

## Digital Entrepreneurship Among Youth In Thiruvananthapuram District: A Pathway To Self-Employment

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### ABSTRACT

The rapid proliferation of digital platforms has opened new avenues for youth to engage in entrepreneurial activities, offering opportunities for income generation, flexibility, and innovation. This study explores the motivations and perceptions of youth in Thiruvananthapuram district toward digital entrepreneurship as a pathway to self-employment. Using primary data collected from 110 respondents enrolled in commerce and management-related courses, the study employs Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to identify motivational factors and Chi-Square tests to examine associations between demographic characteristics and perceptions of digital entrepreneurship. Findings reveal four key motivational dimensions—Income & Independence, Creativity & Innovation, Skills & Support, and Autonomy & Family Support—that significantly influence youth inclination toward digital entrepreneurship. Additionally, education level, employment status, and area of residence were significantly associated with perceptions regarding job stability and sustainability, while gender and monthly income showed no significant impact. The study highlights the potential of digital entrepreneurship as a viable long-term career for educated youth in semi-urban and rural areas, emphasizing the role of skill development, family support, and digital literacy. Policy implications include fostering digital entrepreneurial ecosystems, providing mentorship, and promoting awareness programs.

**Keywords:** Digital entrepreneurship, youth motivation, self-employment.

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative force in the global economy, offering youth unprecedented opportunities to innovate, create, and engage in self-employment. Digital entrepreneurship refers to the process of identifying, developing, and leveraging digital technologies, platforms, and online resources to establish and manage business ventures. Unlike

traditional entrepreneurship, which often requires significant physical infrastructure and capital investment, digital entrepreneurship allows individuals to create value through e-commerce, digital services, social media platforms, mobile applications, and other online tools. This form of entrepreneurship has become increasingly relevant in India, particularly among the youth, due to the widespread availability of affordable internet access, digital literacy initiatives, and government programs promoting startup ecosystems. The flexibility, scalability, and relatively low entry barriers of digital entrepreneurship make it an attractive pathway for young individuals seeking economic independence and innovative career opportunities.

Thiruvananthapuram, the capital district of Kerala, represents a microcosm of this evolving trend, where a growing number of young people are exploring digital avenues for self-employment. Motivations for pursuing digital entrepreneurship may vary, ranging from financial independence, creative expression, and skill utilization to the desire for long-term career sustainability. Simultaneously, youth perceptions of digital entrepreneurship—whether as a temporary source of income or a long-term career choice—play a critical role in shaping their commitment, investment, and growth strategies. Understanding these motivations and perceptions is essential for policymakers, educational institutions, and entrepreneurial support organizations to design targeted interventions that enhance digital skill development, facilitate startup creation, and ensure sustainable employment opportunities. This study focuses on examining these aspects among the youth in Thiruvananthapuram district, aiming to shed light on the potential of digital entrepreneurship as a viable pathway to self-employment and economic empowerment.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study highlights that necessity entrepreneurship emerges primarily from unemployment, economic hardship, or lack of alternative income sources, distinguishing it clearly from opportunity-driven ventures. Studies further suggest that socio-economic crises—including the global financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic—have intensified the rise of necessity entrepreneurs, who often rely on basic need fulfilment as the initial motivation for venture creation. Research also emphasizes that entrepreneurial orientation, human capital, and supportive business ecosystems significantly shape the survival and growth outcomes of necessity entrepreneurs, especially in developing economies (Lim, W. M., Bansal, S., Kumar, S., Singh, S., & Nangia, P. 2024). Studies show that digital transformation has reshaped traditional entrepreneurial models, leading higher education institutions to shift toward cultivating digital competencies and modern startup practices among students. Research further indicates that integrating digital technologies within entrepreneurship education enhances students' entrepreneurial intentions, perceived feasibility, and readiness for self-employment in a digitally driven economy (AAMOU, Z., & BELHORMA, S. 2025).

