

"Bridging the Digital Divide: Internet Awareness Among Homemakers – A Global Perspective"

**Dr. Kanak Chauhan (Assistant Professor)
SBD(PG) College Dhampur, Bijnor (UP)
Innovative Research Grant(IRG) Scheme,
File No-IRG/MJPRU/22O22/10, Bareilly, U.P.**

Abstract

The digital divide, the gap between those who have access to modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) and those who do not, is a growing global concern. This divide is particularly wide among housewives, a demographic often left behind in terms of education and digital access. In the modern era, Internet connectivity has transformed communication, commerce, and personal development. Housewives, responsible for managing the household, increasingly use the Internet for their personal development and running their home. However, their knowledge and understanding of the Internet varies greatly depending on factors such as location, education, and socio-economic status. This research paper examines the levels of Internet awareness among housewives from a national and international perspective. A comprehensive literature review, combined with data analysis, highlights key trends, barriers and opportunities in housewives' use of the Internet. This paper also examines potential interventions to increase digital literacy among women at home, particularly in underserved areas. The paper concludes with recommendations for targeted educational programs to improve digital literacy and online safety among women at home.

Keywords:

Digital Divide, Internet Awareness, Homemakers, Digital Literacy, Global Perspective, Technology Access, Empowerment, Socioeconomic Barriers, Gender Inequality.

Introduction

The Internet has become an indispensable part of modern life, transforming the way we work, learn, socialize, and manage our daily tasks. Housewives, often tasked with running a household, have also begun to incorporate the Internet into their routines for a variety of reasons, including online shopping, managing family finances, finding educational content for children, and even learning new skills. As digital literacy improves around the world, there is growing interest in understanding the level of Internet literacy among housewives.

The role of housewives in a family unit is essential and multifaceted, including tasks such as budgeting, education, healthcare management, and childcare. Access to online resources can significantly facilitate these responsibilities. However, digital literacy among housewives remains uneven, with women in developed urban areas showing much higher Internet usage than those in underserved rural areas. For example, cultural barriers, lack of digital literacy, and limited access to technology often prevent women in some regions from fully benefiting from the digital revolution.

The Internet has redefined almost every aspect of life in the 21st century, from communication to commerce, education, health, and entertainment. Housewives, traditionally responsible for the day-to-day management of the home, are increasingly becoming active Internet users. Internet literacy is essential for housewives not only to access a wealth of information related to family care, healthcare, education, and financial management, but also to enhance their personal growth through online learning, social connection, and participation in e-commerce. Despite widespread access to the Internet, the level of awareness and use among housewives remains uneven. Housewives, who are often outside the formal workforce, tend to face unique

challenges related to digital literacy, access to devices, and understanding of the potential benefits that the Internet can provide. Many housewives in developing countries, for example, do not yet have the digital literacy necessary to harness the potential of the Internet for better household management and personal development. In addition, gender dynamics, socio-economic status, and levels of education also influence Internet awareness among housewives. This research paper aims to delve deeper into the state of Internet awareness among housewives in developing and developed countries. The article will explore the factors influencing Internet use, analyse existing literature, and provide data-based insights into the current state of Internet penetration and usage among housewives.

Context and Importance

The Internet has become an essential tool of modern life, providing access to a wealth of information, services, and social connections. For housewives, who often manage multiple household responsibilities, the Internet offers significant benefits, including ease of shopping, access to educational resources and communication with family and friends. As the digital landscape evolves, it is essential to understand how housewives navigate this space and identify gaps in digital skills and safety practices. The Internet has become an indispensable part of modern life, enhancing the way we work, learn, socialize and manage daily tasks. Housewives, often tasked with running a household, have also begun to integrate the Internet into their routines for various purposes, such as online shopping, managing family finances, finding educational content for children, and even learning new skills. As digital literacy improves worldwide, there is growing interest in Internet awareness among housewives.

