MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages: 2724-2730

Influence of Digital Career-Guidance Platforms on Higher-Education Aspirations of First-Generation Learners in Hyderabad

[1]Ritesh Varma Kalidindi, [2]Dr. Bijja Vishwanath, [3]Dr. N Chandra Sekhar Reddy, [4]Dr. M.Sivakoti Reddy
[1]Student, International School of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India
[2]University of Technology & Applied Sciences, Ibri, Sultanate of Oman
[3]Dept. of CSE, Godavari Global University, Rajamahendravaram, Andhra Pradesh
[4]Professor, APPA School of Business , VVIT University, Nambur, Andhra Pradesh, India
E-Mail: [1]riteshvarmak@gmail.com, [2]vishanath.bijja@utas.edu.om, [3]naguchinni@gmail.com, [4]Shiva.manukonda@gmail.com.

Abstract
First-generation learners often face structural, informational, and socio-cultural barriers that limit their access to higher education and informed career decision-making. Online career-guiding platforms have become the source of significant intervention in the form of individual counseling, career tests, and information on career moves and funding opportunities in recent years. This paper looks into how online career- guidance systems impact the university goals of first-generation students in Hyderabad, India. The questions to be used in the analysis of patterns of platform use, perceived usefulness, and the effects they have on the educational ambitions and career discernment of learners are based on a structured survey, which will be filled out by the participants in the sample of undergraduate and senior secondary students. Descriptive and inferential statistics indicate that using digital career-guidance tools leads to a marked increase in awareness of increased opportunity in higher-education, enhancement in the level of confidence in academic decision-making, and change in ambitions to obtain tertiary education to a substantially favorable degree. The data also show that such characteristics of the platform as localized information, the ability to receive mentoring, and guidance in scholarships are some of the key factors that help first-generation learners. Nevertheless, there are still such issues as digital access, language barrier and level of digital literacy. The paper presents the possibilities of digital career-guidance platforms as non-discriminatory solutions to minimizing the informational disparities and fostering equal opportunities to acquire a higher education. It has significant implications on the work of educators, policymakers, and those working on platforms that aim to create specific and learner-driven digital guidance solutions in underrepresented student groups.
Keywords: Educational technology, digital career, urban India, first generation learners, Hyderabad, higher education aspirations.

1 Introduction

Higher education has been a major problem among the first-generation learners as they are usually the first in their families to receive post-secondary education. They are learners who are usually in the socio-economic disadvantaged background, and have no access to the information that could guide them regarding their academic matters, family support, and social capital they need to complete the complex higher-education systems [1]. Other factors that exacerbate the disparities include financial limitations, exposure to career choices and insufficient counseling infrastructure which ultimately lead to low enrollment and persistence rates in the first-generation students [2]. These obstacles are vital in addressing the objective of attaining inclusive development and social mobility in developing economies like India.

Over the last few years, the pace of growth of digital education services in India has been seen to be soaring, especially on the digital career-guidance platforms. These platforms use web-based platforms, mobile apps and artificial intelligence to offer career advice, academic counseling, information on schools and colleges, guidance on scholarships and exams [3]. There are digital career-guidance platforms which have the ability to bridge the informational gaps of students that have not access to the traditional counseling services due to the application of scale and cost-effective methods [4]. In the case of first-generation learners, these platforms have the capability to be transformative in the way they increase awareness, self-efficacy, and informed decision-making regarding higher education [5].

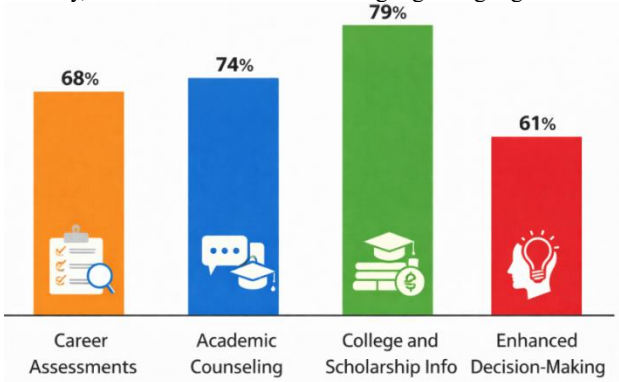

Fig.1. Impact of Digital Career-Guidance Platform Features on First-Generation Learners

The Figure 1 will present the major features of digital career-guidance platforms and their perceived advantages to the first-generation learners. College and scholarship information has had the greatest impact (79%), then there are the academic counseling (74%), career assessments (68%), and enhanced decision-making (61%). On the whole, the chart demonstrates the role played by digital platforms in bridging informational gaps and making informed decisions regarding higher education [3, 4, 7].

