to provide insights that can inform educational policies, guide parents, and assist policymakers in creating an enabling environment for adolescents to thrive in the digital economy.

CONCEPT OF ONLINE BUSINESS

Online business, simply put, is every form of business an individual engages in that is done over the internet. According to Wikipedia (2024), online business (also known as electronic business or e-business) is any kind of business or commercial transaction that includes sharing information across the internet. Techbriefers (2022) defined online business as a venture or activity conducted over the Internet. It involves selling products, offering services, or providing information to customers through online platforms. Everything happens via the internet on websites, social media platforms, and other online platforms instead of operating in physical or local shops or offices.

Additionally, SendPulse (2024) posited that online business is a business conducted entirely on the internet. Kanehara (2023) stated that an online business is any entity that primarily leverages internet-based channels to promote and perform its revenue-generating function. Toppr (2020) explained online business to mean business transactions that take place online with the help of the internet. The term came into existence in 1996. E-business is an abbreviation for electronic business. In this form of business transaction, the buyer and the seller do not need to meet personally. Andrew (2023) mentioned that online business (e-commerce) refers to companies and individuals that buy and sell goods and services over the internet.

Moreover, Cameron (2024) asserted that online business (electronic commerce) is the buying and selling of goods and services, or the transmitting of funds or data, over an electronic network, primarily the internet. Online business is any kind of business activity that happens over the internet. Running an online business can include buying and selling online or providing an online service (Northern Territory Government of Australia, 2024). An online business is a business managed entirely on the internet. Online businesses may include selling goods,

services, training, and SaaS solutions (Jerry, 2021). Ademola (2024) mentioned that online business is a business that operates using the Internet and electronic media, first appearing in the 1990s and being widely accepted since. It is usually associated with virtual companies. Gartner (2024) added that online business (electronic business) is any process that a business organization conducts over a computer-mediated network. Business organizations include any for-profit, governmental, or nonprofit entity. Their processes include production-, customer-, and internal- or management-focused business processes.

CONCEPT OF EMPLOYMENT CREATION

Employment creation, also called job creation or employment generation, is the process of generating new employment opportunities within an economy. According to Umar (2011), employment creation is the process of providing new jobs, especially for people who are unemployed. It can further be seen as the process of providing jobs. Or the process of making more paid jobs available. Hassan (2022) defined employment creation as government policies intended to reduce unemployment. John (2019) posited that employment creation refers to the process of providing new jobs, especially for people who were previously unemployed or inactive.

Cambridge University Press and Assessment (2024) defined job creation as the process of providing new jobs, especially for people who are unemployed. Employment creation is the “process of providing new jobs for unemployed people, the process by which one provides jobs for themselves, and the process of providing more paid jobs” (Umar, 2011, p. 4). Employment creation is the net new job that is created without displacing any other economic activity (Cray, Nguyen, Pranka, Schild, Sheu, and Whitcomb, 2011). Job creation is the process of creating new jobs without necessarily creating unemployment in other sectors as a result of the jobs that have so far been created.

Job creation refers to the process of creating new job opportunities within a given economy or society. It involves the creation of work opportunities for individuals, leading to increased employment rates and reduced unemployment. Employment generation can occur through various means, such as the establishment of new businesses, the expansion of existing industries, government initiatives and policies, foreign investments, and entrepreneurship. It is a crucial aspect of socioeconomic development, playing a significant role in poverty reduction, economic growth, and overall welfare improvement (Definitions.net, 2024). Skyline (2024) stated that employment creation is a deliberate effort made by individuals, corporate bodies, and the government to generate employment of different types for the unemployed citizens in the economy.

