# Effect of Digitalization during COVID -19

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**Abstract:**

"Rural Digitalization involves using advanced digital technologies to strengthen the economic and social fabric of rural population, ultimately providing them with more opportunities to lead connected lives.(builtin.com)" As per the TRAI report, rural internet subscribers account for more than 38% of the total internet subscribers in the country as of March 2020, increasing from about 32% in March 2017. Rural India is witnessing massive increase in use of smartphones from 9% in 2015 to 25% in 2018.COVID-19 forced schools and institutions to adopt the digital transformation. Due to social distancing norms and nationwide complete lockdown people had to abruptly adopt technologies. Ways of working and life styles had to depend on digital technologies. Basic education push forwarded towards extensive digital transformation aimed at meeting the needs of young generation and digitalized future. Research may conclude the workplace monitoring and techno stress issues, online fraud is likely to grow, impact of internet shutdowns, empowering rural areas through seamless transactions, women empowerment through digitalization, problems of internet access in rural areas focusing on Digital Divide. This paper significantly aims at touching the signal of digitalization effects during the pandemic era in analyzing the implementational role of rural areas in the context.

**Keywords:** Rural areas, Digital Divide, COVID-19, Digital Transformation, Women Empowerment.

**Introduction:** By the end of 2020, Pandemic has affected all over the world, has clenched to all over the country. There was complete lockdown in the regions, activities which require human gathering and interactions including offices, education centers institutions for higher education, public places like: Malls, Restaurant, and Cinema halls, Temples, Railway Stations, Schools, and Airports were completely out of service. This resulted in the dependency on internet to communicate and to continue their jobs from home. Work from home phenomena was most popular term used in the pandemic with social media platform-with social media platform Webinar, Conferences on Google meet and Zoom coming into force, making the youth fully digitally aware.

COVID-19 pandemic push forwarded schools and offices to engage in such transformation which is what we are going to examine. **Digital Transformation, i.e.-"A process that aims to improve an entity by triggering significant changes to its properties through combinations of information ,computing**

,**communication, and connectivity technologies (Vial,2019:118)** for sure is changing everyone's life from toddlers to elderly, it is not rigid only to workplace or organizations any more. Digital Technologies such as Cloud, Internet Of Thing (IOT), Block Chain (BC), Artificial Intelligent (AI), and Machine Learning (ML) constitute a bulk of what is being adopted by organizations as a part of their transformation effort .As education and healthcare services witness a shift to the digital domain, BCs enable a way to secure and authenticate certificates, health records, medical records and prescriptions.[International journal of Information management (2020)2]

## Review of Literature

**Deepika Shimar, Ravi Kumar Meena(2019)** concluded in their research paper that new technology needs to harnessed well and for this it is not only the availability but the knowledge to use it. Digitalization introduces new techniques to boost up the economy.

**Deepa tattimani(2020)** has focused on the impact of Digital India on women's improving social and economic conditions of rural areas by giving them accessibility of internet to enhance their capabilities.

**Netta Iivari,Sumita Sharma, Leena venta, OLKK onen(2020**) have reflected in their work sudden and dramatic change in society during COVID-19. They have enlighten how the basic education for teachers, student and parents have changed. People have to learn skills and advanced technologies to sustain in this scenario.

**Neha Saini(2021)** has stated the use of technologies has increased due to social distancing complete lockdown in nation. Rural India had faced a lot in doing work from home and taking online classes due to lack of internet services, signal strength etc.

## Objective

- To examine the challenges in the way of digitalization.
- To study the impact of digitalization on women empowerment and rural strengthening in rural areas during pandemic.
- To bridging up the gap between rural and urban areas.
- To understand the situation of cashless rural areas.
- To capitalizing on skill developing techniques and creating of opportunities in the presence competitive global scenario.

## Research Methodology

This research paper is descriptive. Secondary data has been used. Data and information related to digitalization in rural areas collected through journals, research papers, social media and web vlogs etc. it's helped to evaluate the reliability of the study.

- **Digitalization of Basic Education push forwarded by Pandemic :**

When the schooling started on digital platforms, teachers, management and related authorities efforted to keep things similar as things were before pandemic. There were 2-4 live sessions a day via Google Meet, all the task of the day were sent to the students by the evening. For taking online classes not everyone has smartphones and internet connectivity, moreover not every parent was anyhow accustomed to such and developing technologies application. Online classes for children due to low socio economic backgrounds. Also proved to be barring They did not have personal smartphones or laptop at home. They at homes borrowed their elder sibling's gadgets. Some children have truly seen benefits from digital transformation. They are reported to enjoy, be capable of and benefits from independent, self-directed and personalized learning, parents are also reported of being active and capable of supporting their children, whereas other parents are reported of being less well- equipped of offer their children such support.[International journal of Information management 55 (2020)] that unexpected digital transformation of education forced children and families to possess a variety of skills, competencies and resources, without being well prepared for it - making them a part of this competitive scenario.

- **Women Empowerment through Digitalization:**

Pandemic has led to the use of digital technologies because of social distancing and lockdown in worldwide it has increased the dependency on social media, virtual communication like Google meet & Zoom work from home & online classes have increased internet traffic.
In India use of technology in rural areas has seen a rise in the face of COVID -19, with women lowering digital tools to market network and sell their product (A potential of digitization in rural India – A Case Of Women Entrepreneurship amids Covid -19) Many organization have planned to up skilling women to boom economy which has crashed due to pandemic with Maan Deshi foundation & SEWA leading the way. Many women in rural areas have made efforts to stable their families they lend help from micro – lending groups & SHGs. Sooner or later they have realized that digital mediums are better platforms to make the way forward for the survival of their families. Social sites made out their important role in pandemic for earning through window shopping. Here an important mention relate to positive linkage between Empowerment and Atmanirbharta where women have and are displaying their hidden talent especially in rural areas.

