

Role Of Digitalization In Political Empowerment Of Indian Women

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Abstract

The proposed topic tries to find out how the upcoming of Digital technology, Information and Communication Technology tools especially with the introduction of digital media and various platforms helping in the **Political Empowerment** of Indian women. When we talk about Empowerment it simply means to give women more representation and supremacy in decision making in every aspect of life. Political empowerment is a crucial tool of women empowerment which in simple words can be define as making women active participation in political decision-making process and acquiring leadership in politics as well as governance. It focuses on reducing gender inequality by increasing political participation of women. Also ensuring political socialisation with a participant political culture and active role of women in day-to-day politics.

Keywords: *Digitalisation, Digital media, Feminism, Political Empowerment, Indian women*

Introduction

“Women empowerment is the process by which women gain the ability to make and enact strategic life choices.” Kabeer. In the contemporary society the decision making (life choices or on field) indicates itself empowerment at the public as well as private level. Feminist says “*personal is political*” means if we give authority to women to have autonomy in participation and decision making at their family level, they will surely get autonomy at the public level. Their participation will indirectly deal with the women issues which need to be addressed. Political empowerment of women in India is a significant aspect of women empowerment that focus on enhancing women representation in political life and participation and decision making in governmental process. According to Alexander et al. (2016), women's political empowerment is understood as the improvement of women's resources, capacities and accomplishments to obtain equality in influencing and practicing political power.

This ensure that government functioning and public policies shall focus on ensuring gender and social equality. Indian government no doubt give priority to women representation in the political arena but it is still lacking the spaces. As such the reservation of seats in the Panchayati Raj Institution with the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment act is an example to improve women participation in politics by reserving 1/3rd of seats for women in local bodies, this ensures representation of women at grassroot level influencing the local governance. But the ground reality is different mostly it is observed that on reserved sets the actual power keep in the hands of male member.

However, we see a significant progress in the political participation of women as well as leadership qualities among women in political arena with the help of these digital media techniques and other types of digital resources. So here we come on the topic that how digitalisation is leading to political empowerment of Indian women. Digitalisation is simple words mean the process of using digital technology to upgrade, improve and modernize traditional methods of working, learning, uplifting and connecting with others. It involves changing

data and information from physical formats to digital ones and using these digital tools to increase efficiency, sustainability and engagement in areas like business, government, healthcare, economy, education etc.

Digital transformation has made information more accessible, enabling women to connect with others and address various issues digitally. Smartphones, smart devices, digital technology, and social media have become central to this evolving digital landscape. Innovations like artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) offer advanced analytics and automation capabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated digital adoption in areas such as remote work, education, e-governance, online shopping, international relations, and telemedicine. Emerging technologies like AI, blockchain, and 5G are continuing to expand the scope of digitalization. The Indian government has actively promoted digitalization to foster socio-economic growth, inclusivity, and policy innovation. The Digital India initiative, launched in 2015, focuses on three key objectives: building digital infrastructure, enhancing digital skills, and improving access to online services (ensuring reliable internet and mobile connectivity). Programs like the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) aim to enhance digital literacy in rural areas. Additionally, tools like Aadhaar and Digi Locker simplify access to essential services, including banking, healthcare, and education. India's digital progress is evident in various domains, such as digital payments (e.g., UPI and BHIM), e-governance (e.g., MyGov and e-District platforms), and healthcare (e.g., Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission). The education sector also leveraged digital tools significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these advancements, challenges like the digital divide, privacy concerns, data security risks, rising cyber threats, online harassment, and limited digital literacy remain critical issues.

For Indian women, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are opening new avenues for economic independence, social connections, and personal and political empowerment. Digitalization enables women to access education and benefit from online learning opportunities and resources, overcoming geographical and social barriers. Platforms like Coursera, edX, and Indian initiatives such as SWAYAM offer a wide range of courses, from basic literacy to advanced professional skills. With the widespread adoption of mobile phones, these resources are now accessible even in remote areas. Through ICT, women traditionally restricted in their educational opportunities due to societal constraints can acquire knowledge, pursue vocational and tech-based jobs, or advance their education, thereby boosting their employability and economic independence.