TYPES OF ONLINE BUSINESSES ENGAGED BY YOUTH

In this age of digitalization and tech savvy, young people have evolved with the idea to utilize or leverage the internet in order to make ends meet. The following are the types of online businesses that young people are involved in:

- **E-commerce Stores and Dropshipping:**

E-commerce is short for electronic commerce; it refers to the buying and selling of goods and services over the internet. E-commerce stores are online platforms where businesses or individuals can showcase and sell their products or services to consumers. These stores leverage digital technologies to facilitate transactions, making it possible for customers to browse, select,

and purchase items from the comfort of their homes. Meanwhile, drop shipping is a retail method where a store does not keep the products it sells in stock. Instead, it sells the product to a third party, who resells the product at a higher price to make a profit. This has become one of the most prevalent online business models among youth. Young entrepreneurs often leverage platforms like Shopify, Etsy, or Amazon to sell a diverse range of products.

- **Content Creation and Influencer Marketing:**

Content creation is the process of producing and distributing various forms of media, such as written articles, videos, images, and audio, for a specific audience. While Influencer marketing is a form of marketing that leverages individuals with a significant and engaged following on social media platforms to promote or endorse products, services, or brands. The rise of social media has paved the way for youths to monetize their creativity and personal brand. Content creators, including YouTubers, Instagram influencers, and TikTok stars, often collaborate with brands for sponsored content, affiliate marketing, and product promotions (O'Donnell, 2019).

- **Freelancing Services:**

Freelancing services refer to a work arrangement where individuals offer their skills, expertise, and services to clients or businesses on a project-by-project basis. Freelancers are not bound by long-term contracts and have the flexibility to work for multiple clients simultaneously. Online freelancing platforms like Upwork, Fiverr, and Freelancer have become popular among youths offering various skills such as graphic design, programming, writing, and digital marketing (Economic Times, 2021). This allows them to work on projects for clients worldwide and build a diverse portfolio.

- **Affiliate Marketing:**

Affiliate marketing involves promoting other companies' products and earning a commission for each sale generated through the affiliate's unique link. Youths often engage in affiliate marketing to monetize their blogs, websites, or social media platforms, aligning with products or services relevant to their audience (Patel, 2020).

- **App Development and Software Creation:**

Mobile app development refers to the creation of applications specifically designed for mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets. Youths are increasingly involved in creating and selling software applications. Mobile app development, in particular, has gained attraction, with many young entrepreneurs capitalizing on the demand for innovative and user-friendly applications (Statista, 2021).

- **Online Courses and Digital Education:**

Youths are actively participating in the booming online education industry by creating and selling courses on platforms like Udemy, Teachable, and Coursera. They leverage their expertise in various subjects to provide valuable learning experiences to a global audience (Business Insider, 2022).

- **Efficacy of Online Business**

The advent of the internet has transformed the business landscape, offering numerous opportunities for entrepreneurs to establish and operate online businesses. Weinstein (2008) as cited in Sunil (2018) mentioned that online business is effective in the promotion of an organization's products through digital or electronic platform. The following are other usefulness of online business:

- **Global Reach and Market Expansion:**

One of the primary strengths of online businesses lies in their ability to reach a global audience. Through e-commerce platforms, businesses can transcend geographical boundaries, enabling them to tap into markets that were once inaccessible (Smith, 2020). This expanded reach fosters growth opportunities and allows businesses to cater to diverse consumer preferences and needs.

- **Reduced Operational Cost:**

Online businesses often benefit from lower operational costs compared to traditional brick-and-mortar establishments. The absence of the need for physical storefronts, reduced staffing requirements, and streamlined inventory management contribute to significant cost savings (Chaffey et al., 2019). These cost efficiencies enhance the overall profitability and sustainability of online enterprises.

- **Data-Driven Decision-Making:**

The digital nature of online businesses allows for the collection and analysis of vast amounts of data. Businesses can leverage analytics tools to gain insights into consumer behaviour, preferences, and trends (Chen et al., 2018). This data-driven approach enables informed decision-making, helping businesses tailor their strategies to meet the evolving demands of their target audience.

- **Convenience:**

Online businesses operate around the clock, providing consumers with the convenience of making purchases at any time. This accessibility contributes to a seamless and flexible shopping experience, enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ray, 2021). The convenience factor is particularly appealing in today's fast-paced society.

