ICT and Higher Education:

A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Area Colleges of Lucknow District

Abstract

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Abstract

With the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), it has become possible for the common man to access the global information. Computer and telecommunication are the principal technologies reshaping higher education. We live in a world in which all aspects of life influenced by ICT. This tool defines as gathering, collecting, retrieving, processing, analysing and disseminating information electronically. ICT is all about the combination of manufacturing and services industries that capture, transmit and display data and information electronically. In this study, the researcher has tried to find out, the percentage of women accessing ICT to gather information to support their study at college level in Lucknow, UP. It tells about the habits of using social media to get information on related subjects or courses. This study answers how women consumed and comprehended social media for their own need and requirements. How frequently women use internet for studying, gaming, social networking, chatting and many other things. This study also shows the availability of infrastructure of hardware and software at colleges as well as at home. It focuses on the personal interest of an individual woman to use ICT.

Literature review suggested that the empirical study on micro level is less in this area. Further, it is formed that research on ICT and its use by the female students belonging to SC/ST, OBC and General caste are at scarcity. Through this study, researcher tried to find out the uses of ICT among women. Through interview schedule the researcher got to know about the extent of ICT use in their daily life.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the Government policies and programmes regarding ICT in Higher Education.
2. To analyse the socio-economic status of SC, OBC and Non-reserved category female students from rural and urban areas studying at higher education.
3. To understand the use of ICT among the female students from rural and urban area.
4. To compare digital divide among female students at college level.

Hypotheses

1. Government policies and programmes are not contemporary so far ICT and higher education is concerned.
2. Female students having higher caste background are more familiar with ICT and its uses.
3. Female students hailing from poor socio-economic families cutting across rural and urban areas are less conversant with ICT.
4. Female students from urban area are better informed about ICT and its use.
5. Society generated and system generated obstacles are directly linked with use of ICT by the students.
6. Area of residence not always determines digital divide.

This study was based on Lucknow which has randomly been selected by the researcher. Two Post graduate colleges: one government and one private college have been selected from the district. The government college selected was situated in urban area and the private college selected was situated in rural area.

For this study, exploratory research design has been used by the researcher. Exploratory research designs are the simplest and most flexibly structured designs. It is flexible in its approach and mostly involves a qualitative investigation. Exploratory

research is research conducted for a problem that has not been studied more clearly, intended to establish priorities, develop operational definitions and final research design. Exploratory research helps determine the best research design, data-collection method and selection of subjects. Exploratory research is flexible and can address research questions of all types (how, why, what, when). Researcher may use primary or secondary research, or a combination of both types of research.

The female students pursuing higher education has been selected by the researcher through purposive sampling of the study and is also exposed to the use of information communication technology.

Both primary and secondary data has been used in this study. The focus was on primary data which was collected through field survey and interviews by the researcher. Similarly the secondary data has been collected through available sources like college records, records from Uttar Pradesh Higher Education Commission and Ministry of Human Resource Development.

For this study, the data has been collected by using Interview Schedule as well as Questions prepared separately for both teachers and students. Interview schedule has been used by the researcher which is a set of questions designed to be asked exactly as worded. Interview schedule have a standardised format which means the same questions are asked to every respondents in the same sequence.

The collected data has been analysed by using SPSS. SPSS stands for Statistical Package for the Social Scientist is a tool used for data management and analysis. It is used in many fields such as education, medicine, business and others. SPSS research tool can compare and explore the differences between responses to two or more questions.

- Respondents from the colleges named as Maharaja Bijli Pasi Government Post Graduate College situated in urban area and Sri Mahesh Prasad Degree College rural area were selected for this study. Findings show that 68% respondents from urban college and 73.3% respondents from rural college were interested in using ICT to get information about their subjects. But still students from rural area college lack far behind than the students of urban college. Respondents from urban college were familiar with the ICT tools used at college than the students from rural college.

- Lack of availability of ICT infrastructure has been noticed at both the colleges. 57.3% respondents from urban college and 17.3% respondents from rural college were sure about the computer lab at the college whereas at the rural college there was computer lab present for the students but 46.7% of the students were unaware of its presence and those who were aware of it were not able to use it which can be considered as the irresponsibility of the college administration.

- 14.7% students from rural college believed to check the reliability and validity of information received through ICT than the students of urban area college that is 9.3%.

