A STUDY ON THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL DIVIDE IN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract

The 21st century people are good in using technology for all interactions and communication. Even people in rural areas also use the digital technology. But people suffer the digital divide also. This study aims to identify the use of digital technology and digital divide among people in rural areas. The study found that almost all the people in the study area are well aware of the devices which belong to the modern technology. The said Digital Divide is much less in the concerned study area as a result of the high educational attainment of the people residing there. But, it may not be the same in the case of a place with low literacy rates. So, the best way to remove Digital Divide is to educate and conscientize the people.

Key words: *Technology, Digital divide, Paradigm Shift, etc*

INTRODUCTION

The access to modern information and communication technology and those that don't or have restricted access, this technology can include the telephone, television personal computers and the Digital divide, the term that refers to the gap between demographics and regions that have inter net. Well before the late 20th century digital divide referred chiefly to the division between those with and without telephone access after the late 1990s the term to the used mainly to describe the split between those with and without internet access particularly broad brand.

The digital divide typically exists between those who in cities and those in rural areas; between educated and the un educated; between socio economic groups globally, between the more and less industrially developed nations. Even among populations with some access to technology, the digital divide can be evident in the form of lower performance computers, lower speed wireless connections such as dial-up and limited access to subscription-based content.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Digital divide is the gap between those who have already access to information and communication technology and skills to make use of these technology and those who do not have the access or skills those same technologies.

In our society illiterate especially technologically illiterate people face many problems due to the lack of knowledge about illiterate and literate people. The new generation is technologically advanced. They can use these technologies very easily and it is a part of their life. The illiterate are not aware of the importance and usages of the technological devices, because of this reason they are alienated from the main stream of the society. This is called digital divide.

Many factors affected to digital divide. Some of them are gender –boys use technologies more than girls. Family structure- families with children have more computers and inter net access than families without children. Education- people must know how to use it. Many adult do not have the opportunity to learn how to use computers when they were in school. Literacy- this skills are important for people to read web pages.

Ethnicity – different ethnic group have different attitudes to technology. Motivation- people may not use computers because they are not interested or they may not see any good reason to.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE

The rural areas of Mutholy panchayat of kottayam district in the state of Kerala considered for this study. Majority of the people are farmers and some have good professional jobs. Majority of the people are literate since there are schools and colleges in the village.

Digital divide is one of the major problems of our society. Now a days technology has a vital role in development. Development of the technologies very fast and almost all fields are connected with technology. It decreases the workload of the people. Radio, tele vision, computer, mobile, tablet are the technological devices that are commonly used our society.

In this panchayat most of the people are educated but technical knowledge and competency is very poor among aged people and also financially backward people. This is a major challenge faced by the respondents in the locality.

Therefore this study is needed for evaluating the level of awareness among general public regarding modern technological devices and its impact on increasing academic as well as professional competence.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify the awareness about and the use of modern technological devices.
- To analyse the purpose of the use of technological devices.
- To identify the means by which the people learn to use the modern technological devices.
- To analyse the importance of modern technological devices in the academic social and professional life.

METHODOLOGY

SAMLE

The universe of the survey on use of digital technology and issues of digital divide is Mutholy grama panchayat of Kottayam district. I chose my locality as the study sample. Mutholy is a panchayat that comes under Meenachil village in kottayam district we conducted the survey on thirty families altogether constitute 113 people including infants children, adults, middle-aged and old aged. Of these 113 people, 52 are male and 61 are female. Most of them have an average monthly income.

THE TOOL USED.

The tool used for survey is questionnaire which consisting of four sections. General information, Personal information, Related questions, and Declaration.

PROCEURE

It took four days to complete the survey that is from 26th to 30th august 2015. The investigator visited each family in the study area in person and collected the required information.

ANALYSIS AND INTREPRETATION

OBJECTIVE 1:

To identify the awareness and the use of modern technological devices

Table 1: awareness about modern technological devices

Sl. No	Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	29	96.66
2	No	1	3.33
Total		30	100

The above table shows that most of the respondents are aware about the modern technological devices.

Table 2: use of modern technological devices

Devices	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	7	6.19
Television	28	24.77
Computer	11	9.73
Mobile phone	29	25.66
Tablet	3	2.65
All the above	1	0.88
total	113	100

OBJECTIVE 2:

To analyze the time sped for the use of modern technological devices.

Table 3: the time spent for the use of FM Radio

Sl. No	Hours of use	No. of households	Percentage
1	Less than 1 hour	4	57.14
2	1-3 hours	2	28.57
3	More than 3 hours	1	14.28
Total		7	100

From the above table, an inference can be drawn that only 7 households 57.14% people spend only less than 1 hour for its use. 14.28% uses it for more than 3 hours.

Table 4: The time spend for the use of television.

Sl. No	Hours of use	No. of households	Percentage
1	Less than 1 hour	8	26.66
2	1-3 hours	12	42.85
3	More than 3 hours	8	28.57
Total		28	98.

The above table reveals the fact that 98% of the sample households possess television and out of it 42.85% uses it for 1-3 hours.

Table 5: the time spent for the use of computer.

