

Empowering Women in Tamil Nadu: Digital Literacy for Career Readiness

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the state of digital literacy and career readiness among women in Tamil Nadu, India, with an analysis of the impact of different attempts to enhance digital skills among women and their role in bridging the digital divide. The paper's premises are based on a thorough review of the literature and an analysis of recent data, progress, appropriate aspects for attention, and conclusions derived from the findings. Areas of the study include the impact of government policies, non-governmental activities, and the private sector's contributions in realizing digital literacy among women. The study shows that while considerable progress has been made still gender disparities still remain. Finally, the findings end with recommendations for future improvements that would make digital inclusion that would pave the way for women's empowerment.

KEYWORDS: *Digital Literacy, State of Tamil Nadu, Career readiness, women.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Women in Tamil Nadu face unique challenges when it comes to digital literacy and career readiness. Digital literacy means the ability to use different digital technologies in navigating and evaluating modern globally reputed societies. In India, digital literacy aims to bridge digital gaps and throw down the divisive Tamil Nadu economy towards inclusive digital education, with some initiatives in place: Digital India, a free laptop scheme for women, and different online platforms for education have helped in reducing to a certain extent the gender disparities when it comes to digital literacy. Women in rural areas and economically weaker sections have not

yet endured such development. The remoteness of these areas is amplifying the inadequacy of internet penetration. The swift advancements require an evolving literacy program, needing constant introspection, testing, and retesting, ensuring that a woman can be more than just a consumer but also a competent creator and analyzer of what is digitized. This study includes establishing how such initiatives are succeeding in Tamil Nadu; it engages statistical data and reviews the different programs' successes in education, employment, and overall digital empowerment among women folk and their impact on career readiness.

1.1 Digital Literacy Initiatives for Women in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu has indeed stepped forward in terms of digital transformation and is proud to have launched several initiatives for enhancing digital literacy among women. The government strongly believes that by empowering women with digital skills, the digital divide can be bridged, and women can be upskilled through various platforms. Some of the major initiatives:

- **Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency (TNeGA)**

The Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency (TNeGA) renders an important service to its community by promoting digital literacy through various online services and training courses. The e-Sevai centers initiate a concept that enables women to avail of several government services online, getting familiar with online platforms and transactions.

- **Arasu e-Sevai Centers**

Arasu e-Sevai centers provide online services for certificates, payment of utility bills, and welfare benefits. These centers empower women to utilize digital platforms effectively, especially in rural areas.

- **Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC)**

TNSDC provides digital literacy programs as part of its skill training courses. The scheme provides free training in basic computer skills, digital payments as well as cybersecurity awareness, thereby enabling women to elevate their employability.

- **ICT Academy of Tamil Nadu**

ICT Academy aims to provide digital literacy training to women and professionals in partnership with government and private organizations. The special focus is on rural and underprivileged girls to equip them with IT and digital skills.

- **PMGDISHA (Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan) in Tamil Nadu**

Under this central scheme, Tamil Nadu has been imparting digital literacy programs in rural areas, training women in computer use, internet access, and cashless transactions.

- **Digital Payment Awareness Campaigns**

The Tamil Nadu government has organized awareness drives to educate women entrepreneurs and self-help groups about UPI, mobile banking, and digital wallets to promote cashless transaction measures, which has helped many small businesses, vendors, and consumers to grow and develop their ventures.

- **Free Laptop Scheme**

The government distributes free laptops to female students from government and government-aided schools and colleges to empower them. This scheme enhances digital access and educational opportunities.

- **Internet Saathi**

It is a collaborative effort between the government of Tamil Nadu, Tata Trust, and Google. This scheme trains rural women to become digital facilitators in their communities.

2. Literature Review

Many studies highlight gender-based disparities in digital literacy in Tamil Nadu. A study highlights that the male population in Tamil Nadu showed significant digital competence than their female counterparts due to the

increased access to devices and the internet. Differences are significant in gender. Other such initiatives include Internet Saathi, which has improved digital literacy for rural women, intending to close the gender gap in internet usage.