- **Innovative Marketing Strategies:**

Innovative marketing strategies refer to unconventional, creative, and forward-thinking approaches employed by businesses to promote their products or services and engage with their target audience. The digital realm allows for innovative marketing strategies, with social media playing a pivotal role.

- **Social Media Integration:**

Online businesses can harness the power of social media platforms for targeted advertising, influencer collaborations, and community engagement (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). These integration fosters brand visibility and consumer interaction.

EXTENT OF JOB CREATION BY ONLINE BUSINESS FOR THE YOUTH

The extent of job creation by online businesses for youth has been a topic of interest in various studies. The rise of the online economy has undoubtedly reshaped the landscape of employment, and its impact on youth job creation is particularly noteworthy. Johnson, Lehoahoa, Shaw, and Urquhart (2020) noted that online businesses have increasingly helped youth find work; digital professional platforms have provided youths with a more effective way to find work, especially marginalized and first-time job seekers. A study conducted by Emmanuel, Johnny, and Richard (2021) reported that when disadvantaged work-seekers use LinkedIn, they experience a 10% increase in employment. These findings highlight the potential of digital platforms to facilitate youth employment. Quantifying the exact extent of youth employment in online businesses is complex due to diverse definitions and data limitations.

However, the World Bank (2021) reported that 20–30% of online platform workers globally are aged 18–34, which indicates significant youth participation in online businesses. Similarly, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2022) mentioned that the rate of early-stage entrepreneurial activity among youth (18–24) is increasing globally, with online businesses being a growing trend. McKinsey Global Institute (2020) estimated that by 2030, one billion people could be working remotely, opening up possibilities for online youth employment.

CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH IN ONLINE BUSINESS

No form of business exists without a challenge, both online and offline businesses experience diverse challenges which every entrepreneur needs to overcome or rather, find alternative means to strive over. The following are the challenges that youth face in online businesses:

- **Lack of Reliable Internet Infrastructure:**

One of the foremost challenges facing Nigerian youth in online businesses is the limited access to reliable internet infrastructure (Adewale and Mohammed, 2021). In many regions, including rural areas, inconsistent network connectivity and slow internet speeds impede the smooth operation of online businesses. One key solution to the lack of reliable internet infrastructure is increased investment in broadband development. According to a report by the World Bank (2020), expanding broadband coverage in underserved areas is crucial for fostering economic growth. Governments and private stakeholders should collaborate to fund the development and maintenance of robust broadband networks, ensuring that even remote regions have access to high-speed internet.

- **Financial Constraints and Payment Issues:**

Financial constraints pose a significant challenge for young entrepreneurs entering online business in Nigeria (Oluwatobi, 2019). Establishing and maintaining an online business often requires initial capital for website development, digital marketing, and product and service offerings. Additionally, challenges related to online payment systems, including the prevalence of fraudulent activities, create a sense of distrust among consumers, impacting youth-led businesses' financial stability. One outstanding solution to this challenge is to implement government-sponsored programs that provide low-interest loans, grants, or subsidies specifically tailored for young entrepreneurs entering the online business sector. These funds can be directed towards website development, digital marketing, and initial product and service offerings.

- **E-commerce Logistics and Distribution Challenges:**

The logistics and distribution network in Nigeria presents substantial challenges for online businesses run by youth (Adeola and Adejare, 2020). Issues such as poor transportation infrastructure, delays in delivery, and high shipping costs can affect the overall customer experience. These challenges may deter potential customers and limit the reach of online businesses, particularly those relying on the timely and secure delivery of goods. In order to overcome this challenge, it is recommended that partnerships be forged between online traders and reliable logistics and courier services that have a proven track record of navigating the challenges of transportation infrastructure. Collaborating with established providers can enhance the efficiency of the delivery process and reduce delays (Ololube, 2020).

