Awareness of the Rural People on Different Digital Applications, Sites and Channels

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Digital literacy provides many opportunities for growth and advancement of the people which is essential to survive in the current tech-dominated world. The present study was conducted with the objective of finding out the socio-economic status of the respondents and to assess the awareness of the rural people on different digital applications, sites and channels. The study was conducted on 120 members of Jorhat and Golaghat District of Assam. Results of the study showed that 70.83 per cent of the respondents belonged to the medium level of socio-economic status and among different digital applications sites and channels in different categories, DD Kishan (Agricultural), Facebook (Social media), ArogyaSetu (Health), Google meet (Videoconferencing), Google Pay (Finance) and Flipkart (online shopping) were found to be more popular as compared to others in their categories.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital literacy is the understanding of how fundamental (and not-so-fundamental) technology functions and how to use its various tools and devices effectively. It gives people many opportunities for growth and advancement and is essential to surviving in the current tech-dominated world. The ability to effectively use technology has evolved into one of the most crucial skills in the 21st-century. Knowing how to use digital platforms and technological tools has the potential to greatly simplify people's life. Many of the skills and jobs that are in demand right now require extensive digital experience [1,2]. This significantly disadvantages individuals who lack them.

The increasing use of digital media in society has increased the demand for digital literacy among pupils. As a result, there is a critical need to educate kids about the potential of the digital media, which may play a critical role in determining their capacity to achieve both academically and personally. It also enables individuals to take personal responsibility for how they connect with the world through technology [3-5].

A digital citizen is a concept that commonly refers to someone who has the knowledge and abilities to effectively use digital media and technology to connect with others and participate in society. Digital citizenship is all about having a good attitude and confidence in using digital technology [6,7]. People, employees, and students will have a wonderful opportunity to develop an understanding of the following concepts: digital and information literacy, internet safety, privacy, and security, hacking, unethical hacking, cyber bullying, relationships, etiquette, and communication, creative credit, and copyright by learning about digital citizenship. The acceptance and maintenance of proper, mature, and responsible behaviour is required while utilizing digital tools and technology [8,9].

Many studies on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have reflected that ICT provides opportunities to reach more people within a short duration of time, provides easy access to local and global information in one's own place and provides access at any time [10-12].

There is an urgent need of such type of study which will help the policy makers to plan different policies and strategies for the development of digital literacy among the rural people which will help them to empower themselves in this technological era.

Keeping these points in view, a study on Digital Literacy is proposed to document the socio-economic status of the respondents and to assess the awareness of the rural people towards different digital applications, sites and channels.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Sampling Procedure and Population

The present study was conducted in the Jorhat and Golaghat District of Assam. From these two districts, The Krishi Vigyan Kendra Jorhat, Kaliapani, and Krishi Vigyan Kendra Golaghat, Khumtai were selected with the purpose that these two institutions are situated near Assam Agricultural University. From these two Krishi Vigyan Kendras all the adopted villages were enlisted and then three numbers of villages from each Krishi Vigyan Kendras i.e 6 numbers of villages were randomly selected. From each selected village twenty respondents were selected randomly where ten were men and ten were women. So the total number of respondents was 120 numbers.

2.2 Research Design

The research design adopted for the present study is exploratory and descriptive. Following a review of the relevant literature, a structured interview schedule was prepared to study the socio-economic profile of the respondents and to assess the awareness of the respondents on digital applications, sites and channels. On the basis of the responses, the data were tabulated and analyzed with the help of appropriate statistical tools.

2.3 Statistical Analysis

i.   **Frequency and percentage:**

a.   **Percentage** $= \dfrac{Number\ of\ scores\ obtained}{Total\ number\ of\ respondents} \times 100$

ii. **Mean** $(\bar{X})$ =
$$\frac{\sum fx \ (Total \ number \ of \ scores \ obtained)}{N \ (Total \ number \ of \ respondents)}$$

iii. **Standard deviation:** The formula used for standard deviation is:

a. SD= $\sqrt{\frac{\sum(Xi - \bar{X})^2}{N}}$

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents

The data presented in Table 1, indicates that more than one third (37.50%) of the respondents belonged to lower middle age group i.e. 34-45 years. Majority of the respondents (75.00%) were married, high majority (95.83%) of the respondents were literate, out of which 30.00 per cent of the respondents had education level up to high school. Among all the respondents, 52.51 per cent belonged to Other Backward Caste (OBC). It was found that the main occupation of slightly more than one third (35.00%) of the families was farming. A high majority (80.00%) of the respondents belonged to small family size. Sixty five per cent of respondents had marginal land holdings i.e. having land below 1 hector. Slightly more than half (52.50%) of the respondents had a monthly income of Rs. 10,001-Rs. 20,000. It was found that almost half of the respondents (49.17%) were members of at least one organization. In terms of digital possessions, more than half (56.70%) of the respondents belonged to medium level of digital media possession category. In case of overall socio-economic status, majority (70.83%) of the respondents were found to be in the category of the medium level of socio-economic status.

3.2 Awareness about Different Digital Applications, Sites and Channels

3.2.1 Awareness about agriculture apps/ sites/ channels

The data presented in the Table 2 indicates that a large proportion (62.50%) of the respondents were aware about DD Kisan, followed by Kishan Call Centres (62.50%), Khetiyok application (15.83%), KVK mobile application (14.17%) and only 6.67 per cent were aware about E-NAM application.

According to the table, it can be concluded that a large proportion of the respondents were aware about DD Kisan. It may be due to the reason that it is a popular channel in Doordarshan which provides real-time information to farmers on topics including organic farming, water conservation, and new farming practices. So this channel is able to attract a lot of rural audience. The respondents of the present study were also aware about this channel as compared to other agricultural related platforms.

3.2.2 Awareness about Social networking app

The data presented in the Table 3 shows that majority (62.50%) of the respondents were aware of YouTube, followed by Face book (60.00%), WhatsApp (57.50%) and Instagram (10.83%). From the data it can be concluded that more than half of the respondents were aware about most of the common social networking applications. Since Instagram is very much popular among the young generation only, few respondents were aware about this application.

3.2.3 Awareness about Video conferencing applications

It is evident from the Table 4 that only a small portion of the respondents were aware about different video conferencing applications. It shows that 26.67 per cent of the respondents were aware about Google meet, followed by Zoom (16.67%), Microsoft Team (6.67%), and Webex (5.83%).

During the period of data collection it was noticed that only some young respondents who work in different government offices and few respondents who regularly participate in different extension activities were found to be aware of these video conferencing applications as during the period of COVID-19 they used some of these applications to attend any meeting, training and some of the webinars.

3.2.4 Awareness about health related apps

It was evident from the Table 5 that more than half of the respondents were not aware of health related application available on the internet. It was found that 24.17 per cent of the respondents were aware about the Aarogya Setu app, followed by Healthify Me app (10.83%), Medlife (7.50%), Doctor 24X7 (1.67%).

Table 1. Background profile of the respondents N=120

Variables	Category	Frequency (*f*)	Percentage (%)
Age	Young (23 – 34 years)	39	32.50
	Lower Middle (34 – 45years)	45	37.50
	Upper Middle (45 – 56 years)	36	30.00
Marital status	Unmarried	20	16.67
	Married	90	75.00
	Widow	10	08.33
Educational qualification	Illiterate	05	04.17
	Primary School passed	14	11.67
	Middle School passed	23	19.17
	High school passed	36	30.00
	Higher secondary passed	17	14.16
	Graduate	22	18.33
	Post graduate	03	02.50
Caste	General	23	19.17
	OBC	63	52.50
	SC	34	28.33
Family occupation	Farming	42	35.00
	Daily wage earner	24	20.00
	Business	32	26.67
	Service	22	18.33
Family size	Small (up to 4 members)	96	80.00
	Medium (5-7 members)	16	13.33
	Large (more than 7 members)	08	06.67
Land holdings	Marginal (<1.0 ha)	78	65.00
	Small (1-2 ha)	37	30.83
	Semi Medium (2-4 ha)	05	04.17
Monthly income	Below Rs.10,000	32	26.67
	Rs.10,001- Rs.20,000	63	52.50
	Above Rs. 20,000	25	20.83
Organizational membership	None	31	25.83
	Member of one organization	59	49.17
	Member of more than one organization	30	25.00
Digital media possessions	Low	30	25.00
	Medium	68	56.70
	High	22	18.30
Socio-economic status	Low	11	9.17
	Medium	85	70.83
	High	24	20.00

