

# Digital Literacy and Youth Empowerment as Catalysts for Achieving Viksit Bharat 2047

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## Abstract:

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2027 reflects India's aspiration to emerge as a developed, inclusive, and globally competitive nation by 2027. A key pillar of this vision is the active participation of young citizens, who constitute nearly 65% of the country's population (Government of India, 2021). In today's digital era, digital literacy has become an essential competency not only for economic advancement but also for social inclusion and democratic participation. It enables individuals to access, analyse, evaluate, create, and effectively communicate information using digital technologies. This study examines the significance of digital literacy in empowering youth to play a meaningful role in advancing the national development agenda of Viksit Bharat 2027. By analysing policy initiatives, educational achievements, and socio-economic indicators, the research assesses how strengthening digital skills among young people can reduce the digital divide, expand employment prospects, and promote inclusive growth. The findings indicate that well-designed digital literacy initiatives positively impact youth employability, civic engagement, and entrepreneurial development. The study concludes with strategic recommendations to enhance digital literacy frameworks, improve digital infrastructure access, and embed digital skill development more deeply within educational policies.

**Keywords:** Digital literacy, youth empowerment, Viksit Bharat 2027, employability

## 1. Introduction

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2027 highlights India's aspiration to become a developed and inclusive nation by 2027. A central element of this vision is the active participation of young citizens, who constitute nearly 65% of the country's population (Government of India, 2021). Harnessing the potential of this demographic dividend is essential for achieving sustainable and equitable national growth. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, digital literacy has emerged as a crucial competency, extending beyond economic participation to encompass social inclusion and democratic engagement. Digital literacy enables individuals to access, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information effectively (Ng, 2012). For Indian youth, it serves not only as a practical skill but also as a transformative force. As both a tool and a catalyst,

digital literacy empowers young people to pursue education, secure employment and explore entrepreneurial ventures. By equipping youth with digital capabilities, India strengthens its foundation for innovation, productivity, and inclusive development, thereby advancing the broader goals of Viksit Bharat 2027.

Digital literacy refers to the skills needed to live, learn, and work in a society where communication and access to information are increasingly mediated through digital technologies (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004). It has been linked to improved academic performance, higher employability, and increased civic participation (Van Laar et al., 2017).

Empowerment in youth involves enhancing their capacity to make decisions, gain control over resources, and engage in civic life (Zimmerman, 2000). Digital literacy contributes to youth empowerment by enabling access to knowledge, facilitating self-directed learning, and enhancing communication skills (UNESCO, 2020).

Despite rapid digital growth, India continues to face a digital divide, disparities in access to digital infrastructure and skills between urban and rural areas, and across socio-economic groups (Mehta & Sharma, 2021). Bridging this divide is critical to ensuring equitable participation in the digital economy.

## 2. Research Objectives

- (i) To evaluate the current state of digital literacy among Indian youth.
- (ii) To identify challenges in leveraging digital literacy.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data collected by analysis of secondary data from government reports and surveys on digital literacy and youth employment trends. And qualitative data collected by review of policy documents and interviews with educators, policymakers, and youth leaders.

Data were collected between 2023 and 2025 from national repositories such as the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), and UNESCO digital literacy indices.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

Digital literacy levels among youth vary significantly across regions, socio-economic backgrounds, and educational settings. While many young people demonstrate strong familiarity with smartphones, social media, and basic digital tools, advanced competencies, such as critical information evaluation, cybersecurity awareness, and digital content creation, remain unevenly developed. Urban youth generally have greater access to digital infrastructure and training opportunities compared to their rural counterparts, contributing to a persistent digital divide. The data indicate a steady increase in digital literacy rates over the past decade, with greater access to smartphones and Internet services. However, rural and economically disadvantaged youth lag behind (MEIT, 2024).

Digital literacy among Indian youth aged 15–29 is estimated at approximately 28.5%, with a notable gender gap. Around 34.2% of young men are digitally literate, compared to just 21.6% of young women. Although smartphone access is widespread, nearly 90% of rural adolescents aged 14–16 have access to a device at home practical digital skills remain limited. For example, only about 43% are able to send emails, and just 31–33% can perform digital banking activities in rural areas.

Youth with higher digital literacy demonstrate better employability in IT-enabled jobs and show a higher propensity to start digital ventures. Digital platforms have enabled freelance work, e-commerce engagement, and online training, creating new economic avenues (World Bank, 2023).

Digital literacy plays a pivotal role in enhancing employment prospects and fostering entrepreneurship among youth. Proficiency in digital tools, online communication, data management, and emerging technologies increases job readiness and aligns young individuals with the evolving demands of the modern workforce. Employers increasingly seek candidates who possess not only technical knowledge but also the ability to navigate digital platforms efficiently and responsibly.

In the realm of entrepreneurship, digital literacy enables youth to leverage e-commerce platforms, digital marketing strategies, online payment systems, and social media networks to establish and expand their ventures. It reduces entry barriers, lowers operational costs, and opens access to national and global markets. By strengthening digital competencies, young entrepreneurs can innovate, compete effectively, and contribute to economic growth and job creation.

Digital literacy significantly enhances civic participation and social empowerment among youth. By enabling young individuals to access credible information, engage in online discussions, and understand public policies, digital skills strengthen informed decision-making and democratic engagement. Youth who are digitally literate are better equipped to participate in e-governance initiatives, online public consultations, and digital advocacy platforms.

Moreover, digital literacy fosters social empowerment by providing marginalized groups with platforms to voice their concerns, share experiences, and mobilize collective action. It promotes awareness of rights, access to public services, and participation in community development initiatives. In this way, digital literacy not only supports democratic values but also contributes to greater social inclusion and equitable development.

## **Challenges in leveraging digital literacy**

Digital inclusion continues to face several structural and socio-economic challenges. One of the primary barriers is unequal access to reliable internet connectivity, digital devices, and electricity, particularly in rural and remote areas. The affordability of smartphones, computers, and data services also limits participation among economically disadvantaged groups, widening the digital divide.

In addition, gaps in digital skills and awareness hinder meaningful engagement with technology. Many young people may use digital platforms for entertainment but lack advanced competencies such as critical information evaluation, cybersecurity awareness, and digital content creation. Language barriers, limited availability of local-language content, and insufficient teacher training further restrict effective digital learning.

Social factors such as gender disparities, disability-related barriers, and cultural norms also contribute to unequal digital access and participation. Barriers to digital literacy include inadequate infrastructure in rural areas, high cost of digital devices, lack of trained educators, and gender disparities in technology access (Mehta & Sharma, 2021). Addressing these challenges requires coordinated policy efforts, improved infrastructure, inclusive educational strategies, and targeted interventions to ensure that digital transformation benefits all sections of society.

## 5. Policy Implications and Recommendations

**Strengthen Digital Infrastructure:** Expand affordable broadband connectivity, particularly in rural regions.

**Integrate Digital Skills in School Curricula:** Embed digital literacy at all educational levels.

**Youth-Centered Skill Development Programs:** Design programs aligned with industry needs and emerging technologies.

**Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage collaborations to scale digital learning platforms.

**Gender-Inclusive Initiatives:** Address gender gaps in access to digital education.

## 6. Conclusion

Digital literacy is a foundational enabler for youth empowerment and a key driver of national development under the *Viksit Bharat 2027* agenda. When youth are digitally literate, they are more employable, socially engaged, and entrepreneurial, contributing significantly to economic growth and social transformation. Closing the digital divide through targeted policy interventions will be critical in achieving inclusive progress and realizing India's developmental aspirations.

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