A STUDY ON DIGITAL LITERACY IN RURAL AREAS COVERED UNDER MP HIGHER EDUCATION

Dr. Neha Chouhan
Assistant Professor,
Department of Commerce, Govt. Lead PG college,
Sheopur (MP).
Nehachouhan2010@gmail.com

Abstract

Digital awareness or digital literacy is the prerequisite for the survival and success in 21st century. Digital awareness is not limited to occupation or area or income. Due to the quick spread of digitalization, it has also the life of rural people of India. Yet, due to various factors namely, unavailability of network, lack of digital knowledge and financial resources, unawareness about the technology etc., an important part of the rural population is still resisting in adopting the various subsidies of digitalization. In the present study, the researcher tries to find out the factors behind the level of digital awareness among the rural population of India. Digital literacy is incredibly important in rural India for several reasons. First and foremost, it can provide access to valuable information and resources that may not be readily available in remote areas. This can include educational materials, healthcare information, and agricultural resources, among others.

Additionally, digital literacy can open up economic opportunities for individuals in rural areas. It can enable them to access online marketplaces, financial services, and remote work opportunities, which can help improve their livelihoods.

Furthermore, digital literacy can facilitate communication and connectivity, allowing people in rural India to stay connected with the broader world, access government services, and participates in civic engagement.

Overall, digital literacy has the potential to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, empower individuals, and contribute to the overall development of rural communities in India.

Keywords: digital literacy, higher education, competencies

Introduction

In a context of development and expansion of an increasingly digital society, training in competencies within the scope of Digital Literacy (DL) of higher education students becomes essential (Jeffrey et al., 2011); yet, it is often viewed as something that "is often taken for granted" (Murray & Pérez, 2014, p. 95).

Every country is generally categorized in two parts, namely rural and urban. Both the parts pf country plays an important role in the development of that particular country. Yet, they are intensely alienated on the basis of income, culture, technology, and availability and affordability of resources. Due to digital revolution and measures taken by Indian Government, the technological gap is diminishing day by day. According to Nielsen Report (2023), number of internet users of rural India is 44 percent more than the urban India. In the words of government, 'rural' means any area with a population of under 5,000 and population density of less than 400 per sq km, with more than 25% of the male population engaged in

AIJRRLSJM   **VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1 (2024, JAN)**   **(ISSN-2455-6602)ONLINE**

Anveshana's International Journal of Research in Regional Studies, Law, Social Sciences, Journalism and Management Practices

agricultural pursuits. This report also indicates that there is a vital increase in the usage of online banking and digital payments in India, with an unexpected growth rate of 43 percent. Digital revolution also came with the concept of global village. Marshall McLuhan prophesied the global village as one world interconnected by an electronic system that make it part of our popular culture before it actually happened. He was the first person to promote the concept of a global village and to consider its social effects. (Understanding Media, 1964). Rural India is an inseparable part of the Indian economy as it contributes about 46% of the national income. About 66% of India's population is rural and even due to the rapid increase of urbanization, rural India is still marking its presence in the country's growth and development for the next decade also.

Even after the growing number of internet users in rural India, there is a significant digital divide between urban and rural India. According to TRAI report 2022, internet penetration in rural India was only about 33% compared to 99% in Urban India. This gap is mostly due to two factors, namely, lack of infrastructure and awareness.

To overcome the above dissimilarity, the Indian government has launched the "Digital India" programme. The efforts of Indian government to create digital awareness were started on 1st July 2015 by launching Digital India Campaign. Digital India campaign was launched with the motive that the Government's services are accessible by every citizen electronically and through improved online infrastructure and by improved Internet connectivity. The implicit objective behind this campaign was to make India digitally empowered. The campaign includes various plans that connect rural regions with high-speed internet networks. The three fundamental components of this initiative were the development of protected and stable digital infrastructure, delivering government services digitally, and universal digital literacy.

Some of the initiatives undertaken by GOI as a part of this campaign to boost rural digital infrastructure are highlighted below.

Initiatives	Description
Common Service Centres	Common Service Centres is a connecting local population with the Government departments, banks, and insurance companies and with various service providers in private sector using IT-Enabled network of citizen service points.
Universal Access to Mobile	Aims to provide mobile access to more than 55,600 villages that do not have mobile coverage.

AIJRRLSJM   **VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1 (2024, JAN)**   **(ISSN-2455-6602)ONLINE**

Anveshana's International Journal of Research in Regional Studies, Law, Social Sciences, Journalism and Management Practices

Bharatnet	BharatNet, one of the biggest rural telecom projects in the world, implemented in a phased manner to all Gram Panchayats (approximately 2.5 lakh) in the country for providing non-discriminatory access to broadband connectivity to all the telecom service providers. Objective is to enable access providers like mobile operators, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), Cable TV operators, content providers to launch various services such as applications like e-health, e-education and e-governance in rural and remote India.

