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Digital Literacy among Student Community in Hisar District: A Study

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ABSTRACT

Digital literacy is accepted as an essential tool for sustaining in today's highly competitive marketplace. Government of India has also recognized the importance of digitally literate citizens and took initiatives in this direction. Digital literacy must be inseparable from other type of literacy. Higher education institutions have been responsible for generating an army of skilled and informed citizens. Hence, digital literacy assessment must be a regular feature in higher education institutions. In the ever changing society, Information Technology has become a critical tool for survival. The present study was undertaken to access digital literacy of the students of F.C.College for Women, Hisar. For the purpose of data collection, questionnaires were distributed among 280 students from Arts, Commerce and Science faculty. The findings reveal that a good percentage of students from commerce stream possess their own desktop, laptop and smartphones. 45.52 % students are familiar with E-mail whereas in the case of Twitter, Blog and Skype the figure is very low. The digital competence of students was tested by framing a few questions and the students of Arts faculty are not very confident in many operations. To improve the current picture, digital literacy skills must be imparted in every graduate because only then they can become a part of the knowledge society.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Haryana, Women
Keywords: Internet Connectivity, Collaboration, Research Productivity of Librarians, Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education has been at centre place from the ancient times. But in the present era to be literate is not enough but every individual must be digitally literate. This has increased the responsibilities of higher education institutions. After completing his/her higher education when a student steps forward into the global marketplace for further job or business, he must be well informed and information rich. Today every organization demands a knowledge worker who can sustain in the knowledge society and can contribute in progress of the organization.

In India, across over 6,50,000 villages and 2,50,000 panchayats represented by 3 million panchayat members. Approx 40% population is living below poverty line, illiteracy rate is more than 25-30 % and digital literacy is almost no-existent among more than 90% of India's population. 1

The need for digital literacy in a country as populous and diverse as India is critical. With a constant tug-of-war between resources and requirements technology is the only way to scale up solutions and bridge the gaps between them. Whether they are used for education healthcare, citizen services, financial services or any other basic need, technology and connectivity can make a huge difference to the socio-economic levels of a community and ultimately, the country, since true progress comes from inclusive growth. 2

2. DIGITAL LITERACY

ICT digital literacy is ability to use digital technology and communications tools, and/or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create and communicate information in order to function in a knowledge society. 3

Digital literacy involves finding, using and disseminating information in a digital world. Digital Literacy underpins teaching and research, regardless of discipline, and is an essential graduate skill for effective participation in employment and all aspects of life. With digital media sources utilised everyday as part of life and work, we know that the volume, choice, range and complexity of information can be overwhelming. This then can lead to poor selection of sources and time wasted on re-tracing materials. Navigation skills and information management can ensure that up to date, relevant sources are located in an accessible format and sources are well organised and documented to enable efficient retrieval – as and when needed. The sheer influence and ubiquity of digital media mean that synthesis and critical assessment of a diverse array of resources are also key skills. Further, ethical and legal use of information and maintaining the security and privacy of the user's – and others' – information are paramount. Digital literacy is not a stationary concept: as ICT changes, what it means to be digitally literate also needs to evolve to ensure that students develop and apply skills in appropriate new technologies for information discovery, transfer, analysis, review and communication. 4

The most essential aspect of digital literacy is the ability to make informed judgments about what is found online, for unlike conventional media, much digital information is unfiltered by editors and open to the contribution of all. Digitally literate people are able to:

- Determine the extent of digital information needed;
- Access the needed digital information effectively and efficiently;
- Evaluate digital information sources and services critically;
- Incorporate selected digital information into one's knowledge base;
- Use of digital information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose; and
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of digital information access and use of this information ethically and legally.⁵

Maharana and Mishra (2007)⁶ studied digital information literacy of faculty members of Sambalpur university and found majority of faculty members have computer knowledge and they use latest digital tools. Another survey was conducted by N, Parvathamma and P., Danappa (2013)⁷ to check digital literacy among students of management institutes in Devanagree district and they found that students are competent enough in using latest ICT tools and other web based services. S.Z., Shabana Tabusum, Saleem, A. and Batcha, M.Sadik (2014)⁸ analysed digital literacy awareness among Arts and Science College Students in Tiruvallur District and the result revealed that students are digitally literate.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To know the frequency of use of computer by the students of different stream.
- To identify ICT tools possessed by students.
- To understand about the familiarity of students with the web based applications.
- To know the frequency of use of various web services.
- To find out the digital competence of students.

4. METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in the Hisar district of Haryana. At the early stage of my research, I have decided to cover all 4 colleges situated in Hisar city but gradually I realized that I should focus first on my own college students. I have analysed the students of Fateh Chand College for Women, Hisar. The undergraduate students of all the streams i.e. Arts, Science and Commerce have been covered in the study. The competence level varies in different streams. Digital literacy assessment covers vast

area, so survey questions were designed by keeping in mind the basic needs of students. Because most of the students belong to rural background so general questions were asked about the grass root level knowledge. Questionnaires were distributed randomly to 10% strength of each stream and 280 in total. 246 filled questionnaires were received back and selected for statistical analysis.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDING

The responses retrieved from the students of each stream are depicted in the following tables.

Table 1

Questionnaires Distributed & Responded from Students

Stream	Total Students	Questionnaire Distributed	No. of Students Responded
Science	628	63	56 (89%)
Commerce	912	92	90 (98%)
Arts	1246	125	100 (80%)
Total	2786	280	246(88%)

Questionnaires were distributed to 280 students of all streams and the response rate is 88% in total and individually commerce students responded very well.

Table 2

Frequency of Use of Computer

Stream	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never
Science	1 (1.8 %)	22 (39.3 %)	27 (48.2%)	5 (8.9%)
Commerce	20 (22.2%)	47 (52.2%)	20 (22.2%)	3 (3.3%)
Arts	12 (12%)	46 (46%)	15 (15 %)	27 (27%)

Table 2 exhibits the frequency of computer usage by the students of all streams. 22.2 % students of commerce stream use computer daily. A good percentage of students related to each stream preferred to use computer weekly. 27 % students of Arts faculty have never used computer which is an alarming situation and needs quick attention.

Table 3

Place of Access of Computer

Stream	Home	College	Cyber Café	Other
Science	25 (45%)	23 (41%)	2 (4%)	6 (11%)
Commerce	48 (53%)	39 (43%)	-	3 (3%)
Arts	45 (45%)	36 (36%)	1 (1%)	10 (10%)

Students were asked to fill the place where they usually access computing devices. Table 3 clearly shows that students access computer at home as well as at their institution because nearly half of the strength has agreed upon this fact. So institutions need to maintain their resources and update their web tools. Negligible percentages of students go to cyber cafes to access computers.

Table 4

ICT Tools Possessed by Students (Stream wise)

ICT Tools	Science	Commerce	Arts
Desktop	26 (46%)	58 (64%)	33 (33%)
Laptop	26 (46%)	47 (52%)	23 (23%)
Tablet	3 (5%)	9 (10%)	6 (6%)
Smartphone	30 (54%)	50 (56%)	51 (51%)
I-Pod	5 (9%)	7 (13%)	3 (3%)
Digital Camera	25 (45%)	42 (47%)	28 (28%)

Analysis in Table 4 shows that respondents from Commerce stream possess maximum number of tools. Students from every stream are having smart phone whereas tablet and I-Pod are not their choice. Maximum 64 % students have their own desktop and just 33 % students from arts are having it. More efforts are required at government level to bridge this digital divide.

A few questions were designed to check whether the students are familiar with the latest web applications. Table 5 shows the results which are not positive.

Only 34 % students of Arts, 46% students of science and 58 % students of commerce are familiar with E-mail. It is the need of the time that every graduate must be capable to communicate over internet. A less number of students are familiar with Twitter, Blogs and Skype like services.

Table 5**Students Familiarity with Web Based Applications**

Applications	Science Stream	Commerce Stream	Arts Stream
E-Mail	26 (46.43%)	52 (57.78%)	34 (34%)
Facebook	32 (57.14%)	63 (70%)	37 (37%)
Youtube	26 (46.43%)	45 (50%)	31 (31%)
Twitter	5 (8.93%)	17 (18.89%)	10 (10%)
Web Blogs	4 (7.14%)	11 (12.22%)	18 (18%)
Skype	7 (12.50%)	14 (15.56%)	12 (12%)

Table 6**FREQUENCY OF USE OF DIGITAL APPLICATIONS**

Applications	Daily			3 to 5 Times a Week			1-2 Times a Month			Rarely		
	BSC	BCOM	BA	BSC	BCOM	BA	BSC	BCOM	BA	BSC	BCOM	BA
E-mail	1	10	7	1	14	3	4	15	10	15	9	9
Facebook	2	21	16	12	19	5	9	8	8	7	11	4
Youtube	3	8	4	3	9	7	8	16	4	8	11	10
Twitter	0	1	1	0	3	2	1	5	1	4	6	5
Web Blog	1	1	5	2	3	1	0	3	3	0	1	6
Skype	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	8	1	2	4	5

Over the last few years, social networking sites and other web services have become a part of our day to day life. Table 6 exhibits the frequency in which the students use various newer digital applications. It was clear from the previous table that students were not even familiar with various web services. That is the reason that in the present table the usage figures are not good enough. The figures from Commerce stream are slight better.

