

Digital Dispossession and Gendered Discrimination in Use of Smartphone by Women in Marginal Settings in India

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Abstract

Women are becoming avid user of mobile phones and are increasingly turning to technology to up-skill themselves which offers scope to reduce gender inequalities even in marginal settings. Technology has ushered in a development offering which holds tangible promise to reduce social barriers by providing training that boosts proficiency. Digital media offers scope and opportunities of reshaping systemic gendered imbalances of social structure. Women, in marginalized settings, hemmed in by deeply rooted patriarchal structures may find emancipation by use of the digital technologies in their everyday routine which may accelerate restructuring of their social and cultural realities. The role of digital media in struggle for women's inclusion in the civil society and gender equality has been considered as emancipatory. This is particularly so because technology provides an avenue for women's engagement where their physical mobility is restricted and voices deliberately muted. However, patterns of social attitudes may underpin internet cultures if viewed through a gendered prism. There is a persistent gender gap in mobile phone ownership and usage in the low income setting areas and women tend to experience certain barriers more acutely than men. This deprivation in terms of being unconnected widens the gap of marginalization. The present study is an attempt to explore entry of digital technologies in a given culture of slum area in urban settings and subsequent negotiations for the concomitant changes in the discriminatory roles and responses. Two research objectives that have been explored are- factors that engender marginalisation of women and their gendered aspects constraining their digital literacy and competency; the second objective is to describe disruptive impact of digital devices on traditional gender roles and responsibilities that determine the relationships and status in the family. A sizeable percentage of the slum dwellings have electricity, television and smartphones even though lacking toilets. The paper uses qualitative method and tools of observation, focus group discussions and interviews to study mobile and smartphone usage of women living in slums to capture their everyday mobile experience and internet adoption in the context of existing gender inequalities. The study finds that power dynamics within the household play roles that mark digital in/exclusion and (dis) empowerment. It is obvious that digital divide exists even among marginalised as do categorical differences because women are conditioned to accept and continue male dominance in subtle ways. Augmenting the efforts to provide digital literacy and competency to marginalised women may turn out to be real game changer in bringing about social change.

1. Introduction

Computers and internet technologies have transformed and shaped our lives today in more ways than one. India's image as an emerging industrial and economic superpower has been largely facilitated by the technological knowledge, skilled manpower and information technologies (IT)-enabled services. A contrasting picture of dispossession and provision in access to the ICTs does necessitate an inquiry into how their availability and usage can bring about societal changes at the normative and structural levels. The term digital divide over the years has come to mean as lack of a) infrastructure; b) access; c) information, and d) inability to leverage information. Considerable differences are found in the way various researchers have defined what constitutes as digital exclusion. For some, the term refers to the gap between people who have access and those who do not have physical access to ICTs and the internet resulting in the uneven distribution of benefits of ICTs (Mehra et al, 2004; Loader & Keeble, 2004; Azari & Pick

2005, 2009). Additionally, feminists' viewpoint was positioned on digital divide across gender (S. Jain, 2020, Gurumurthy et al 2017, M. Kirk, 2008). In last two decades, engagement and influence of digital on the social, being influenced in return and role played in further social stratification was sensitively viewed by researchers (Ragnedda, 2017, Deursen and Dijk, 2019). With the spread of pandemic in the year 2020 and subsequent periods of lockdown, life went online for several including school and college going students. The changed scenario compelled parents even from disadvantaged section to buy smartphones for the online education of their children. This meant eventually women of the households also got exposed to a little or more online iterations inside their respective homes.

2. Rationale

Technological gadgets may appear as artefacts, yet their acquisition go through the social and cultural processes and occupy an indispensable position in the personal and social lives.

Technology may influence the societal structure and cultural framework, modifying them for future generations, or may be honed by the normative practices to lend credence to the existing social structure. The present study uses the term digital divide to denote gaps in access and usage as a gendered phenomenon, since access and usage of ICTs in India has been found to be class based, gendered and generational (GSMA report 2015; India Exclusion Report 2016; Sarkar 2016). Cultural complex of norms, values, customs, and the systemic paraphernalia may also decide the processes of ICT consumption in a gendered manner. If access to the technological gadget is denied, controlled; usage is monitored, its ensuing benefits may be uncertain exclusionary. Social development indicators encompass employment opportunities, social protection, health, and education; however social inclusion and cohesion are important aspects of well-being and an integral part of the economic development. Hence, digital reach of the technology to all citizens and its access and usage by them becomes a foremost foundation in order to develop skills, resources and competence. Additionally, the societal resilience to accept these technological innovations needs to be investigated given a perpetual contention and struggle between status quo and social change. For, the structural flexibility to absorb technological changes may not deliver positive results to already vulnerable sections though benefitting the advantaged.

