



ROLE OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract:

Digital Literacy plays a significant role in women's empowerment by giving access to information, education and job opportunities. It enables women to learn, communicate, connect with others, raise their voice for self, breaking down social barriers and also reducing isolation. Digital literacy can also improve women's participation in political and civic life, giving them voice and platform to share their opinions and ideas. Additionally, it can lead to better job prospects, increased income and greater financial independence by using various online platforms. However, there are still significant barriers to digital literacy for women, including unavailability of technology, lack of knowledge of using technology, culture and social norms, gender-based violence through online. By considering the above challenges it is essential to achieve gender equality and empower women through digital literacy.

Keywords: Empowerment, Digital Literacy.

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INTRODUCTION:

Indian society worshiped women as goddesses, in the ancient times. However, in the middle age, the status of women was degraded to a great extent. They were thought of as a subordinate part of society to perform duties like upbringing of children, caring for every family member, and other household activities.

Recently with the increase in literacy the trend has been changing, and women are stepping into new areas, overcoming all the barriers of old ideologies and trying to gain prominence in the field of education and industry too. Although this change is becoming apparent in recent times, it has yet to undergo a monumental change.

This is due to the fact that we have not contemplated these issues from the right perspective or don't have

the genuine understanding to gauge the performance. This creates a genuine need for us to look for real indicators to measure social change. Women Empowerment can't achieve its peak, if we just consider education and employment of women. Considering their economic contribution, economic freedom, access to health services, decision making at home and offices, being the part of management committees and most importantly achieving Digital Literacy which is the indispensable qualification in today's technological world. These are the true determinants of women empowerment.

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR DIGITAL LITERACY?

Considering the latest transformation, the world is going through, we see that everything is going virtual. Right from communication to all financial



transactions, even meetings and discussions are becoming digital. And last but not the least, getting financial resources is going online. Hence to be at par with men or getting close to gender equality, it is must to be on the path where the world is going and hence digital literacy is the most significant step towards women empowerment and going further to become entrepreneurs.

DIGITAL LITERACY AS A SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGE:

When we say that we are digitally literate, it means that we have acquired a basic understanding of and ability to use digital media and use technologies in a meaningful and fruitful way, so that we can work effectively in today's technologically advanced world. Its simple indicator is the knowledge that gives us ability to use a computer, a smartphone, the internet, e-banking, a website, operating through an e-commerce site, as well as basic operating systems and software applications, in addition to higher education, digital and internet literacy is an essential and important tool that makes women truly employable and empowered.

Digital Literacy is extremely significant in technology because it helps people to understand the use of various digital tools, apps, software's and technologies. In today's world technology is valuable in all sorts of areas like education, communication, entertainment, workplace, entrepreneurship etc. Having digital literacy skills is also essential for personal and professional success. As the paper is focusing on Women Empowerment, we will see how digital literacy plays a vital role in enabling women into their careers or various aspects of life. We are living in the world of technology, and technology is helping women to

advance their careers and contribute to the community. Being digitally literate is significant for women empowerment. Digital literacy enables women to get information, connect with others, creating opportunities to participate in various economic and social activities around the world through online mode. Women who are digitally literate will be more advantageous in various areas like improved access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare, social connections, safety and security, entrepreneurship etc.

ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL LITERACY WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

With digital literacy the corporate world has shrunk to such an extent that people are working full time from home. Not only in the IT sector but in all fields non-technical work is successfully done from home and during the COVID pandemic time it proved a blessing in disguise. This has paved a way for women on their journey towards empowerment. Digital literacy has many plus points that negate the disadvantages women faced by working from home.

1. If digitally literate, women can now work from home full time while simultaneously taking care of her children and family. Women usually are very good at multitasking at home and this makes her best suited for both office jobs as well as caretaker.
2. Women's safety is not jeopardized when she is working from home. She is safe from hazards typically arising from traveling as well as psychological and physical harassment the women undergo usually at offices. She is much safer to work from home.
3. Digital literacy and related employment don't demand physical strength as compared to factory



work. So, women can opt to do non-technical work. Many Women are seen working with non-technical work in Oil & Gas and mining industries too.

4. Access to education is limited due to family responsibilities and restrictions, financial limitations, and most commonly the physical location and its safety aspect. But digital Literacy helps in overcoming the barriers and helps women to gain access to variable educational resources and tools.
5. Digital Literacy helps women to access the online database related to health and hygiene thereby leading to a better health at an economical cost. Many digital tools and apps are available almost for free where they can track and manage their physical and even mental health.
6. It is very difficult to get government information and services that are not available locally. Digital literacy helps in accessing the information and services to such distant and inaccessible financial services and resources, government services and support in legal issues.

This has significantly increased women employment and they are quite flourishing especially in IT skills, where we get to see many women at managerial positions supervising even a group of men. Going further, women are now emerging as entrepreneurs. For eg. Chitra Gurnani Daga (Thrillophilia.com), Upasana Taku (MobiKwik), Divya Gokul Nath (Byju's) are some of the few women entrepreneurs who are into digital technologies.