- **Empowering rural areas to make transaction seamless: Shift to Digital Money:**
As government announced lockdown all over the country. Digital mediums have become the most important tool to the people for the purpose of transactions government have initiated contactless payments through UPI, credit and debit card and other transaction mode and. These mediums started before but pandemic has boosted it.
There are two distinct phenomena related to digital money that has added the fight during the pandemic. First, banknotes & coins were suspected to be carrying the virus & digital payment was preferred to the "dirty Money (Gardener, 2020, Samantha 2020) online delivery services were encouraging Customers to make payments with mandates by government in several parts of India (Bhandari 2020).
Second during the lockdown, there was loss of jobs with migration problem adding salt to the wound. Hence the government provided aid through payment app & digital payments modes.

These are a convenient mode of fund transfer from donors to recipients as seen in previous crisis relief cases as well (Pollach, Treiblmaier and Floh, 2005)

In various crisis and disaster events, where the mobility of civilians was restrained, many mobile payment service providers (Vodafone in Afghanistan, Safaricomin Kenya, and Orange in Africa) provided Quick funds transfer of remittance from migrants to their homes, and relief aid from the government to victims (Aker, Bounnijet, Mc Clelland & Tierney, 2016, Pega, Liu, Walter and Lhachimi 2015, Achanga 2015) so as to witness in covid-19 crisis.

To provide a digital push, specifically in rural India, The Ministry Of Electronics and IT (Meity) launched a highly relevant scheme called " Digital Finance for Rural India : Creating Awareness & Access through Common Service Centres (CSCs), It aimed at setting CSCs as Digital Finacial hubs by spreading awareness regarding government policies and digital finance options available to rural citizens . (Times of India. India Times .com/blogs).

- **Rural Digital Divide:**

An imperative segment of this paper is the Rural Digital Divide. Before pandemic in rural areas people mostly used internet for the purpose of entertainment. During pandemic people used internet for news, education, business work for official work like E-mail, Video Conferencing and the like.

We maintain that digital divide is not merely about access or use of digital technology, but about being able to integrate digital technology into meaningful social practices (Livingstone and Helsper,2007; Marien and Prodnic, 2014; Warschauer,2002) and to gain benefits of it (Song et al.,2020). The young generation needs to understand and be able to make informed decisions on how to utilize digital technologies in everyday life in meaningful ways.(International Journal of Information Management 55 2020)

Pandemic has brought the situation to that ground where most of services now target towards continuing needs of accessibility of internet. People who don't have the facility of internet were facing total exclusion which justifies the rural digital divide. Reasons for the divide are many: unaffordable device

Access, unaffordable internet access, content relevance, access skills or government ordered internet shutdowns (Armbrecht, 2016; Scheerder, Van Deursen, nd Van Dijk, 2017). In developing countries, the condition is more serious. Thus, it becomes extremely important to explore the possibilities of ensuring connectivity – mainly in the competitive global integrated scenario although these issues have been researched and discussed earliar (Warschauer, 2004).

**Problems:**

As digital mediums was the compulsory part of our life during or post pandemic but due to video conferencing, online classes etc. all these activities undoubtedly increase internet traffic.

- o **Continuous Monitoring of workers:**
  Working population is this largest section who have used digital ways to continue their work. Those working from home using video conferencing technology of find themselves under intense scrutiny and all interactions are "hyper focused " (Kalia ,2020) knowing that to call & locate to workers is easier at any time , learning new technologies and availability for work at any time increases technology working in digital hours was constant work pressure . it is reflecting the concerns of work equity  Balance and managing stress.

- o **Online fraud:**
  The pandemic has created a scenario of insecurity that is inviting fraudsters to explain the crisis situation by extracting money or information or by creating vulnerabilities (Agrawal, Sengupta , Kulshrestha ,Anand and Gugha ,2017) Government and Organizations  are aware of this threat and are tacking countermeasures for instance some governments took a strong head against zoom session for education facing the platform provider to upgrade security (Yo 2020)

o **Accessibility of Internet Services:**

As per ITU's world telecommunication ICT indicator database only 43% of the population in India uses the internet. The National Family Health Survey 2019-21 (NFHS), however, shows a significantly larger gap in internet usage. With 72.5% rural –urban) of the urban males and 51.8% of urban females have ever used the internet, only 48.7% of rural males and 24.6% of rural females qualify for this condition across all the states of India urban males have the highest percentage while rural females have the lowest %.

According to the monthly report released by the TRAI on June 29. The country had over 1.160 million wireless subscribers in feb 2020, up from 1010 million in feb 2016. Rise of 30 million per year, urban subscribers increasing by 74 million (579 million to 643 million).rural subscribers by 86 million (from 431 to 517 million).

But this growth only indicates the rise in basic telecommunication facility. Services such as online classroom, financial transaction and E- governance requires access to the internet as well as the ability to operate internet enabled devices like phones, tables and computers.

**Conclusion:**

Rural internet connectivity is independent to the urban internet connectivity. with India is emerging as a highest number of IT experts, rural India constantly confrontation a lot of problem and challenges in doing work from home during pandemic – with social well as economic inclusion and work exposures come interactions missing; but regarding the other side of the coin, a competitive advantage gradually being gained digitally. Bringing the web to rural areas should prove to be a driver of immense growth (A Study of rural areas towards the growth of digital India in post Covid 19 Pandemic). Pandemic has brought a sudden change in society. It has taken great leap in our usual life including toddlers to elders. Still miles have to be credit in the direction of our journey towards a progressive and digitally developed nation with rural transformation as also transition being kept in the core study.

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