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Digital Alienation Ordeal for Marginalised Communication

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Abstract

Almost all fields improved during the COVID era as a result of the application of digital technology. Nearly all social gaps were filled. Since technology serves their requirements, a large number of individuals have embraced it; yet, there remains a digital divide among other ethnographic groups. The digital divide in India amongst various social categories was examined in this study. The outcomes of a meta-analytical investigation were ascertained. Information from several papers and discoveries from the COVID-19 era was used by researchers. The study examined the digital divide that exists between underprivileged caste groups and other groups on the first level—access to computers and the Internet—and the second level—soft skills to utilize computers and the Internet. Using a technique known as "nonlinear decomposition," this study also demonstrates
How caste-based variations in socioeconomic conditions contribute to the digital divide between different groups. The findings indicate that there is a significant digital divide in India, both at the first and second levels, between the lower caste groups and the general population. The non-linear decomposition results demonstrate that the social and economic marginalization of lower-caste groups in the past is the primary cause of India's caste-based digital divide. persons from disadvantaged caste groups make less money and have lower levels of education than persons from other caste groups, which accounts for more than half of the caste-based digital gap.The study's findings highlight the critical need to address the disparities in income and education across India's many castes in order to bridge the country's digital divide.

Keywords: COVID-19, Social Alienation, Digital Exclusion, Castes

1. Introduction

The digital divide has negative effects on society. People who lack access to technology run the risk of becoming even more marginalized in society and losing vital resources. The digital divide impacts every area of life, including Due to our increasing reliance on digital technologies and the internet, we are experiencing changes in every field possible, including education, health, mobility, safety, financial inclusion, and so on. The National Digital Literacy Mission and the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan are two of the government's initiatives to encourage digital literacy but more has to be done. The current digital infrastructure needs to be updated in order for different socioeconomic groups

to physically have access to ICT. Access to and encouragement to use technology in daily life are necessary for impoverished groups to digital abilities to enable this transition.

Digitization and Digitalization

Two conceptual terms, digitalization and digitization, are often used interchangeably in a range of literary works. Digitization is the process of converting analogy data especially when used later on for text, images, and video into digital format. On the other hand, "digitalization" refers to "the augmentation or acceptance of digital or computer technology by a company, sector, nation, etc." Any big data-based solution requires digital information, which is why "digitalization involves digitization" and "digitalization is the first step to realizing digitalization" are true. Digitalization is the process of moving from a traditional business model to one that leverages digital technologies to create new opportunities for revenue generation and value creation. representation of the digital economy at this perfect moment for Indian businesses should investigate digitalization, which entails generating new, profitable revenue streams from digitalized resources such as cloud-based software and devices equipped with digital sensors. It is projected that a number of components of India's digital ecosystem such as the digitized consumer, e-commerce, the generation of digital data volumes, and tech-savvy labor pools—will reach maturity in the next years (Kaur Narula & Rana, 2017).

India's Digitalization

The goal of the Digital India initiative was to give India the technological know-how it would need to achieve unrestricted growth. It has supported public policies aimed at meeting the needs of the general public. The popularity of Indian languages on digital platforms is influenced by a wide range of factors. The two most significant ones are the growing trend of internet penetration and the increase in smartphone use. Digital payments, e-business, news, and entertainment have all been profoundly impacted by the usage of pertinent technology and its consequences. Thanks to technology, social commerce has become more and more popular as a means of conducting profitable neighbourhood-based business online. Brands may now interact with audiences instantly by relying on community and content. The growth of online purchasing may open up new doors for the social commerce industry. The rising usage of the internet has enabled the expansion of e-business. As a result, a single platform for numerous devices has been developed. Online shoppers have increased as a result of this. With the growth of alternative commerce, Indian merchants' methods of offering their products have undergone a substantial change. Combining aided commerce with the omnichannel strategy gave rise to the idea of alternate commerce. Therefore, it is true to say that the Indian industry has gained greatly from Digital India. General economic and social activities that can promote accountability and communication between citizens and the government for a better future have received a significant boost (Arup Roy, 2018).

Covid-19 and Digital Shift

For many years, COVID-19 has altered how businesses operate across many industries and regions. According to a McKinsey Global Survey of executives, their organisations have advanced in digitising internal processes, customer interactions, and supply chain management over the past three to four years. Their product portfolios now contain a higher percentage of digital or digitally enabled products than they

did seven years ago. Nearly all of the respondents believe that their organisations have responded to new needs significantly faster than they had predicted before the crisis by developing at least interim solutions. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic of this year accelerated the long-term digital transformation. A lot of people started working from home, kids with access to the Internet at home started taking virtual classes, and a lot of businesses adopted digital business strategies to stay in business and continue to make money. To "track and trace" the outbreak, smartphone applications were created, and scientists used to use artificial intelligence (AI) to learn more about the infection and create a vaccination in certain countries, Internet traffic increased by 60% after the outbreak.

