Entrepreneurial Inclination among Senior Secondary Students: Examining the Role of School Syllabus

Kavita Ahuja, Pallavi Rathor, Roshni Patel

School Education and Entrepreneurship Adani Vidya Mandir, Makarba

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ABSTRACT

India's rapidly expanding startup ecosystem and digital transformation are influencing career aspirations at increasingly younger ages. While entrepreneurship has been extensively examined at the university level, limited research explores how senior secondary students perceive startups and how school education shapes their entrepreneurial thinking. This study investigates the inclination of Class XI and XII students toward entrepreneurship by analysing their motivations, awareness levels, perceived barriers, and views on curriculum support. Using a survey-based research design, the study examines whether students view entrepreneurship as a primary career choice, a supplementary pathway, or merely an aspirational idea. It further evaluates how subjects such as Business Studies, Economics, and Information Technology contribute to entrepreneurial confidence, and whether classroom learning translates into practical readiness. The findings reveal distinct patterns in students' career preferences, digital orientation, and expectations from schools, while also highlighting notable gaps between intention and institutional support.

Keywords: Youth Entrepreneurship, Senior Secondary Education, Startup Aspirations, Curriculum Design, Digital Entrepreneurship, Experiential Learning

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has become a central pillar of economic growth and innovation worldwide (OECD, 2017). In India, the rapid rise of the startup ecosystem, supported by digital accessibility and national policy initiatives, has transformed conventional career aspirations (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade [DPIIT], 2024). Increasingly, entrepreneurship is no longer confined to higher education or professional stages but is emerging as a serious consideration among school students.

India's demographic advantage presents a strategic opportunity to cultivate entrepreneurial competencies at an early stage. While higher education institutions have integrated incubation centres and entrepreneurship programs, senior secondary education remains relatively underexplored in scholarly research. Understanding entrepreneurial inclination at the school level is essential, as career attitudes and risk perceptions begin forming during adolescence.

This study seeks to examine whether entrepreneurial orientation begins during senior secondary education and to evaluate the role of school curriculum in nurturing entrepreneurial thinking.

LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Youth Entrepreneurship

Youth entrepreneurship is widely recognized as a driver of innovation, economic participation, and human capital development (OECD, 2017; Global Entrepreneurship Monitor [GEM], 2023). It fosters competencies such as creativity, resilience, opportunity recognition, and problem-solving abilities.

Entrepreneurial intention research highlights the importance of psychological and contextual determinants. The Theory of Planned Behavior posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly influence intention formation (Ajzen, 1991). Similarly, self-efficacy theory emphasizes the role of

individual confidence in undertaking entrepreneurial tasks (Bandura, 1997). Empirical models of entrepreneurial intention further demonstrate that early exposure, role models, and institutional support contribute significantly to entrepreneurial decision-making (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000).

However, much of the existing literature focuses on university students (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015), leaving entrepreneurial orientation at the school level comparatively underexamined.

Digital Transformation and Early Entrepreneurial Exposure

Digital transformation has significantly lowered entry barriers to business creation. Social media platforms, digital payment systems, and e-commerce marketplaces have enhanced perceived feasibility and reduced startup costs (GEM, 2023). As a result, teenagers now possess tools that allow experimentation with microventures such as online tutoring, digital content creation, and small-scale product sales.

This digital accessibility has reshaped perceptions of risk and opportunity, making entrepreneurship appear more attainable compared to previous generations.

Entrepreneurship Education in Schools

Entrepreneurship education at the senior secondary level in India has evolved from implicit theoretical exposure to a more structured and skill-oriented framework. Under the CBSE curriculum, entrepreneurial concepts are introduced primarily through Business Studies, Economics, Accountancy, and Entrepreneurship as a skill subject (CBSE, 2023). Additional skill-based subjects such as Marketing, Financial Markets Management, Information Technology, and Artificial Intelligence indirectly strengthen entrepreneurial competencies.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes experiential learning, multidisciplinary flexibility, and innovation-based pedagogy (Ministry of Education, 2020). Initiatives such as Atal Tinkering Labs aim to promote creativity and design thinking at the school stage.

Despite these reforms, entrepreneurship education often remains examination-oriented and concept-driven. Research indicates that practice-based and experiential approaches are more effective in fostering entrepreneurial competence and intention (Neck, Greene, & Brush, 2014; Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). Consequently, a gap persists between theoretical awareness and practical entrepreneurial readiness.

Research Objectives

1. To assess the level of entrepreneurial inclination among senior secondary students.
2. To identify key motivational factors influencing startup aspirations.
3. To examine perceived barriers to entrepreneurial engagement.
4. To evaluate the role of school curriculum in shaping entrepreneurial orientation.
5. To propose recommendations for strengthening entrepreneurship education at the school level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

The study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. The cross-sectional design enabled the collection of data at a single point in time to assess prevailing attitudes and perceptions.

Sample

The sample consisted of 80 students from Classes XI and XII. Participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique to minimize selection bias and ensure representation across academic streams.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered online. The instrument included multiplechoice questions, Likert-scale items, and opinion-based questions assessing entrepreneurial intention, awareness, motivational drivers, perceived barriers, and curriculum evaluation.

