Chapter 1
Do Digital Skills and Internet Access Boost Women's Empowerment?
A Global Empirical Analysis, 2017–2021.

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ABSTRACT

Women's empowerment has become a key variable in determining the degree of development of women's rights and their importance in the social and economic development of different countries. New technologies and especially the internet have facilitated access to all kinds of information and knowledge and contribute to improving the situation of women in all areas. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze how internet penetration development and other country characteristics influence women's empowerment. The results show that empowerment increases as the number of internet users increases. It is observed that all the control variables have a positive and significant influence on empowerment in developing countries.

INTRODUCTION

According to UN Women, achieving female empowerment, represented by all those women who faced the established canons and fought for effective and true gender equality, is one of the listed Sustainable Development Goals 2030, also known as the Global Goals, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the capacity of the future generations, guaranteeing the balance between economic growth, care for the environment and social welfare. The Sustainable Development Goals are focused on the future of people, the planet and nature, they are the world's shared plan to end extreme poverty, reduce inequity and safeguard the planet. Two of the targets are: (1) Guarantee the full and effective participation of women, as well as gender equality at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life; (2) Improve the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to promote the empowerment of women.

In recent decades, women have acquired a greater role in society, especially in the economic and work environment. The fight for equality between men and women has made great progress, especially in countries with greater economic and social development. This struggle for equality has been associated in certain studies and circumstances with the term empowerment, Alkire et al. (2013). Women's empowerment is a multidimensional concept that encompasses different aspects such as access to education, freedom to make vital decisions, labor market access and wages (Abramovitz, 2006; Buvinić and Furst-Nichols, 2016; Corcoran et al. 2000; Hunt and Samman, 2016; Stein, 2008), as well as political participation, among others (Moral and Sánchez, 2020). According to Moser (1989), empowerment is the capacity of women to have self- reliance and internal strength by gaining control over economic resources.

Establishing a variable that defines and measures the concept of women's empowerment is not easy, also considering that the different aspects associated with it change over time (Narayan-Parker, 2005; Mahajan, 2012). It is a multidimensional variable that has been quantified and defined by applying various techniques and variables (Alsop et al. 2006; Martinez 2006; Njoh and Ananga 2016; Sharaunga et al. 2018).

In recent years, the concept of women's empowerment has become a key variable in determining the degree of development of women's rights and its importance in the social and economic development of different countries. A very important question is to determine which aspects and variables improve the empowerment of women (Moral and Sánchez, 2020; Besnier, 2020; Hornset and de Soysa, 2022), by facilitating the application of measures and policies by the authorities of the different countries that favor the development and integration of women in political, social and economic environments.

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