The applicability of online career guidance is particularly high in centers of learning like Hyderabad, which are urban. Hyderabad has established as a big hub of higher education with universities, engineering colleges, professional institutions, and private training centers and is also a destination of students of different socio-economic backgrounds [6]. Regardless of this educational density, there are still disparities in access to guidance and information, especially among the learners of the government schools and poor family-income learners [7]. Although the city has a wide range of educational options, first-generation students do not actually know which directions to take or cannot be sure to continue their education on the basis of their interests and capabilities.

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages: 2724-2730

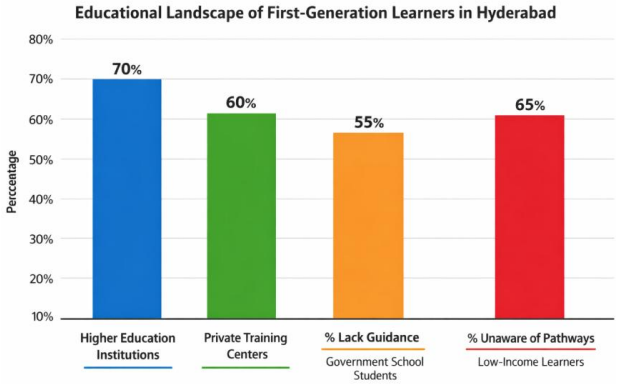

Fig.2. Educational landscape of first generation learners in Hyderabad

The Figure 2 demonstrates the education environment of first-generation students in Hyderabad based on the presence of opportunities and the inability to close guidance gaps. The city has a dense experience of higher-education institutions (70%), as well as of private training centers (60), although access to these opportunities is inequitable. A major percentage of government schools learners (55%) are poorly advised on careers, and close to two-thirds of lower-income students (65) do not know how to take the right route to higher education. This comparison shows that the institutional density is in itself not enough to guarantee equitable access. The figure highlights the importance of using specific career-guidance interventions especially online platforms to overcome informational and aspirational gaps in first-generation learners [1, 4, 7].

1.1 Problem statement

The research problem to be solved in this research is based on the weak empirical knowledge of the way online career-guides platforms manipulate the higher-education ambitious among first-generation students within the city level. Some of the literature on career guidance, educational ambitions and the application of digital technologies has already been done independently, but limited literature has looked at their intersection in an urban Indian setting [8]. In addition, previous studies are mainly on the availability of technology instead of its aspirational and motivational effects. The existence of this gap demands a specific study that will possibly provide answers to the question whether and how online career-guidance platforms influence the perceptions, aspirations, and readiness of learners to pursue higher education.

1.2 Motivation

The rationale behind the study is the rising popularity of online networks as the source of educational decision-making and the necessity to determine their success in supporting underrepresented groups of students. The insights into the power of such platforms can inform policymakers, educators, and platform developers about the possibility of such platforms as an instrument of equity and inclusion [9]. The study could be useful in informing evidence-based intervention and design to address policy in areas of local impact through its investigation of first-generation learners in Hyderabad.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is important because it helps in educators to create research, practice, and policy. It contributes empirical evidence regarding the role of digital career-guidance platforms in forming higher-education aspirations, sheds light on contextual issues of first-generation learners and provides practical implications on building inclusive digital guidance systems [10]. Finally, the research aims to contribute to a more fair access to higher education through the use of digital innovations to empower less traditionally underrepresented in higher-education pathways learners.

2 Background

In India, more than 200 million people belong to the first generation, with one-fifth of those residing in Mumbai Human India has over 200 million first-generation learners (2.1): half a billion of them live in Mumbai

2.1: First- Generation Learners in India

The first-generation learners refer to students whose parents or guardians never completed a post-secondary education. These learners usually have a background in economically disadvantaged groups of the Indian society, in the rural and semi-urban regions, and in the traditionally marginalized social groups [1]. They are usually not guided in any way by their families concerning academic directions, institutionalization and career planning and this makes them disadvantaged in the higher education systems [2].