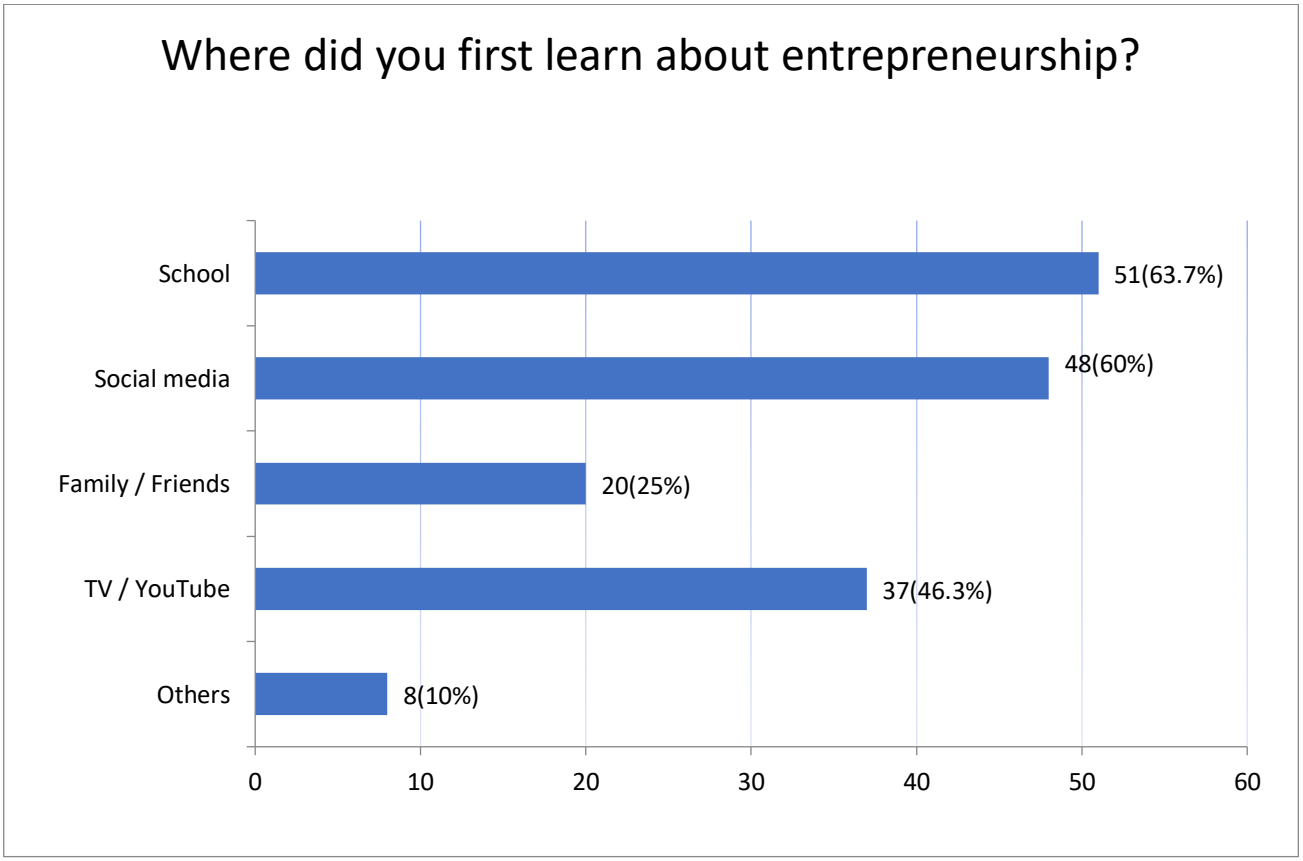
Data Analysis

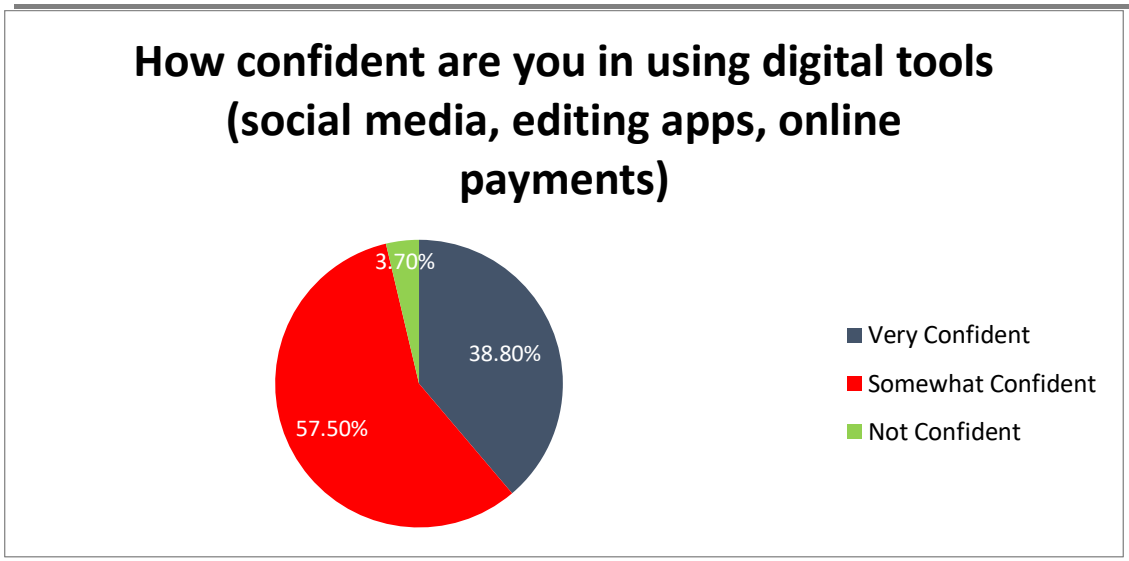
Responses were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency distribution and percentage analysis, to identify trends relevant to the research objectives.

