

Great Digital Divide-Digital Education Issues and Challenges of Tribes: A case study in Visakhapatnam Tribal Area

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Abstract:

The Digital deprivation remains high in India. The digital shift of classrooms is proving to be a disadvantage to students of government schools in rural and tribal areas of the state, as they do not have access to TVs or smartphones. The shift from in-classroom teaching to digital learning through the internet or TV became imminent in view of the Covid-19 outbreak (Sree Chandana M, Indian express, Digital divide proves to be challenge for online education in rural areas, 14th September 2020). prolonged school closure will increase learning losses. Online classes were not a possibility, given the digital divide in this part of the tribal regions (Rakhi Ghosh, Newslick, 09 Dec 2020). This Digital divide categorized into three Economic divide, Geographical and Social divide. Economic divide: Digital divide arises due to unequal distribution of wealth and income among the communities. The ill affordability of digital gadgets to Economically weak sections especially Schedule Tribes and Schedule Castes. Geographical divide: unequal access of ICT to geographically isolated regions where Tribal communities live. Geographical structure and physical environment are the main reason for the exclusion of tribal communities from other societies. Social divide: Tribes are socially deprived and such social deprivation pushing them farther into Digital gap. the interior pockets of the tribal villages, where children are facing a serious digital divide (Rakhi Ghosh, Newslick 09 Dec 2020). Mobile network and lack of capable phones have struck a guillotine on the continuing education. This study focuses on the digital education challenges and how various socio-economic factors attributing the digital divide widening of the tribal children.

Key Word: Tribal education; Tribes; Digital education; Tribal studies, Education

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I. Introduction

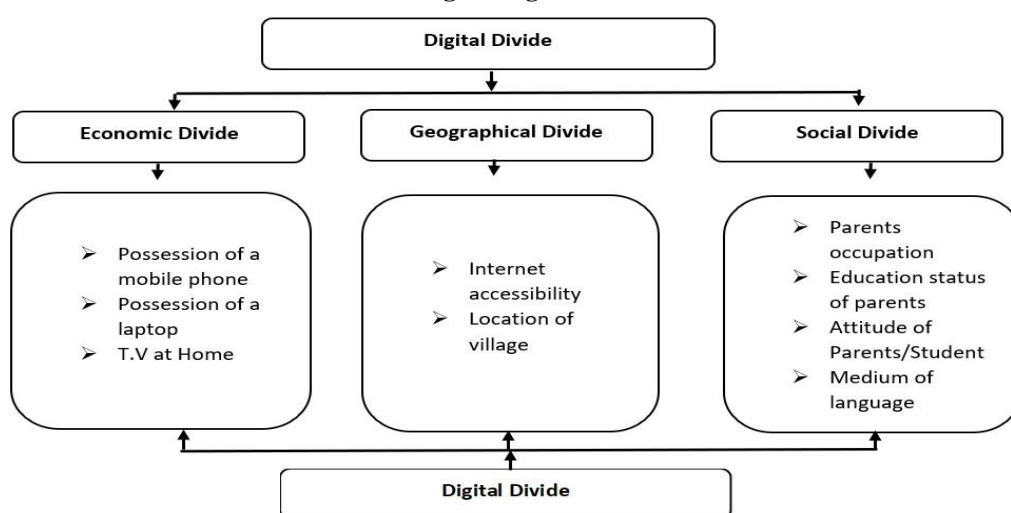
Emerging technologies accelerate the Economic growth and development and this technological advancement will improve people's lives in many ways. While the technology available in some areas and not in other (Sajda Qureshi, Teresa Trumbly-Lamsam, 2008). And it effects development of the communities like economically weaker and social backward. The way of life of human beings in which digital technologies are inseparable. But inaccessibility of Information and Communication Technologies to certain segment of population exacerbates inequalities. Due to Covid-19 the nationwide lockdown has affected all segments of society, and it has greatly affected marginalized people from the lower socio-economic stratum (SES) (Hema S.Gopalana, Anoop Misra, 2020). The economic impact of this pandemic is like to be more severe for tribes in the following ways pushing more people below poverty, aggravating socio-economic inequalities. Ever since the coronavirus-induced nationwide lockdown, like other children in remote villages in tribal areas and ese children cannot afford smartphones to attend online classes (Rakhi Ghosh, newslick 09 Dec 2020). In view of understanding the problems faced by the Tribal students and the study is mainly focused on identifying the problems and hindrances of the tribal student to pursuing online education. and to suggest suitable measure for bring out from the digital deprivation and improvement of the prevailing situations regarding digital education.

