



## **The Impact of Digital Literacy on Women in Rural Areas**

**Dr. Deepti Bhargava\* and Dr Amrita Singh\*\***

\*Assistant Professor, College of Community Science, B.U.A.T., Banda

\*\*Subject Matter Specialist, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Mahoba, BUAT, Banda

[E-mail-bhargava.deepti95@gmail.com](mailto:E-mail-bhargava.deepti95@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Digital literacy is an essential skill in the modern world, yet many rural women still encounter major obstacles when trying to access and use digital tools. This article explores the impact of digital literacy on women in rural communities, with particular attention paid to economic empowerment, education, healthcare access, and social inclusion. Policymakers and groups may create focused plans and develop targeted strategies to bridge the digital divide and promote gender equality in rural areas.

**Key words:** Digital literacy, economic empowerment, health care access, rural women

### **Introduction**

In today's digital age, technology has become an integral part of our daily lives. While urban areas have seen rapid digital adoption, rural regions still lag behind, particularly in digital literacy among women. Digital literacy plays a crucial role in empowering women socially and economically. Enhancing digital literacy among rural women can significantly contribute to their empowerment, opening doors to financial independence, better education, improved healthcare, and greater participation in social and political activities. This article explores the significance of digital literacy, its benefits, and its impact on rural women.

### **Digital Literacy**

Digital literacy refers to the ability to use digital devices, such as computers and smartphones, efficiently. It includes activities like sending emails, online banking, accessing government schemes, making digital payments, and learning through the internet. It gives people ability to acquire knowledge, negotiate the complexity of the online environment and engage productively in the digital economy.



## **Importance of Digital Literacy for Rural Women**

For rural women, digital literacy is vital as it enhances knowledge, fosters independence, and opens up new opportunities. With access to digital tools, women can pursue education, start businesses, and avail government schemes efficiently.

### **Benefits of Digital Literacy**

#### **1. Enhancing Educational Opportunities**

One of the most significant benefits of digital literacy is improved access to education. Women in remote areas can access quality education without relocating with the advent of e-learning platforms. Digital literacy enables them to use online resources, enroll in vocational courses, and participate in remote learning programs. Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have launched several initiatives to promote digital education, ensuring that women receive the necessary skills to improve their economic prospects.

#### **2. Economic Empowerment**

Digital literacy opens up new employment opportunities for rural women by enabling access to online job platforms, remote work, and digital entrepreneurship. Many women leverage digital tools to start small businesses, sell handmade products online, or provide digital services such as data entry and online tutoring. Digital banking and mobile payment platforms like UPI have also made financial transactions easier, allowing women to engage in economic activities independently. These advancements contribute to increased financial autonomy and improved household income.

#### **3. Improved Healthcare Access**

Digital literacy significantly improves healthcare access for rural women. Telemedicine services allow them to consult doctors remotely, reducing the need for long and expensive travel to medical facilities. Additionally, digital platforms provide information on maternal health, nutrition, and hygiene, enabling women to make informed health decisions. Government welfare programs and subsidies often require online registration, making digital literacy essential for accessing social benefits and financial aid.

#### 4. Social Empowerment

Empowering rural women through digital literacy fosters greater social and political engagement. With digital connectivity, women can voice their opinions on social issues, engage in community discussions, and fight for their rights using platforms like social media. Digital platforms enable women to connect with communities, participate in discussions, and advocate for their rights. Social media and online forums provide spaces for women to voice their concerns, share experiences, and seek support. Moreover, digital literacy helps women stay informed about legal rights, government schemes, and opportunities for civic engagement, leading to increased participation in decision-making processes.

##### **Government Initiatives Promoting Digital Literacy**

Several government programs aim to boost digital literacy:

- **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)** – This government initiative aims to ensure digital inclusion across the remote parts of country and provides digital literacy training in rural areas.
- **National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM)** – This mission focuses on making people across all social classes digitally literate.
- **Digital India Initiative** – This Government initiative expands internet access and digital services to rural communities.

##### **Challenges in Enhancing Digital Literacy**

Despite its advantages, several challenges hinder digital literacy among rural women:

1. **Limited Internet Connectivity** – Poor infrastructure affects internet accessibility for rural women.
2. **Lack of Awareness** – Many women are unaware of the benefits of digital literacy.
3. **Cultural and Social Barriers** – Societal norms often restrict women's access to technology.

4. **Financial Constraints** – Many women lack resources to buy digital devices.

### **Solutions and Recommendations**

Despite its advantages, several barriers prevent women in rural areas from acquiring digital literacy. These include limited internet connectivity, lack of digital infrastructure, and cultural restrictions that discourage women from using technology. Additionally, low levels of education and financial constraints hinder their ability to acquire digital skills. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach, including government investment in digital infrastructure, affordable internet access, and community-driven initiatives to encourage digital learning among women.

1. **Government Policies and Infrastructure Development**– Governments must invest in expanding internet connectivity in rural areas and providing affordable digital devices. Policies promoting digital education should be integrated into rural development programs.
2. **Community-Based Digital Literacy Programs**– NGOs and community groups should conduct digital training programs tailored to rural women's needs, focusing on practical applications such as online banking, e-commerce, and healthcare access.
3. **Public-Private Partnerships**– Collaboration between governments, private organizations, and technology companies can facilitate the distribution of digital devices and provide internet subsidies to rural women.
4. **Awareness and Cultural Sensitization**– Community awareness campaigns should emphasize the importance of digital literacy and address cultural barriers that prevent women from using technology.

### **Conclusion**

Digital literacy has the power to transform the lives of rural women by promoting education, economic independence, and social empowerment. Governments, NGOs, and communities must

collaborate to ensure rural women fully benefit from the digital revolution. A collaborative approach involving governments, NGOs, and private sector players is necessary to equip rural women with the digital skills needed to thrive in the modern world. By empowering women through digital literacy, societies can promote gender equality and drive overall socio-economic development.

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