3. Review of literature and Theoretical Framework

Digital inclusion should be seen as an engine of growth that ensures access to ICTs and relevant skills for individuals and disadvantaged groups to participate in and benefit from an increasingly electronically mediated knowledge economy. As information technologies mainstreamed in the social and everyday practices, they became vitally important in the enunciation of economic, social and cultural dynamics. With dependency on the technology, notions of digital exclusion implied social exclusion (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014; Sparks, 2013) and the advent of information society amplified ideas of liberation (Castells, 2011), simultaneously producing new forms of exclusion and marginalization (Mariën & Prodnik, 2014). Digital divide studies have focused on different aspects of digital inequality; from access to usage to empowerment, thus including differences in skills, motivation in absorbing digital uptake, and eventual benefits arising out of usage. In early stages of digital diffusion, the research focus was on the access i.e. economic inequality, later encompassing people's motivations, skills, and interests situated in their social cultural and economic backgrounds that led to their usage gaps (Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2013, Annafari, Axelsson, & Bohlin, 2013). Access (first level) and usage (second level) thus sums up the differential tangible outcomes as third level digital divide.

The digital divide approach underscores socio-demographic differences and associated social inequities as part of the structure shaping digital usage. In the mid-2000s, research on the digital divide focussed beyond physical access to issues around culture, empowerment, social mobility and differentiated uses of the internet (Hargittai, 2002; de Haan, 2004; Newhagen & Bucy, 2004; Van Dijk, 2006). In order to allow the inclusion of the marginalized in the information society, the role of digital literacy and ability to access relevant online content and services as the process of democratizing access to ICTs was recognized (Crandall and Fisher, 2009).

Digital divide, rooted in the construct of poverty, scarcity, class consciousness and development, includes social capital as an inclusive development criterion transmuting it into a complex and dynamic phenomenon (van Dijk and Hacker, 2003), though elites continue to control content, even if this control (structure) has been somewhat reshaped by digital media (Shroeder, 2015).

Weber's comparative historical analysis of the social implications of technology explicates how the relation between elites and people is shaped by the media (Ragnedda, 2017) hence perpetuating class divisions online. There is a democratic divide where political internet users are individuals with high internet skills and political interest suggestive of technological forms of exclusion (Blank and Groselj 2015; Min Seong-Jae Min, 2010). Helsper (2008) considers ICT deprivation is strongly linked to traditional twentieth century social deprivations, such as low income, unemployment, poor education, ill health and social isolation. The original digital divide of physical internet access has evolved into a divide that includes differences in skills to use the internet (Van Deursen and Van Dijk 2010). The three levels of digital divide for across the globe populations, in terms of access, usage and accrued benefits and consequences in exacerbating existing inequalities were illustrated (Van Dijk: 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012; Ragnedda and Muschert: 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018). Jakob Nielsen (2006) named these three levels of divide in 1) economic 2) usability and 3) empowerment terms, considered that second and third levels alienate huge population groups who miss out on the internet's potential. However, the digital divide did not merely stem from the social cultural morass; or disparities in disproportionate usage and benefits, it gave rise to new forms of digital inequalities termed as the third level of digital divide (Ragnedda, 2017; Ragnedda and Muschert, 2018; Van Dijk, 2018).

Digital Divide as Gendered Phenomenon- In last few decades, feminist scholars had varied opinions on the influence of technology along gendered lines. There is limited availability of gender-disaggregated statistical data on mobile and mobile internet access, thus making it difficult to draw inferences (UN Women, 2015). Sue V. Rosser (2005) finds a lack of coherent trajectory of theoretical framework demonstrated by various feminist scholars. The feminist take on digital consumption along gendered lines remained undulating marked by profound pessimism about inherent masculinity of technology of early feminist theorists to optimism in ITC during the 1990s about the liberating potential of techno-science for women (Judy Wajzman, 2007). Avoiding both technological determinism and gender essentialism, techno-feminist approaches emphasize that the gender-technology relationship is fluid and flexible, and that feminist politics and not technology per se is the key to gender equality. More recently, many scholars (Bailur, S. et al, 2018) have observed economic causes like cost and cultural practices acting as constraints in women access and usage in Asian and African countries, like male control of finances, digital (il)literacy and fear of use among women in rural Maharashtra, India (Potnis 2015), digital purdah in Pakistan (Schoemaker 2015), restricted agency of female street traders in Kampala to preserve the status quo (Masika & Bailur, 2015). The moot issue however, has been the concept of empowerment/benefits accrued from access and usage; if the particular affordances of cheaper, more accessible smartphones have the potential to disproportionately affect women. Bailur, S. et al (2018), interrogate the digest of empowerment from its limited

moorings defined by access and usage to assign a bigger role by contextualising the intersectionality perspectives of access and empowerment with different levels of technical, spatial, social, political and economic constraints or autonomy.