Internet Age: Dialectics of Digital India: Internet and digital innovation promise to provide new scopes and horizons of opportunities for pursuit of enriching engagements and information deliberation at the stroke fingertip to the digitally connected people in the globe. The digital revolution has been potentially affecting personal lifestyles and public affairs of social, economic and political information and choices. Close to 4.66 million people are digitally connected in the world in real time estimated data as on today. Their proportion constitutes more than 60 percent of the global population. Share of Indian population constitutes close to 54%, it is significant proportion. Internet penetration and digital innovation is ever unprecedented revolution spread across the globe in limited period of time than any other earlier political, social and economic movements in the world. Digital innovation has not only created profit making venture and social interaction medium to the

people, which possibly enhances social capital but also it is considered as information capital and gigantic source to enhance democratic means of pursuit of participation and opportunities.

The study has observed that various barriers like Economic, Social and Geographical factors makes them unable to establish Digital Education link with their existing knowledge. On the one hand, sections of society already connected - such as higher income, elite communities are adopting newer technologies faster and are connecting even more. On the other, groups with traditionally lower rates for Internet and computer usage continue to lag far behind (Digital divide, <https://cs.stanford.edu>). Having infrastructural constraints and social issues, it becomes harder to make education accessible to all segments of the society especially tribal communities (Parmeshwar Singh Maravi, 2017). This is compounded by challenges such as not having the right device or being unable to navigate the software. Use of technology for education have emerged, school education as a whole is not ready to move online not in India nor globally speaking. Pushing everyone online while knowing that doing so excludes the most marginalized children puts the education of a generation at risk. (Ankit Vyas, World Economic forum, 24 November 2020). Low level of literacy and educational backwardness among the tribal communities can be attributed to various factors centering around chronic poverty (Senapati Tushar Kant, 2015)

The factor affecting for digital education to Tribal students



Economic divide: The economic conditions of tribal people is so meager and their economic strength completely depends on agriculture and forest products. The economic condition of tribal people is so poor that they do not desire to spare their children or their labour power and allow them to attend schools (Dr. Kabita Kumari Sahu, 2014). Lack of resources, employment opportunities and high poverty are clutter the life of tribes. Not surprisingly, and in direct correlation to education, the levels of household income also play a significant role in the widening gap and Due to lower income levels, poor neighborhoods lack the infrastructure available in affluent areas (<https://cs.stanford.edu/>). Due to this lower economic status tribes unable to afford smart phone, laptop, TV and other digital gadgets which is need for digital education. And this economic divide makes pushes them into the digital divide. Digital divide arises due to unequal distribution of wealth and income among the communities. The ill affordability of digital gadgets to Economically weak sections especially Schedule Tribes. Children belonging to the poor tribal families are the worst victims as they cannot afford costly handsets with WhatsApp and video-calling facilities (Diana Sahu, Indian express, 09th August 2020)

Geographical divide: life style of tribes connected with forest hills. The tribal regions are isolated with other modern societies. And tribal villages located in hill areas and deep forest areas where there are no basic amenities. Such regions are isolated from the plain areas. The beauty of tribal areas are hills, mountains, forests etc. on the other these factors make dent on geographical divide were poor communication and transport facilities. unequal access of ICT to geographically isolated regions where Tribal communities live. Geographical structure and physical environment are the main reason for the exclusion of tribal communities from other societies. Poor tele-density and internet infrastructure are major challenges but there is more (Diana Sahu, Indian express, Great digital divide: Here's how online education poses massive challenges in tribal areas, 09th August 2020). The physical barriers create a hindrance for the children of a tribal. Most of the tribes live in well-defined but isolated hilly areas which are often inaccessible (Anbuselvi.G, P.John Leeson, 2017).

