TECHNOLOGY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: TRIBAL FAMILIES OF SOUTH GUJARAT REGION

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Abstract:

Technology plays a transformative role in empowering women by expanding access to education, healthcare, civic participation. Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Information and communications are closely linked to power and the ability to affect change. As technology-based tools are devices are growingly becoming cheap as well as more and more popular among the masses, women's initiatives adopting such modern technologies can command a competitive edge and attract more people. Women empowerment is a comprehensive term and digital awareness and its effective utilization are its integral part. The digital revolution has enabled women to become socially and economically independent by ensuring their participation in all walks such as improving their network, having a better understanding of the world, and gaining easy access to knowledge and information. The state of Gujarat, especially in South region wide area of tribal, so many families of them live in urban area for their progress. This research concluded that the information and communication technology empower tribal women in various areas like social, economic, educational, personal, psychological, political, in technology development century. Overcoming these challenges will benefit women, but will also benefit their families, their communities, and ensure their full participation in the development and growth of society.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Technology, Tribal Women.

Introduction:

South Gujarat is home to a large and diverse tribal population. Tribal women in this region occupy a central role in household economies, agriculture work, craft production and community life. Constant change in technology especially mobile phones, internet services, digital payments and also, providing health information and so on. Information technology also has become a potent force in transforming social, economic, and political life globally. More and more, development strategists see the need for developing countries to embrace information technology both as a way to avoid further economic and social marginalization as well as to offer opportunities for both growth and diversification of their economies. Women within developing countries are in the deepest part of the divide, further removed from the information age than are the men whose poverty they share. The digital divide is of increasing concern; if access to and use of these technologies is directly linked to social and economic development, then it is imperative to ensure that women in South Gujarat regions understand the significance of these technologies and use them. If not, lack of access to information and communication technologies becomes a significant factor in the further marginalization of women from the economic, social, and political mainstream of their regions.

The information and communication technologies have also an effective tool to achieve our development in the country. These tools and technologies can enable the women to fight in developing countries due to change in economic, social and political environment. But we can't forget them, the use of technology has been several social and economic benefits which are directly linked to their life. Most Governmental policies and programs, however, approach the issue of women empowerment from the economic perspective only, on the other hand, women's economic self-reliance empowers them, disregarding other aspects, like, mental peace, health, literacy, education, etc. Also, technology's role in women empowerment concerted efforts for using Information and Communication Technology and Advanced Technologies like Artificial Intelligence for financial inclusion, rural development, a tribal women in various areas like social, economic, educational, personal, psychological, political, etc. need special attention.

Objectives and Methodology of the Study:

This research seeks to explore the need for adoption of technology and advanced technologies including artificial intelligence, machine learning, etc. for the purpose of women empowerment, rural development, etc. and hence equitable and sustained national economic development, especially for tribal area of South Gujarat region. To know the status of women empowerment through application of ICTs for tribal family's conditions. The method used in this study was aimed at eliciting response from women who are participants in the use of the burgeoning technologies. This study is of descriptive-analytical in nature and is exploratory too. The data used were secondary data from authentic sources, and common statistical tools were used in this study.

Literature Review:

Women's empowerment plays a critical role in the development of a society (Dhanamalar et al., 2020), as women are able to make choices and become active members of a community and develop capacity. The term Women's empowerment emerged in the academic literature in the 1970s with a trend in gender equality (Freire, 1970; Grabe, 2011). In recent years, women's empowerment has been described as a goal in seeking gender equality and equity (Mackey & Petrucka, 2021). In studies across the last decade, it has been used as a term to describe women as having choice or control over their options (Chew et al., 2015; Lindsay et al., 2013; Vivakaran & Maraimalai, 2017). In this study, women's empowerment is when women gain agency, resources, and/or capabilities to make decisions on matters of importance (Kabeer, 1999; Mosedale, 2005) through learning gained from access to information via technology. As women have opportunities with technology, they are able to gain access to information, learn, and make decisions that overcome social, political, and economic obstacles (Cummings & O'Neil, 2015).

Women and Technology:

Technology has played a part in increasing women's learning accessibility and choice in the economic realm and other aspects of life. Studies have highlighted that women's learning through access to finance, mobile money, and inclusive aspects of finance or microfinance, and digital-based health, agriculture have promoted higher female engagement in the formal economy and production and service sectors (Çetin et al., 2020). Technology has advanced women's engagement in the scientific field and provided political and institutional empowerment (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2020). Technology is the catalyst for empowerment as it provides different ways of accomplishing tasks at any time and location. The activities can be entirely online without leaving home if needed. Technology also offers opportunities to enhance the learning of all possible subjects, with a wealth of instructors providing video and text directions in multiple languages. Throughout this study, "technology" refers to digital technologies needing a source of power, such as mobile devices, laptops, and desktop computers (Crompton, 2014), and the Internet, applications, and programs used on those technologies.

In view of the above analysis, it is noted that ICT may be noted to be crucial for any sector, especially for women empowerment and rural development. It enhances the competitiveness of any business and helps women and other deprived segments to be abreast of developments, and hence, get rid of deprivations, issues like dependence and depression. As ICT is vital in women empowerment, rural development etc., this study closely looks into latest developments, like AI.

