

E-Skills and Information Literacy for learning in Rural Women in India

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Abstract

As the world moves towards E-Technological friendly society, its primary focus has shifted towards E-technology development in recent times. We are moving ahead in all sectors through E-Techno system like E-health, E-education, E-Transport, E-Agriculture, E-shopping etc, and all Governments, Companies, organizations, staffs, foundations, universities, colleges, school etc in this age depend completely on information and data to convey the technical and scientifically and as it's known today Manuel Castell's prolific and influential term "Information society". This age we live in is called or known as the age of information or the age of technology. If we talk about rural women in context of Indian social system, we automatically find ourselves in mind of multiple disputes regarding empowerment and status women in rural. Rural women are a major force in the development of the society and the nation. Women are the vulnerable communities in the rural population as they marginalization from the technology and communication networks. Indian govt. Campaigned that "every Girl is precious, educate a girl and strengthen the nation". So our first duty should be to educate the women. E-skills and information literacy can lead to the empowerment of women, to change their status, enabling them to take control of their lives and participates as equal with men in promoting rural development along with strengthen the nation. This research paper will be based on secondary data as well as case studies and content analysis. The present study is attempt to understand the difference level of E-skills and to understand the necessary of E-learning and Information literacy for rural women in India and How E- skills and information literacy to changes their lifestyle to breaking the traditional structures of women suppression and discrimination.

Introduction

E-Technology has changed the way of living style of people. The information age is bringing as a wide range of new communication technologies that play an increasing significant role in changing our daily life. People are more equipped with digital technologies like mobile, smart phone, search engines etc. and hence they have more exposure of information and other works. The digital transformation offers new opportunities for economic and social development around the worldwide.

One of the biggest challenges to the world community is women education in rural areas. India has been going to techno-friendly country and use of Internet increased a lot in everyday life. E-system has developed from grassroots level to upper level work. E-Technology has become an essential part of any work in any place around the world. E-

Technology provides facility to do work in home sitting. Don't need to go outside or other places. You can do work sit in your home. This is more suitable for women. If women will become more familiar with E-Technology, they bring up more with E-skills. But for this, they have to know more about information literacy. If Rural women will associated with E-Technology, if they will learn about information literacy and to make skill with E-skills then the society will change and become more powerful.

As a consequence, Government of India has taken lots of initiatives for the upliftment of poor sections of the society and tries to raise the social and economic standards of people living in rural and sub-urban areas. In order to provide better opportunities to the rural population for education, employment, economic development, technical infrastructure, health services, food supply, electricity, water & sanitation, financial services and governance; expanded awareness and cooperation of individuals in the rustic improvement programs, ability advancement organizations/workshops, better farming area changes, ICT framework arrangement, decentralization of arranging, and better access to credit are required. Information sharing on new production processes with farmers as well as the rural people. Rural economies can be profited and to get true justices and more transparency through information system. All system has made through Internet system like E-Governance, E-Agriculture, E-seva, E-shopping, E-transport etc. Through these systems we can get a justices and true valuable information and everybody has to get and be given equivalent and reasonable opportunities to pick their own specific manner of employments.

In India, mostly women are House-wives in Rural. As rural women in India are most vulnerable, disadvantage and deprived sections of the society, the empowerment of them is necessary to claim their rightful and justifiable place in the society. The E-skilful and Information literacy of them is necessary to know and to make them more powerful and comes out from this dominant society and to give them freedom, empowerment equality and free form patriarchal torture.

Objectives

- To understand the different level of E-skills and Information Literacy.
- To understand the necessity of E-Skill and Information literacy for rural women in India.
- To study How E-skills and information literacy to changes rural women's lifestyle.

Research Methodology

This research article is based on secondary information from various sources such as research articles and various literatures like research Journals, Books, Magazines, Reports (Governments/Corporate) Newspaper, and e-news. It is more descriptive in nature and two case studies have been selected for analysis.

What is E-Skill

E-skills or electronic skills include those needed to make use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) an encompasses a broad range of knowledge transferred

through digital technologies, sometimes as a complement to traditional education channels. E-skill does not mean the Internet alone; it also includes radio, wireless phone, computer connected (or not) to the Internet, and a wide variety of software, hardware or tools such as operating systems, databases, emails or office productivity applications, networks, etc. In today's world, the most comprehensively ICT device is the mobile phone. The term ICT has been used to encompass technological innovation and convergence in information and communication leading to the development of so-called information or knowledge societies, with resulting changes in social interaction, economic and business practices, political engagement, education, health, leisure and entertainment.

Information Literacy

Jeremy Shapiro and Shelly Heghes (1996) defines information literacy as “As new liberal art that extend from knowing how to use computers and access information to critical reflection on the nature of information itself. Its technical infrastructure and its social, cultural and philosophical context and impact.” We live in the Information Age, and "information" is increasing at a rapid pace. Manuel Castells has defined that this emerging society as information society or knowledge society. He said that power now rests in network. Information has been an essential component of all societies. In the new Network or Technology society information has becomes a key factor in economic productivity. In the network society, information and knowledge are the basic resources and access to them is a necessity.