Sl. No	Hours of use	No. of households	Percentage
1	Less than 1 hour	2	18.18
2	1-3 hours	7	63.63
3	More than 3 hours	2	18.18
Total		11	100

It's understood from the above table that 20 households possess computers and 60% among them uses it for 1-3 hours a day. Only 15% among them uses it for less than 1 hour.

Table 6: the time spent for the use of tablet.

Sl. No	Hours of use	No. of households	Percentage
1	Less than 1 hour	0	0
2	1-3 hours	3	100
3	More than 3 hours	0	0
Total		3	100

Tablet computers or phones belong to the latest category of modern technological devices. It is important to note that only 3 sample households possess these devices. All of them use the tablets for 1-3 hours.

OBJECTIVE 3:

To analyse the purpose of the uses of the modern technological devices

Table 7: the purpose for the use of FM Radio

Serial No.	Purpose of use	No. of children	No. of adults
1	News	0	2
2	Music& Entertainment	2	2
3	Others	-	-1

FM Radio was a unique device of the last decades of the 20th century. It was an important source of both information as well as entertainment for all categories of people. It was even a luxury for many people. However, the above data reveals the fact that it has lost its importance in the present era. Only a few people are using it. The number of children using it has been significantly reduced.

Table 12: the purpose of the use of televisions

Serial No.	Purpose of use	No. of children	No. of adults
1	News	10	47
2	Entertainment	20	30
3	Education	2	-0
4	Others	-0	0

Television is still a significant electronic device in most of the families. All categories of people, especially the women folk seem to be much fond of it. Although adults seem to outnumber children in its use, it is felt because of their small number in the samples. Adults mainly use the television for news and entertainment. However, children use them for education purposes too.

Table 8: The purpose of the use of compute

Serial No.	Purpose of use	No. of children	No. of adults
1	Internet	20	10
2	Entertainment	3	1
3	Education	30	4
4	Others	0	0

Computers are becoming a common device in each and every family. However, only less number of adult respondents in the study area is using them. The children folk in the study area use computers intensively for various purposes. This shows the gap between the Digital Natives and the Digital Immigrants.

Table 9: the purpose of the use of mobile phone

Serial No.	Purpose of use	No. of children	No. of adults
1	Internet	57	16

2	Entertainment	17	5
3	Education	7	-
4	Others	2	2

Mobile phones have become the part and parcel of each and every person in the society. It is quite interesting to refer that none of the families in the study area lack mobile phones. It is also important to note that more than 27 families possess at least one smart phone. Both the adults as well as children use mobile phones intensively for calling, internet surfing and entertainment purpose.

Table 10: the purpose of the use of tablet

Serial No.	Purpose of use	No. of children	No. of adults
1	Internet		2
2	Entertainment		
3	Education	1	
4	Others		

Tablet phones or computers belong to the latest category of digital technology. It is important to note that there are only 3 respondents in the study area who own these devices.

OBJECTRIVE 4:

To identify the means by which the people learn to use the modern technological devices.

Table11: the means by which people learn to use modern technology

Serial No.	Means of learning	No. of households
1	User guides	30
2	Training centers	5
3	Peer groups	36
4	Children	18

The means of learning the devices which belong to the modern technology are significant in finding out the digital divide in the study area

OBJECTIVE 5:

To analyze the importance of modern technological device in the academic social and professional life.

Table 12: the importance of modern technological devices

Serial no.	Response	No. of families	Percentage
1	Yes	28	93.33%
2	No	2	6.66%
3	Total	30	100%

The above table shows the awareness among the respondents about the importance of the modern technological devices in their day to day life. Almost all of them believe that it is significant to be acquainted with the modern technological devices in order to enhance their academic, social and professional life.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Almost all the people in the study area are well aware of the devices which belong to the modern technology. This shows the effect of the high educational attainment of the people in the concerned area.
- The time spent for the use of various technological devices by different categories of people differs from device to device. Adults must be encouraged to use the devices for more time in order to get efficiently benefitted.
- The children, especially the students must be boosted to use the modern technological devices in such a way that it can effectively support their academic needs.
- People must be encouraged to learn the methods to use the devices from efficient training centers, especially with regard to computers.
- The concerned authorities must set up adequate infrastructure facilities for providing training, especially for the adult category.
- Adequate financial supports must be made from the part of the government so that more number of people can be accessed to these devices.
- The curricula at various levels of education must be revised in such a way that students should be made familiar with the modern devices as it can enhance their international competence.
- The number which is shown in this survey may not be the same when a village is considered. So, the concerned authorities must ensure that all the villages have equal access for these devices when compared with urban areas and large cities. Only through such a measure we can reduce the digital gap.
- More training should be given to the youth as it can benefit both the families as well as the nation itself.
- The said Digital Divide is much less in the concerned study area as a result of the high educational attainment of the people residing there. But, it may not be the same in the case of a place with low literacy rates. So, the best way to remove Digital Divide is to educate and conscientize the people.

CONCLUSION

The digital divide refers to the separation between those who have access to digital information and communication technology and those who do not have. Low literacy, lack of training, lack of internet access is the major challenges faced by the common people. The commonly used devices are smart phones, television, computers and tablets. The majority of the sample population is using one or other device of information technology in their daily life. So the digital divide is very visible in the society. It is desirable to take necessary steps to reduce the separation between the ignorant of the information technology and those who are familiar to it.

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