This study attempts to unravel how the typologies of technology mimic the structures in the similar vein as Max Weber's theory of stratification. Situated within the context of existing social structure, the argument is made to ascertain if the digital divide simply extends traditional forms of inequality, by including new forms of social exclusion, or manifests new modalities of inequality. The present paper derives from feminist literature and digital divide as a theoretical framework to explore the gendered implications in marginalised settings. Digital divide denotes inequalities in access to the technologies of the so-called information society (Castells, 1996; Van Dijk, 1999, Resnick, 1998; Rheingold, 1993; Negroponte, 1995 Hargittai, 2000, 2003). Evidence of links between social and digital engagement, have shown consistently that individuals who have access to the internet are those who have more schooling, higher incomes, and social class and status compared to those who do not come from high strata of the society (Witte and Mannon, 2010). Why fewer women access and use digital media may be a direct result of their unfavourable conditions related to employment, education and income or systemic inequalities that discriminate against women for e.g. social practices that provide them with less employment, less education and less income, which leads to low use and access of digital media (Bamezai, 2017). However, despite the evidence, there remains significant debate around the existence, nature and causality of these links. Can ICTs help disadvantaged individuals improve their position in the society? Or conversely, does exclusion from the information society hinder social mobility? Answers to these questions need to be looked into within the theoretical frameworks to determine its recurrent patterns. Though feminist literature is critical of information technology, yet at the same time aware of its potential to open up new gender dynamics (Wajcman 2007, pp-287). The idealistic expectations of emancipatory potentials of digital inclusive policies and ICTs need to be seen in the background of existing ground realities.

Entry of digital in the gendered class structures-

Women comprise a sizeable number of the migrant population in India, representing 65.4 million of the total migrants, to which marriage, household shifting make up for significant reasons for migration. An approximate 57.5 million migrated due to family reasons and an approximate 61 per cent of these migrated to urban areas. The number of Indian women who are economic migrants has grown by 129 per cent. Despite socio-economic development programmes to raise the status of women, decision-making rests primarily with the man, to which the woman has to play the supporting role (Richard Rambarran, 2014). The present study explores repercussions on women arising out of social change occurring through navigations of digital gadgets and tools in the families from low socio-economic settings in urban slum areas of India.

Study area - As part of this research, a slum cluster was selected from an upscale part of the metro city of Delhi, the capital of India, to assess how women living in marginal settings had adapted to use of smartphones/mobiles. Though women and men have adjusted to the city life, the village life with its mores and values was the constant and consistent reference template in these settings surrounded by social and

economic abundance. However, these migrant women are living in slum clusters area from last 15-30 years which assigns them a unique position in the urban ecosystem, significantly divergent from their rural counterparts. After visiting the urban slums of south Delhi, it was observed that the women residents of slum clusters were artful, schooled in street smart ways and were continuously looking for opportunities to supplement the household income. With eyes on meeting many ends, they focus on the children, their education and a good job and are constantly in search of opportunities and information on welfare and education programmes for their children. As an institution, the family's cohesion, and strong existence often times depends on the woman of the house as pivot who may have to stand up against a wife beater and yet continue to maintain the strong exterior of the family. Women's perception of smart phone entrance into mundane, ownership patterns at home and usage of content by themselves and their family members were sought that gave an insight into the participants' perspectives on privacy and the digital sphere, and an insight of their online activity and life.

The growth in internet users was seen both in rural and urban parts of India. The latest report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Nielsen showed rural India had 227 million active internet users, 10% more than urban India's about 205 million, as of November 2019. Much of the motivation for the extra push of the women in the urban slums of India lies in the pursuit of a better future for their children (Richard Rambarran, 2014 pp-21) To them, children, family, community follows in that order, nevertheless many participants of the study thought of their individual lives as primary and were willing to forge ahead. Despite having overtones of personal progress in the construct of their lives, the inherent nature of communal life was the dominant aspect of their urbanised life. Many of these women gathered, during evenings and pre-noons, in tight knit social groups (which also turned into economic collaboration group like community kitty banking and lotteries), to seek information on their common interests, related to bringing up children and any new opportunity of a job or provision of an emergency fund. However, they were still confined to their traditional social roles reflective again of greater peculiarities of the community relationship in slums with rural origins.

4. Research questions-

1. Does smartphone usage and internet access exhibit discriminatory practices across gender among the marginalized?
2. What is the role of structural and economic factors in engendering or perpetuating the discriminatory practices?

5. Research Objectives

1. To explain the conditions and factors which further engender marginalisation and their gendered aspects of the use of digital devices.
2. To describe disruptive impact of digital devices on traditional gender roles and responsibilities that determines the relationships and status in the family.

Research Design, Methodology and Sample size-

Exploratory research design was used to discover the access, usage of the internet through the smartphones of women from disadvantaged settings and their ways of digital iterations.

Qualitative methodology was used to explore the life situation of women in spatial and temporal terms. The tools used were focus group discussions, observation and semi-structured interviews with women, men, young girls, and male adolescents to expound on emerging trends in technology-usage, vis a vis social practices defining gender roles. Focus groups can be both consciousness-raising and empowering for the research subjects and for the researcher herself, and allow for a more egalitarian and less exploitative dynamic than other methods (Frances Montell, 1999). They provide opportunity to observe people's interactions, and they also let the researcher direct the interactions to the attitudes and experiences of interest (Morgan and Spanish 1984, 259). The focus group discussions prepared the framework of the study and in depth interviews provided the specifics of the phenomenon. 'Depth interviews and observations are commonly used methods for collecting data in qualitative research. Depth interviews are mostly undertaken with individual respondents whilst the method of observation is a technique of collecting data from a group of individuals. Even though depth interviews and observations are different approaches, the purpose of both is to obtain a deep understanding of the cases being studied, mainly how individuals act and think (Karen Cacciattolo, 2015: 2; Goodwin & Horowitz, 2002: 37). The depth method offers a large coverage and discloses insights on the study to the researcher, due to its qualitative nature (Karen Cacciattolo, 2015: 2, Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 129). It is also a very extensive way of gathering information consisting of a framework and a structure. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 119; Warren et al 2003: 110-1).