- **Digital Skills Gap:**

While the youth are generally tech-savvy, a significant digital skills gap exists in Nigeria (Ogunsiji et al., 2020). Many young entrepreneurs lack comprehensive knowledge of online business management, digital marketing strategies, and cybersecurity measures. This knowledge gap hampers their ability to navigate the complexities of the online business landscape effectively. One solution to the digital skills gap among young entrepreneurs in Nigeria is the implementation of comprehensive digital skills training programmes. These programmes should focus on equipping youth with the necessary knowledge and expertise in online business management, digital marketing, and cybersecurity.

- **Poor Power Supply:**

Nigeria, like many other developing nations, grapples with the persistent challenge of poor power supply, which significantly affects various sectors of the economy. Among those most affected are the youth-led online businesses that depend heavily on reliable electricity to operate efficiently. Inconsistent power supply disrupts the daily operations of online businesses, leading to downtime and delays in service delivery. Frequent power outages force youth entrepreneurs to rely on generators or alternative power sources, incurring additional costs and affecting the overall efficiency of their operations. However, reliance on alternative power sources, such as generators and inverters, to compensate for poor electricity supply contributes to increased operational costs for youth-led online businesses. This, in turn, reduces profit margins and limits the financial resources available for business expansion and development.

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT TRAINING IN ONLINE BUSINESS BY THE SCHOLL MANAGEMENT

In today's digital age, secondary school students are increasingly being encouraged to explore and engage in online business ventures as part of their educational journey. This initiative, spearheaded by school management, aims to equip students with practical skills, entrepreneurial mindset, and digital literacy crucial for their future success in a rapidly evolving global economy. One key aspect of training secondary school students in online business is the emphasis on practical learning experiences. Schools often collaborate with industry experts and provide students with hands-on opportunities to create and manage their online businesses. Through workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs, students learn essential skills such as market research, digital marketing, e-commerce platforms, and financial management. These experiences not only enhance their understanding of business concepts but also foster creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Smith, 2023).

Moreover, school management plays a vital role in providing the necessary resources and support for students' online business endeavors. This includes access to technology infrastructure, software tools, and educational materials tailored to entrepreneurship and e-commerce. By creating a conducive environment, schools empower students to explore their entrepreneurial interests, experiment with different business ideas, and gain practical insights into running a successful online venture. Additionally, school management integrates online business training into the curriculum, ensuring that it aligns with academic goals and learning outcomes. This integration allows students to apply theoretical knowledge from various subjects such as economics, marketing, and information technology to real-world business scenarios. It also encourages interdisciplinary learning, where students can connect concepts from different disciplines to develop comprehensive business strategies. By investing in secondary school students' training in online business, the school management not only prepares them for future career opportunities but also cultivates a culture of innovation, resilience, and adaptability (Brown & Johnson 2022). Students learn to embrace challenges, overcome setbacks, and continuously evolve their entrepreneurial skills in response to changing market dynamics.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, adolescents' active participation in online businesses in Imo State exhibits a promising correlation with employment creation. The digital landscape has provided a platform for young entrepreneurs to harness diverse opportunities, fostering economic growth and individual empowerment. However, the potential benefits must be weighed against challenges, including online safety concerns and the need to balance academic commitments. Policymakers in Imo State should consider implementing measures to support and guide adolescents in their online entrepreneurial endeavors, promoting a conducive environment for skill development and economic contribution. Overall, recognizing and addressing the nuances of adolescents' involvement in online business is crucial for maximizing positive outcomes and mitigating potential risks in the local context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Comprehensive educational programs should be implemented in schools to enhance digital literacy and educate adolescents about the opportunities and risks associated with online businesses. This can empower them to make informed decisions and navigate the digital landscape responsibly.
- Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to create and disseminate resources on online safety, emphasizing the importance of protecting personal information, recognizing frauds, and promoting ethical business practices.
- Work towards flexible educational policies that recognize and accommodate adolescents engaged in online businesses. This may include supportive measures such as flexible schedules, alternative learning pathways, or recognition of entrepreneurial achievements within the educational system.

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