There are barriers like socio-economic like low household income, less access to quality schooling, and financial insecurity among others which influence their education paths remarkably [7]. Aspirations and confidence are further suppressed by cultural barriers caused by low education capital, language barriers and scanty exposure to role models of a profession [11]. Research has shown that first-generation students tend to associate less self-efficacy and uncertainty in academic choices, even though they are similar in academic capacity [5]. All these structural and cultural limitations need to be dealt with in order to facilitate equity and increase access to higher education.

2.2 Digital Career- Guidance Platforms.

Digital career-guidance platforms, also known as technology based solutions, are those solutions developed to provide assistance to students in exploration and the making of an educational decision guidance. Such platforms involve mobile applications, Web portals, artificial intelligence-based counseling, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), that enable guidance services to be delivered in a scalable manner [3]. With the inclusion of artificial intelligence, it will be possible to make individual suggestions with references to the interests, academic performance and aptitude tests of the learners [8].

The digital career-guidance platforms usually provide such services as career evaluation, academic advising, data concerning higher learning institutions, entrance tests and additionally they offer scholarship opportunities [4]. These platforms will be used as substitute guidance mechanisms to learners who do not have access to trained counselors, especially in government schools [6]. It was hypothesized that the digital guide products could decrease informational asymmetry, improve career awareness, and assist in making information-based decisions if these are designed in a non-discriminatory manner and with reference to the local realities [12].

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages: 2724-2730

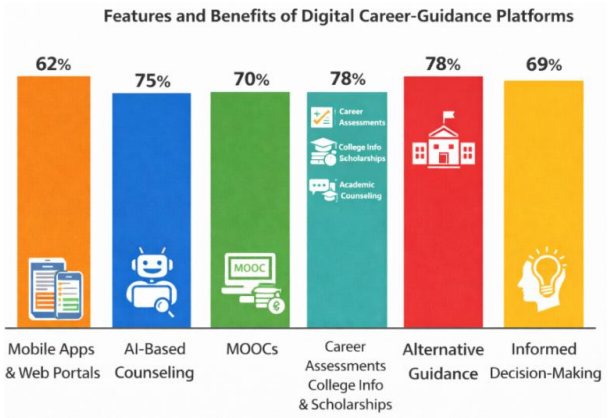

Fig.3. Key features and benefits of digital career guidance platforms

The Figure 3 demonstrates the main aspects and advantages of digital career-guidance platforms. Counseling (75) and career assessment (78) using AI are most impactful and underline individualized and information-focused advice. MOOCs (70%), mobile apps (62%), accessibility, and alternative guidance (78) and informed decision-making (69) illustrate how the platforms help to make informed educational decisions.

2.3 Post-Secondary School Ambitions

Higher-education aspirations are the intentions, intentions, and the perceived capacity of an individual to advance into post-secondary education. The aspirations are influenced by individual drive, perceived possibilities, the surrounding social life and information availability [13]. Aspirations are also typically limited among the marginalized and first-generation learners due to the low level of awareness of education routes and perceived perceived financial and social risks [10].

Socio-economic status, parental education, peer influence, institutional support, and career guidance exposure are some of the factors that influence higher-education aspirants [14]. Availability of correct and timely information is important in shaping aspirations especially enhancing self efficacy and future orientation [15]. Online career-advising services could have a beneficial effect on intentions by broadening their senses of the options available and decreasing the level of uncertainty related to tertiary education [16]. Empowerment of aspirational ability of marginalized students is thus core to enhancing the involvement and achievement of higher education.

3 Literature Review

The concepts of career guidance and educational decision-making were introduced in Chapter 3.1.

Career guidance is very essential especially in helping the students in their studies and career choices. Conventional models of career-guidance are based on the face-to-face counseling, teacher recommendations, and parental influence which, however, are not always accessible to students with disadvantaged background [3]. It is limited by few counselors, poor quality, and absence of individualized models. Contrastingly, online career-guidance models take advantage of online platforms, mobile applications and data-driven tools to provide scalable, personalized and ongoing guidance [17]. The digital models assist the learners to gain access to information on career patterns by involving assessments, labor trends and educational pathways to facilitate informed decision-making processes.

3.2 Education Aspirations and Technology.

Digital technologies have been also noticed as having a greater effect on shaping the educational goals and self-efficacy of the student. Availability of online resources will provide more exposure to a wide range of career choices, better goal outcomes, and increased self-efficacy in education planning [6]. Research shows that technology based instructions favor self directed learning and future orientation especially among students who do not possess social and cultural capital [5]. Nevertheless, usefulness, accessibility to language expression, and relevancy to context make digital tools effective with an emphasis on the concept of inclusive design [12].