Digital literacy programs like the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) play a crucial role by providing digital literacy training, particularly for rural women. These initiatives empower women to use digital tools effectively, furthering their participation in economic, educational, and social spheres. Digital platforms offer women opportunities to achieve financial autonomy. Services like Upwork, Freelancer, and Fiverr enable remote work, providing flexibility for those constrained by cultural or logistical factors. This opens avenues for economic empowerment. Technology enhances access to healthcare and vital information, supporting women's well-being. Digital tools encourage civic engagement and advocacy, allowing women to participate in governance and social movements. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp foster dialogue on social issues, mobilize communities, and advocate for rights. Campaigns such as #MeToo have empowered women to confront harassment and drive societal change. Digital tools have empowered women to become entrepreneurs. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook Marketplace, and Amazon enable women to start small businesses. Digital payment solutions such as Paytm, Google Pay, and the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have improved women's access to financial services. Online platforms simplify access to essential services like voter registration, legal advice, and welfare benefits, encouraging women's participation in governance and ensuring their rights are upheld. Despite the

transformative potential of ICTs, challenges persist. Access inequality, traditional gender roles, and low digital literacy—particularly in rural areas—limit women's participation. Cyber harassment and online abuse discourage women from fully utilizing digital spaces, impacting their freedom of expression and engagement. To ensure women's empowerment, these obstacles must be addressed. Digital tools and platforms offer significant opportunities for social development, inclusion, and participation in decision-making processes, fostering equality, growth, and harmony.

As the fourth pillar of democracy, the media has important responsibilities toward societal well-being. It plays a crucial role in educating the public and highlighting the importance and contributions of women, which in turn empowers them and drives social advancement. Although in India less women are politically conscious and they are among the passive participants but their role in area political life is increasing day by day. Digitalisation in itself is a broad concept narrowing down it in phase of digital media we can analyse how digital media and acting as a revolutionary force in political in powering women in India especially by offering platform for political engagement socialisation mobilisation consciousness and awareness. Many of them with the help of the digital platform, somehow contributing in the governance and politics of India. Digital media has no doubt positively impacted the Indian women by enhancing their knowledge about the contemporary politics of a country. Digital media act as a tool for political empowerment, specifically for Indian women. The rise of digital platforms such as social media, news websites, and digital forums, which enable increased access to political information and opportunities for engagement. Digital Media Usage Patterns Among Indian Women shows a positive output in political engagement. Social media engagement rates and platform preferences among women seems rising, also participation in online political discussions and campaigns, campaigns on women's political involvement. Digital media provides women with access to political content, which can influence political opinions and increase knowledge. Digital Media as a tool for Grassroots Mobilization, leads to Gender Equality, influences women's voting behaviour and political preferences. The one example of political empowerment is the facilitation, get awareness easily throw a single click through which they can access information about political rights policies and government initiative allowing them to be an informed citizen of India. The help of digital platform they get political engagement and connect with the community groups government representatives and political leaders. Social media and particular place a crucial role in postpaid political activism for instance WhatsApp is a social media platform which is used by everyone in it there is a new feature where we can connect to our leaders and become political updated with the help of news highlights by just connecting with the page on WhatsApp with sound so safe and simple to access. Also platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X handles have facilitated many campaigns ensured solidarity among women, against the various challenges faced by women in this male dominated society. Some examples of digital feminist activism are Pinjra Tod movement, MeToo movement etc.

However, there are still existing challenges which are acting as a hurdle for political empowerment of women in this digital era the basic barrier the women face is the less digital literacy and less access to devices or reliable and affordable internet packages. Also, the patriarchal nature of the society limits the women to not express themselves at public places. There are also issues of service security and online harassments, trolling and privacy, many of the female political voice is on social media face online harassment the conservative family look over the engagement of women online. Sometimes misinterpret information and rumours, impact the women to access the accurate information.

Objectives of the study:

- To describe and analyse India's digital transformation including digital inclusion, use of digital media tools and technology in digital India campaign and accessibility of information and communication technology for women and how it led them for their own empowerment.
- The purpose of this analysis aims to understand how does the digitalization is enhancing political awareness among Indian women focusing upon both the positive impacts and challenges that limit them from digital inclusion.
- To focus why political awareness is crucial for political empowerment of women ensuring gender equality.
- With this study we can analyse the various digital initiative which is supporting the digital and political empowerment of women. Also we shall study about the recent developments and their potential ,through which women of India are getting political empowered with help of digitalisation in different spheres of contemporary society.
- The study shall be helpful to address the gaps where women is lacking behind from this political empowerment through digital devices.

Research questions:

- How digital media impacted the status of Indian women in India politics?
- How can digital tools help women to overcome traditional barriers, leading them to participate in Indian politics?
- What is the role of digitalisation for representing women in political field and women role in governance and public policies with help of digital media and platforms?
- What are the possible challenges that are emerging for political leadership in this digital era?