The State/UT-wise details of Gram Panchayats made service ready under BharatNet Project during last five years.

S.No.	Name of States/UTs	Service Ready GPs
1.	Assam	15
2.	Bihar	2791
3.	Chhattisgarh	5567
4.	Haryana	13
5.	Jammu & Kashmir	446
6.	**Madhya Pradesh**	**5290**
7.	Rajasthan	418
8.	Himachal Pradesh	186

State /UT-wise details of fund disbursed as on 31.12.2023 under BharatNet

S,No	Name of States/UTs	Total
1.	Assam	288.37
2.	Bihar	1609.50
3.	Chhattisgarh	2635.75
4.	Haryana	639.56
5.	Jammu & Kashmir	259
6.	**Madhya Pradesh**	**3951.03**
7.	Rajasthan	1825.26
8.	Himachal Pradesh	123.30
	Total	**11,331.77**

Note: Rs. 11,331.77cr has been disbursed from USOF under BharatNet.

AIJRRLSJM   **VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1 (2024, JAN)**   **(ISSN-2455-6602)ONLINE**

Anveshana's International Journal of Research in Regional Studies, Law, Social Sciences, Journalism and Management Practices

What is digital literacy?

Digital literacy is a skill that allows students to evaluate, use, and create digital information. Students must use critical thinking to determine what sources are valid when assessing and utilizing information. Digital literacy requires both cognitive and technical skills to manage, create and communicate information, all while thinking critically.

The ability to use ICT and the Internet becomes a new form of literacy – 'digital literacy'. Digital literacy is fast becoming a prerequisite for creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship and without it citizens can neither participate fully in society nor acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to live in the 21st century.

Why is digital literacy important for online teaching and learning?

- Digital literacy is vital to online teaching and learning because a lot of student work in higher education happens independent of instructors.
- Teaching digital literacy increases a student's engagement in their coursework and helps them achieve better learning outcomes.
- Because students are exposed to so much information every day through their smart phones, apps, social media, and news outlets, they must develop skills to discern which sources of information are reputable.
- From an instructor perspective, when students are equipped with digital literacy skills; their work will be improved and free of faulty citations or poor sourcing of information.
- Digital literacy is the set of competencies required for full participation in a knowledge society. It includes knowledge, skills, and behaviors involving the effective use of digital devices such as smart phones, tablets, laptops and desktop PCs for purposes of communication, expression, collaboration and advocacy […] Digital information is a symbolic representation of data, and literacy refers to the ability to read for knowledge, write coherently, and think critically about the written word […] The individual is able to find, capture, and evaluate information. Digital literacy requires the individual to understand the societal issues raised by digital technologies and possess critical thinking skills (Digital literacy, 2017).

Literature Review

Vijayan (2019) discussed that the emergence of internet in rural livelihoods eliminated the difference between rural and urban livelihoods and also grown up their education system as well. In conclusion, the author stated that the Digital India Campaign has been effective thus far, demonstrating favorable outcomes in terms of GDP growth, employment prospects, educational elements, and technological advancement.

AIJRRLSJM   **VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1 (2024, JAN)**   **(ISSN-2455-6602)ONLINE**

Anveshana's International Journal of Research in Regional Studies, Law, Social Sciences, Journalism and Management Practices

Lawani (2018) in his study "Digital Empowerment for Inclusive Growth & Sustainable Development" defines the concept of inclusive growth for sustainable development. He concluded without proper digital literacy the dream of digital India is not possible. India can transition to digitalization with the support of PMGDISHA, a good government project promoting digital literacy. The resolution of these two primary obstacles to digital literacy is necessary for the success of this program: insufficient funding and inadequate infrastructure.

Kumar, Prdhi, and Arora (2017) have conducted a study to explore the impact of digitalization on the development of Rural India, under the study authors explained about various benefits of digital India programme initiated by government of India for rural areas. With the emergence of Digital India programme rural entrepreneurs are being more empowered as they can get easy loans under MUDRA Yogna to set up Common Service Centre (CSCs) points at village level, they can also start Internet/cyber-kiosks to be a local entrepreneur, and women are also getting health care services by Arogyasakhi Application.

Significance of the study

In today's era, along with education literacy, digital literacy or digital awareness is also became an integral part of the growth of an individual as well as of the economy. The rate of digital literacy has been accelerated due to the digital revolution and various factors associated with it, namely easy availability and accessibility of the internet even in rural areas, increase in social media usage, user friendly applications and so on. But these factors are unevenly distributed amongst the urban and rural India. Therefore, this study is an attempt to understand the factors and their impact on the awareness level of digital literacy among Rural India.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the level of digital literacy among higher education of rural or Urban area of Madhya Pradesh.