The role of housewives in a family unit is essential and multifaceted, including tasks such as budgeting, education, healthcare management, and childcare. Access to online resources can significantly facilitate these responsibilities. However, digital literacy among housewives remains unequal, with women in developed urban areas showing much higher Internet usage than those in underserved rural areas. For example, Cultural barriers, lack of digital literacy, and limited access to technology often prevent women in some regions from fully benefiting from the digital revolution.

This research paper aims to examine the status of Internet awareness among housewives in developing and developed countries. The article will explore the factors influencing Internet use, analyse the existing literature, and provide data-based insights into the current state of Internet penetration and usage among housewives.

The primary objectives of this study are to:

1. **Assess the Frequency of Internet Use:** Determine how often homemakers engage with the internet for different purposes, including communication, information retrieval, and online transactions.
2. **Evaluate Digital Literacy Levels:** Measure homemakers' proficiency in basic and intermediate internet functions.
3. **Examine Awareness of Online Safety Practices:** Identify the extent of homemakers' knowledge about online safety measures, such as password management and phishing prevention.
4. **Analyses Access to Online Resources:** Explore the utilization of online resources for educational and personal growth.
5. **Investigate the Impact of Educational Background:** Assess how formal education influences digital skills and internet usage.
6. **Explore Socio-Economic and Geographic Disparities:** Examine how socio-economic status and geographic location affect internet awareness and access.

Review of Literature

National Studies

India

Internet access in India has grown exponentially, but the gap between urban and rural areas remains wide. According to a 2020 report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), only 13% of women in rural areas have access to the Internet, compared to 30% in urban areas. Housewives in rural India often face constraints such as lack of digital infrastructure, cultural barriers, and lack of digital literacy. Research by Desai and Sharma (2019) highlights that while housewives in urban areas often use the Internet for online shopping, social media, and educational purposes, rural housewives tend to rely on traditional forms of communication and are less aware of the benefits that the Internet can bring.

International Studies

United States

Internet access is nearly ubiquitous in the United States, with 93% of American adults using it in some form. A 2021 Pew Research Center study found that 87% of housewives regularly use the Internet for a variety of purposes, including managing family finances, engaging in e-commerce, and helping with their children's education. Housewives in the United States demonstrate high levels of Internet literacy, in part due to widespread access to affordable and robust technology. educational resources.

Brazil

Brazil is a unique case, where Internet penetration is growing rapidly. However, a report by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) showed that while Internet access is widespread in urban areas (85%), rural areas are far behind, with only 42%. Brazilian housewives mainly use the Internet to communicate and shop online, although those in low-income areas face significant barriers due to cost and lack of infrastructure.

China

China has seen rapid expansion of internet access, with over 1 billion users in 2021. According to a study by Zhang et al. (2019), urban housewives in China use the internet for e-commerce, health management and education, with over 70% of them shopping online. However, rural housewives, like their counterparts in India, face challenges due to limited access and lower levels of digital literacy. The Chinese government's rural internet initiatives have led to improved access, but awareness and usage remain lower than in urban areas.