'It is important for researchers conducting qualitative interviews with Indigenous (here the migrant population, residents of urban slum area) participants to be aware of the Indigenous context; their history and impact of (scarcities) and dispossession, their kinship structure and relationship to land and sea. With an awareness and knowledge of their context, researchers can then apply them to experiences, ideas, belief, attitudes and events that contribute to theoretical rigor which Mason (1996) observed is essential to qualitative interviewing'(Kariippanon, K. & Senior, K., 2017).

Working with a community leader is recommended in order to better understand the conventional patterns and cultural protocols of the slum cluster residents. The community leader who is elected every two years by them was contacted and his advice taken in selection of participants and their consent was sought. After acquainting with the participants, the convenient time for focus group discussions was sought from the participants and the place chosen was decided by them as one of the participants home. Three focus group discussions with women were done initially, supplemented with the depth interviews with women later. Subsequently, male viewpoints were sounded out in order to ascertain their interpretation of the phenomenon, views and counter views. Photo-documenting of cell phones chat sessions allowed recording of security measures via privacy settings. It allowed triangulation of interview data about internet usage, based on the applications that the participants had downloaded and cited as most frequently used. These observations helped in comprehending power dynamics and contestations of the community, family spheres within which smartphones operated as an extension of patriarchal authority and control.

Sampling- purposive sampling was used for this study

as it is widely used for the identification and selection of information-rich cases (here individuals), who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002, Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore those participants were chosen who were exposed to the device and network or were owners/users. Additionally, the participants were selected who had opinions/observations or experienced discrimination on smart phone usage at home as availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to articulate experiences and opinions in a reflective manner are crucial (Bernard, 2002, Palinkas et al 2015).

Sample-Three focus group discussions were done with women the sample consisted of 8 women for the first FGD and 6 for the second FGD, and 5 young school-going girls for the third FGD (Total-8+6+5=19). Later, 9 women and two female teenagers were selected for in-depth interviews (19+11=30 women participants). Besides the women, the male counter point was gathered from 18 male participants by interviews with menfolk, all residents of slum area. Male viewpoints included 8 interviews in the age group of 20-30, 5 in 30-45, 3 in the age group of 15-18, and 2 old-aged men. All male participants were users of smartphones, but not necessarily owners. Hence total sample size consisted of 30 women and 18 males, that is, 48 participants.

6. Findings and Discussion

Women from the selected slum cluster possessed button knowledge (operational skills, Van Dijk, 2007), as every woman participant had knowledge of operation skills required to operate the formal operative system like browsing and navigation. However, what they wanted to browse and navigate is determined by other variables. The information skills knowledge that is, searching, selecting, and evaluating online information, for e.g., search engines were found partial among women but, in all likelihood would upgrade their usage skills and add to time spent in exploring various websites, Women in these clusters primarily use Facebook and WhatsApp and the group comprises of family and friends. Hence, giving opinions, albeit taking care of others in the group, is not a challenge, however, they have not made it a public platform and were not confident of expressing their opinions publicly. Literate women better perform in other skills like creating their own identities mailing, contacting etc. than the unschooled females. The digital medium was used by the literate women to learn new techniques of their profession that is strategic skills, to achieve particular professional and personal goals, which encouraged consistent use. Non-literate women however showed no such interests. The women however, lacked content-creation skills for making contributions to the internet with a particular plan or design.

These technologies contribute to the unsettling of established social relations, which results in debates around new media practices. It has been evident that bottom of the pyramid (BoP) initiatives could disrupt structural divisions of gender, class, and caste drawing mainly on projects in rural India (Schwittay 2008; Sreekumar 2007). The present study brings out another perspective to these results. Digital differences can emerge in terms of access and usage, suggesting the resistant systemic gender discrimination. Daniel Calderón Gómez (2018) focused on gender, age, education and technological access as key variables influencing young people in Spain. The thematic

issues that emerge out of group discussions and corroborated by depth interviews establish the social practices as gender discriminatory to women as reflected in their smartphone ownership, access of internet and usage. Other issues that came to the fore were not framed in research questions but substantiate the findings

1. Male control in terms of possession of smartphone (Access)-

The possession and ownership pattern reveals that majority of men in the locality have had a phone for past 8-12 years. However, possession of smartphones is not common among women to this day in the slum cluster, nonetheless gaining currency. Man of the house, who is normally a breadwinner, has a first claim on the ownership then comes the turn of other men in the family, especially the claims of the male child, women's turn come later. This is general hierarchy followed in most households.