3.3 Research on First-Generation learners.

There are unique academic, psychological, and informational limitations that affect education pathways of first-generation learners. The studies have constantly indicated that such learners have low-academic-self confidence, reduced awareness on higher-education systems and less access to mentoring networks [18]. Aspirations are further limited by psychological motivation like fear of failure and the financial danger. Informational gaps, particularly those to do with entrance examination, institutional demands as well as financial aid influence decision-making processes to a great extent [9].

3.4 The Indian Digital Interventions.

Digital interventions have become one of the potential tools in Indian setting to handle educational inequalities. Experimental research indicates that online career-advising systems enhance the awareness of post-secondary educational options and promote understanding decisions by secondary and undergraduate school students [4]. Irrespective of the increased adoption, there exist challenges associated with digital literacy, infrastructure, and rural inequality. However, there is a sign of evidence that properly developed digital guidance systems can augment formal counseling systems and strengthen educational equity within urban and semi-urban regions.

3.5 Research gap

Although the use of digital career-guidance platforms has been increasing rapidly in India, the current body of literature offers not much empirical information on the particular impact on tertiary educational dreams of the first-generation learners in cities or regions. Majority of the previous researches discuss career advice or technology in the general national or institutional aspect without reflecting local socio-economic and cultural forces. Specifically, Indian cities like Hyderabad that represent a dense concentration of higher-education facilities with inequalities in access to guidance are less studied. The research gap regarding the systematic examination of the role that digital career-guidance platforms play in determining aspirations, confidence, and decision-making during the first-generation learners in any such urban setting is notable. To guarantee (and to design) inclusive and place-based policies and platforms that can broaden higher education access, this gap needs addressing in order to comprehend contextual efficacy of digital guidance interventions and shape it.

3.6 Objectives

a. To investigate the degree of awareness and usage patterns of digital career-guidance platforms with regard to first-generation learners.
b. To determine how the digital career-guidance platforms impact the career clarity and higher-education expectations of first-generation students.
c. To examine how digital career-guidance platforms are perceived to restrict and benefit the process of informed educational decision-making.

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages: 2724-2730

4 Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The research design implemented in the study is quantitative, in the sense that it directs the study of the impact of digital career-guides platforms on higher-education intentions among first-generation students as presented in Figure 4. Quantitative approach will be suitable because it will be possible to measure the relations between the use of platforms and aspirational results through systematic means and statistical procedures [19]. This design enables objective comparison between groups and will facilitate generalizing the findings on the identified population.

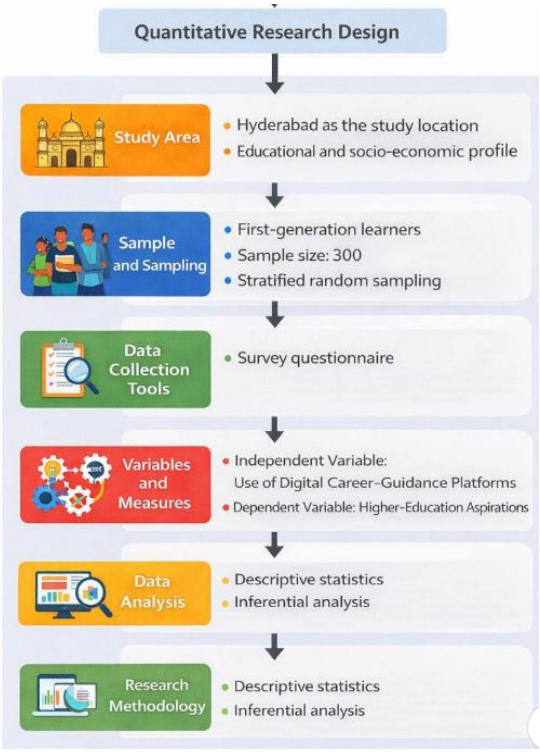

Fig.4. Structural model on research design

4.2 Study Area

The research was carried out in Hyderabad, a large city of educational centers in southern India. There are numerous institutions of higher learning in Hyderabad such as public universities, privately-owned colleges, professional and coaching institutes. Although there is this level of density in terms of education, the city shows strong socio-economic inequalities between the students of government schools and households with low incomes [20]. These attributes render Hyderabad a proper place to study the disparities in access to career mentorship and education information on higher education.

