A Study on Digital Inequality among marginalized Women and Policy recommendations towards inclusivity

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Abstract

In today's fast paced world, easy access to technology and the internet is an essential for education, employment and social participation. However, women and young girls from marginalized sections of the society continue to face significant hurdles towards digital inclusion, fortifying the already existing gender and socio-economic inequalities. This study aims to explore the nature and side effects of digital inequality among the marginalized female population shedding special focus on how digital exclusion can limit their access to important resources and opportunities. The study employs a mixed methods approach combining quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews and focus groups discussions to implore a deeper understanding of the issue. The survey done across various marginalized sections such as rural, low-income, indigenous and migrants explores their access to digital devices, internet connectivity, digital literacy, and usage. On the other hand, qualitative data from in-depth interviews and case studies gives us clarity of the reality and lived experiences of women and girls who are digitally excluded, and the challenges they face in accessing education, healthcare information, online services and other opportunities. The preliminary findings of the study suggest that digital exclusion is not just about lack of infrastructure but is deeply rooted with cultural norms, gender roles and negligence from the system in framing inclusive digital policies, particularly social stigma, lack of female focused digital education, affordability impacts women and girls to engage online. The study also tries to identify some of the best practices that have emerged towards digital inclusivity initiated in grassroots or NGO's. The research aims to recommend more equitable digital policies by focusing on the intersection of gender and digital access. With practical recommendations for inclusive digital literacy programmes, gender sensitive infrastructure planning and focused policies to narrow down the gender digital divide which would ultimately promote empowerment within the marginalized women communities in this digital age.

Keywords: digital inequality, marginalized sections, women, gender, inclusivity.