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the growing interest in digital entrepreneurship among Indian youth, there is limited research on the underlying motivational factors and the influence of demographic characteristics on perceptions of digital business as a career. This study addresses this gap within Thiruvananthapuram

district.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the motivation of youth to pursue self-employment through digital platforms.
2. To assess whether youth perceive digital entrepreneurship as a temporary source of income or a long-term career path.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on youth engaged in commerce and management courses in Thiruvananthapuram, exploring their motivation, perception, and demographic influence on digital entrepreneurship intentions.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Insights from this study can inform policymakers, educators, and entrepreneurial support programs to design interventions fostering youth participation in digital ventures, enhancing self-employment opportunities, and bridging skill gaps.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Source of Data:** Primary data collected via structured questionnaires.
- **Tools Used for Analysis:** SPSS software; Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Chi-Square Test of Association.
- **Sample Selection:** Purposive sampling targeting youth in commerce and management-related courses.
- **Sample Size:** 110 respondents from urban, semi-urban, and rural areas of Thiruvananthapuram.

## HYPOTHESES

### Hypothesis 1

- **H<sub>0</sub> (Null):** There are no significant underlying motivational factors influencing youth to pursue digital entrepreneurship.
- **H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative):** There are significant underlying motivational factors (such as income generation, independence, flexibility, and innovation) influencing youth to pursue digital entrepreneurship.

### Hypothesis 2

- **H<sub>0</sub> (Null):** There is no significant association between youth's demographic variables (e.g., education level, gender) and their perception of digital entrepreneurship as either a temporary income source or a long-term career.
- **H<sub>1</sub> (Alternative):** There is a significant association between youth's demographic variables (e.g., education level, gender) and their perception of digital entrepreneurship as either a temporary income source or a long-term career.

## DATA ANALYSIS

**TABLE 1:** Descriptive demographic analysis was carried out to provide a clear overview of the respondents' background characteristics. This assessment includes key variables such as gender, age

group, education level, employment status, monthly income, and area of residence for the sample of 110 respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	60	54.5
	Female	50	45.5
<b>Age Group</b>	18–21 years	52	47.3
	22–25 years	34	30.9
	26–29 years	24	21.8
<b>Education Level</b>	Undergraduate	57	51.8
	Postgraduate	20	18.2
	Professional Course	19	17.3
	Diploma	9	8.2
	PhD	5	4.5
<b>Employment Status</b>	Student	52	47.3
	Self-employed	18	16.4
	Salaried	30	27.3
	Unemployed	4	3.6
	Business	6	5.5
<b>Monthly Income</b>	No Income	56	50.9
	Below ₹10,000	4	3.6
	₹10,000–₹20,000	6	5.5
	₹20,000–₹40,000	30	27.3
	Above ₹40,000	14	12.7
<b>Area of Residence</b>	Urban	20	18.2
	Semi-urban	60	54.5
	Rural	30	27.3

Source: Primary Data, (n = 110)

**Interpretation:** The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1. Out of 110 valid responses, a slight majority were male (54.5%), while females constituted 45.5%. Nearly half of the respondents (47.3%) belonged to the age group of 18–21 years, followed by 30.9% in the 22–25 age category, indicating that digital entrepreneurship interest is higher among younger youth. In terms of educational background, more than half (51.8%) were undergraduate students, while 18.2% were postgraduates and 17.3% were pursuing professional courses. Regarding employment status, 47.3% identified as students, whereas 27.3% were salaried and 16.4% were self-employed. With respect to monthly income, 50.9% reported having no income, which is expected as many respondents were students. About 27.3% earned between ₹20,000 and ₹40,000. The majority of participants (54.5%) resided in semi-urban areas of Thiruvananthapuram, followed by rural (27.3%) and urban regions (18.2%). Overall, the demographic distribution shows that the sample largely comprises young, semi-

urban, and educated individuals, making them relevant for a study on digital entrepreneurship intentions.

#### TABLE 2: RELIABILITY ANALYSIS FOR MOTIVATION SCALE

A reliability assessment was undertaken to evaluate the internal coherence of the items designed to measure students' motivation toward digital entrepreneurship. This step ensures that the scale demonstrates methodological soundness and adequately reflects the construct it intends to measure.