The sample and method of sampling will be as follows:

4.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

A target population will be defined as the first-generation students, to which the students whose parents have not attained post-secondary education fall. Senior secondary, and undergraduate students at the aided institutions and government are included in the sample. Gender, academic level and type of institution were used to sample academically so as to get a representative sample. The ultimate sample comprised of 300 respondents and this number is deemed sufficient in both quantitative analysis as well as in inferential statistics in any social science research [21].

4.4 Data Collection Tools

Data were gathered with the help of a structured survey questionnaire that was created to embrace demographic characteristics, awareness and digital career-guidance systems use, and higher-education-aspiration levels. The items in the questionnaire were Likert-scale questions based on those instruments that have been validated in previous educational and career-guidance researches [4]. In order to increase reliability, the instrument was piloted, and internal consistency tested by alpha Cronbach. During the collection of data, ethical issues such as informed consent and confidentiality were also adhered to.

4.5 Variables and Measures

The study independent variable is using digital career-guidance platforms, which is measured using variables in frequency of use, types of platforms used, and usefulness as measured. The dependent variable is higher-education aspirations, which will be measured with the help of such items as the intention of higher education among the students, clarity of their academic objectives, and certainty of their educational decision-making [5]. The inclusion of control variables by these factors gender, socio-economic status and type of schooling was done to eliminate possible confounding factors.

4.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Statistical software was used in the analysis of data. The frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were also used as descriptive statistics to summarise the characteristics and usage patterns of the respondents. Correlation analysis and regression analysis were the inferential statistical methods used to investigate the connection between digital platform use and higher-education intentions [22]. The level of statistical significance was evaluated at the levels of traditional confidence. The interpretations have been done in respect of the existing literature which provided analytical rigor and relevance of the studies.

5 Results & Discussion

This part provides the empirical results of the research that studied the impact of online career-guiding websites on the postsecondary education ambitions of the first-generation learners. The findings are also structured to ensure that the researchers have a wholesome picture of the demographic features of the respondents, the awareness and use of digital career-guidance services, and their views on how these

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages: 2724-2730

services influence career awareness and education goals. The key patterns and trends are summarized with the help of descriptive statistics, whereas the association between platform usage and aspirational outcomes is investigated with the help of inferential analysis. Collectively, the findings present evidence-based information about the contribution of digital career guidance to informing educational choices of first-generation learners in an urban environment.

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic features of the respondents are provided in Table 1 (N = 300). The sample is gender balanced and students of various academic levels and institutional backgrounds are represented which will guarantee the sufficient representation of first-generation learners.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	156	52%
	Female	144	48%
Academic Level	Senior Secondary	174	58%
	Undergraduate	126	42%
Type of Institution	Government	204	68%
	Aided/Private	96	32%

Most of the respondents were students of senior secondary and learners of governmental institutions because this demographic has the largest portion in terms of the lack of formal career guidance.

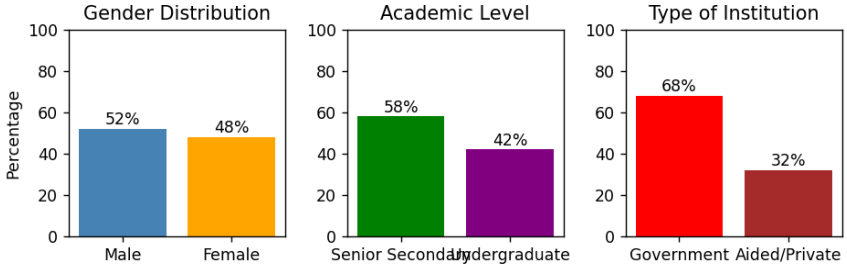

Fig.5. Demographic profile of Respondents

The demographics of the respondents are introduced with the help of the figure 5. Males (52) are marginally more than the females (48). Majority of the participants are senior secondary students (58%), undergraduates (42%). Most (68) research was done in government institutions and less in aided institutions (32) and also private institutions (32).

5.2 Customer Digital Platform Usage and Awareness Trends.

Awareness and use of digital career-guidance platforms were also inquired of the respondents. These findings are summarized in table 2.

Table 2: Awareness and Usage of Digital Career-Guidance Platforms

Platform Type	Aware (%)	Regular Users (%)
Mobile Apps	66%	48%
Web Portals	55%	39%
AI-based Counseling	47%	28%
MOOCs	35%	22%

The awareness is high as far as the mobile apps and the web portals are concerned, but the regular usage is moderate. The most modern and sophisticated tools AI-based counseling and MOOCs have less engagement, implying that there is a barrier associated with digital literacy and access.