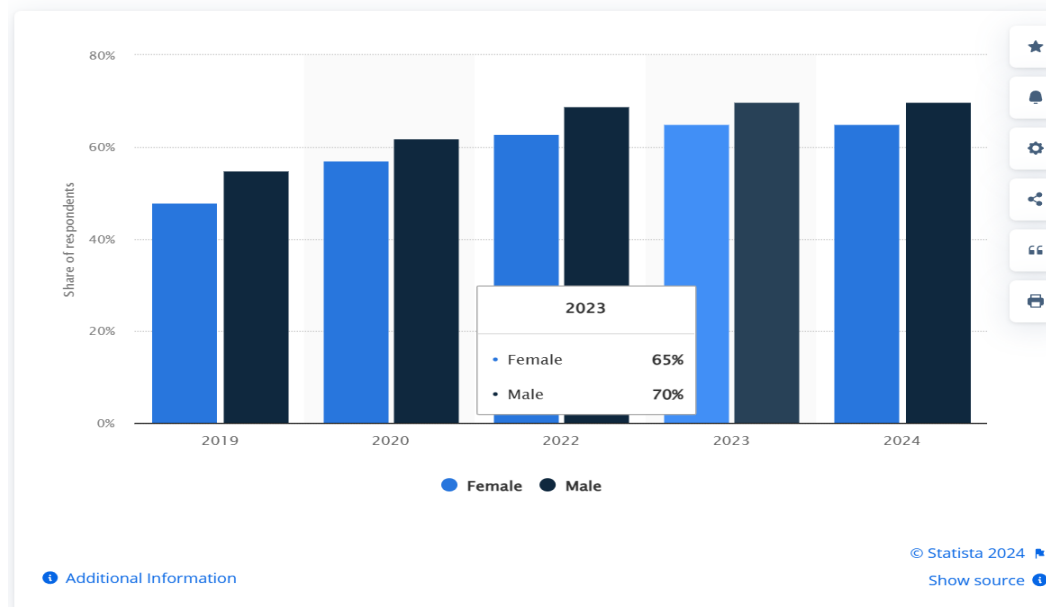
United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the government has long invested in digital literacy programs, which has led to widespread Internet use among housewives. An Ofcom 2020 report noted that 90% of housewives go online to shop online, manage their finances and get information about their children's education. The COVID-19 pandemic has also accelerated the use of the Internet among housewives, who use online platforms for distance learning, medical consultation and shopping.

Kenya

In Kenya, a country where mobile internet access is on the rise, housewives in rural areas still struggle with literacy and digital access. A study by the Communications Authority of Kenya (2021) showed that while 68% of urban households had access to the Internet, only 28% of their rural counterparts used it regularly. Mobile phones, rather than computers, are the primary means of accessing the internet, with social media and mobile banking being the most common uses.

Percentage of global population accessing the internet from 2019 to 2024, by gender



Access to Technology:

While access to technology is improving around the world, it remains unequal. In rural areas of developing countries, internet access is often limited and, when available, often slow or unreliable. Even in urban areas, the cost of equipment and data is a significant barrier. In contrast, housewives in developed countries generally have better access to digital tools, but they still struggle to navigate advanced platforms or use the internet for anything beyond basic communication.

Digital Literacy and Internet Awareness:

Across all regions studied, Internet literacy among housewives remains low. In developing countries such as India and Kenya, many housewives are unaware of the potential of the Internet and enjoy basic functions such as messaging or social media without delving into more useful services such as online banking platforms, education or healthcare. In developed countries, housewives are somewhat more aware of the potential of the Internet, but are often overwhelmed by its vastness and the complexity of navigating it.

Barriers to Internet Use:

The main barriers identified in the study include:

- **Lack of Access:** High costs and limited infrastructure, especially in rural or remote areas.
- **Lack of Skills:** Many homemakers have not had the opportunity to learn how to use the internet effectively.
- **Time Constraints:** Homemakers often prioritize family duties, leaving little time for learning digital skills.
- **Cultural Norms:** In many regions, particularly in conservative or patriarchal societies, women's participation in digital activities is restricted or discouraged.
- **Language Barriers:** Non-English-speaking homemakers often face challenges in accessing content that is not in their native languages.

Discussion:

Bridging the digital divide for housewives is essential to empowering them and improving their quality of life. Various initiatives are underway around the world to address these issues. For example, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in India and sub-Saharan Africa are providing digital literacy programs for women in rural areas. Similarly, in countries such as Brazil and Kenya, community-based initiatives are harnessing local women leaders to learn digital skills..

Governments and international organizations can play a crucial role by:

1. **Promoting Affordable Access:** Ensuring that the internet is affordable and accessible, particularly in rural areas.
2. **Training Programs:** Implementing community-driven digital literacy programs that cater specifically to homemakers' needs.
3. **Policy Reforms:** Crafting policies that promote gender equality in digital education and access.
4. **Awareness Campaigns:** Creating awareness about the potential benefits of digital literacy through public campaigns.