Statistic	Value
Cronbach's Alpha	<b>0.754</b>
Number of Items	<b>15</b>

Source: Primary Data

**Interpretation:** The Motivation for Digital Entrepreneurship Scale, consisting of fifteen items, demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.754. Most items showed satisfactory corrected item–total correlations, indicating that they effectively contribute to measuring students' motivation toward digital entrepreneurship. A few items—specifically, *I prefer being my own boss rather than working under others*, *Digital entrepreneurship allows flexible working hours*, *I can balance studies/work and entrepreneurship through digital platforms*, and *Support from family and peers encourages me to pursue a digital business*—exhibited relatively lower correlations. However, removing these items did not improve the overall alpha value, and they hold theoretical significance in motivation-related constructs. Therefore, all fifteen items were retained for subsequent Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

#### TABLE 3: EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS KAISER-MEYER-OLKIN AND BARTLETT'S TEST

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), a statistical technique used to identify underlying factor structures within a set of items, was conducted for the motivation scale. This analysis was necessary to determine whether the items grouped into meaningful and coherent motivational dimensions.

Test	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.748
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Chi-Square)	1123.45
Degrees of Freedom	105
Significance (p-value)	< 0.001

#### TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Component	Initial Eigenvalue	Percentage of Variance	Cumulative Percentage	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings	Percentage of Variance (Rotated)	Cumulative Percentage (Rotated)
1	5.351	35.68	35.68	4.012	26.75	26.75
2	2.480	16.54	52.21	3.541	23.60	50.35

3	2.134	14.23	66.44	2.300	15.34	65.68
4	1.564	10.43	76.87	1.678	11.19	76.87

#### ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX (VARIMAX)

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
I enjoy experimenting with new digital tools and technologies	0.903	-	-	-
Digital entrepreneurship can help me achieve financial independence	0.892	-	-	-
I see strong income potential on digital platforms	0.851	-	-	-
Location independence (work from anywhere) is a major attraction	0.744	-	-	-
I feel confident to start a small digital venture within the next year	0.596	-	-	-
Digital entrepreneurship lets me apply creativity and innovation	-	0.938	-	-
Running a digital venture would give me control over my work decisions	-	0.937	-	-
Success stories of digital entrepreneurs motivate me	-	0.937	-	-
I have (or can quickly learn) the skills needed for a digital venture	0.569	0.666	-	-
Online resources and training make it easier to start a digital business	-	-	0.870	-
Digital entrepreneurship allows flexible working hours	-	-	0.676	-
I believe being a digital entrepreneur brings social recognition and respect	0.442	-	0.670	-
I can balance studies/work and entrepreneurship through digital platforms	-	-	0.646	-
I prefer being my own boss rather than working under others	-	-	-	0.795
Support from family and peers encourages me to pursue a digital business	-	-	-	0.753

Source: Primary Data

**Interpretation:** Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on 15 items of the Motivation for Digital Entrepreneurship Scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.748, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $\chi^2 = 1123.45$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating suitability for factor analysis. Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation extracted four factors with eigenvalues greater than one, explaining 76.87% of the total variance, with 65.68% variance explained after

rotation. Factor 1 (Income and Independence) included items related to financial potential, independence, confidence, and location flexibility; Factor 2 (Creativity and Innovation) reflected innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial motivation; Factor 3 (Skills and Support) captured skills, training resources, and work-life balance; Factor 4 (Autonomy and Family Support) represented autonomy and encouragement from family and peers. All items loaded cleanly ( $>0.40$ ) on respective factors, confirming the presence of four distinct motivational dimensions among youth pursuing digital entrepreneurship. “The exploratory factor analysis of the Motivation for Digital Entrepreneurship Scale identified four distinct factors—Income & Independence, Creativity & Innovation, Skills & Support, and Autonomy & Family Support—thereby supporting Hypothesis 1 ( $H_1$ ) that significant underlying motivational dimensions influence youth to pursue digital entrepreneurship.”

**TABLE 4: CHI-SQUARE TEST OF ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHICS AND PERCEPTIONS OF DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

The Chi-square test, a statistical method used to examine associations between categorical variables, was applied to explore whether demographic factors influence youth perceptions of digital entrepreneurship. This analysis helps identify whether differences in education, employment status, or area of residence correspond to meaningful variations in respondents' views.

