

Chapter 5

Women Empowerment Through ICT

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ABSTRACT

ICT has the biggest potential today to become a key vehicle for the socio-economic advancement of women. There exists a plethora of opportunities for ICTs to improve women's economic activities in the field of trade, governance, education, health, crafts, employment in formal as well as informal sectors. It can be used to fight many social issues and to empower weaker segments of society. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the opportunities which ICT can provide to improve the life of a woman in India. It will include the voices which speak of how women can fully participate and benefit from ICT and how ICT can be used as a tool to empower women. Women also should have an equal advantage of technology and the use of ICT should not be restricted to the upper section of the society. The aim here is to explore how women in India can improve their lives by using ICT. At last, it will also suggest ways on how all the segments of the female population can have benefited from technology.

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has the potential to expedite the process of women empowerment by facilitating access to education, information, occupational opportunities, market information, financial services, information about appropriate government programmes, health agencies and workers, feedback mechanism and support system and networking. Brown & Brown (2008) defines ICT as an umbrella term that includes all technologies like computers, smartphones, social media application which enable communication of information in the digital world. Scholars have identified ICT as a tool to facilitate women empowerment in emerging economies (Crittenden et al., 2019). In a developing na-

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tion, empowering women will improve household welfare, ensure better education, poverty reduction, and decreased violence. Cumulatively, this will have a positive impact on the social and fiscal health of the country. The rural population of India has not been able to reap the benefits of ICT to its full potential. However, urban India has had better access to the same. Though there have been considerable efforts in the recent past to facilitate empowerment through ICT, one need to explore the real impact on women, specifically in the rural areas in the Indian context. Efforts are being made by the government, civil society organizations and public/private agencies to empower women and girls through education, funding, participation and involvement in all spheres of activities for socio-economic development. ICT can facilitate the empowerment of women by ensuring their mainstreaming in the economic, political, technological and social environment. This paper discusses the economic empowerment of women through ICT in India and also explores the steps being taken by the government, non-government and other organizations, businesses, to empower them through ICT.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this paper is to indicate the relationship between ICT and the empowerment of rural women through secondary data. The aim is to study and analyze previous studies based on similar themes.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, secondary data has been collected from various sources, e.g. websites of various ministries of the Government of India, books, and journals, among others for analysis. Functional schemes of the Government that use multimodality and ICT for empowering minorities, especially women, have been taken for evaluation. We searched Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct, Emerald, Taylor and Francis databases to search peer-reviewed literature. Google Scholar search engine was used for the literature review. Following keywords were used to search for the related articles - ICT*, Women*, Empowerment, Information and Communication Technology. The Boolean operator OR and AND were used to combine all the terms. Our Scopus search used the following keywords: Role*, Women empowerment*, and was combined with ICT to narrow our results. In both the databases, we limited our search to journals written in English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women empowerment through ICT has captured the imagination of various individuals, scholars, enterprises and development organizations across the globe. The aim of the present literature review is to provide readers with a discussion of studies that encompass the use of ICT to empower women as perceived from researchers and women perspective. The majority of these studies have investigated how digital technologies have improved the condition of women.

Abdulwaheed et al. (2016)_presented the role of ICT in agriculture knowledge management. The focus of this study is on the penetration of ICT in Nigeria and strategies to be adopted for enhancement of research and development in agriculture.

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