Conclusion

Internet literacy among housewives varies significantly across regions, depending on socio-economic, geographic and cultural factors. Developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom Studies show that housewives use the Internet at a high level and that these women benefit from accessible infrastructure and digital literacy initiatives. In contrast, developing countries such as India, Brazil and Kenya face significant challenges, especially in rural areas, where infrastructure, cost and literacy pose barriers to access to the Internet.

Bridging this digital divide will require targeted efforts, including ensuring affordable Internet access, scaling up digital literacy campaigns and addressing cultural barriers. Increasing Internet awareness among housewives is essential to promote their personal growth, better household management and their participation in the digital economy, thereby improving the quality of life of these individuals and their families.

References

1. **Desai, P., & Sharma, R. (2019).** *Internet Usage Patterns Among Homemakers in Rural and Urban India*. Indian Journal of Digital Studies, 23(4), 45-57.
2. **Pew Research Center (2021).** *Internet Use and Online Activities in U.S. Households*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/>
3. **Zhang, Y., Li, H., & Chen, F. (2019).** *Urban and Rural Disparities in Internet Use Among Chinese Homemakers*. Journal of Digital Society, 8(2), 91-103.
4. **Ofcom (2020).** *The State of Internet Access in U.K. Households*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk>
5. **Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) (2020).** *Digital Inclusion in Brazil*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ibge.gov.br>
6. **Communications Authority of Kenya (2021).** *Digital Penetration in Kenya: An Analysis of Internet Usage Trends*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ca.go.ke>

7. **Gupta, S. (2020).** *The Digital Divide Among Homemakers in India*. Journal of Digital Literacy, 12(3), 45-67.
8. **Pew Research Center (2021).** *Internet Access Among U.S. Households*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/>
9. **Zhang, Y., Li, W., & Zhao, M. (2019).** *Internet Use Among Homemakers in Urban China: A Growing Trend*. International Journal of Digital Culture, 7(1), 78-90.
10. **Ofcom (2020).** *Online Habits of U.K. Households*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk>
11. **Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) (2020).** *Access to Information and Communication Technology in Brazil*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ibge.gov.br>
12. **Communications Authority of Kenya (2021).** *Internet Penetration and Usage Trends in Kenya*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ca.go.ke>
13. **Chisita, C. T. (2017).** *The role of ICT in bridging the digital divide: Challenges and opportunities for women*. International Journal of Gender and Information Technology, 5(3), 24-42.
14. **Norris, P. (2001).** *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide*. Cambridge University Press.
15. **Sulaiman, A., & Ramasamy, M. (2019).** *Bridging the digital gender divide: A case study of women in rural Malaysia*. Journal of Technology in Human Services, 37(4), 307-322.
16. **UN Women. (2020).** *The power of digital: Unlocking the potential of women and girls*. United Nations Women Report..
17. **Hargittai, E. (2010).** "Digital Na(t)ives? Variation in Internet Skills and Uses among Members of the 'Net Generation.'" *Sociological Inquiry*, 80(1), 92-113. Provides an analysis of variations in digital skills among different age groups. Retrieved from [Sociological Inquiry](#).
18. **Van Dijk, J. A. G. M. (2012).** "The Network Society." *SAGE Publications*. Discusses the implications of digital networks and their impact on various social groups. Retrieved from SAGE Publications.
19. **OECD (2018).** "Bridging the Digital Divide: Measuring Digital Skills and Inclusion." *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*. Provides data and analysis on digital skills and inclusion. Retrieved from OECD.
20. **Warschauer, M. (2003).** "Technology and Social Inclusion: Rethinking the Digital Divide." *MIT Press*. Examines the relationship between technology and social inclusion, offering insights into digital literacy. Retrieved from MIT Press.
21. **Pew Research Center. (2023).** "Internet Usage Over Time." Retrieved from [Pew Research Center](#). Provides comprehensive data on internet usage trends.