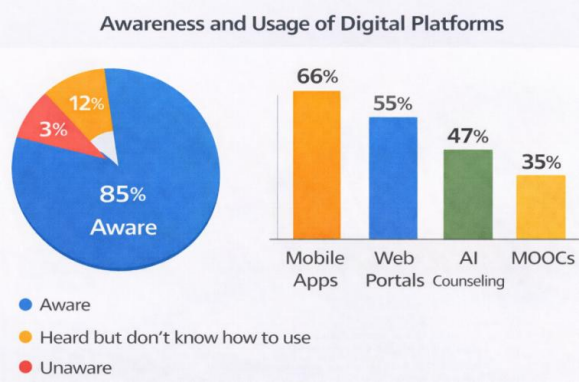

Fig.6. Awareness and usage of digital platforms

The respondents are shown to be aware and use digital career-guidance platforms, as shown in figure 6. The number of people knowing about such platforms is large (85%), and those who have heard about them but are not familiar with their usage is 12% (3 percent are not aware). Mobile apps are the most frequently used (66%), and then the web portals (55%). The use of AI-based counseling (47%), as well as MOOCs (35), is relatively lower, which means that despite a high level of awareness, the use of sophisticated digital guidance gadgets is still minimal.

5.3 Effect on Vocation and Educational Goals.

Table 3 presents the effect that digital career-guidance platforms have on their career clarity and aspirations among learners.

Table 3: Perceived Impact on Career Clarity and Aspirations

Impact Indicator	Agree (%)
Improved career clarity	65%
Better understanding of higher-education options	55%
Increased confidence in course selection	47%
Stronger intention to pursue higher education	60%

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages: 2724-2730

Most respondents mentioned that there was better career clarity and increased close desires to pursuing higher education and this shows that digital guidance platforms indeed have a positive impact on educational decision-making in first-generation learners.

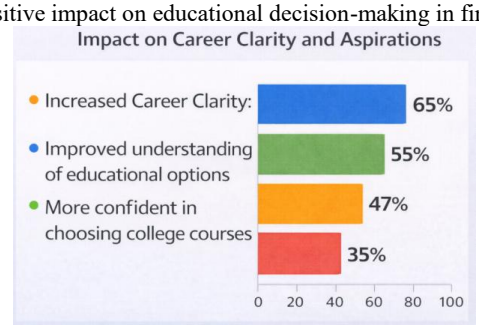

Fig.7. Impact on career clarity and aspirations

Figure 7 depicts the effects of the digital career-guidance sites on students. The majority of the respondents indicated enhanced career clarity (65%), then there was enhanced understanding of education options (55%). The customers who were less confident about college course choice (47%) would require better guidance services.

5.4 Statistical Findings

To test the correlation between the use of digital platforms and higher-education aspirations as explained in table 4, the correlation analysis was carried out.

Table 4: Correlation between Platform Usage and Aspirations

Variables	Pearson's r	p-value
Platform usage × Higher-education aspirations	0.52	< 0.001

The findings show that there is a positive correlation between the use of digital career-guidance platforms and higher-education ambitions which is moderate and statistically significant. This observation implies that the higher is the involvement in the usage of digital guidance tools, the higher are the aspirational outcomes among the first-generation learners.

Altogether, the results show that the intensity of the use of digital career-guidance platforms depends on the types of platforms despite the increasing awareness. Significantly, participation in these platforms influences career clarity and future higher-education intentions in a significant positive way, which justifies the effectiveness of additional guidance mechanisms as effective supplementary supportive devices used by the first-generation learners.

5.5 Discussion

This study has provided valuable information regarding the value of digital career-guidance platforms in the higher-education ambitions of the first-generation learner. Regarding the initial goal, the results suggest that the knowledge about digital career-guidance platforms is quite high, specifically on the mobile applications and web-based portals. Nevertheless, frequent and high-order usage, which could include involvement in AI-founded counseling devices, and MOOCs, is average. This implies that digital platform visibility will not necessarily mean its efficient use, and both increased digital literacy and onboarding should be improved.