Social divide: Tribes have their own culture, customs, religious belief etc which make them different from other tribal community (G.Anbuselvi, P.John Leeson, 2017). The idea behind the social divide in digital education is that the growing gap between the underprivileged members of society, especially the tribal communities who

are socially handicapped and economically lowers portion of population (Digital divide, <https://cs.stanford.edu>). These underprivileged group of communities, handicapped section of population who do not have access to internet and other digital gadgets which is essential for digital education. There is still a wide spread feeling among the tribal is that education make their offspring deviant, insolent them from the rest of their society. The other problem faced by them was lack of academic help from the teachers, non-availability of teachers are the major reason (Anbuselvi.G, P.John Leeson, 2017).

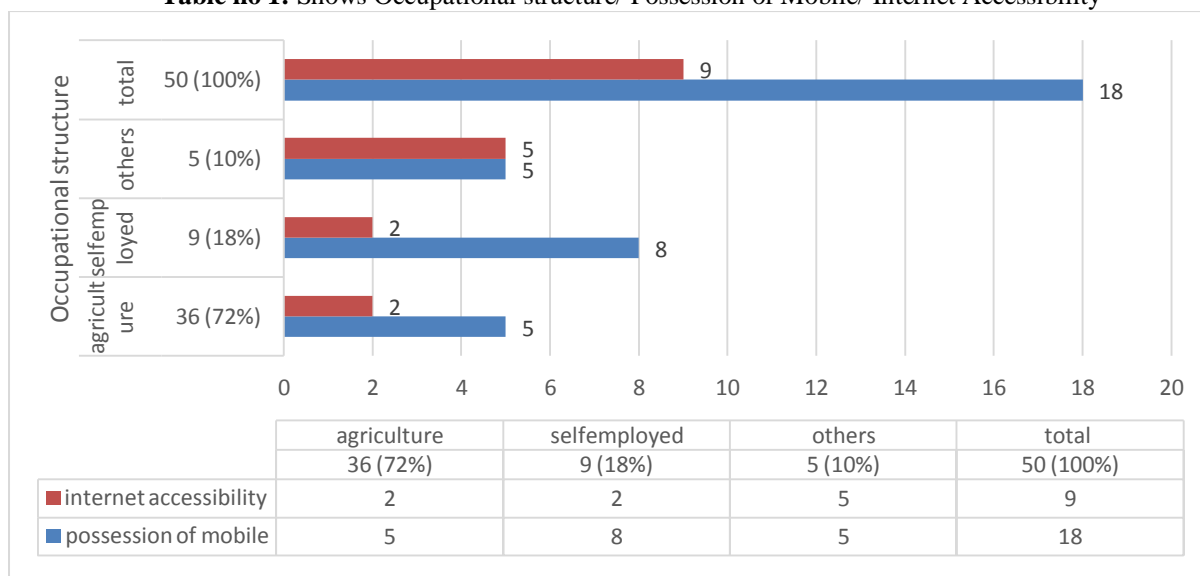
II. Material And Methods

In this study semi structured interviews to find out major problems of tribal student pursuing the digital education. Both primary and secondary data were used in this study and 50 samples were selected as primary data from a tribal hamlet Darela gram panchayat. The qualitative research design has been adopted to analyze research problem. The participant observation method also used for naturalistic enquiry in study area. Secondary data drawn from various sources like newspapers different book and research articles.

