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## Closing The Digital Divide: Gendering The G20 To Promote Women's Tech Literacy

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### Abstract

A large percentage of the four billion people who suffer exclusion from the digital economy are women. According to government reports, the internet-based economy has the potential to fundamentally change the world of work. On the other side, there are concerns that the present "digital divide" across and within nations may exacerbate current socioeconomic imbalances and solidify discrimination based on gender. Digitalization provides various prospects for female empowerment and increases female inclusion in labor, financial, and entrepreneurship markets. Presently, it appears that digitization benefits female labor, which is less likely to be displaced by robots than male labor. Women's superior social skills often provide an edge over their male counterparts in the digital sphere, particularly when paired with greater education and increased computer proficiency.

Nevertheless, the hurdles and inadequacies already impeding women's growth in many G20 countries may deprive them of numerous advantages in the digital era. G20 nations must make significant efforts to eliminate these hurdles. Increasing women's access to new technological resource looks to be a possible starting point for such activities and for achieving the goal of gender equality. This will be a qualitative and descriptive research study. In the context of the G-20, this paper will investigate the obstacles and potential for the empowerment of women in the technological age.

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment, Gender Gap, Digital divide, Challenges, Policy Narratives.

### Introduction

According to estimations, a woman today is less likely to be online, has fewer or no digital skills, and is more likely to face economic and social marginalization as a result of the present technological upheaval, regardless of where she resides. Among the four billion individuals who are not part of the digital economy, the majority are women. Women are 31% less likely to be provided with connectivity to the internet in the nations with the lowest development rates in the globe. than their male counterparts, primarily because of societal, cultural, and economic hurdles (Mishra, 2017). According to policy narratives, the digital economy can change the nature of labor. For instance, by 2024–2025, India's digital economy is predicted to create 30 million new jobs. The new information society provided these possibilities. Studies show that by 2020, over seventy-five percent of women will still be disadvantaged due to the disparity between men and women in emerging countries. Additionally, the so-called "digital divide," formerly understood to represent the discrepancy in access to contemporary information and communications technology (ICT) between those who do and those

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who do not, has evolved through history. Because “access” and “use” are frequently used interchangeably, there is not enough emphasis on the knowledge, time, and resources needed to utilize ICT effectively. The lack of physical access to ICT and the skill gap, which contribute to one another in a cycle of causation, are the two factors that most truly characterize the digital divide (Taylor, 2018). Although the enabling potential of ICT is the focus of policy narratives, there are worries that without equitable access and skill sets, ICTs would worsen already-existing disparities and support conventional gender hierarchies (Sandys, 2005). Both the G20 and women are not a monolithic group. The gender gap in the digital sphere varies depending on the member state and the associated socioeconomic environment. For example, according to a 2015 Pew Research Centre poll, the United States (US) leads the world in smartphone ownership with 72%. Research reveals that, in wealthy economies, factors other than gender that may affect digital participation include age, ethnicity, and geography. The G20 member states have very different levels of ICT access and usage. For instance, according to the Effective Measure Demographic Report 2014, women made up 51% of internet consumers in South Africa. In contrast, women make up 28% of cell phone users and 29% of web surfers in India.

The G20 platform’s significance, however, resides in its norm-setting capabilities. All member states have frequently vowed to eliminate the persisting gender inequalities in financial inclusion, involvement in the labor force, and more recently, technological integration. Analyzing how the G20 may work towards coordinated action, monitoring and evaluation systems, and locally tailored country-specific approaches is crucial given the variety of the group. Furthermore, it is critical to consider how the G20 can work together to fulfill its pledges without an implementation mechanism. Against the backdrop of the G20, this paper examines the obstacles and prospects for female empowerment in the era of digital media. It has two parts: The first part examines the possibilities and difficulties of making gender equality the central concern of the G20. The second part argues for context-specific solutions while exploring the ramifications of Digital disparities between the exclusion and inclusion of women in the varied G20 environment.

### **Challenges of Women in the Digital Era**

Even while women account for 28% of the workforce in the IT industry, less than fifteen percent of engineering jobs are occupied by women, according to a World Bank analysis. This indicates that the STEM professions are those where women are most underrepresented. According to Women Tech Network, 69.2% of the personnel laid off in the notorious 2022 tech layoffs were women.