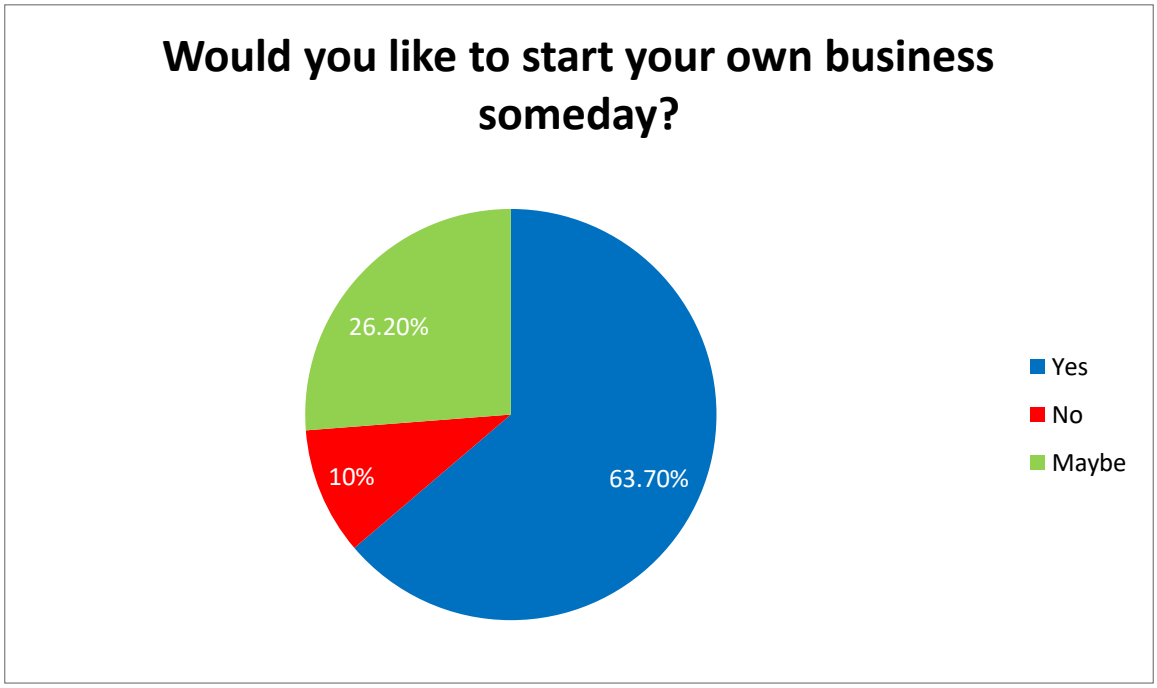
RESULTS

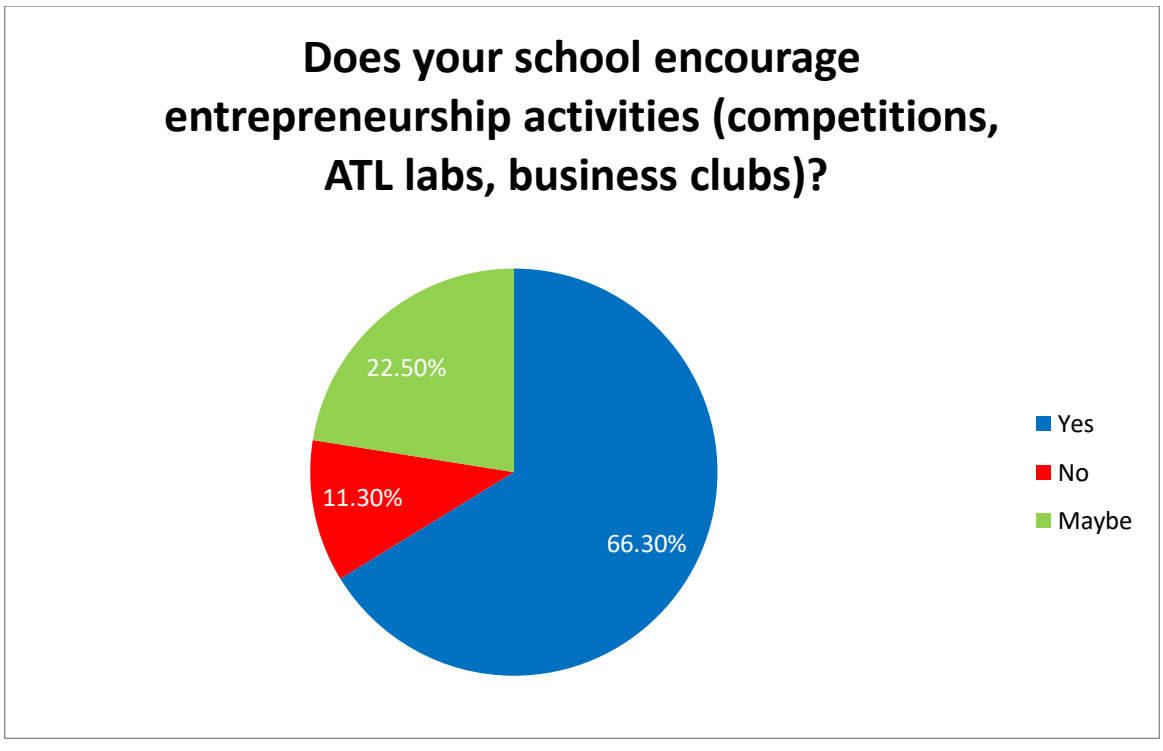
The findings indicate strong entrepreneurial orientation:

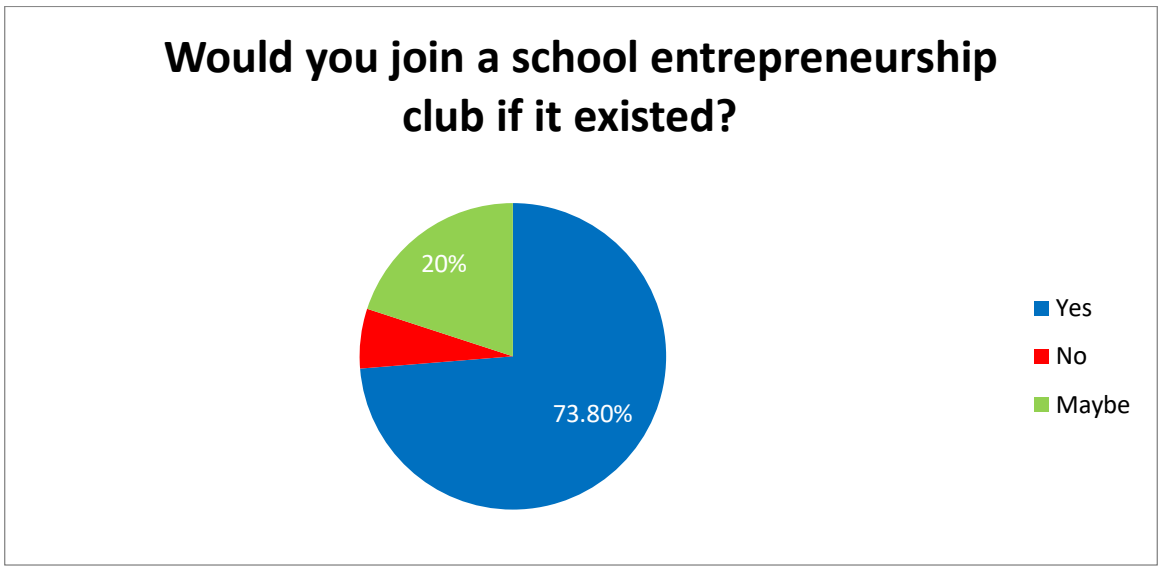
- Over 65% expressed interest in starting their own business.
- 38.8% preferred entrepreneurship as a primary career path.
- 37.5% preferred a hybrid model.
- 80% expressed willingness to learn digital business skills.
- Awareness levels were high, with 92.5% familiar with entrepreneurship concepts. Students identified independence, innovation, income potential, and digital accessibility as key motivators.
- Major barriers included lack of time (61%), lack of guidance (56%), lack of capital (54%), and uncertainty about procedural steps (46%).
- Students strongly preferred experiential learning models, including project-based activities and mentorship.

