

Abstract

Exploring the Nexus: Socio-Demographic Factors and Perceptions of Digital Entrepreneurial Competences of University Students [†]

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1. Objectives

Digital entrepreneurial competences (DEC) are “the total ability of the entrepreneur to perform a job role successfully using a range of ICT means” [1]. The academic literature provides very limited evidence on DEC levels university students acquire during their education. The aim of this research is to measure the perceived levels of DEC and to examine whether socio-demographic characteristics of university students have an impact on their perception of DEC.

2. Methodology

The DEC perceptions of university students were assessed using a questionnaire, and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to process the data and provide the results and relevant conclusions. EmDigital framework [2] was used to develop the assessment tool (questionnaire). A total of 1551 students completed the questionnaire. Non-parametric tests (Mann–Whitney U, Kruskal–Wallis test) were used to examine responses in relation to categorical variables.

3. Results

The students’ responses, which were measured using a four-point Likert scale, reveal that students perceive their DEC on average at 2.97 for all the items investigated.

The results suggest that the variables of gender and degree level are not associated or have very little association with students’ DEC perceptions ($p > 0.05$). The fact that gender proved to be not statistically significant seems like a surprise, especially given that [3] found statistically significant differences in perceptions of DEC levels between male and female students. Employment status, location and field of study demonstrated significant association with DEC perceptions.

4. Implications

The limited confidence among final-year diploma, bachelor’s, and master’s students regarding their grasp of DEC signals a call to action for universities and educational stakeholders. It’s evident that there’s a pressing need for digital entrepreneurship curricula to be realigned with the contemporary demands of the job market, necessitating potential adjustments to teaching methodologies and instructional designs employed to impart relevant skills to university students.



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5. Originality Value

This paper fills the gap in the literature by providing the empirical evidence on the perceived levels of DEC of university students using the DEC competence framework EmDigital [2] which represents the most detailed specification of DEC competences across different competence areas and a foundation for the creation of the DEC assessment tool.

6. Contribution

This study adds to the body of knowledge on digital entrepreneurship by presenting empirical findings on university students' perceptions of their DEC competence and demonstrating how socio-demographic factors correlate with these perceptions. Our findings suggest that university students perceive their DEC competency to be moderate, implying a gap in the instruction they receive in DEC throughout their university studies.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by Scientific Research Centre of the Australian University in Kuwait with the approval number: SRC01-05/2021.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data are available upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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