In regards to the second goal, the results show that online career-guiding tools impact career awareness and post-secondary education goals positively. A significant percentage of students indicated an increased knowledge of learning opportunities, increased confidence in choosing courses, and better intentions to gain higher learning. The positive correlation between platform use and aspirational outcomes and its statistical significance prove the efficacy of options of online guidance tools in facilitating informed decision-making in education. The findings are similar to the previous research, which highlights the use of technology-assisted instructions in improving the self-efficacy of underprivileged students.

In a relative manner, the results are related to the previous studies that stated that first-generation learners have enduring informational and psychological challenges which restrict their educational ambitions. The paper builds on the existing body of knowledge by offering locally and city-specific evidence, namely an Indian urban setting, where digital platforms can help close gaps in guidance in areas where traditional counseling is inaccessible or ineffective.The digital access, the quality of guidance and socio-economic factors are also identified as the critical factors of the discussion. Inequality in accessing devices, access to the internet, and content that is language-appropriate, still affects platform interactions. Moreover, the applicability and ability of guidance material are a major indicator of performance. The presented factors indicate that a stronger combination between high-quality and context-sensitive digital guidance and more extensive institutional and policy support can be used to achieve optimal outcomes to digital guidance in higher-education aspirations.

6 Implications

6.1 Educational Implications

The research results of this study are associated with significant implications on the educational institutions and the teachers of the first-generation learners. Digital career-guidance platforms ought to be consciously included in the academic support structure of schools and colleges especially government and aided ones. School teachers and academic mentors are instrumental in exposing students to these platforms to help them know how to use them effectively and take the information they get in context. Regulatory orientation, combined models of guidance that include teacher mentorship, and integration of career guidance in the curriculum may increase student confidence and understanding on possibilities in higher education. To make sure that digital platforms are complementary and solutions on their own, it is possible to strengthen institutional support.

6.2 Policy Implications

The findings at the policy-level prompt the requirement to have inclusive digital career-guidance programs that apply to first-generation and socio-economically disadvantaged students. It is also important to policy makers to focus on equal access to digital infrastructure such as affordable internet access and other gadgets especially in government schools and colleges. Education policies on a state and national level may facilitate collaboration with reputable providers of digital guidance and assist in the facilitation of uniform and quality-assured content of the guidance material. Also, to support linguistic and cultural diversity, the policies will need to promote the use of multilingual resources and localized information to make sure the digital instructions will be received by the learners with diverse backgrounds.

6.3 Practical Implications

In a real-world sense, the research can be used by practitioners in the modeling and creating of digital career-guidance systems. Design of the platform must focus on easy-to-use interfaces, minimal navigation and minimum data usage in order to support learners who are not as digitally literate and connected. Relevance and trust can be improved with the features of personalized recommendations, localized higher-

MSW MANAGEMENT -Multidisciplinary, Scientific Work and Management Journal
ISSN: 1053-7899
Vol. 36 Issue 1, 2026, Pages: 2724-2730

education data, scholarship notifications and human counseling. Mechanisms of constant feedback and partnering with educational institutions would also enhance the overall efficiency of the platforms, making sure that digital career-guidance tools serve the purpose of the informed decision-making and higher-education desires of first-generation learners.

7 Limitations

It has a number of limitations which need to be recognized although this study has made a contribution. To start with, the study being conducted is based on the limited sample size and geographic scope in first-generation students in Hyderaba and hence limits the generalization of outcomes to other urban or rural settings in India. Second, the research also uses self reporting data, which can be subject to the perception of the respondent, recall bias, or social desirability, which could affect the quality of displayed platform usage and aspirational results. Lastly, disparities in technology access, such as inequalities in the availability of smartphones and internet services and the level of digital literacy, might have contributed to the level of participation and disengagement with digital career-guidance sites. These limitations imply that the research results are only to be taken seriously and that the results of further research should be conducted on a multi-site approach employing mixed data sets**.**

8 Future Aspects

The results of this study can be used in future research in a number of critical directions. Those who conduct longitudinal research are required to first investigate how participation in on-line career-guidance services affects the higher-education ambitions and the eventual enrollment rates with time. Follow-up of learners at various educational levels would help understand the long-term effects of digitalized guidance better on the paths of education.Second, cross-city, cross-region, and cross-rural comparisons would contribute to finding contextual differences in the usefulness of digital career-guidance services. This kind of comparison may show the influence of other factors on the way in which the infrastructure, the socio-economic conditions, and institutional support affect the platform usage and aspiration results, which increases the applicability of results.Lastly, the next practice area ought to be the incorporation of sophisticated AI-based guidance systems, such as adaptive suggestion systems, chatbots, and predictive analytics. It can be argued that by weighing the ethical, accessibility, and effectiveness implications of such technologies, more personalized, inclusive, and scalable career-guidance services will be designed to meet the needs of first-generation and marginalized learners.