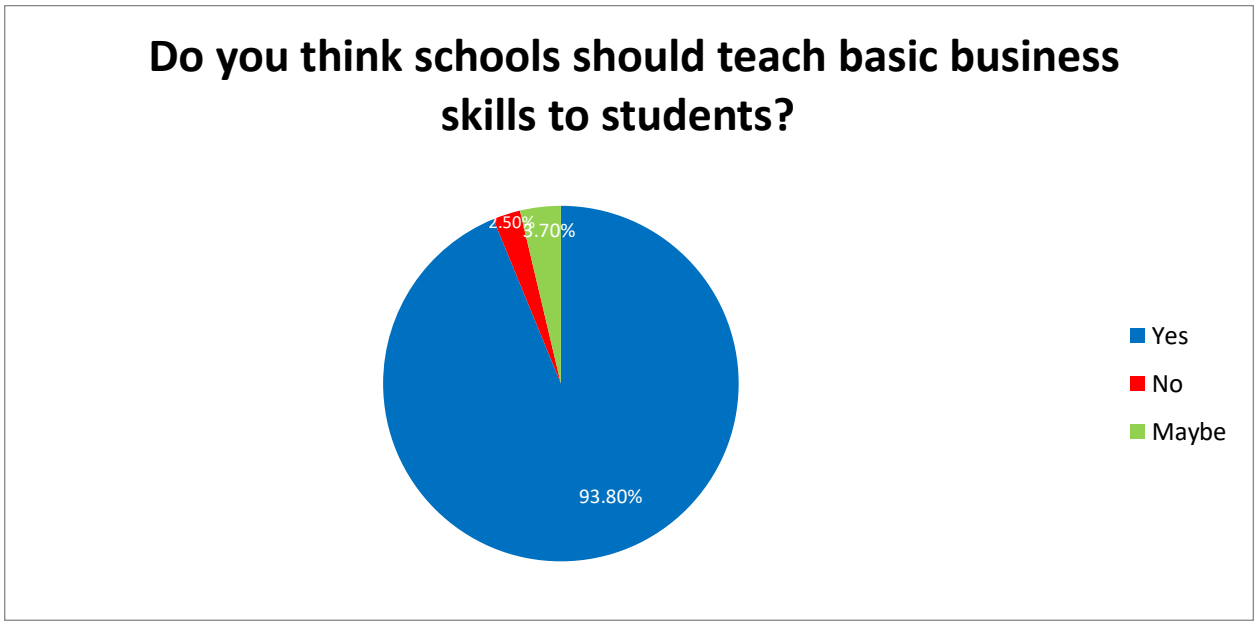


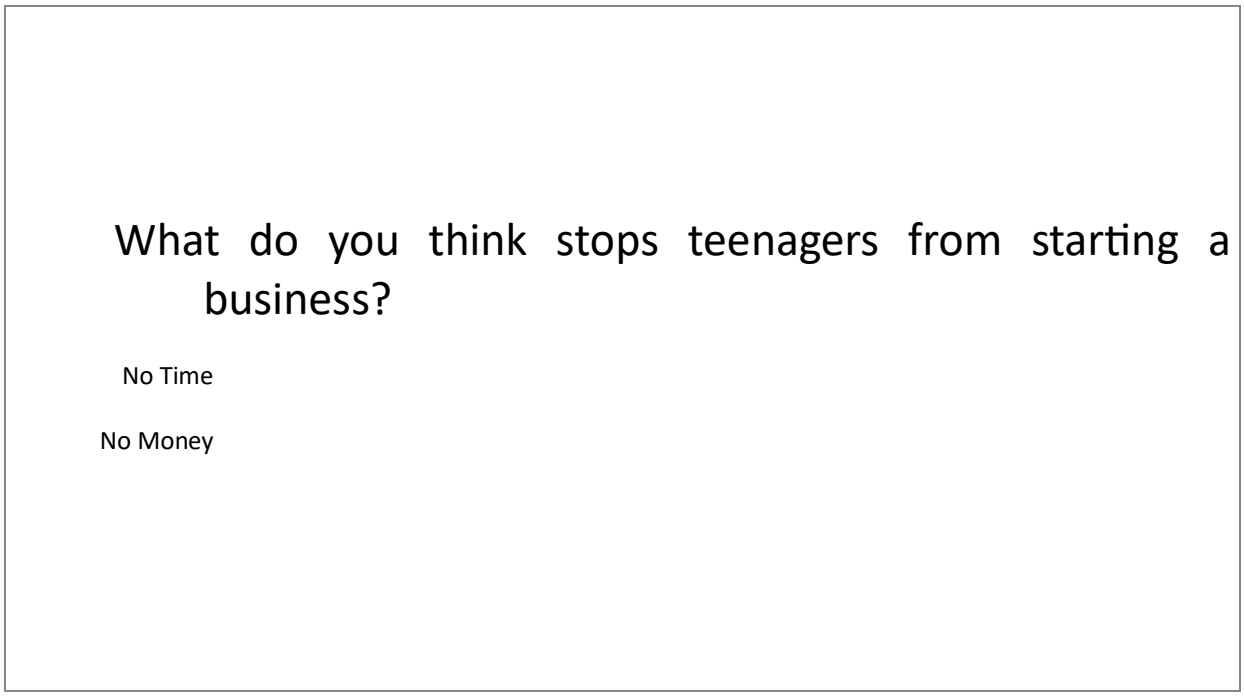

How confident are you in using digital tools (social media, editing apps, online payments)
3.70%
38.80%
57.50%
Very Confident
Somewhat Confident
Not Confident

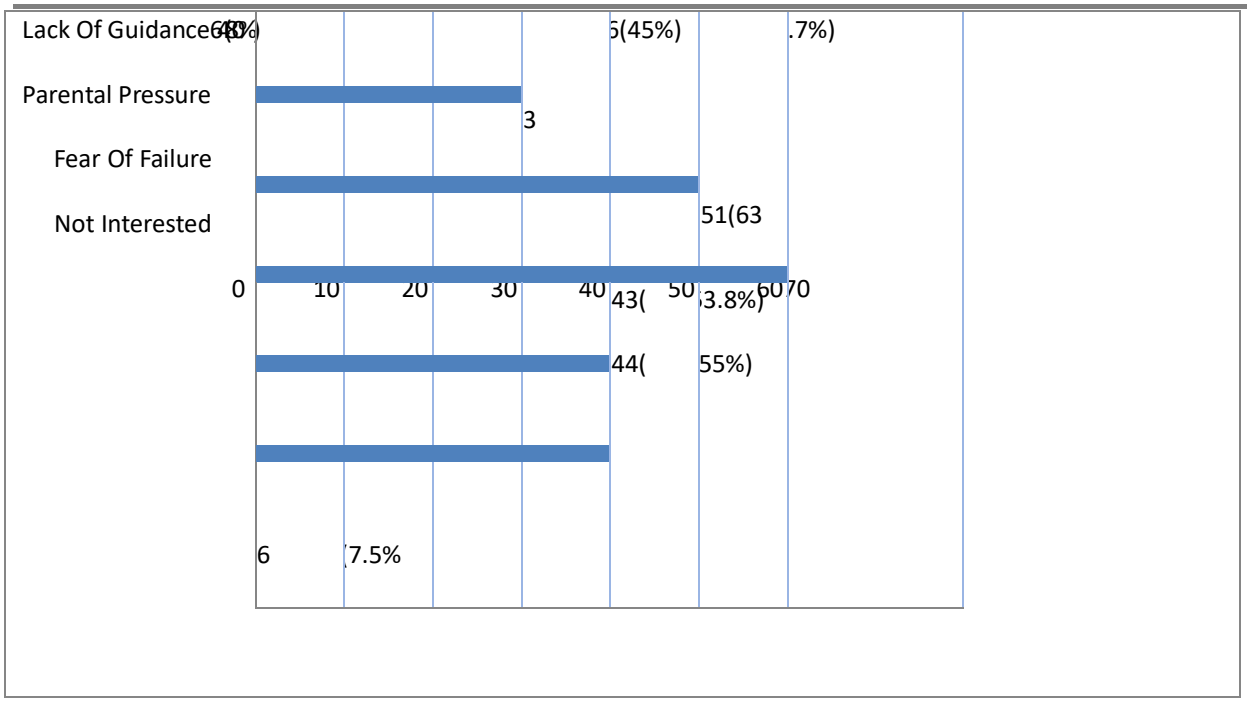

Would you like to start your own business someday?
26.20%
10%
63.70%
Yes
No
Maybe