Technology and Women Empowerment:

Empowerment is process, which helps people to gain control of their lives through raising awareness, taking actions and working in order to exercise greater control. Empowerment is the feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish one's goal. The term 'empowerment' has till-date not been very explicitly defined and it may be assumed that based upon context the term may be interpreted contextually and situational. However, in context of women, empowerment essentially refers to a feeling of awareness of one's own situation backed up with the knowledge, skills and information which could enable women to gain higher self-esteem and facilitate their role as decision makers in the current patriarchal society where women have always been subordinate to men. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities.

Empowerment of women in the context of knowledge, societies entails building up the abilities and skills of women to gain insight into the issues affecting them and also building up their capacity to voice their concerns. In this context ICTs are emerging as a powerful tool for gender empowerment in many developing countries. There has been a rapid growth in the ICT sector since the late 1980s and the use of ICT has dramatically expanded since the 1990s. ICT offer the opportunities for direct, interactive communication even by those who lack skills, who are illiterate, lack mobility and have little self-confidence. Here are some aspects of life which have a direct influence of ICT especially on women:

(1) Women's increased access to job using ICT
(2) Increase of average household income in villages
(3) Women empowerment
(4) Shrinking Information Asymmetry through ICT
(5) Improved Governance
(6) Indigenous Knowledge
(7) Easy-Family communication
(8) Increase Social awareness.

Technology and Tribal Families:

At that time of developing our nation, in most of the rural areas, some mobile apps have been developed for the women for not only to search the information even they learn the benefits of healthy lives. It is also helpful for women in rural areas for searching job into different ways. There are various ICT has played an important role in changing the concept of work. Now education at everywhere is possible for the rural women but it is only possible through the ICT. Even during the Covid-19 time, not only the men even mostly of the women have performed the job from their own home and at any time, thereby raising their income to become more financially independent and empowered.

But, for Tribal families of South Gujarat region, we can't forget them there are two side of the coin, so several barriers are their due to some limitation about them. Lack of computer skills among women in tribal areas including installation of hardware and software installation. Limited internet facilities are available for these areas due to some network problem. Lack of electricity and poor infrastructure about ICT in these tribal areas and also, various social and cultural barrier are there. Lack of government policies for promoting development through ICT of tribal women.

Suggestions for improvement:

There should be need for the further improvement of ICT system for women empowerment. These suggestions are totally based on the finding of ICT about women Empowerment. These are given as under:

1) Government should adopt the right approach about the ICT policy for the empowerment of women in India due to reason being that ICT is a good system for providing the information relating to health, education, employment and awareness.
2) An Educational Institutes can be established for the training of computer for women in rural tribal area. E-Governance can be adopted by the govt. where women are free to take the decision.
3) NGOs can be setup for empowering the women in rural tribal areas where the govt. imparts the training to women about using the ICT in these areas. ICT camp be started in rural areas where the awareness about the ICT is providing to women in these tribal areas.
4) Good Internet facility should be providing to rural women for the development of knowledge of running the ICT system.
5) Government can take the initiative to provide the basic knowledge about the computer for tribal women because it is very much important for availing the employment opportunities.

6) A program can be started for women and girls and women who are enrolled should provide the training about the ICT at the free of cost.

7) Establishing women-led platforms to gather women entrepreneurs, women founders of start-ups, non-profit institutions from across the country, enabling them to discuss innovations, financing, training and mentorship to encourage other women around these areas.

8) This implies that further enlightenment on the benefit of education must be conducted by relevant authorities. Furthermore, financial assistance or where there is necessary, scholarships should be made available to women willing to go further in acquiring ICT skills and competence.

9) The girl-child is gradually assuming that position of competitiveness required for elevating women from their present status.

Conclusion:

Digital inclusion for tribal women in South Gujrat is both a challenge and an opportunity. This study provides unique findings in one of the first to examine the collective knowledge on how technology provides access to learning materials that are used to empower women. While there were similarities to extant systematic this study gained a high number of studies conducted within developing countries, providing scholars with a window into research area. The data from this study revealed that work on empowering women with technology took place across six continents. (1) Society, (2) Economic, (3) Education (4) Technology and (5) Communication. Women's roles within the family as wife, daughter and mother were re-emphasized and extended, to be in tune with the requirement of the family in a changing situation, which had more to do with the familiar problems. It was social reformers, who made noteworthy efforts for the liberation of women. Here, they face devices have high functionality, with a variety of applications, access to the technology. Creating an enabling environment even for the illiterate women to find their niche in the ICT range will not only empower them but it will also ensure that they contribute positively to the comfort of their families and community. In short, issues faced by women and other marginalized groups should be handled by empowering them through ICT and allied technologies including AI, ML etc. Entrepreneurships among the women, the physically challenged etc. need to be encouraged further and that too with maximum ICT-integration, so as to bring about holistic and sustained economic development in tribal families of South Gujarat region.

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