2. Differential usage of participants-

A) The women, who are employed, have their own smartphones but their number is insignificant. Availability of data plan at a reasonable cost in 2016 has stimulated demand among women working in a small-time job as a domestic help, shop/mall assistants, beauty attendants. The house helps used the internet primarily for their work-related issues and employment demands: for learning food recipes, hair styling, beautician's tips, tailoring for limited sociality, and entertainment needs, whereas the housewives used their leisure time for listening songs and music, watching movies, reading about films and TV gossip, gaming and other entertainment related news for watching films, and porn in the company of their spouses. The video calls made to their relations and friends are largely used by both the groups.

B) Women in the slum cluster with little knowledge of e-booking, e-banking, navigation etc. spend time on familial interactions through video call and on WhatsApp group if their spouses and young children are gracious enough to let them have a peek into the group chats, video calls, and attachments of photographs. Hence, the women both homemakers and house-helps find themselves inadequate in online engagements because of their limited competencies and online skills owing to existing social practices and economic dependence. Some of the stay-at-home women have to share the mobile, either with teenage/adult daughters or male children and their smartphone is often the second one in the household, the first one often for male offspring. There are cases where women first bought the smartphone for their son, to facilitate their school/college studies only to realize later that they never got the opportunity to use it. The stay-at-home women are content that the data-plans are managed by their respective spouses.

C) Young girls used the smartphones for doing assignments and project works, however, after the lockdown, their usage hours have gone up due to online classes. Hence online usage by women is oriented towards augmenting their social needs, entertainment news/gossip health information, and other needs (beauty tips, recipes academic, cook's, etc.) depending upon demographic variables like age and education. Their usage is not spread over wide spectrum of online engagements like e-booking of tickets, e-banking, shopping, reading current news and a variety of things.

D) Usage Gaps between men and women- In our sample, usage of internet (on smartphone) by men show diversity than women from the slum clusters; number of hours men tend to spend with smartphone, in an unrestricted manner, is significantly more compared to women. It is not that men are more educated, but get more uninterrupted time and freedom to spend with the smartphone. The main concern of women appears to be usage of smartphone by young males. Since there are no controlling agents to monitor their online behaviour, unlike in the rural ramparts, women of the house believe they are driven to watch porn. However, as the men in the house got exposed to the smartphone much earlier than the women, they are more conversant and at ease with accessing a variety of features and applications, that come handy in day to day life. Hence women look up to them for accessing the internet. Men, especially the young males, use internet in diverse ways, as compared to women in the same age groups, and for longer hours. Their unrestricted access and use of smartphone and applications suggest more freedom enjoyed by them inside and outside the house.

E) Online content consumption of younger men and married men-

While men consider using smartphone for making calls, video calls as mandatory to their work-related needs and other uses like e-booking e-banking, and news reading as important for daily life and knowledge, they do not admit freely of using smartphones for porn consumption. A discrepancy emerges out of employment positions. There are male adolescents who are neither employed nor attending school who use smartphones and there are working male married adults who keep simple mobile phones for themselves but have provided smartphones for their school attending children during pandemic who may access education online. Men consider their little educated counterparts as incapable of accessing and using internet adequately. They justify handling of smartphones by their sons as first claimant following the male head (themselves) of the household for they believe them more digitally literate and competent, as against their wives who they opine, 'how can she use, she's not even educated'. While men mention diverse uses of smartphones by them, women question their version. This is a contentious issue as many times description of male online consumption of males and their women counterparts did not match. Looking across the spectrum of male viewpoints consisting of young unemployed men using smartphones to adult married employed men using small mobile phones to older men using smartphones, one finds varied usage and different viewpoints.

Women have not used the mobile for banking, booking, navigation etc., although they seem aware of its multiple applications. Online shopping experience was not found to be good as they found themselves lacking in navigating the options. This also shows lack of competence, hence confidence in dealing with online shopping. Younger women had more information of data plan vis a vis middle aged woman. The former go out sometimes to pay their bill, and know about various data plans, whereas latter consider it as an added headache to their daily routine. Across the slum cluster, women lacked in formal internet skills, information internet skills and strategic internet skills, except a few who used information internet skills owing to their education. Women

use their smartphone for entertainment related needs. Besides economic factors restricting or denying access to women of low economic setting, there might be aspirational and psychological factors driving its access. The data-plan of a smartphone makes internet linking possible to number of sites. While all house-helpers made their own choice of a data plan themselves, housewives were dependent on their spouses/sons. However, access is generally need/aspiration based and driven.

3. Digital illiteracy among males constraining smartphone usage more important to men than discrimination in usage across gendered lines - The male viewpoint centres around their inability to effectively find, identify, evaluate, and use information digitally. The pandemic led lockdown has rendered many (youth, and middle aged) unemployed, yet they were observed using smartphones. In the same flow, they mentioned their wives using small mobile phones. It could not be established that their counterparts were less educated than them, rather in some cases, their spouses were more educated, yet bore the burden of economic costs translated as them using mobile phones whereas male spouse using smartphone.

