VISION VIKSIT BHARAT 2047: CONTRIBUTION AND INITIATIVES OF DIGITAL INDIA FOR EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN

Vol – 2

Editor-in-Chief

Dr.R.Senthilkumar

Assistant Professor, Department of B.Com (Professional Accounting)
Nallamuthu Gounder Mahalingam College (Autonomous), Pollachi, Tamil Nadu – 642 001.

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Ms.J.Madhubala

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Nallamuthu Gounder Mahalingam College (Autonomous), Pollachi, Tamil Nadu – 642 001.

Dr.D.Padma

Associate Professor, Department of B.Com (Professional Accounting)
Nallamuthu Gounder Mahalingam College (Autonomous), Pollachi, Tamil Nadu – 642 001.

Book Title: **VISION VIKSIT BHARAT 2047: CONTRIBUTION AND INITIATIVES OF DIGITAL INDIA FOR EMPOWERING RURAL WOMEN**

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Editors: **Dr.R.Senthilkumar, Dr.S.B.Gayathri, Dr.N.Sumathi Ms.J.Madhubala & Dr.D.Padma**

First Edition: **January 2025**

Book Size: **B5 Size**

ISBN: **978-93-94004-84-1**

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BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: BARRIERS OF ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORMS ON RURAL WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Ms. P. Divya Bharathi
Assistant Professor, PG Department of Commerce-CA
Nallamuthu Gounder Mahalingam College, Pollachi, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract
The research paper aims at exploring the Barriers and impact of online learning platforms on rural women's education. Data for the study have been collected from 117 women from rural areas through issue of well- structured questionnaire by adopting convenience sampling method. Simple Percentage and has been used to analyze the collected data. The study reveals that the majority of the women are in the age group of 21-25 years and majority of the rural women have wi fi internet facility in their home and using mobile phone for learning. And majority is spending Less than 1 hour a day for learning. And also completed only one course and they finds online courses are useful for them. Majority of women are strongly agreeing that they are not having equal access to resources due to poor network connection in remote area. Professional Network and Mentorships is the major barrier faced by women. Women from rural are needs more awareness related to online learning platforms.

Introduction

Digital technology transformed the lives of people particularly in rural areas (Iivari et al., 2020) The advent of online learning platforms has revolutionized education, offering unprecedented access to knowledge and skills. However, this transformation has not been uniform across all demographics. Rural women, in particular, face a myriad of challenges that hinder their ability to benefit from these digital resources. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the availability and variety of online learning platforms. These platforms have expanded access to education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic which necessitated a shift to remote learning. However, despite the growth of these resources, rural women often remain on the periphery. Factors such as limited internet connectivity, lack of digital literacy, and socio-cultural barriers continue to impede their participation in online education.

Review of Literature

Sindakis, S., Showkat, G. (2024), entitled a study on "the digital revolution in India: bridging the gap in rural technology adoption", to analysis the factors that

influence the adoption of digital technology in rural areas of India, with a focus on the Digital India Program. The study finds that young population in rural India indicating a workforce with significant economic potential and a higher likelihood of embracing digital technologies. Moreover, the study highlights the high levels of education among respondents, indicating a population well-equipped to understand and benefit from digital initiatives. Unexpectedly, the research shows a higher rate of digital technology adoption among female respondents, challenging the perception of gender disparities in technology access.

Barnali Dey and Ramesh Kumar(2024), entitled a study on Breaking Barriers: The Empowering Effects of Mobile E-Learning for Women in the Digital Age. To identity the how mobile e-learning empowers women, emphasizing how flexible, accessible, and capable it is of overcoming socioeconomic barriers. The study finds that mobile e-learning improves women's digital literacy and technical abilities while fostering confidence and self-reliance in them and also the study finds that Mobile e-learning gives women the flexibility, affordability, and accessibility to study in ways that enhance their employability, help them launch and expand enterprises, and help them become financially independence

Amasamy, I., Saravanan, S. A., Rangasamy, G., & Subramanian, D. (2024), entitled a study on "Exploring the impact of digitalization on rural women's socio-economic status: A bibliometric and scoping study" to analysis the diverse digital tools and platforms that have played a crucial role in improving the economic involvement, education, health, and social standing of women living in rural areas. The study finds that digitalization enables rural women to easily access markets, financial services, and educational resources and also it promotes entrepreneurial activity and self-employment among them.

Amina, T. (2021), entitled a study on Online Education and Women's Empowerment. to explore the formal and informal online learning spaces for women's empowerment. The study finds that different sources of knowledge and information and join in different online education opportunities for formal and informal learning. Women not only empower themselves with the exploration of online resources but also others when they teach online, actively share information on social media, and participate in online discussion forums.