Table 7

Student’s Confidence Level Regarding Their Digital Competene

Applications	Very Confident			Fairly Confident			Not Very Confident			Not Confident		
	BSC	BCOM	BA	BSC	BCOM	BA	BSC	BCOM	BA	BSC	BCOM	BA
Identifica-tion of computer parts	25 (45%)	48 (53%)	39 (39%)	20 (36%)	34 (38%)	27 (27%)	8 (14%)	2 (2%)	10 (10%)	3 (5%)	6 (7%)	24 (24%)
Use of Search Engine	8 (14%)	36 (40%)	29 (29%)	25 (45%)	28 (31%)	20 (20%)	11 (20%)	8 (9%)	20 (20%)	12 (21%)	18 (20%)	31 (31%)
Use of Net Banking	11 (20%)	29 (32%)	15 (15 %)	8 (14%)	23 (26%)	14 (14%)	15 (27%)	17 (19%)	19 (19%)	22 (39%)	21 (23%)	52 (52%)
Searching Information on Internet	38 (68%)	62 (69%)	36 (36%)	16 (29%)	17 (19%)	20 (20%)	1 (2%)	5 (6%)	13 (13%)	1 (2%)	6 (7%)	31 (31%)
To fill Online Forms	24 (43%)	49 (54%)	17 (17%)	19 (4%)	15 (17%)	24 (24%)	6 (11%)	9 (10%)	18 (18%)	7 (12%)	7 (8%)	41 (41%)
Online Shopping	9 (16%)	26 (29%)	16 (16%)	17 (30%)	26 (29%)	17 (17%)	15 (27%)	20 (22%)	21 (21%)	15 (27%)	18 (20%)	46 (46%)
Use of Facebook / Whats App	34 (61%)	64 (71%)	36 (36%)	9 (16%)	19 (21%)	14 (14%)	3 (5%)	3 (3%)	15 (15%)	10 (18%)	4 (4%)	35 (35%)
To read online newspaper/ journals	38 (68%)	56 (62%)	42 (42%)	11 (20%)	24 (27%)	25 (25%)	-	4 (4%)	9 (9%)	7 (12%)	6 (7%)	24 (24%)
To operate Smart Phone	22 (40%)	56 (62%)	43 (43%)	22 (39%)	18 (20%)	13 (13%)	4 (7%)	5 (6%)	18 (18%)	8 (14%)	11 (12%)	26 (26%)
To Select Best ISP for You	11 (20%)	38 (42%)	27 (27%)	27 (48%)	28 (32%)	25 (25%)	12 (21%)	12 (13%)	8 (8%)	6 (11%)	12 (13%)	40 (40%)

All these questions require digital competence in students. Table 7 makes clear that commerce students are more confident in performing above mentioned tasks. 24 % arts students cannot even identify components of computer. Only 14 % students are very confident in the use of search engine and 20 % students can surely use net banking which is required in daily transaction. Figures show that Facebook is known to maximum students. Otherwise students need first hand training to overcome all problems.

6. FINDINGS

The analysis of the data revealed that digital divide still persists in the rural India. A good percentage of students from all the steams possess desktop, laptop and smart phone whereas tablet and I-Pod are not very commonly used . Maximum students who

are capable enough in handling several tasks are from commerce stream. Majority of students are below average in digital competence analysis. Major social networking sites are not known to a good number of students. Generally students use Facebook and Whats App like applications. Students from Arts side are also not very confident in the use of online shopping and net banking.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should be given proper training of computer handling along with their regular curriculum.
- Digital literacy of students must be regularly assessed so that necessary steps could be taken, if necessary.
- The institution must develop its infrastructure to promote the usage of digital communication of information.
- Practical training for online purchasing/selling, internet banking and filling up of examination forms so the students can be able to take part in the race of career as well as life.

8. CONCLUSION

Government of India and NASSCOM together set a goal that there should be one eLiterate person in every Indian household by the year 2020. We the people from education field can play a lead role in this direction. We all must bear social responsibility and follow at least the concept of Each One Teach One. The students from every stream are literate but digital literacy should also be incorporated in the school/college basic curriculum. Live demos of various applications should be given time to time. Digital devices and applications are developed rapidly so students need to be familiar with all latest tools and technologies. Newer internet service providers come in the service market. ICT plays key role in today's marketplace. Newer web tools should be a part of our day to day life as well as working. The coming generation will have to be techno savvy to cope up with the changing environment and it is the prime duty of higher education institutions that they should prepare an army of such citizens who will positively contribute in the knowledge economy.

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