Methodology**Type of the research:**

The proposed topic will be based on theoretical, empirical, diagnostic, analytical and descriptive methods of research. This research shall also be considered as Qualitative and Quantitative type of research. The mode of data collection is of both nature i.e. qualitative and quantitative method. Through qualitative focusing on meanings and interpretations instead of numbers i.e all the aspects of physical, emotional, patriarchal, economical, sociological and psychological barriers will be covered. And through quantitative all factual analysis will be recorded for statistical representation. Data will be collected from the secondary as well as primary resources for theoretical understanding what political empowerment of women means, what empowerment means , what digitalization is ,the role of digitalization in the political empowerment of women, all books, research articles , journals, newspapers shall be covered.

Research work will be depending on Field surveys through Questionnaires, observation, personal interviews, focus group interviews etc. Quantitative data shall be represented with help of various charts and graphs e.g. Pie charts.

The methodology will include flexibility depending upon the situations of sample.

Scheme Of Study:

“In today’s technologically advanced society, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) comes in handy to speed up this process. The fusion of information and communication has led to knowledge explosion across the world beyond all expectations. As a result, social interaction, economic and commercial activities, political negotiations, education, health, leisure, and entertainment tend to infuse changes into our life Ramilo et al. (2001) (Ramilo and Pi, 2001)”. Technology is a big help in making women economically independent. ICT in new media clearly creates new opportunities for women to grow and succeed. Digital literacy also play a significant role especially at the grassroot level to facilitate the women political activism and provide platform tools and techniques so women can have digital access giving them independence and getting digital active.

For further clarification an outline of data collection is mentioned below: -

Percentage of Women Political awareness (Urban)	Percentage of Women Political awareness (Rural)	Mode of political participation (Mobile Social Media, News, Communication, News Websites, Online Discussion Forums , Government portals	Voting Behaviour of women	Knowledge of Digitalisation	Awareness of Government Policies	Percentage of Women Facing Barrier(and type)

Young women use these platforms to express their political ideas and consciousness, hence challenging the traditional norms of society. Digital tools and technology is has no doubt rays the status of Indian women upgrading the livelihood of women in a multidisciplinary way. The digital India program (2015) ,by Government of India tries to prepare India for digital empowered society such as , most of the women use internet to seek information about the day to day political activities The digital tools and platforms have created the culture of connectivity by sharing of ideas and public political opinions online where they can activity participate and interact with each other with the help of blogging, commenting, tweeting on day to day politics. Many women because of patriarchal norms are marginalised in social, economical, political, physiological ways but with these technological advancements women who previously face geographical social and cultural restrictions are participating in every aspects of life for example mobile access helps women to gain financial independent and enable them to participate in digital economy which is part of empowerment too. Moreover rural women who are also getting the importance of digital literacy are now using mobile based internet to access government schemes in participate in local governance process.

This new face of digital activism has opened digital new species for political as well as social engagement for women. The social media provide visibility solidarity accountability addressing the systematic and structured gender inequalities. We can see the digital inclusion also for further betterment of women for example

LinkedIn provide professional networking, feminist activist shall communicate to the remote areas and educate them on the issues like menstrual health, gender pay gaps, workplace harassments etc. Women in India, after the enactment of constitution were given right to vote as well as some political representation however there percentage in the houses of parliament and legislative assembly is still quite unsatisfactory. India is a democratic country which promotes the engagement of all citizens of India in every spheres. The engagement process involves the participation and decision-making process ensuring political activism with help of active political culture. However, government adapt methods across the world to ensure the higher representation of women with the help of reservation of seats in parliament. The article in The Hindu mentions "In April 2024 India ranks 143 in the list of countries in the 'Monthly ranking of women in National parliament' published by Indian -parliamentary union. A significance step has recently been taken by government of India through 106 Constitutional Amendment Act, this would surely ensure a fair representation of women in the legislature by emphasising on gender inclusivity and sensitivity. Women's participation and political institutions will surely lead to the women empowerment by these digital platforms and facilities is women or much aware about the institutional politics. The women can have their own prospective on the evaluation implementation planning processing the various significant decisions in the political system. Digital literacy can play an important role in educating the women about how they can use the digital tools and technology for their own upgradation as well advancement of their own life. Also, digital literacy will have them to know about the system of Government and how they can draw the potential initiative to participate which can led to the political mobilisation of the country. The government also with the various schemes, focusing on digital inclusion and enhancing the digital literacy. The internet serves as a crucial tool for them to hold local leaders accountable and verify information regarding government schemes in programs directly from the online portals. Overall, digitalisation in various aspects empowered women focusing on the role of Indian women in political phenomena and intensified focus on the women issues within the party agenda and policies.

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