These numbers illustrate the prejudice and gender bias existing in the field of technological innovation and the underrepresentation of women in the fields of science and engineering. In today’s fast-paced, constantly changing technology environment, the social expectation that women undertake more household duties might still be perceived as a barrier to a job well done. Women are more likely to experience career stagnation due to this discrimination, even if it stems from unconscious bias that leads recruiting managers to select a more male-dominated workforce. Companies determine how the employment market will develop, but these businesses may also significantly impact the educational system, which is the root cause of the gender gap in STEM fields. The difficulties of prejudice and discrimination in the job have received much attention in the digital age, but it is crucial to remember that this inequality starts in school. Disparities in the classroom set the stage for inequality in the workplace. Studies suggest that gender stereotyping is still a significant issue in education, especially

in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). It directly impacts students' career choices, influencing their higher- and secondary-level course selection.

Because of the present gender inequities, women could find themselves unable to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology. Gender disadvantages often keep women trapped in an endless loop that prevents them from moving forward. As a consequence of this, in several developing nations, there are both institutional and societal constraints on the independence of women that limit them from using digital devices, which may assist them in overcoming some of these barriers. In addition, reduced female enrollment rates in higher educational institutions, particularly in STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), even among the most highly advanced G20 nations, prevent women from taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by digitalization. Because of this, women face the danger of sacrificing some of the most lucrative occupations available in the digital age.

### **Gendering the G20**

The G20 economic growth, which represents 2/3 of the globe's population, 80% of worldwide trade, and 85% of the global economy, has the potential to provide a solid foundation for promoting sustainable, gender-equal economic collaboration and policy development. However, some G20 policies frequently have a gender-neutral focus, resulting in gender-inequal consequences. The movement to mainstream gender in all policies has strengthened over the past few years. Contrary to popular belief, the percentage of female involvement in the labor market has remained unchanged, if not decreased, globally in the past few years. Women's empowerment is predicted to result in a \$12 trillion rise in the world economy by 2025 and 15 more sustainable societies. This is in line with the G20's primary goal, which is to promote GDP growth on a worldwide scale G20, and the rest of the worldwide community recognized the importance of making gender parity the number one objective in their written statements. The global society adopted the Sustainable Development Goals' fifth standalone goal, "empower all women and girls," in September 2015. (SDGs). The G20 member nations have promised to "ensure women's full engagement in economic and social life" (G20, 2012), "reduce the gender participation gap by 25% by 2025," and "increase the number of women in the labor force by more than 100 million" (Langou et al., 2018). The platform has previously been criticized for tokenism rather than giving real-world policy solutions since there are not many women's views, and there is not much room for an in-depth discussion on gender equality. The Women20 or W20 engagement group was founded in 2015 in response to this and to guarantee rigorous follow-through (Avveduto et al., 2022).

### **Policy Proposals**

Thus, a policy is needed to prepare women to adopt the new opportunities presented by the digital era effectively. The G20 leaders must act because the gender gap has the potential to damage any future benefits that women may derive from digitization. There have previously been suggestions for corrective policy actions from several prior studies assessing the problem of digitalization for gender equality. Utilizing leading-edge online finance technology and electronic government, these programs promote female economic independence, higher learning, STEM vocations, internet-based female entrepreneurship, and technological competence. They offer open, accessible affordable, and ubiquitous broadband connectivity to the Internet. Several countries have already taken action to accomplish these objectives. But the progress is still sluggish. According to the most recent research

by Sorgner et al. (2017), which also affirms the suggestions that were made in the earlier studies, the G20 should also act in each of the five domains, establish a system for early identification of any potential harm that digitalization may cause with regard to equality between men and women.

The Group of Twenty ought to keep a close eye on how prospects for female employees alter as digitalization advances. Such a national endeavor should support the creation of a system for early alerts that can trigger policy decisions. The meeting of the G20 must concentrate on more than just how digitization affects women in job opportunities in developed countries, though. However, given that emerging and developing nations may be especially vulnerable to digitalization. The group of twenty nations ought to also think about prominent research programs for these countries. Female employment is now expected to be less vulnerable to digitization than male employment, especially in inexperienced occupations. This is due to the fact that less skilled males are more prone to work in regular jobs, which include those associated with manufacturing, where the advancement of automation in industry has long replaced such roles. As a consequence of this, females with low skills are more inclined to find employment in sectors such as healthcare that need irregular hands-on tasks that are not easy to digitize. Recent improvements in the field of computational intelligence, on the other hand, have revealed that upcoming developments in technology might be successful in expanding digitization into sectors previously believed inaccessible by computers. As a result, many professions that were previously thought to be immune to automation may become obsolete in the future. As an outcome of this, during the subsequent phase of digitization, female employment might be negatively impacted. (Wilson et al., 2017).