- It has been found the socio-economic status of female students belonging to general caste is way better than the female students of SC and ST caste in both urban and rural colleges. Instead of being less in number 4.0% respondents from general caste were belonging to income group of 50-80,000 per month in the urban college and

1.3% were from rural college and at the same time no respondent were belonging to the same income group from SC and ST caste in both the colleges.

- According to the respondents socio-economic profile it has been found that respondents from poor socio-economic background either for urban college or from rural college were dealing with lack of ICT tools at home, which make them hesitant and shy in using information and communication technology at home and in the college as well. The students from rich socio-economic background were able to understand many of the technical terms asked during the survey and it is because of their more exposure to the ICT tools.

- It has been found in this study that there is digital divide between the two colleges and the students at these colleges. Some students from rural area college were not even having the smartphone and those who were having smartphones were not having internet connection on their phones. There was lack of equipment at rural college which defines a huge gap of technology between the two colleges which also shows that there is need of bridging the digital divide.

- Though the college situated in urban area has computer lab but no other facilities such as interactive board, digital reader, wifi etc. College situated in rural area also has the computer lab but its availability was limited to the students from particular discipline.

- Female students from rural area college showed more interest in the use of ICT than the students from urban area college. 68.0% respondents from urban college and

73.3% respondents from rural college were interested in using ICT to obtain knowledge. 32.0% respondents from urban college and 26.7% respondents from rural college said that they were not interested in using ICT. This determines that area of residence does not determine the interest or willingness of the student to connect with technologies.

- Respondents were not allowed to bring or use smartphones, laptops or any other device during the classes in both the colleges.

- In urban college projectors have been used occasionally by the teachers during lectures, students belonging to some particular subjects give their presentation on projectors whereas in rural college neither teachers nor students used projectors for the study purpose.

- ICT policy and programmes run by the government is still need to reach out the higher education in rural areas. There is a huge gap of digital divide between the rural and urban area where the growth is biased in favour of urban areas.

- The government has also realised the need of introducing information and communication technology to the higher education and the National Programme of Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) Phase II and III are focusing on the content generation activity.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Government policies and programmes are not contemporary so far ICT and higher education is concerned.

On the basis of the present study it has been found that the above hypothesis was proved partially true.

Hypothesis 2: Female students having higher caste background are more familiar with ICT and its uses.

On the basis of the study mostly the respondents from higher caste was the Brahmins and Kshatriya, thus, above hypothesis found to be true.

Hypothesis 3: Female students hailing from poor socio-economic families cutting across rural and urban areas are less conversant with ICT.

On the basis of the study as per explained in chapter 3 respondents from poor socio-economic status where hesitant in using ICT and there was lack of knowledge among them about the gadgets thus, above hypothesis found to be true.

Hypothesis 4: Female students from urban area are better informed about ICT and its use.

As it has been observed the female students from urban area were better informed about ICT , hence, the above hypothesis found to be true.

Hypothesis 5: Society generated and system generated obstacles are directly linked with use of ICT by the students.

On the basis of the present study it has been found that the above mentioned hypothesis found to be true as the students were lacking the facilities of using ICT at college as well as at home.

Hypothesis 6: Area of residence not always determines digital divide.

According to the study it has been originated that area of residence does matters in the use and availability of ICT, and it also shows the digital gap between the students of rural area and urban area. Hence, the above hypothesis found to be false.

Suggestions

a. Introducing ICT to rural area colleges is necessary to urge to help the students as well as the teachers to improve their skills and improving the classroom teaching process, it can bring change to the pedagogy of the traditional teaching methods.

b. Teachers must be trained to use ICT properly and be ready to accept the challenges of pedagogical changes. Including ICT to the pedagogies can make teaching and learning process easier for the teachers and students both.

c. The process of education must deal with the urge of students to develop both macro and micro strategies for dealing with the world.

d. Including ICT in school curriculum will surely affect the students those are paving their way to the higher education.

e. Making technology more easy to understand and affordable for those living in remote or isolated area will help the students to learn more quickly and achieve new heights in their studies.

f. Use of available, relevant and cost effective information and communication technology will enhance the development of institutional networks and makes processes and systems more effective.

g. Information and communication technology (ICT) can act as a facilitating agent and catalyst to enhance the efficiency of educational system.

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