2. To compare the level of digital literacy between the boys and girls studying at higher education of rural area of Madhya Pradesh.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in the level of digital literacy between urban and rural students studying among higher education.

2. There is no significant difference in the level of digital literacy between boys and girls studying at higher education.

Research Methodology:

The descriptive survey method employed for the present study. The population of the study comprised the students of secondary schools situated in Anuppur, Damoh , Datia division of Madhya Pradesh state.

Sample and Sampling Procedure:

The sample of the study was drawn by using Random Sampling method comprised of 670 students, in which 276 boys and 394 girls. From 670 students, 338 urban students and 332 rural students.

Tools and Statistics Used:

In order to gather data, the researchers created a module that focuses on digital devices and their use. They then used the Digital Literacy Achievement Test (DLAT), a constructed and standardized tool with 113 items that addressed four main areas: introduction to digital devices; Internet usage; access to e-government services; and safety and security of digital devices. The items were rated on a six-point scale: extremely low, low, below average, average, high, and extremely high. The instrument has a validity of 0.82 and a reliability of 0.87.

Data Analysis and Results:

Objective-(1): To compare the level of digital literacy between rural and urban students studying at secondary schools.

The total number of students are divided into two groups as urban locality (f=338) and rural locality (f=332) respectively and to test the following hypothesis, t-test is used in the study.

Hypothesis-(1): There is no significant difference in the level of digital literacy between rural and urban students studying at secondary schools.

Table 1. Comparison of Digital Literacy between urban and rural Students

Locality	N	Mean	SD	t-value	P-value	Result
Urban	338	42.16	18.612			**Sign. at 0.05**
Rural	332	30.71	13.482	**9.105**	**0.00**	

Result: p value is 0.00 (< 0.05), which is found to be significance at 0.05 level of sign. Therefore, the null hypothesis for this objective is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. It indicates that there is difference in the level of Digital Literacy between urban and rural students studying at secondary level. This shows that urban students have significantly more Digital Literacy than rural students.

AIJRRLSJM   **VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1 (2024, JAN)**   **(ISSN-2455-6602)ONLINE**

Anveshana's International Journal of Research in Regional Studies, Law, Social Sciences, Journalism and Management Practices

Objective-(2): To compare the level of digital literacy between the boys and girls studying at secondary schools.

The total number of students are divided into two groups as boys (f=276) and girls (f=394) respectively and to test the following hypothesis, t-test is used in the study.

Hypothesis-(2): There is no significant difference in the level of digital literacy between boys and girls studying at secondary schools.

Table-2: Comparison of Digital Literacy between boys and girls Students

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Result
Boys	276	39.75	17.878			**Sign at 0.05**
Girls	394	34.19	16.419	**4.159**	**0.00**	

Result: The calculated t-value is 4.159 and p-value is 0.00 (< 0.05) which is found to be significance at 0.05 level of significant. Therefore, the above mentioned hypothesis for the second objective is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that boys have significantly more Digital Literacy than girls. The result shows that there is difference in the level of Digital Literacy between boys and girls studying at secondary level.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The findings showed that boys have a much higher level of digital literacy than girls. Still, Hargittai (2005) argued that user experience and usability, not gender, class, or group, determine disparities in digital literacy. Furthermore, compared to rural kids, urban students have a notably higher level of digital literacy, according to the results. According to Kumar and Kumara (2018), comparable systems were reported, with 20.66% of rural students using computers and 69.70% of urban students using computers for various academic purposes. The results suggest that in order for students to get the most out of using computers and other technology, educational systems should support them in acquiring advanced digital literacy abilities. Moreover, educational policy makers need to be alerted to the fact that secondary school students require training and proper guidance related to computer and internet safety.

References:

1. *Digital literacy.(2017). In Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_literacy.*

2. *Kumar, B. S., & Kumara, S. U. (2018). The Digital Divide among the Rural and Urban Students: An Exploration. South Asian Journal of Participative Development, 18(2), 160-167.*

AIJRRLSJM   **VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1 (2024, JAN)**   **(ISSN-2455-6602)ONLINE**

Anveshana's International Journal of Research in Regional Studies, Law, Social Sciences, Journalism and Management Practices

3. *Murray, M. C., & Pérez, J. (2014). Unravelling the digital literacy paradox: How higher education fails at the fourth literacy. Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology, 11, 85-100. Retrieved from http://iisit.org/Vol11/IISITv11p085-100Murray0507.pdf*

4. *McLuhan, Marshall, 1911-1980. Understanding Media; the Extensions of Man. New York : Signet Books, 1964.*