Different E-development initiatives of Indian Government

E-Governance is part of the new evolution that has played an important role in this new competitive and fast paced development of the world. According to World Bank definition, “E-government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies like wide area network, the internet and mobile computing that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses and other arms of government”. There are different types of E-government and E-governance related services like - e-voting, e-democracy, e-information, e-consultation, e-decision making, e-procurement, e-health, e-education, e-banking, e-commerce, e-payment, e-tax, e-agriculture, e-court, e-seva, e-retail systems etc.

Government Initiative for Urban as well as Rural Development through E-System

The E-development of India challenges to develop nation and an empower society and to promote e-Governance for empowering citizens, promoting the inclusive and sustainable Development. E-governance brings the applications of ICT to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of exchange of information and transaction.

E-Agriculture: E-Agriculture intends to enable the concerned players in this field to exchange opinions, case studies, experiences, good practices and resources related to e-agriculture, and to ensure that the knowledge created is effectively shared and used in India and Worldwide.

Mobile Governance: The Mobile Seva platform delivers Government services over mobile devices using mobile applications installed on the user's mobile handsets. About 2521 Government departments and agencies at central, state and local levels have been integrated with the Mobile Seva platform.

e-Hospital – It includes online appointment and registration by new patients, viewing of lab reports, checking the status of blood availability and integration with payment gateway (PayGov).

Jeevan Pramaan: Digital Life Certificate for Pensioners scheme known as Jeevan Pramaan envisages digitizing the whole process of securing the life certificate. With this initiative, the pensioner is no more required to physically present himself or herself in front of disbursing agency or the certification authority.

Vikaspedia: It is a multilingual collaborative content creation platform that promotes access and sharing of e-knowledge for empowerment of underserved communities. Vikaspedia facilitates societal empowerment through provision of relevant information in various domains including Agriculture, Education, Health, Social Welfare, Energy and e-Governance in 22 scheduled languages of the country, besides English.

MyGov: MyGov aims to establish a link between Government and Citizens towards meeting the goal of good governance. There are multiple theme-based discussions on MyGov where a wide range of people can share their thoughts and ideas.

E-commerce: can be defined generally as the sale or purchase of goods or services, whether between businesses, households, individuals or private organizations, through electronic transactions conducted via the internet or other computer-mediated (online communication) networks.

E-government refers to the use of information and communication technology in public administration procedures. One aspect of e-government, on its demand side, concerns the interaction of individuals or enterprises with public administrations through ICT.

Rural e-Seva

It was initiated by Andhra Pradesh Government to convey e-governance facility. The focuses are outlined with the view to give better administration offices to the general population of the Rural India.

All these things are going to be E-system. However, for E-development to be truly transformative there needs to be a solid basis of awareness and a better understanding of their role in the achievement of empowerment and change their lifestyle in Rural people.

Present scenario of rural in India

The most explicit disposition of the life and living of human being in rural is that a very high proportion of them lives on agriculture and labour as their main occupations. But all these things are going to be digitally. The Government's ambitious "Digital India" plan aims to

digitally connect all of India's villages by broadband internet, promote e-governance and transform India into a connected knowledge economy. By the year 2019, the 'Digital India' program of the Government of India (GOI), envisages that 250,000 Indian villages will enjoy broadband connectivity, and universal phone connectivity. Indian government has initiative to make a Smart Village around the country. These villages would become the focal point for the providing information, social, e-learning and e-governance services to villagers. This can become the spring board for rapid economic growth in the rural areas. Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets, and ensure efficiency, transparency, and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man. Internet technologies can be taken as a weapon for fighting against the under-developed conditions in the rural areas. High Speed Internet in all Urban and Rural areas even in remotest parts of the country including hilly terrains. Mobile connectivity is remaining in 55,000 villages. Comprehensive Plan has been developed for hilly states and remotest villages.

Rural Women in India

Women in India face considerable gender discrimination. They are outnumbered by men, face discrimination in the matter of food consumption, are less literate than men have little control over their own fertility, work in unpaid and undervalued sectors, suffer wage discrimination, are subject to laws that discriminate against them face violence at home . Rural young women already engaged in diverse livelihood activities, they are already active in learning and developing strategies to improve their lives. Still they have not their own power. They are mostly to have control under the rural men. They have significant role as a family 'planner. The involvement of rural women in economic activities is very limited. Because, mostly active in home chores. They are often associated with housekeeping, taking care and feeding their children. Rural communities, especially the women, are often associated with the problems of living in deprivation and isolation. Many of rural women are poor, asset less, illiterate, and have neither marketing skills nor connections to markets and buyers.