Digital Alienation

Public, economic, and social life are sustained by the internet and digital technologies. These days, we work, communicate, consume, learn, amuse, and use public services in a different way. Because of unequal access and use, digital exclusion still exists. Full social involvement is impeded by exclusion. People who are not connected run the risk of becoming more disconnected. The amount and frequency of an individual's internet usage determines who is digitally excluded and how the internet and digital skills impact their life (Robert Sanders, 2020). Fewer people who are socially isolated have access to gadgets, the internet, and online services. Despite having limited access, people in poverty are more likely to visit libraries. The most suffering and least useful people fall into these two categories.(Helsper and others, 2008.

India's Digital Alienation Based on Caste

In India, where there are significant socioeconomic differences between caste groups, the digital caste divide becomes pertinent. Disparities in digital caste are not studied in India. Using nationally representative survey data, this study investigates the first- and second-level digital gaps that exist between impoverished caste groups and other groups. This piece investigates the nature of the digital divide exacerbated by caste-based disparities in socioeconomic attributes. India's impoverished caste groups face a significant digital divide. Results from non-linear decomposition show that socioeconomic hardship is the primary cause of India's digital gap. Nearly half of the caste-based digital divide is caused by disparities in education and income. In order to bridge the digital divide in India, this paper highlights the necessity of addressing financial and educational disparities among caste groups. (Rajametal,2021)

Material and Method

The digital divide in India amongst various social categories was examined in this study. The outcomes of a meta-analytical investigation were ascertained. Information from several papers and discoveries from the COVID-19 era was used by researchers. In terms of first-level access to computers and the Internet and second-level soft skills for using computers and the Internet, the study looked at the digital divide that exists between disadvantaged caste groups and other groups. Using a method called "nonlinear decomposition," this study also shows how differences in socioeconomic variables based on caste contribute to the digital divide that exists between these groups.

Research Findings

Owning a mobile phone in India: The digital world has become unavoidable. Access to markets, information, and basic services has all improved because to technology. The privileged who can take advantage of being online by having devices and unrestricted internet at home and on their smartphones represent only one side of the story. Those who aren't online are the marginalized. This transformation leaves those who are separated from technology behind. The wealthy benefit from technology and digitalization, but there is a digital divide.

The findings unequivocally demonstrated that a household's income was a significant factor in examining its internet usage. Additionally, network accessibility is a significant influence in internet usage.

Respondents' digital usage according to caste

The majority of individuals do not have access to computers. Compared to SC and ST, general and OBC categories are more likely to have access to computers. The difference between general and ST between 2018 and 2021 is 7 to 8%. In contrast to General and OBC, the number of SC and ST people without computers have decreased (India Inequality Report 2022, 2022).

Prior to the pandemic, there was a push for digital technology and online learning in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education. However, because of the influenza, physical gatherings and venues have become less common. There is a "Digital Divide" between student castes and income levels, according to the National Sample Survey Office. Only 9.0% of the respondents reported utilising to access online courses lessons using a laptop or computer with internet access, while 25.0% of respondents used other devices such as a tablet or cell phone to access the internet.

A pandemic-induced deprivation of digital services was evident in the number of respondents who did not own a computer or laptop, which increased from 93.5 percent in January to April 2018 to 96.6 percent by the end of 2021. Merely 2.7% of homes in the lowest 20% of income bracket possess a computer, whilst 8.9% of households in the highest 20% of income bracket have access to Internet resources. In terms of wealth, these percentages are compared to 27.6% and 50.5%, respectively, in the top 20% of households. An individual having a graduate degree forty percent more likely to own a computer than someone without any post-secondary education at all is someone with a degree or a PhD. In addition to other forms of social discrimination, patriarchal norms prohibit women from using internet services. The more significant trend in the data is also supported by recent news stories about situations that have occurred, such as allegations that women and girls encounter discrimination when attempting to use computers and phones. The number of men who own phones is higher than the percentage of women; by the end of 2021, 61 percent of men and 31 percent of women will own a mobile device; this is a 30 percent gendered digital difference.