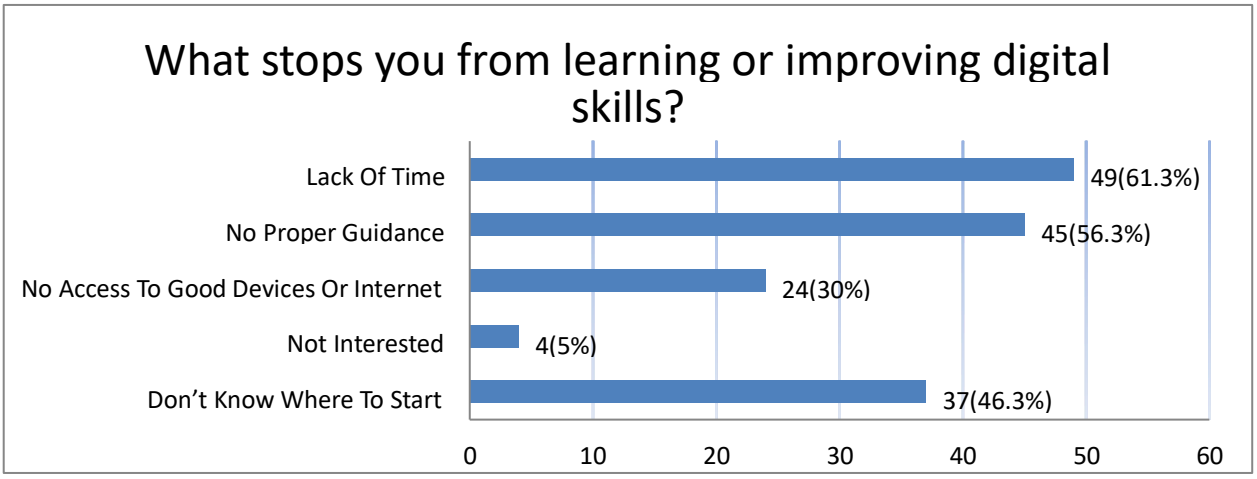

Does your school encourage entrepreneurship activities (competitions, ATL labs, business clubs)?
22.50%
11.30%
66.30%
Yes
No
Maybe

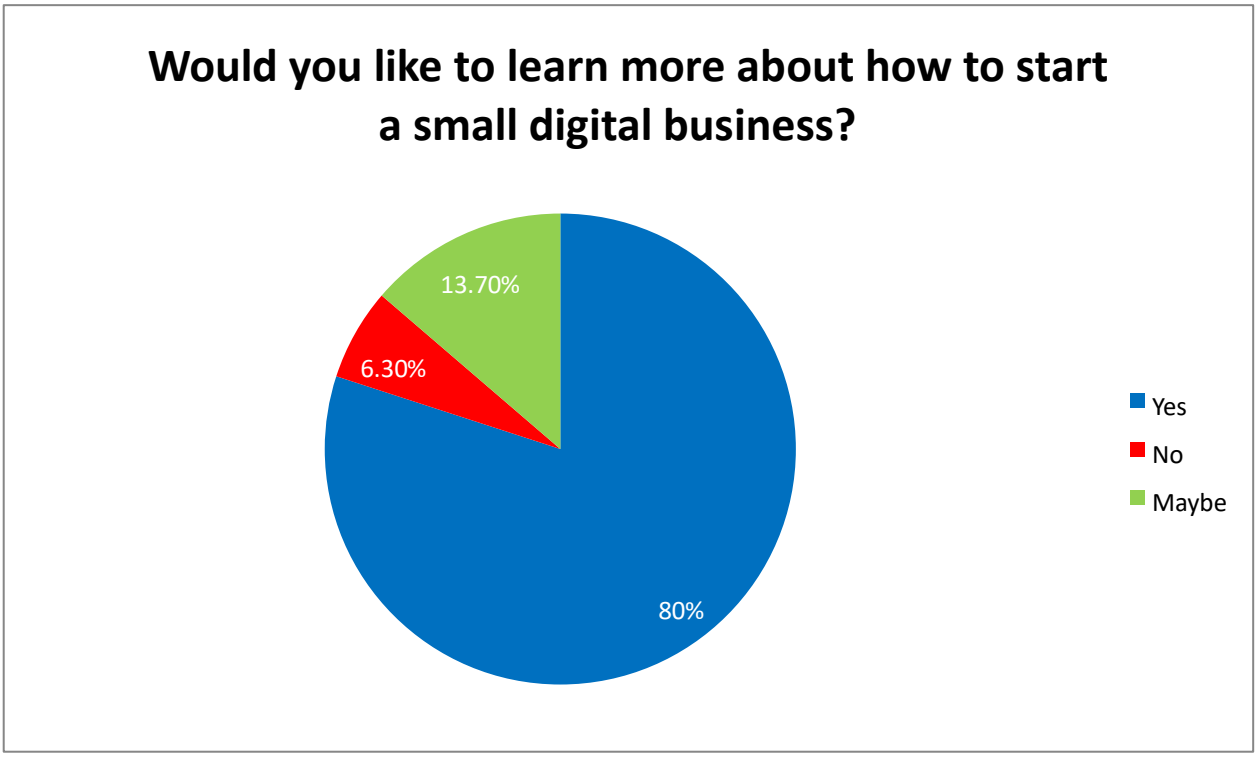

Would you join a school entrepreneurship club if it existed?
20%
73.80%
Yes
No
Maybe