1. Digital tools for Entrepreneurship:

New technologies offer huge potential to increase economic opportunities-from mobile, computer, smartphones etc. Digital technologies which

facilitate trade and access to local and global markets which would help women to start their own business. Following are the tools which would help women for their beginning of entrepreneurship

- a. **Social Media:** Tools like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube can be used to advertise and promote the product, providing various services, introducing the brand and also getting connected with the customers from any corner of the world. Digitally literate women can influence this platform to reach an audience.
- b. **E-Commerce Platforms:** there are various websites like Shopify, GooDaddy etc allow women to create their own online stores and sell their products straight to the customers.
- c. **Online marketplaces:** platforms such as Amazon, Flipcart, eBay provide easy ways for women to start and manage their own online business. From these platforms they can have large access to customers.
- d. **Virtual meets:** Managing work at different locations and especially at remote places has become an effortless thing to do, thanks to the online meeting platforms like Zoom, Google Meet etc. Now a team can have a meeting by staying at their respective homes and hence work together online.
- e. **New Options to Access Capital:** The difficulty in accessing the Digital Financial services like remittance, payments, credits and insurance are now becoming easy with these services available on all devices like computers, tablets and mobiles. Thus, Women entrepreneurs who are facing these issues can subscribe to Kickstarter and Indiegogo, where they can raise money from a global pool of investors. Various



venture capitalists who are looking to invest in businesses run by women are also at ease to find. This is revolutionizing the digital financial system and making the pathway successful for women entrepreneurs.

2. Digital literacy for financial Education:

Access to Digital landscapes of financial transactions and services is a major hurdle. Digital literacy helps in overcoming this hurdle by providing them the knowledge required in this field. They get access to multiple financial resources like banking services, budgeting apps and several investment platforms which assist women in financial management. Following are some tools which are available online to help in this regard.

Following are some of the online tools which will help to improve financial situation of women

- a. **Mobile Banking apps:** These apps are easily available on smartphones. They give easy access to banking services and manage their finances without wasting time. Apps like Paytm, ICICI Pockets, SBI Buddy, M-Pesa etc. are specially designed to be user-friendly and usable by individuals with low level literacy.
- b. **Microfinance Institutions:** There are various MFIs like Annapurna Microfinance Pvt Ltd, Asirvad Microfinance Pvt Ltd etc. which offer small loans with less interest and other financial services to individuals which are not able to access traditional banking services. MFIs also provide financial literacy training and business development support to their clients, which are very helpful for even illiterate women who may lack basic financial knowledge and skills.

- c. **Women's Institute for Financial Education (WIFE):** It is one of the non-profitable organizations which gives financial education for women. It provides various online courses, webinars and financial coaching which will be beneficial for women to achieve financial empowerment.

3. Tools to be used for women's safety:

Women's safety has become very challenging but there are many ways which would help women to keep them safe. Following are the different online apps and tools which would be useful for women's safety

- a. **Location sharing maps:** there are apps like Google map, Life 360, Snapcharts live Location etc. which could be shared by women in emergency with the trusted contact. This can help her if she is going to a new place and wants someone to know her whereabouts.
- b. **Safety wearables:** Devices like smart watches can help women who are in distress situations. By pressing a button or by activation the features of the smartwatch can alert designated contacts for emergencies.
- c. **Safety apps:** apps like 112, My Safetipin, Sheroes, Smart 24x7 etc. could be downloaded on their smartphones which allow women to send emergency alerts and even call for help.
- d. **Virtual self-defence courses:** Knowing how to protect yourself from the attacker is very important. There are several online self-defence courses available for women who cannot attend physical classes. These online classes can teach how to protect themselves in case of attack.

Social media platforms: Media is also playing a vital role to raise voice against violence and also to create



awareness. Women can use social media platforms to share information with others. Hashtag like #MeToo, #TimesUp, #YesAllWomen etc. are examples of how social media can be used to bring attention to violence against women.

But it's important to note that while these tools can enhance safety, they are not a replacement for being complacent and unaware of your surroundings. Women need to trust their instincts and take precautions to prevent dangerous situations.

4. Digital platform in support of women's health:

There are many digital platforms that support women's health and well-being. Following are the examples:

- a. **Telemedicine Platforms:** these enable women to access healthcare services remotely, which can be especially important for women who face barriers to accessing healthcare, such as those in rural or remote areas. Platforms like Teladoc, Sesame Care, MeMD etc. consult with healthcare providers via video call.
- b. **Women's Health apps:** These apps can help women track their menstrual cycles, monitor their fertility, and manage their pregnancy. The apps are as follows Clue, Flo, Ovia.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In addition to the above-mentioned points, Following are the recommendations which would help in strengthening the concept of Empowerment

1. It is said, teamwork is always better than individual performance. Having an online forum of Women Entrepreneurs, where problems and issues could be discussed and getting solutions and ideas will have women who are into the same business or face similar issues.

2. Mistakes make us learn in the best way. Having a website where the failures are listed along with its lessons learnt, would be a great tool to learn from the mistakes of others. It is the best way where women can implement some solutions which have been implemented earlier and were proved to be successful. For eg. a HSE website (www.hse.gov.uk) for UK's Industrial health, safety and environment site where incidents and lessons learnt are documented for people to get knowledge and use the recommendations.
3. Finally, the government can step into this process of strengthening by providing subsidies and grants, like what they do to farmers, fishermen and amateur businesses to give them the initial support to make the business flourish.

CONCLUSION:

Putting it in nutshell, the process of empowerment of women has been initiated but not fully grown and needs further enhancement and back up from the government to reaffirm the importance of this program. This will surely lead us in achieving gender equality. After all, statistics have shown that women who are equally equipped with the talent as their male counterparts can play a vital role in enhancement and upliftment of social, economic or political progress of a society and country. Giving them the digital tool will take them one step further to stand shoulder to shoulder with men. We all as a society, including women themselves and the government should take appropriate steps to make this change happen. We should not only view empowerment in the economic sense, ignoring other variables like health, education, literacy etc as these are also the indicators of women empowerment.



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