4. Smartphone is not good for family cohesion; the male argument- There are men who despite lockdown necessitation would not allow smartphone entry into their homes. 'I cannot imagine my family members using it (smartphone) as I have seen many households ruined by smartphone led skirmishes. I pay extra money to the tutor who gives tuitions to my children to let my children use his phone to access school online classes and then he takes back his phone. If it has spoiled family relationships in other households, how can I allow my family or my wife to use it,' (Chaman, a sanitation worker), though he himself uses smartphone. So, he thinks it is correct if only he uses it? 'Oh, I use it for video calls, nothing else.' His opinion is shared positively by some more as they think the content transmitted through smartphone is not good to be consumed by women of the household, but think it is fair if kids particularly their sons use the same for studies. There are indeed very few who specifically purchased smartphones for their daughters. Following lockdown, if the daughters needed it for school classes, she had to co-use her mother, brother, or father's phone. 'Girls run away from homes if you let them own it,' Mustaqeem, who has two sons, points out. However, when asked how giving the same to boys may not be harmful, he smirks and says, 'No, they know, they will not do anything (against the family honour)'. There is implicit faith/trust that family endows to boys but not to girls.

5. Male porn watching is common- Though some unemployed youth hesitated admitting using smartphones for watching porn clips, others comprising their employed peers, middle and old aged men agreed that porn watching is prevalent in the area. "If you are unemployed, and you use the phone entire day, what exactly you are doing on it, if not using it for your entertainment (porn)", Mukesh who works as parking attendant, said. 'Why, I always see them huddled together in a group in the corner and watching and enjoying something on one mobile. When people go near them, they switch off (the phone). Also, women avoid approaching them as they lech. I often wonder at the content they are watching, may be because they are jobless', Mani, a milk vendor observes. The self-employed or employed males agreed in unison that this porn watching though common among 'useless louts' (faltu ke log, a term constantly used by men and women for the porn users), other male participants did not subscribe to this view.

6. Surveillance- there might be covert and subtle intimidation tactics for young girls by the family particularly male siblings of young participants for example instructions to not joining social media. Girls' social media circle must be known to men while knowledge of female friends or online activities of male members remains in their privately secure domain. Participants are aware how owning a smartphone and not keeping the male members of family in the loop may cause conflicts among couples. Incidents are galore where husband broke wife's phone and thrashed severely on suspicions of using social media on phone. Young girls in their late teens, admit the monitoring and surveillance tactics exercised through the familial fold. The controlling techniques subtle or crude are common across religion. A digital tool supposed to enhance capacities may also be used to assert authority and for surveillance in many ways. House-helpers/Participants recounted how male members/spouse/brothers instructed them to use it only for calls and not be on social media, resorting to different ways of supervision and surveillance, from directly checking the gadget, to locking the social media account of participants. Earning money or contributions to household income by women mean little to the family as for head of the family women should not go astray when they communicate. Women normally yield to these demands in the larger interests of family happiness and family honour though they often think of the disparity in usage, access, denial of freedom, and choices, as they voiced their resentment during discussion and interviews. House-helpers and young girls intuitively know the boundaries within which they are supposed to operate while using the internet on their phones which may be blown out of proportions in their disfavour. The role of mothers in enabling the status quo of surveillance over their daughters with the help of their male offspring is significant.

7. Privacy- Privacy is an entitlement meant for men in the house, which is exercised by them by entering passwords and dominating women psychologically by restricting use of the device by women. Women do not keep passwords as their phone is accessible to all members of the family, and young girls are denied this privilege as they co use their mothers'.

The online iterations, beginning with access to usage and finally to privacy settings give men of the house, priority and privilege while these privileges are not enjoyed by women. Though social media entices them the women are generally wary of continuing with their social media accounts because of surveillance by male family members. Though women checking men's social media's accounts, is not common.

8. 'Stay at home' women as enablers/collaborator of systemic norms- There is a contradiction in how women see the use of Smartphone by their children. While they rue that male kids are soaking in all things corrupt from the internet, they are certain that their daughters should not own any smartphones and should not be accessing or using internet in any fashion that goes against their communal/cultural norms. This needs to be seen through the lens of ingrained normative patterns within the social structure. Even if they resent their own delayed access to use of smartphone, they are restrictive (bordering on denial) towards their daughters, Mothers are not alone in imposing restrictions on their daughters. The male child of the house, keeps a hawk's eye on his sister's usage, and ensures that she does not use Facebook and WhatsApp. There is a catch however restrictions on daughters are imposed by mothers who are uneducated. They also encourage their daughters to co-use

their own phones so her activities can be monitored. However, education broadens mental horizons as women, who attended schools to the middle level, do not subscribe to this view and say they would provide smartphones to their daughters when the time comes. Muslim women held monitoring of digital activities of their daughters as legitimate, Hindu women gave more liberties to their daughters and were more open for discussions. Muslim women were apprehensive and feared for their life lest their statements would be heard by other family members. It was observed that Muslim men occasionally held two smartphones but women at home possessed none. The Muslim wives could manage without or little phone usage. However, the young Muslim women or teenagers smartly survived with their friends' smartphones etc.