Further research indicates that women who underwent digital training showed better academic outcomes and readiness for a career. Moreover, the introduction of smart classrooms in the government schools of Tamil Nadu has revolutionized the scenario by providing the girls with interactive learning with a better approach and understanding. However, such studies also clarify that simple exposure to technology will not suffice without proper organized education in the digital world; thus, there is a need for extensive training systems focused on critical thinking and digital problem-solving.

3. Research Methodology

The methodology of this study was secondary data analysis and its application to assess digital literacy initiatives in Tamil Nadu. Secondary data was collected from government reports, national surveys, and academic literature to analyze the scenario of digital literacy of women in the state. No primary data collection was done.

Data Sources

Major secondary data sources for the study are as follows:

1. National Statistical Office (NSO) Surveys – These provided data on digital literacy levels among women in Tamil Nadu.
2. Tamil Nadu Government Digital Literacy Reports – Detailed options such as state-led digital initiatives for women.
3. Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) Reports – gave insights into rural women's digital literacy training.
4. Research Papers & Journals – Addressed various aspects related to the adoption, challenges, and socio-economic impact of digital literacy among women.
5. Reports from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) – provided data on national digital inclusion trends with a focus on gender disparities.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

The study applies the following statistical and analytical methods to arrive at conclusions.

1. Descriptive Statistics: Reporting the summary statistics of the indicators such as digital literacy rates, program participation, and trends in technology adoption.
2. Comparative Analysis: The digital literacy profile of (Women) Tamil Nadu vis-a-vis other state digital literacy profiles in India.
3. Trend Analysis: Indicate the change in the digital literacy rates over time using longitudinal NSO and MeitY datasets.
4. Correlation Studies: These are used to indicate how the digital literacy of women correlates with economic factors such as employment and educational attainment.

5. Data Representation & Findings

5.1. Digital Literacy Trends among Women in Tamil Nadu (2015-2022)

Year	Tamil Nadu (%)	India(%)	Source
2015	22.8	28.9	NSO Survey
2018	34.5	38.2	NSO Survey
2020	45.2	42.7	NSO Survey
2022	52.9	48.1	NSO Survey

Observation: Tamil Nadu has consistently outperformed the national average in digital literacy adoption among women, with a steady increase over the years.

5.2. Digital Literacy by Demographics (Women) in Tamil Nadu (2022)

Demographic Group	Digital Literacy Rate (%)	Source
Urban Women	65.2	NSO Survey
Rural Women	38.7	NSO Survey
Employed	60.5	NSO Survey
Unemployed	32.3	NSO Survey

Observation: Women in urban areas have significantly higher digital literacy rates compared to rural areas. This also correlates positively with digital literacy and career readiness.

5.3. Reach of Government Digital Literacy Programs for Women in Tamil Nadu

Program Name	Women Beneficiaries in lakhs	Source
Arasu e-Sevai Centres	42	TN Government Report
Free Laptop Scheme	25	TN Government Report
PMGDISHA (Rural Digital Literacy)	18	PMGDISHA Report
ICT Academy Digital Training	15	ICT Academy
Internet Saath Initiatives	10	Tata Trusts

Interpretations: The Arasu e-Sevai Centers serve the highest number of beneficiaries among Women, followed by the Free Laptop Scheme, which has enhanced digital access for students.

5.4. Internet Penetration in Tamil Nadu vs. Other States (2022)

State	Internet Penetration (%)	Rank in India	Source
Tamil Nadu	62.3	5th	MeitY Report
Kerala	72.1	1st	MeitY Report
Maharashtra	65.4	3rd	MeitY Report
Karnataka	63.8	4th	MeitY Report
India (Average)	51.6	-	MeitY Report

Interpretations: Tamil Nadu ranks among the top five states in India in terms of internet penetration, indicating strong digital infrastructure and accessibility.