### **I. Restructure current government initiatives to promote women's economic and digital participation.**

To advance female empowerment, the G20 should start a project to leverage government initiatives, particularly in developing and emerging countries. Current government initiatives, including programs for social assistance, can be adjusted to focus on women's socioeconomic and digital engagement in addition to accomplishing their core objectives. Women's economic advancement may be enhanced through these efforts, which choose women as the receivers of financial remittances to their families or localities. So, in order to achieve the scheme's key objectives, effectively leveraging the women's strengths in terms of their social and familial responsibilities will boost women's economic participation and increase program effectiveness. The programs may increase women's accessibility to digital information and reduce the expense of delivering the programs by using electronic devices more frequently for reimbursement, administration, or supervision. (Sorgner et al., 2017). It can be concluded that the G20 nations must assist women in enhancing their social abilities by enhancing their education and digital proficiency. The G20 should do more to support women's involvement in higher education and research and develop digital capabilities. Digitalization is expected to favor positions that largely depend on the synergies between behavioral and emotional intelligence and conceptual (or cognitive) skills that can be acquired through higher learning, for example, imaginative thinking and analytical thinking. (Deming, 2017). High levels of digital skill mastery will also be necessary for the digital era. Many women are more socially active than their male counterparts, so they may profit from utilizing these complementarities. Women may miss out on occupying those prominent jobs in management, STEM disciplines, or in the entrepreneurial sector which flourish immensely in today's technological landscape if they do not receive such opportunities because of

gender discrepancies in academic achievements and digital proficiency. Some G20 countries have launched a variety of initiatives, such as hacking competitions, coding sessions, or mentorship programs, to promote expanded digital literacy and to spark curiosity about STEM fields between young women and girls. Such projects must get more G20 support if the aim of gender equality is to be achieved. Women will be more prepared to fulfill the requirements of the contemporary labor market if they accomplish this. (Diaz et al., 2018).

**II. Support legitimate internet platforms that help women develop their business abilities.** Higher education, employment experience, particularly in STEM professions, and regular connections with entrepreneurial peers are all ways to gain crucial human capital for entrepreneurship. Many women now excluded from the job market still have no access to this opportunity. Online platforms are a promising new resource for empowering women with business skills and connecting them with mentors and role models. Women in areas with a dearth of female entrepreneurs or who experience barriers to accessing these role models may find benefits from excellent online mentoring and training programs for women business owners.

**III. Promote innovative web-based tools that make it easier for female entrepreneurs to get funding.**

The G20 should support cutting-edge web-based tools that help women-owned enterprises access finance for their endeavors. It should promote reputable online marketplaces that unite female investors and female businesses, such as equity crowdfunding, angel investing, and venture capital.

## Conclusion

The present study upholds the perceptions of previous studies urging the G20 to make accessible to women with open, reliable, affordable, and access to high-speed internet worldwide. Through innovative digital financial resources and electronic government, these projects will considerably advance women's digital competence, inspire more women to seek STEM disciplines, assist female internet-based entrepreneurial activities, and provide women greater economic autonomy. The present study further makes some suggestions for the G20 work in the following five areas:

1. A greater investigation is needed to determine how digitalization affects women's job chances, particularly in countries that are developing and flourishing. Women's employment prospects should also be continuously monitored globally to develop a system of prior alerts that might lead to forthcoming changes in policies.
2. By giving them greater participation and supportive positions in current, preferably automated government programs, we may encourage women in developing and emerging economies. Conditional cash transfer experiments show how leveraging women's superior social skills may help increase program performance and empower women economically and digitally.
3. Make it easier for women to get professions that will thrive in the electronic age by giving more women with higher education and sophisticated digital skills. When combined with women's stronger social skills, higher education, and improved computer abilities may offer significant returns in the digital era.
4. Encourage women's entrepreneurship by investing in top-notch internet-based resources that train aspiring female entrepreneurs and link them up with seasoned female businesswomen who may act as examples to them.



5. Promote the creation of cutting-edge internet-based instruments for female entrepreneurs to gain access to monetary assistance, such as top-notch online platforms for angel investors, venture capitalists, or crowdfunding campaigns for equity that link female businesswomen with female investors.

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