

DIGITAL LITERACY AND MOBILE TECHNOLOGY USE AMONG ADIVASI COMMUNITIES IN ODISHA

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ABSTRACT

Background: Digital technologies have become increasingly important for accessing education, information, healthcare, financial services, and government welfare programs. Despite rapid technological expansion across India, tribal communities continue to face challenges related to digital access and digital literacy. Limited evidence is available regarding the extent of digital inclusion among Adivasi populations in Odisha.

Aim: This study aimed to assess digital literacy and mobile technology use among Adivasi communities in Rayagada district, Odisha, with a focus on smartphone ownership, internet access, utilization of digital government services, and barriers contributing to the digital divide.

Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive survey was conducted among 500 respondents, including 350 tribal youth, 100 teachers, and 50 community leaders. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire covering smartphone ownership, internet accessibility, digital literacy skills, use of e-governance services, and perceived barriers to digital inclusion. Descriptive statistical analyses were performed using frequencies and percentages.

Results: Smartphone ownership was reported by 78.4% of respondents, while 75.2% had access to internet services. Mobile data was the primary source of connectivity for most participants. Basic digital skills such as messaging and social media use were common; however, fewer respondents were able to independently access government portals, submit online forms, or utilize digital payment systems. Scholarship-related services and Aadhaar-linked services were the most frequently used digital government platforms. Poor network connectivity (63.6%), limited digital skills (55.2%), lack of awareness and training (50.4%), and affordability issues (44.8%) were identified as major barriers to digital inclusion.

Conclusion: Although digital technology has achieved substantial penetration among tribal communities in Rayagada district, significant disparities remain in digital literacy, internet quality, and utilization of digital services. Strengthening digital infrastructure, improving digital literacy, and expanding community-based training programs are essential for promoting inclusive digital development among Adivasi populations.

KEYWORDS: Digital Literacy, Digital Inclusion, Mobile Technology, Smartphone Use, Internet Access, Adivasi Communities, Tribal Development, Digital Divide, Odisha, E-Governance.

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