Table 2. Distribution of the respondents according to awareness of agricultural apps, sites and channels N=120

Sites/Apps/ Channels	Frequency	Percentage
DD kisan	75	62.50
E-NAM app	8	6.67
Khetiyok app	19	15.83
Kishan Call Centres	53	44.17
KVK Mobile App	17	14.17

 # Multiple response

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to awareness of social networking applications N=120

Apps	Frequency	Percentage
WhatsApp	69	57.50
Facebook	72	60.00
Instagram	13	10.83
YouTube	75	62.50

 # Multiple response

Table 4. Distribution of the respondents according to awareness of video conferencing applications N=120

Apps	Frequency	Percentage
Google meet	32	26.67
Zoom	20	16.67
Webex	7	5.83
Microsoft team	8	6.67

 # Multiple response

Table 5. Distribution of the respondents according to awareness of health related applications N=120

Apps	Frequency	Percentage
Aarogya Setu	29	24.17
Medlife	9	7.50
Doctor 24X7	2	1.67
Healthify Me	13	10.83

 # Multiple response

Table 6. Distribution of the respondents according to awareness of financial applications N=120

Apps	Frequency	Percentage
PhonePe	19	15.83
Google Pay	33	27.50
YONO	41	34.17

 # Multiple response

Table 7. Distribution of the respondents according to awareness of online shopping applications N=120

Apps	Frequency	Percentage
Flipkart	43	35.83
Myntra	21	17.50
Amazon	35	29.17
Meesho	28	23.33
Zomato	13	10.83
Swiggy	15	12.50

 # Multiple response

From the findings it can be concluded that rural people are not aware of the health related applications available on the internet. Only few of the young respondents were aware of these

applications. During the period of COVID-19 only, the respondents got to know about the Arogya Setu app.

3.2.5 Awareness about Financial apps

Table 6 reveals that only a small portion of the respondents were aware about the financial applications. 34.17 per cent of the respondents were aware about YONO, followed by Google pay (27.50%) and PhonePe (15.83%).

YONO was found to be used by some of the respondents as compared to other financial applications. It may be due to the reason that YONO is an integrated digital banking platform offered by State Bank of India (SBI). As SBI is most trusted and popular bank in India, so people prefer to use YONO as compared to other financial applications. During the survey it was reported that most of the respondents don't know about these financial applications and people are afraid of using financial applications for money transaction. They have the fear of committing any mistake while using these applications.

3.2.6 Awareness about Online shopping apps

The data presented in the Table 7 shows that 35.83 percent of the respondents were aware about the Flipkart app, followed by Amazon (29.17%), Meesho (23.33%), Myntra (17.50%), Zomato (10.83%) and Swiggy (12.50%).

This table reflects that as compared to other online shopping applications, awareness regarding Flipkart is more. It may be due to the fact that, the items which are for sale in Flipkart, are available in lower price range as compared to other online shopping applications. This data also indicates that respondents were more aware about these online shopping applications as compared to the other (financial, health and video conferencing applications) applications.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the present study it can be concluded that the rural people belonged to medium socio-economic status and the awareness of the rural people on different digital applications, sites and channels is found to be low. Therefore, emphasis should be given to increase the knowledge, attitude and practices of the respondents towards digital literacy and make them aware about the benefits of using

digital device and performing activities through digital mode. Thus, it provides a great scope for promoting rural people in use of ICT with appropriate intervention and hence building their capacity. Therefore, there is an urgent need for providing formal and informal trainings related to use of ICTs in different activities.

5. SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDIES

As the sample for the study is confined to a particular area so the results gained from this cannot be applied to the entire state. The study can be further elaborated and conducted in other areas too so that it can be made more appropriate and useful for formulating future strategies on digital literacy.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing financial interests or non-financial interests or personal relationships exist.

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