

September 7-9, 2021

Weblink: <http://cdltr.uohyd.ac.in/iceie>

Abstract



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Women, The Digital Divide, and The Global Economy: A Post Pandemic Perspective

The digital divide is a sociological phenomenon “reflecting broader social, economic and educational inequalities with domestic and global implications” (Ho& Tseng 2006). It should be acknowledged that it is a global challenge transcending issues of technological access. The digital divide points to disparities in economic and social development across regions of the world (Norris, 2001). While there has been an exponential growth in Internet penetration worldwide, there are still great disparities between affluent and poor countries/communities and even more so across gender lines (GSMA, 2021). Internet and devices (such as the mobile phone) enabled billions of people worldwide access to crucial information and services needed to meet their daily needs in a digitized world (GSMA, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted life as we know it and made access to the internet and mobile devices more important than ever. During the 2020 stringent global lockdown restrictions, access to the internet and mobile phones provided people a way to stay connected, continue with their education, and continue working to earn an income (Lindsey, 2016). While great strides have been made to connect over 3 billion people in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) to the Internet on a mobile phone, women continue to lag behind men (Carboni, 2021; ITU, 2019). Women across LMICs are 8% less likely than men to own a mobile phone or have access to the internet. This translates into 165 million fewer women than men accessing the internet or owning a mobile phone (Carboni, 2021). The following research seeks to better understand the existing digital divide along gender lines and propose ways to alleviate the situation in a post pandemic world.

Brief Bio :

Dr. Maha Bashri received her PhD from the University of South Carolina's School of Journalism and Mass Communications. She is Associate Professor of Communication at the United Arab Emirates University. Before joining UAEU, Dr. Maha was Associate Professor of Communication at Bradley University in Illinois, USA. Her research focuses on media representations of minorities, especially women, in the West as well as new media effects on audiences. Dr. Maha serves on the editorial boards of several prominent Communication journals. Her latest research includes a co-edited book titled *Minority Women and Western Media: Challenging Representation and Articulating New Voices* published by Rowman and Littlefield.