Benefits or Empowerment (third level of DD) – 'The third level of digital divide comprises the social consequences derived from the access (first level) and use (the second level) of the internet (Ragnedda, 2017). Today those not using internet, lacking access, or competencies in various ways depict a variety of social disadvantages. Not being able to be part of digital life may not reflect positively thus significantly affecting people's lives. internet appears to offer a vertical social mobility (thus disrupting structure) to only those who are involved in digital information flows, hence those left outside the digital churn may have higher probability of becoming second-class and third class citizens or no citizens at all' (Van Dijk, 2005: 17). 'New forms of inequalities arise in terms of opportunities and possibilities to improve one's life chances by reinvesting in the social realm resources and knowledge acquired online. This is what could be defined as the third level of digital divide (Ragnedda 2018). The digital

divide, therefore, is a form of social and digital exclusion which depends not only on technological, demographic and geographical factors, but also on economic, cultural and personal circumstances associated with social structure (Ragnedda, 2017).

In the present study tangible benefits across the gender may be different depending on individual educational input and employment conditions. The first set of women i.e. the 'stay at home' are largely uneducated/nominally literate and depend on their spouses for sustenance and other benefits. Their dependent employment status conditions them to be in tune with the system. The access to the technological gadget depends on their spouses' will, and the usage of internet is limited by their nondescript education, thus the consumption is more audio-visual, that caters to entertainment need as opposed to information needs that requires analytical tasks. Even the sociality part is played out more audio-visually. At the most, it is the button knowledge that they are skilled at, expecting more may be futile. The reason why as a home maker or mother she wants to regulate and control her daughter's online activities but not her son's reflects her complicity with the system, as also her material dependence. In our sample of 'stay at home' women seem less interested in seeking goal-oriented information, focusing rather on purposeless information-seeking. The case of working women from this segment is not different as they are constrained by social norms and controls and their own minimal educational input. However, school going young girls' future may offer hope as they develop online competencies.

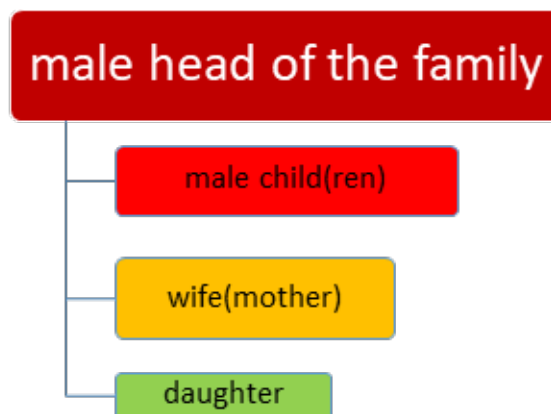


Figure 1: Hierarchical claims for smartphone ownership in the family

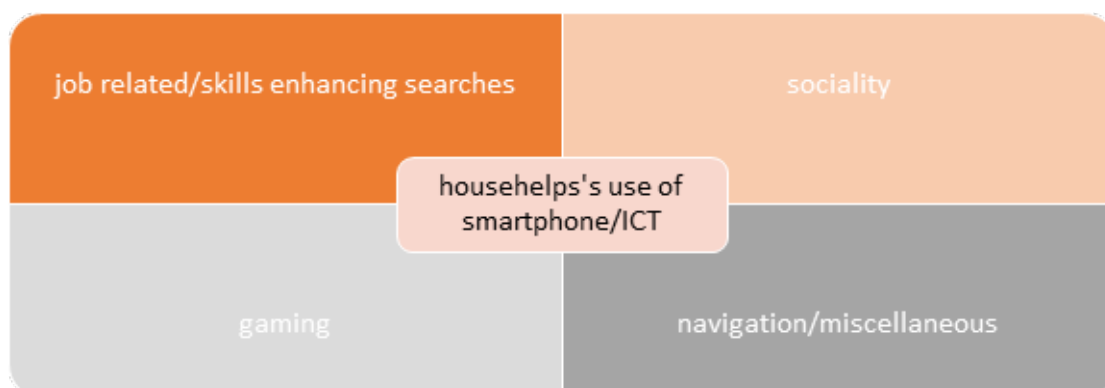


Figure 2: househelps's use of smartphone/ICT

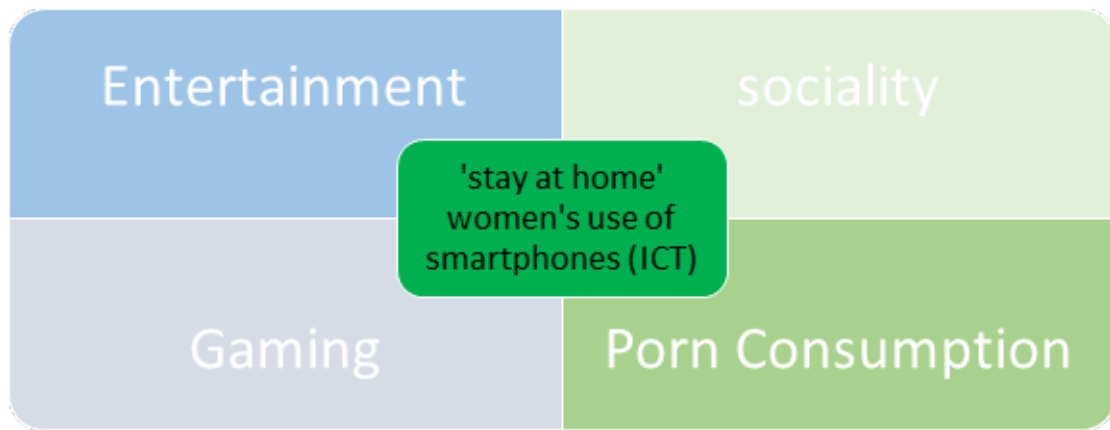


Figure 3: 'stay at home' women's use of smartphones (ICT)