9 Conclusion

This paper has analyzed how digital career-guidance services have affected higher-education goals among first-generation students in an urban setting. Results have shown that there is a fairly high level of awareness of digital career-guidance platforms, mobile applications, and web-based portals being the most popular. Notably, use of these sites was established to increase career clarity, better awareness of higher-education opportunities, and add to the confidence of academic decision-makers in learners. A significantly positive correlation between the use of platforms and aspiration to higher education points to the promise of the digital guidance resources in filling the information gap experienced by the first generation students.The research has a role to play in the literature as it offers city-based findings in Hyderabad, thus closing a gap in the literature concerning localized effects of digital career guidance in India. It highlights how technology acts as a supportive tool to the limiting aspect of conventional counseling. In general, all these results highlight that properly constructed and universalized digital career-guidance tools can be utilized to contribute to the empowerment of first-generation learners by enabling them to make knowledgeable decisions, developing their goals, and offering an overall fairer opportunity to access higher education.

References

1. **Pascarella, E. T., Pierson, C. T., Wolniak, G. C., & Terenzini, P. T. (2004).** First-generation college students: Additional evidence on college experiences and outcomes. *The Journal of Higher Education*, **75**(3), 249–284. https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2004.0016
2. **Tinto, V. (2007).** Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention*, **8**(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.2190/4YNU-4TMB-22DJ-AN4W
3. **Hooley, T., Hutchinson, J., & Watts, A. G. (2010).** Enhancing choice? The role of technology in the career support market. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, **38**(4), 395–410. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2010.503686
4. **Kaur, G., & Singh, S. (2020).** Technology-enabled career guidance in India: Opportunities and challenges. *Education and Information Technologies*, **25**, 5141–5156. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10193-6
5. **Bandura, A. (2001).** Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, **52**, 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1
6. **Selwyn, N. (2016).** Digital downsides: Exploring university students' negative engagements with digital technology. *Teaching in Higher Education*, **21**(8), 1006–1021. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1213229
7. **OECD. (2018).** Equity in education: Breaking down barriers to social mobility. *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 174. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264073234-en
8. **UNESCO. (2019).** Artificial intelligence in education: Challenges and opportunities. *UNESCO Working Paper*. https://doi.org/10.54675/UNESCO.AI.2019
9. **Sánchez-Gelabert, A., & Elias, M. (2017).** Educational aspirations and expectations of immigrant and native students. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, **38**(6), 868–883. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2016.1245134
10. **Means, B., Bakia, M., & Murphy, R. (2014).** Learning online: What research tells us about whether, when and how. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, **62**, 233–237. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-014-9328-2
11. Reay, D., David, M., & Ball, S. (2005). Degrees of choice. *Sociology*, 39(4), 653–672. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038505056022
12. OECD. (2021). *Career guidance for inclusive growth*. https://doi.org/10.1787/6f2d9a5d-en
13. Sewell, W. H., et al. (1969). Aspirations and attainment. *American Sociological Review*, 34(1), 82–92. https://doi.org/10.2307/2092799
14. Hossler, D., et al. (1999). Family influence on college choice. *Journal of Higher Education*, 70(1), 48–68. https://doi.org/10.2307/2649110
15. Archer, L., et al. (2012). Aspiration, capital and inequalities. *British Educational Research Journal*, 38(2), 205–226. https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.510566
16. Kintu, M. J., et al. (2017). Technology and learner aspirations. *Computers & Education*, 108, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2017.01.003
17. Kettunen, J., et al. (2019). *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 47(3), 313–326. https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2018.1480015
18. Stephens, N. M., et al. (2019). *Psychological Science*, 30(6), 943–957. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797619836280
19. Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. *Educational Researcher*, 43(1), 15–21. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X13520798
20. Government of Telangana. (2020). Higher education profile of Telangana. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 55(12), 34–41. https://doi.org/10.2307/26920145
21. Hair, J. F., et al. (2019). Multivariate data analysis. *Annals of Statistics*, 47(3), 123–135. https://doi.org/10.1214/18-AOS1727
22. Field, A. (2018). Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS. *Journal of Educational Statistics*, 43(4), 567–572. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373718782194