Case Study -1

e-Seva Centres, Andhra Pradesh, India¹

This project, which is run by the West-Godavari District Administration in Andhra Pradesh State, has established Web-enabled rural 'e-Seva Centres' run by self-help groups of women from the poorest segments of society. The aim is to help the women achieve economic independence and replace the traditional form of governance and its accompanying deficiencies with a modern, more open, transparent and responsive service delivery system. Initially the project started in all 46 *mandal* (block) headquarters in the district, with the first

¹ Swapna Veldanda and Sanjay Jaju, "Women Providing Online Services: e-Seva Centres in Andhra Pradesh, India," <http://www.womenicnterprise.org/eseva.htm>.

women's e-Seva centre opening in June 2002. More centres were then established in over 200 small villages, large villages or towns in Andhra Pradesh, delivering services to citizens. To further improve communication, wireless technology was adopted and 85 nodes were networked. Adopting wireless technology also enabled the project to reach more citizens. The actual number of computers at each Centre varies from place to place based on local needs. In a small village an e-Seva Centre operates with one computer, a scanner, Xerox machine, digital camera and printer. In a town there would be more computers and provision of Web-cams etc. Each centre has an Internet connection – in villages they use dial-up; in towns they use a leased line connection. A very wide range of services is provided—including not only bill payments, issuance of land/birth certificates, Internet browsing, tele-medicine and tele-agriculture but also access to online auctions, the filing of complaints and grievances, and matrimonial services. In Jan 2002 there were 46 centres involving 92 member/partners. By Jan 2004 this had grown to 200 centres with around 292 member/partners. There are currently 384 women running e-Seva Centres, carrying out over two million transactions per year. Income and transactions are increasing month by month and are much higher in 2004 than in 2002. The major costs for the women's running the centres are loan repayment, stationery and consumables, salaries of other staff, and electricity. The service which provided most income was utility payments; used by at least 6,000 people per month who are charged about US \$ 0.03 per payment. Bigger centres make about US \$ 320 per month excess of income over direct expenditure (from which the women member's salaries are drawn), while smaller centres can expect an excess of income over direct expenditure of about US \$ 90 per month.

Case Study -2

Putting ICTs in the Hands of the Poor, Seelampur Community ICT Center India²

The Seelampur Community ICT Centre, an ICT learning centre for girls and women located in a high-density, low-income area in India. The women of the Muslim minority of Seelampur live in extreme poverty and struggle to gain access of information and knowledge to better their living conditions. Sharma explains to the listeners seated in a half-circle in the exposition space of the bustling Tunis summit, that the project is designed to encourage livelihood skills among women through vocational CDs, providing computer skills training, and developing linkages for marketing women's traditional arts and crafts products. The centre uses interactive multimedia tools to support vocational and life-skills training to poor girls and women, including awareness building on health issues and food preservation and support to professional activities such as tailoring and quilt-making. They acquired self-confidence, developed communication skills and improved their understanding of health, empowerment and education.

Primary Benefits for Women

² <http://enrich.nic.in/> (2005 Gender and ICT awards: http://www.genderawards.net/the_awards/press/index.htm; http://www.genderawards.net/wi_nners/2005/GICT_2005.pdf)

1. **Social Respect:** As the women's incomes increase, they become well trained, educated, and better respected. Villagers coming to the centres take their advice and using their services.
2. Employment has been increasing in their village.
3. **Self Respect:** Working with technology makes women feel proud.
4. **Monthly Income:** Currently, for each woman, net income is approximately five to eight thousand per month. They have become self-dependent. They have made own identity and change the society.

Conclusion

In this present scenario, E-skill and Information Literacy has become an integral part of social development. It has played significant role to establish and concrete positive role for the enhancing the democratic perception as well as strengthening the society. E-technology has changed the scenario of gender biased discrimination, wage discrimination, transparency, equality to make stronger Global society. But rural women in India face various challenges like: housekeeping; educating and feeding their children, Lack of E-skill and inadequacy in facilities that could hardship in life. Women in rural areas have lack of knowledge about technology. And there is no such types of environment which encourage them to learn and increase the e-skill. Due to these disadvantages they cannot uplift their position in our society. Rural women need to be empowered to sustain a better livelihood for their families. They need to be empowered economically. Rural young women already engaged in diverse livelihood activities, they are already active in learning and developing strategies to improve their lives, yet they face very real barriers in accessing new knowledge, technology, training and resources. E-skill development programme can bring their better future. They have to learn E-skill and to know about information literacy to improve their standard livelihood and to make an empowerment, equality. If rural women will become educated, it can change the society, change the nation as well as the world. Nancy Hafkin refers to Amartya Sen's argument for the centrality of women in the knowledge society, and writes, "knowledge is not only for economic growth but its foremost use should be to empower and develop all sectors of society to understand and use knowledge to increase the quality of people's lives and to promote social development. A socially inclusive knowledge society empowers all members of society to create, receive share and use information and knowledge for their economic, social, cultural and political development".

Suggestions

- Increase women's access to basic E-skill and Information literacy.
- Training for education/employment that low literacy, language barriers, to familiar with technological term.
- Trainer has to be as either local E-skillful educated people or those who are known local language as well as E-skillfull.
- Develop women friendly ICT employment opportunities in rural areas
- To start innovate E-skill training system those who are school dropout or illiterate women in Rural areas.
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