While less than 50% of respondents who are unemployed have access to a phone, salaried permanent employees make up the largest group of respondents with phone access—nearly 94%. Education is a right guaranteed by the constitution, but in the modern world, when learning is primarily done online, people

without access to digital resources run a higher risk of falling behind in their coursework. The study's conclusions showed that over 56% of kids with disabilities were finding it difficult to attend their usual classes. According to reports, the percentage of SC/ST households who frequently used the internet for educational reasons was only 4%, whereas the percentage for other caste homes was 15%. Furthermore, 57.6% of teenage girls thought that males had easier access to digital resources in colleges and schools. It is not possible to propose that the digitisation process will resolve the problems that come with the physical world in a country where socioeconomic disparity is rife. This becomes more problematic when half of the population needs devices, the internet, and technological know-how to make the shift to a digital society. India's growing socioeconomic inequality is exacerbated by the country's digital divide. The digital sphere also reflects the developing inequalities that can be linked to socioeconomic class, caste, gender, religion, and geographic location. Individuals without access to computers and the internet are of teenage girls thought that males had easier access to digital resources
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The digital divide and its effects on the country are demonstrated by the employment of digital technology in the provision of basic services like healthcare and education. The CEO of Oxfam India, Amitabh Behar, said: "India's growing inequality is made worse by the digital divide. Caste, religion, gender, and other forms of inequality are reflected in the digital world geographical location and social status. The marginalisation of those without access to technology and the Internet is made worse by their inability to obtain public services, healthcare, and education. Breaking this cycle of injustice is imperative."

The report recommended that the government make its existing efforts to reduce income inequality in India more significant and successful by raising the incomes of the impoverished. This can be accomplished by lowering the indirect tax burden on citizens, enacting a competitive minimum wage, and offering universal access to healthcare and education. As to the report, availability plays a crucial role in closing the digital gap. It highlights that internet connectivity in rural and hard-to-reach locations is either non-existent, intermittent, or of poor quality. Accessibility through public WiFi and Internet access points must be guaranteed by providers, neighbourhood networks. It was claimed that community networks, which are often based on shared infrastructure as a shared resource, are a subset of crowdsourced networks that are meant to be open, free, and impartial.

Digital gap and social Alienation

The state has been surprised to learn that a ninth-grade kid apparently committed suicide for this reason. The Keralan administration has announced. that individuals who are excluded will immediately receive resources. However, experts, advocates, Dalit and tribal people, and numerous others who have collaborated extensively with traditionally marginalised groups warn that this is a terrible example of how the internet divide exacerbates the difference between socioeconomic classes. Kerala has been praised for its efforts to combat the pandemic, but it has also come under fire for not giving priority to children from underprivileged communities in its rush to start schools on June 1. Devika encounters prejudice from the government.

A significant portion of students do not have the means to take part in online classes. Most pupils are Adivasi or Dalit. The state administration says these children's issues may be resolved gradually, but they say this incoherently. Due to students from marginalised groups and castes being left behind, the digital divide has evolved into a kind of social exclusion (Neethu Joseph, 2020). According to Praveen MP (2021) of The Hindu, there was another instance when the article was titled "'No end to tribal students' struggle with digital divide, Online classes with little access and poor awareness affect academic development of tribal youth." Last year, Vijeesh K., 22, of Sulthan Bathery in Wayanad, was prevented from accessing online classes for approximately 30 days. He was unable to replenish his phone with his modest daily wager from his mother. Extra he had to miss courses due to the additional admission.

Conclusion

In order to fully understand the facts underlying caste-based digital exclusion, the current analysis examined a number of studies. Numerous sources state that a sizable fraction of respondents said their home economic situation prevented them from affording digital equipment. This was particularly true for those from economically disadvantaged groups, for whom access was severely restricted. Many students from scheduled tribes were unable to attend online classrooms as a result of the COVID shutdown, which transformed the entire country of India into a digital learning environment. This resulted from the poorer socioeconomic status of these pupils. Online education platforms are supported by both the public and private sectors as well as the corporate community. It is evident from the discussion that has taken place thus far that those from disadvantaged castes find it challenging to register for online courses. A number of schemes that were introduced in 2016 and 2017 made free laptops available to students enrolled in higher education institutions in the states of Karnataka and India. However, these programs were not implemented in an appropriate manner in the years that followed. Individuals with personal computers engaged in active participation on the e-learning platform. However, the Indian government has started a number of initiatives to attempt and close the digital divide that separates the nation's many social classes. Those with a lower socioeconomic status and those who live in more remote areas will remain outside the service area.

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