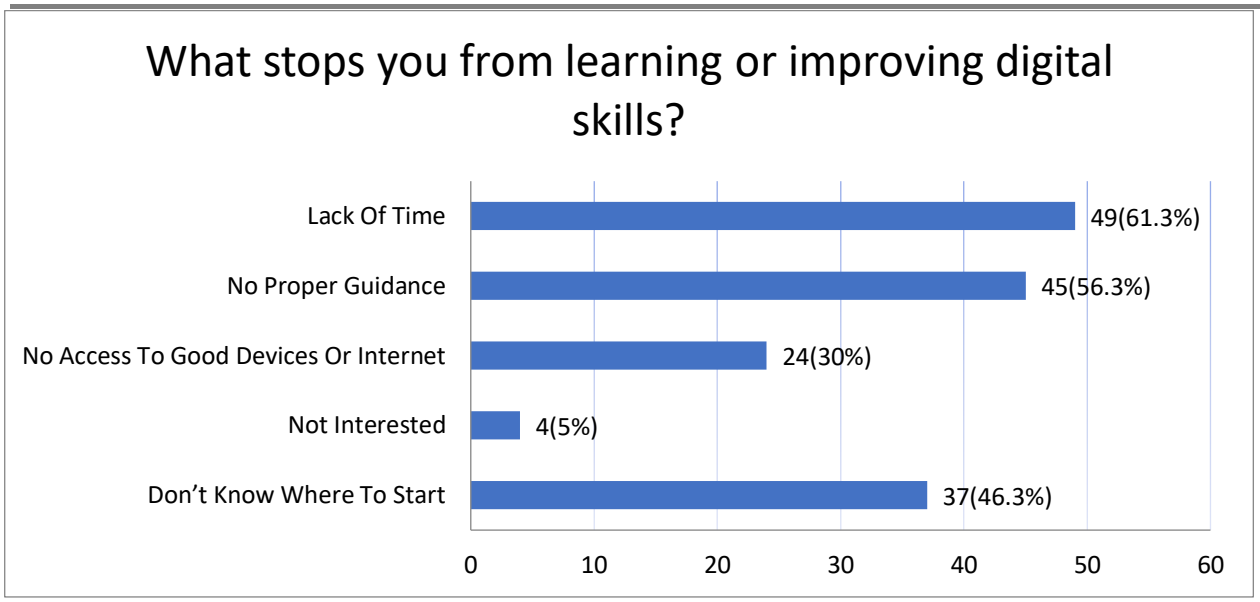

Do you think schools should teach basic business skills to students?
2.50%
3.70%
93.80%
Yes
No
Maybe