Statement of the Problems

The digital divide remains a significant barrier to education, particularly for rural women who face unique challenges in accessing online learning platforms. Due to remote area network problems and other gender and family based biases etc., in this background it is essential to identify the accessibility of online learning

platforms by rural women and barriers faced by rural women in utilizing online learning platforms. This study may help to identify the problem faced by rural women.

Research Objectives

- To identify the accessibility of online learning platforms.
- To identify the barriers faced by rural women in utilizing online learning platforms.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on primary data which have been collected through issue of well structured questionnaire. It contains questions relating to the learners socio-economic profile, Accessibility of Online Learning Platforms and Barriers faced by rural women while utilizing online learning platforms. The data for the study have been collected from 120 women through Google forms. Snowball sampling technique has been adapted to collect data. The data collected have been analyzed using simple percentage.

Findings

(i) Socio - Economic Profile

- Among 120 rural women's majority of 40 (33.33%) are in the age group of 21-25 years.
- Majority of 46 (38.33%) women are completed their under graduation.
- Majority of 33(27.50%) women are employees.
- Majority of 30(25.00%) women are in the monthly income group of Rs.21000 – Rs.26000.

ii) Accessibility of Online Learning Platforms

- Among 120 women respondents majority of 52(43.33%) have Wi-Fi internet facility in their home.
- Majority of 42(35.00%) women are using mobile phone for learning.
- Majority of 41(34.16%) women are spending Less than 1 hour a day for learning.
- Majority of 52(43.33%) women are completed only one course.
- Majority of 50(41.66% of women are finds online courses are useful for them.

iii) Barriers faced by rural women in utilizing online learning platforms

The findings are based on a survey that highlights the challenges faces by women including awareness of platforms, cultural norms, digital literacy, and more. Understanding these barriers is crucial for developing strategies to enhance access to online education for rural women, ultimately empowering them and promoting gender equality in education.

Table: 1

Barriers	Strongly Agree	Agree	disagree
Awareness on related platforms	67(55.83%)	33(27.05%)	20(16.66%)
Cultural norms limiting their access	24(20.00%)	56(46.66%)	40(33.33%)
Digital Literacy	22(18.33%)	40(33.33%)	58(48.00%)
Working hours/ work load	54(45.00%)	34(28.33%)	32(26.66%)
Family Support	58(48.33%)	35(29.16%)	27(22.05%)
Financial Constraints	60(50.00%)	40(33.33%)	20(16.66%)
Gender bias	30(25.00%)	34(28.33%)	56(46.66%)
Internet Connectivity	23(19.16%)	40(33.33%)	57(47.05%)
Lack of Access to Necessary Devices	54(45.00%)	43(35.83%)	23(19.16%)
Professional Network Mentorships	70(58.33%)	27(22.05%)	23(19.16%)
Unequal Access to Resources & Area Remote Areas	73(60.83%)	27(22.05%)	20(16.66%)

The study finds that among 120 respondents majority of 73(60.83%) women are strongly agreeing that they are not have equal access to resources due to remote area network connections. Professional Network and Mentorships is the major barrier faced by 70(58.33%) of the women respondents. A significant majority 67(55.83%) of respondents strongly agree that awareness of related platforms is a barrier, indicating a critical need for improved outreach and education regarding available resources. Financial constraints are perceived as a significant barrier with 60(50.00%) strongly agreeing. This underscores the need for financial assistance and resources to help individuals overcome economic challenges. Family support is seen as a moderate barrier 58(48.33%) women are strongly agreeing that it impacts access. This highlights the importance of family encouragement and support in pursuing opportunities. 58 (48.00%) women are disagreeing that Digital literacy is not an issue. This indicates that women feel confident in their digital skills. And 57(47.05%) women have Internet facility but the network I a major problem form them. 56(46.66%) women are agreeing that **Cultural norms limiting their access towards digital learning platforms.** 56(46.66%) women are disagreeing that Gender is not a barrier. And 54(45.00%) women are strongly agreeing that work load and Lack of Access to Necessary Devices are the barriers faced by rural women in utilizing online learning platforms.

Suggestion

- Creating technology literacy among women.
- Creating user friendly environment for earners.

- Promote online learning.
- Guidance and mentoring to select and continue the course.
- Improved access to network increase the online learning.

Conclusion

The present study provides a better understanding on accessibility of online learning platforms among rural women and barriers faced by rural women i while utilizing online learning platforms. The available evidence suggests that in rural are gender is not barrier. But at the same time basic cultural norms are the barriers that affect the online learning among women. Moreover they are financially strong to bare the expenses but they faces constrains like remote area network problems like poor network connection. So the government may take necessary action to improve the infrastructure to bridge the gap.

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