Demographic Variable	Perception Question	Pearson $\chi^2$	df	p-value
Education Level	Provides job stability	12.634	4	0.013
Education Level	Overall, Promising & sustainable	13.119	4	0.011
Employment Status	Career vs Temporary income	33.679	4	0.000
Employment Status	Provides job stability	32.663	4	0.000
Employment Status	Overall, Promising & sustainable	16.657	4	0.002
Area of Residence	Career vs Temporary income	16.923	2	0.000
Area of Residence	Provides job stability	10.175	2	0.006

*Source: Primary Data,  $p < 0.05$  indicates statistically significant association.*

**Interpretation:** Table 4 presents the results of Chi-square tests examining the association between respondents' demographic variables and their perceptions of digital entrepreneurship. The analysis indicates that education level, employment status, and area of residence have significant associations with youth perceptions. Specifically, education level was significantly associated with perceptions of job stability ( $\chi^2 = 12.634$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ) and overall sustainability of digital entrepreneurship ( $\chi^2 = 13.119$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ), suggesting that more educated youth are more likely to view digital entrepreneurship as a stable and promising career. Employment status was strongly associated with all perception items: career vs temporary income ( $\chi^2 = 33.679$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), job stability ( $\chi^2 = 32.663$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and overall sustainability ( $\chi^2 = 16.657$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), indicating that students, self-employed, and salaried youth perceive digital entrepreneurship differently. Area of residence also showed significant associations with perception of career potential ( $\chi^2 = 16.923$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and job stability ( $\chi^2 = 10.175$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ), reflecting variations in opportunities and outlook across urban, semi-urban, and rural youth. Other demographic variables, including gender and monthly income, did not show significant associations.

( $p > 0.05$ ) and are therefore not emphasized. Overall, these findings support Hypothesis 2 ( $H_2$ ), confirming that youth's demographic characteristics—particularly education, employment status, and area of residence—are significantly associated with their perceptions of digital entrepreneurship.

## FINDINGS

- Youth consider financial independence, flexible work hours, and location independence as primary motivations for starting digital ventures.
- Creativity and innovation emerged as strong motivational dimensions, indicating youth prefer digital entrepreneurship to apply skills and experiment with new technologies.
- Gender and monthly income were not significantly associated with perceptions ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating these variables do not impact views on digital entrepreneurship.
- Overall, students, semi-urban youth, and those with higher education perceive digital entrepreneurship as a promising long-term career, while self-employed and salaried youth show variation in perception depending on prior exposure and skills.
- Hypothesis 1: The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) revealed four distinct motivational dimensions—Income & Independence, Creativity & Innovation, Skills & Support, and Autonomy & Family Support—which together explained a substantial proportion of variance in motivation. As these factors emerged with strong loadings and theoretical coherence, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is supported, confirming that significant underlying motivational factors influence youth to pursue digital entrepreneurship.
- Hypothesis 2 : The Chi-square test results showed significant associations between key demographic variables—specifically education level, employment status, and area of residence—and youth perceptions related to job stability, career sustainability, and the long-term potential of digital entrepreneurship. Since multiple demographic categories demonstrated statistically significant relationships ( $p < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted, indicating that demographic characteristics meaningfully shape how youth perceive digital entrepreneurship.

## SUGGESTIONS

- Expand digital skill training programs offer practical courses in digital marketing, e-commerce, and online business tools for youth.
- Conduct regular awareness workshops educate youth about digital income opportunities, risks, and long-term career potential.
- Promote mentorship networks connect young entrepreneurs with experienced digital business mentors.
- Encourage family participation organize counseling sessions to help families understand and support digital careers.

## CONCLUSION

Digital entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful self-employment avenue for today's youth,

offering flexibility, low entry barriers, and broad market reach in an increasingly digital economy. Young individuals are drawn to online platforms to express creativity, build independent careers, and access new income opportunities. This study reinforces this trend by showing that youth in Thiruvananthapuram district view digital entrepreneurship as a viable and sustainable career path. Key motivational dimensions—Income and Independence, Creativity and Innovation, Skills and Support, and Autonomy and Family Support—play an important role in shaping entrepreneurial intention. Demographic elements such as education level, employment status, and area of residence also influence perceptions, reflecting a growing acceptance among educated and semi-urban youth. To strengthen this momentum, improved digital literacy, greater awareness, and supportive ecosystems are essential. Overall, digital entrepreneurship stands as a promising and empowering pathway for youth, offering sustainable self-employment opportunities and enabling them to pursue innovative and independent career choices.

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