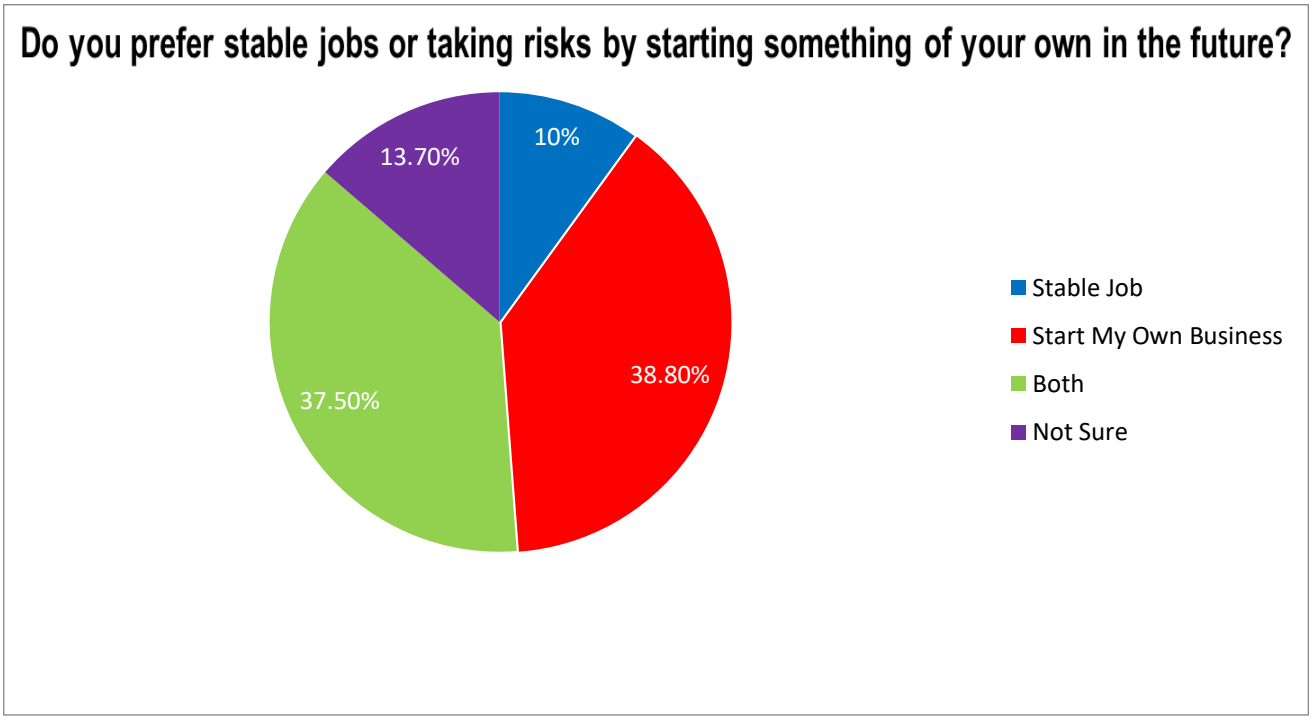

What do you think stops teenagers from starting a business?
No Time
No Money

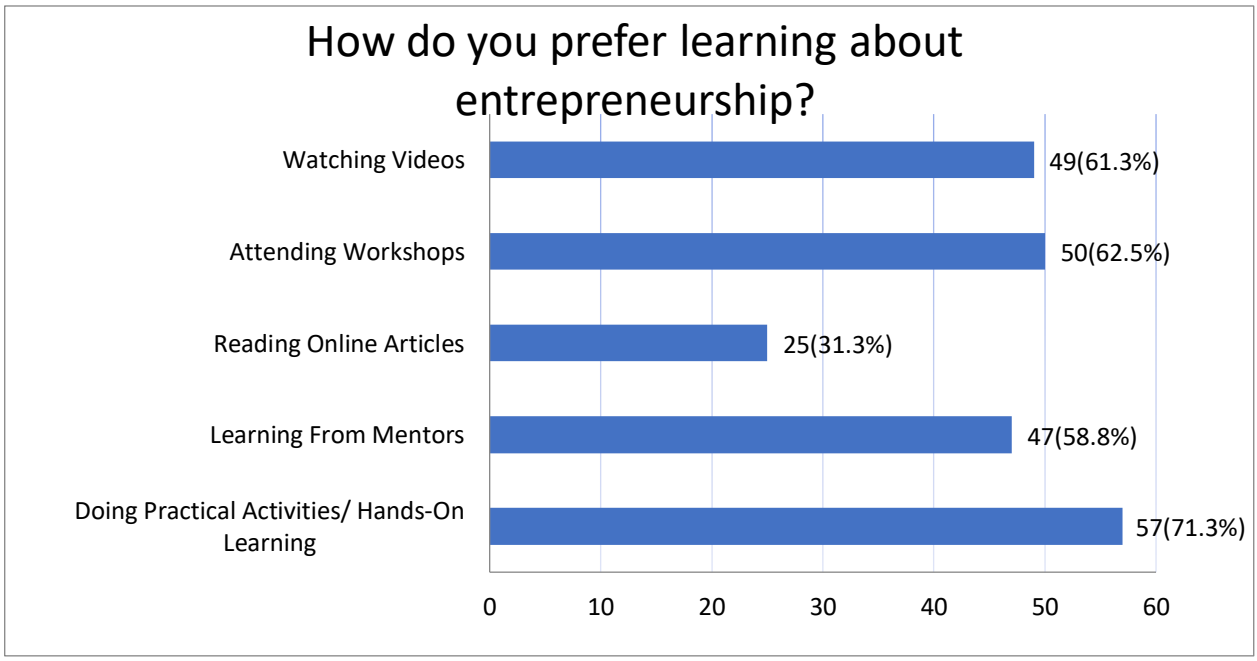

Lack Of Guidance
Parental Pressure
Fear Of Failure
Not Interested
3
51(63
43(
3.8%)
44(
55%)
6
7.5%
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70


What stops you from learning or improving digital skills?
Lack Of Time
No Proper Guidance
No Access To Good Devices Or Internet
Not Interested
Don't Know Where To Start
49(61.3%)
45(56.3%)
24(30%)
4(5%)
37(46.3%)
0
10
20
30
40
50
60


Would you like to learn more about how to start a small digital business?
13.70%
6.30%
80%
Yes
No
Maybe


What stops you from learning or improving digital skills?
Lack Of Time
No Proper Guidance
No Access To Good Devices Or Internet
Not Interested
Don't Know Where To Start
49(61.3%)
45(56.3%)
24(30%)
4(5%)
37(46.3%)
0
10
20
30
40
50
60


Do you prefer stable jobs or taking risks by starting something of your own in the future?
10%
38.80%
37.50%
13.70%
Stable Job
Start My Own Business
Both
Not Sure


How do you prefer learning about entrepreneurship?
Watching Videos
Attending Workshops
Reading Online Articles
Learning From Mentors
Doing Practical Activities/ Hands-On Learning
49(61.3%)
50(62.5%)
25(31.3%)
47(58.8%)
57(71.3%)
0
10
20
30
40
50
60

Awareness levels were high, with 92.5% familiar with entrepreneurship concepts. Students identified independence, innovation, income potential, and digital accessibility as key motivators.

Major barriers included lack of time (61%), lack of guidance (56%), lack of capital (54%), and uncertainty about procedural steps (46%).

Students strongly preferred experiential learning models, including project-based activities and mentorship.

DISCUSSION

The results align with intention-based theoretical frameworks (Ajzen, 1991; Krueger et al., 2000), indicating that positive attitudes and perceived feasibility contribute significantly to entrepreneurial inclination. Students' preference for experiential learning supports research emphasizing practice-based entrepreneurship education (Neck et al., 2014).

The gap between aspiration and execution reflects structural limitations in mentorship and experiential integration, consistent with global findings on youth entrepreneurship development (OECD, 2017).

Implications

Educational Implications

- Integration of experiential learning modules within existing subjects.
- Inclusion of digital entrepreneurship skills in curriculum design.
- Establishment of entrepreneurship clubs and mentorship networks
- Introduction of project-based startup simulations and micro-venture activities.
- Interdisciplinary access to entrepreneurship education across all streams.
- Assessment models that evaluate innovation alongside theoretical knowledge.

Policy Implications

- Development of structured school-level entrepreneurship frameworks aligned with NEP 2020.
- Facilitation of industry–school collaborations.
- Provision of innovation platforms and exposure programs.
- Teacher training programs focused on entrepreneurship pedagogy.
- Policy support for student innovation initiatives.

Limitations

The study is limited by its sample size of 80 students and reliance on self-reported survey data, which may introduce response bias. Findings may not be generalizable across diverse regions or educational boards. The cross-sectional design limits examination of longitudinal changes. Future research may employ larger, multiregional samples and longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to assess long-term entrepreneurial development.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights a generation of digitally empowered and aspiration-driven students who view entrepreneurship as a viable career pathway. While awareness and motivation are strong, the school curriculum primarily functions as an introductory exposure mechanism rather than a comprehensive entrepreneurial incubator. Strengthening experiential integration and mentorship structures within senior secondary education may help translate entrepreneurial intention into actionable competence.

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