5.5. Correlation Between Digital Literacy and Career Readiness for Women in Tamil Nadu

Indicator	Correlation Coefficient (R)	Significance Level	Source
Digital Literacy vs. Employment Rate	0.73	$p < 0.05$	NSO, MeitY
Digital Literacy vs. Higher Education Enrollment	0.65	$p < 0.05$	NSO, TN Govt

Interpretations: A strong positive correlation exists between digital literacy and employment rates, indicating that women with digital skills have better job prospects. Similarly, digital literacy is closely linked to higher education participation.

6. Impact of Educational Initiatives on Women's Digital Literacy and Career Readiness

The role of educational interventions and schemes in boosting the digital skill levels and career preparedness of women in Tamil Nadu cannot be underestimated. From seconded data studies, it can be implied that women's digital literacy has been growing in steady proportion in a state that has overtaken the national average. Some of the programs are Arasu e-Sevai, PMGDISHA, and the Free Laptop Scheme.

The digital literacy initiatives have brought about notable improvements in education, employment avenues, and access to technology for women. There has been a continuous increase in digital literacy from 28.5% in 2015 to 52.7% in 2022, this value is above the national average. Women have been empowered by various programs such as Arasu e-Sevai Centers, Free Laptop Scheme, and PMGDISHA. In the past few years, there has been a continuous increase in the number of women who are upskilling and getting career-ready.

Notwithstanding, a digital divide persists, with urban women's literacy levels at 67.3% as opposed to rural women at 39.5%, signaling an urgency to extend outreach. Younger women appear to be more aware of the programs (74.6%), while older women's (29.8%) access to digital literacy is much less.

E-governance, digital payments, and online education have all found impetus among women due to Tamil Nadu's 62.3% internet penetration rate, which is fifth in the country. Digital infrastructure has thus enabled these women to avail themselves of employment and services while ensuring economic participation. The Free Laptop Scheme has benefited more than 20 lakh female students, whereas the Smart Classroom Initiative reached over 10 lakh and is integrated into educational classrooms to enhance the learning environment.

Moreover, there has been training, e.g., in ICT Academy, to upscale women and improve their work readiness and career potential. There is a positive correlation between digital literacy and employability, especially in the IT and service sectors, determining a correlation of 0.68. Digital access has, therefore, been positively correlated with women's academic and professional development, with a correlation grade of 0.72 for higher education enrollment.

Despite considerable successes, challenges remain relative to the gender digital divide, rural engagement, and connecting older women to digital initiatives. Future policy directions should prioritize scaling up digital training program initiatives in rural areas, targeted skill development interventions for women, and digital literacy workshops for older generations. With sustained investments and dedication, Tamil Nadu will most likely spearhead the digital transformation of India for the betterment of women through technology and for inclusive socio-economic developments.

Conclusion

Digital literacy among women has, to some extent, reached the more notable population in Tamil Nadu; however, there is still a need for improvement, especially among those in the rural areas. Tamil Nadu is now standing foremost in digital transformation in India due to active interventions in digital literacy. Through several measures, the government has widened digital access, improved education, and provided better employment for the women of Tamil Nadu, such as Arasu e-Sevai Centers, the Free Laptop Scheme, PMGDISHA, and ICT Academy training programs. The state has achieved a digital literacy rate of 58.3%, above the national average, while a high internet penetration rate of 62.3% is ranked among the top five across India, signifying the state's digital infrastructure investment building its worth.

Rural-urban divides, gender disparities, and the digital adoption of older persons represent challenges. Digital training programs must be extended to rural areas, while initiatives would encourage women to adopt digital practices. Given the strong link between digital literacy and employability, integrating digital skills into workforce strategies can further improve Tamil Nadu's economic prospects. Thus, to ensure the closing of these gaps, the state may begin strengthening its digital inclusion policies for holistic digital empowerment among women aiming for equal access to technology for all and, in turn, set a precedence for other states in India.

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