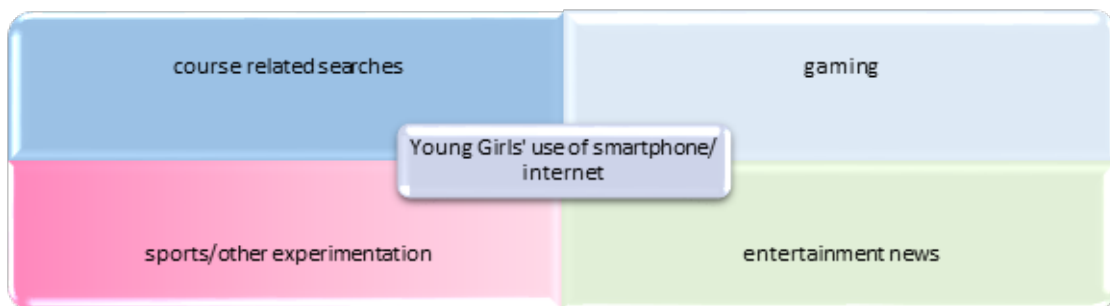


Figure 4: Young Girls' Use of Internet



Figure 5: Usage of smartphone by men and younger men living in slum cluster

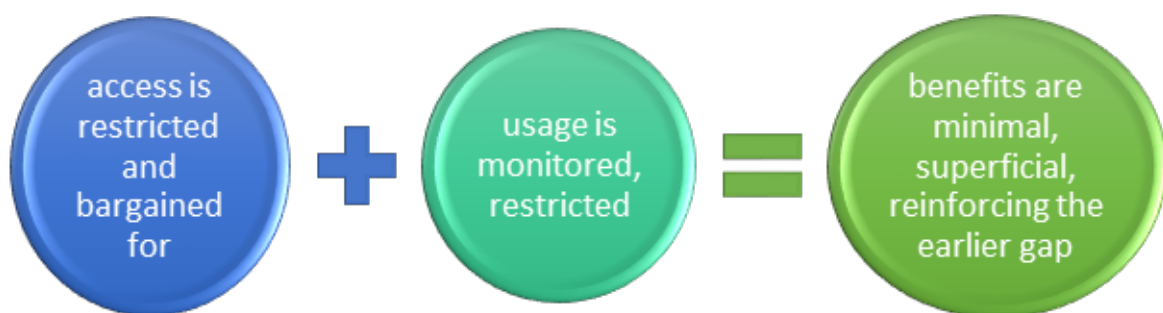


Figure 6: Access and usage of smartphones by young girls



Figure7: Family's stance towards young males' access and usage of internet

7. Conclusion-

This gives a nuanced picture of access, usage and benefits that gets inextricably linked with social structure, cultural and social practices. These are not merely socio-economic variables that are at play constraining access, usage and benefits thus accruing (Helsper, 2008), but the three levels of digital divide are inseparable from the structural ramifications and constantly iterate with it. In wrapping up the findings and revisiting the theoretical framework, researchers find close allegiance of women with the feminists' point of view and men with the digital divide. Looking at the findings as answers of research questions, one may conclude that social and economic disparities inculcate digital disparities, yet women pay more in terms of structural costs in that the inequality is engendered at home.

Social science should not only look at digital inequalities as a phenomenon that is based upon social inequalities which mirror the social structure, but also at how social inequalities are further reinforced by unequal access to and use of the internet. The culture follows economics and politics in that woman look up to man for economic means and power relationship and thus take an inferior position (Ragnedda, 2017, pp-90). Social inequalities are further reinforced by unequal access to and use of the internet. The way one accesses the internet in terms of physical access and in terms of cognitive, skills and motivational accesses may be influenced by one's social and cultural context. The structure influences their access and the welfare policies aimed at digital inclusion may get compromised in absence of support network emanating from their surroundings and from gaining the experiences they need to support the development of their digital skills (Rebecca Eynon and Anne Geniets 2015) with the help of which they may enhance their life chances. These socio-economic variables may yet again influence their perception and interpretation of internet as useful or useless to them'. Such is the power of context and structure.

However, digital literacy catching on among younger generation of women, prospects seem bright in that they appear to have edged past the previous generation in enhancing personal and social capital, thus thereby increasing their life chances. If access to digital resources can ensure social inclusion, governments at all levels must strive to support such initiatives, nevertheless, societal support for these changes should be forthcoming to endorse these measures.

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