Profile of the study area: Visakhapatnam is one of the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh. And the Visakhapatnam district is one of the highest tribal populous districts of Andhra Pradesh with 14.42% tribal population. In this district covered scheduled area Paderu tribal agency with 11 tribal mandalas. Darela is tribal hamlet which is 15 km away from Munchingiputtu Mandal headquarter. There are only two mobile network towers BSNL and JIO with 5 km distance but network is erratic and impacts online education. Darela is a medium size village located in Munchingiputtu Mandal of Visakhapatnam district and with total 84 families residing in this village. This village has population of 260 of which 126 are males while 134 are females as per Population Census 2011. literacy rate of Darela village was 53.72 % Male literacy stands at 69.91 % while female literacy rate was 39.53% (Census of India, 2011).

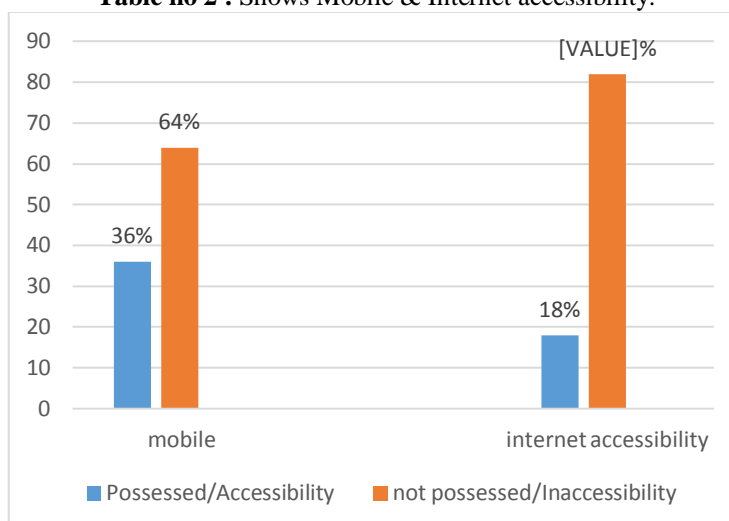
III. Result and Discussion

Table no 1: Shows Occupational structure/ Possession of Mobile/ Internet Accessibility



The above table shows that parents of the student's occupational structure, possession of mobile phone and internet accessibility. Out of fifty sample 72 percent of respondents are agricultural dependents and 9 percent of respondents are self-employed and 5 percent from other occupations. Only 5 respondents from agricultural dependents possessed mobile phone. 8 respondents from self-employed were possessed mobile phone. And 5 respondents from the other occupants were possessed mobile phone. Among these sample only 9 respondents have internet accessibility. And rest of the 40 respondents are in internet inaccessibility. 2 respondents are from agriculture families who are in accessed internet facility and 2 respondents from self-employed have internet accessibility. 5 respondents from other occupants are accessed internet facility.

Table no 2 : Shows Mobile & Internet accessibility.



The above table shows that mobile possession and internet accessibility. These findings are unsurprising in light of the fact that 18% of households have access to the internet in sample area. Out of 30 respondents 18 respondents possessed mobile phone, i.e., 36 percent of respondents has possessed mobile phone and rest of the 64% respondents have not possessed mobile phone. Internet accessibility also very low. Only 18 percent of respondents has accessibility of internet facility and rest of 82 percent of respondents do not have internet accessibility.

IV. Recommendations and Conclusion

This research has investigated how various barriers hindrance the digital education of tribal students such as economical, geographical and social barriers. The frames discovered as a result of this analysis can expand our understanding of digital divide and digital challenges of tribal students in the way of pursuing digital education. The study analyses the digital divides separating tribal communities due to the various factors attributing to the Digital Divide. The study claims that various forms of constraints in digital education for the tribal children are directly or indirectly connected with socio-economic environment. All basic amenities are required for the digital education such as need to improve digital literacy among the tribal groups through the formal education system. And it is necessary to infrastructure facilities like internet connections, providing laptops and other digital gadgets. Necessary to take a special care about tribal students to improve their digital knowledge for attaining education. needed to enhance the facilities that must possess a minimum level of digital proficiency in order to gain knowledge. The development of tribes is connecting to the outside modern society's infrastructure to create the opportunities of information for their own communities (Sajda Qureshi, Teresa Trumbly-Lamsam, 2008).

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