

Digital India and Women Empowerment through Mee Seva: An Empirical Study among Women Users in Hyderabad, Telangana

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ABSTRACT

The Digital India Programme, launched by the Government of India in 2015, has catalysed significant changes in public service delivery through e-governance platforms such as Mee Seva in Telangana. This paper empirically examines how Mee Seva contributes to women's empowerment across digital literacy, financial inclusion, welfare access, and decision-making dimensions. A structured questionnaire was administered to 100 women users of Mee Seva centres in Hyderabad, Secunderabad, and Ranga Reddy District during 2024–25. Percentage analysis and chi-square tests were applied. The study finds that 85% of respondents were aware of Mee Seva, 78% agreed on time savings, 85% reported improved welfare scheme access, and 85% reported high or moderate overall empowerment. Three hypotheses were accepted, confirming significant relationships between awareness and utilisation, education and digital literacy, and Mee Seva usage and empowerment. Persistent challenges include limited digital literacy (20% low), connectivity gaps, and language barriers. Targeted digital literacy programmes and infrastructure investment are recommended to bridge the digital gender gap.

Keywords: Digital India, Women Empowerment, Mee Seva, E-Governance, Digital Literacy, Financial Inclusion, Telangana

1. INTRODUCTION

The Digital India Programme, launched on July 1, 2015, aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society by making government services available electronically to every citizen. Women, who constitute 48.4% of India's population, represent both a major target beneficiary and a largely underserved segment of the digital ecosystem. The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI, 2023) reports that women account for only 40% of internet users in urban areas, with the gap widening sharply in rural and semi-urban settings. In Telangana, Mee Seva — meaning 'At Your Service' — serves as a single-window digital platform offering over 300 government-to-citizen (G2C) services, including income and caste certificates, pension applications, utility bill payments, and welfare scheme enrolments, at neighbourhood service centres. For women who face barriers of mobility, time poverty, and complex bureaucratic procedures, Mee Seva represents a significant democratising intervention in public service access. This study examines whether and how Mee Seva usage translates into measurable empowerment outcomes for women in Hyderabad, Telangana.

The specific objectives are: (a) to assess women's awareness and utilisation of Mee Seva; (b) to evaluate service satisfaction, time savings, and transparency; (c) to measure self-reported empowerment outcomes including financial inclusion, decision-making, and welfare access; and (d) to identify key challenges and recommend policy measures for improving digital inclusion among women.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sharma (2020) examined Digital India's impact on women and found that digital technologies significantly improved access to information, education, and government services, with women reporting enhanced confidence after participation in digital programmes. Rajeshwari (2024) specifically studied the Digital India–Mee Seva–Women Empowerment nexus and concluded that Mee Seva effectively promotes digital inclusion, improving service access and socio-economic empowerment. Lakshmi (2021) documented that e-governance reduced administrative barriers and increased women's independence by eliminating dependence on intermediaries. Kavitha (2021) found that Mee Seva significantly reduced certificate processing time, with rural women particularly appreciating transparency. Anuradha (2023) identified certificates, welfare benefits, and utility services as the most common services accessed by women, with significant time and resource savings reported.

On digital literacy, Ramesh Kumar (2020) established that women with digital skills were significantly more likely to access government services and employment opportunities. Uma Devi (2023) identified limited digital literacy, internet affordability, and socio-cultural restrictions as the primary barriers to women's digital inclusion, emphasising the need for targeted training. Jyothi (2022) found that digital banking and government transfer schemes improved women's financial independence and household decision-making authority. Raghavendra (2020) demonstrated that e-governance strengthens democratic participation and citizen empowerment through improved transparency and accountability.

Research Gap: While existing literature documents the positive role of e-governance in women's empowerment, there is a shortage of multi-dimensional empirical studies using primary survey data that simultaneously examine awareness, utilisation, satisfaction, and empowerment outcomes among Mee Seva users in the post-COVID digital expansion phase (2024–25) in Telangana. This study addresses that gap.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical research design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 100 women Mee Seva users in Hyderabad, Secunderabad, and Ranga Reddy District during 2024–25, using convenience sampling. The questionnaire covered demographic information, Digital India and Mee Seva awareness, service usage and satisfaction, empowerment outcomes, and challenges faced. Secondary data were drawn from MeitY reports, RBI Annual Reports, IAMAI surveys, and peer-reviewed journals. Statistical tools applied include percentage analysis, weighted average method, and chi-square test ($\chi^2 = \Sigma[(O-E)^2/E]$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Three hypotheses were tested: H_1 — awareness of Digital India is significantly associated with Mee Seva utilisation; H_2 — educational qualification is significantly associated with digital literacy; H_3 — frequency of Mee Seva usage is significantly associated with overall empowerment. Limitations include a sample confined to urban and semi-urban Hyderabad, convenience sampling bias, and cross-sectional data that do not capture long-term empowerment trajectories.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The survey findings are summarised in four composite tables covering awareness and usage, service experience, empowerment outcomes, and challenges. All figures represent percentages of 100 respondents.

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Awareness — Digital India	Aware	78
	Not Aware	22
Awareness — Mee Seva	Aware	85
	Not Aware	15
Frequency of Use	Regularly	45
	Occasionally	40
	Rarely	15
Purpose of Visit	Certificates	40
	Utility Bills	25

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
	Welfare Schemes	20
	Other	15

Table 1: Awareness and Usage of Mee Seva among Women Respondents Source: Primary Survey Data (2024–25)

A substantial 78% of respondents were aware of the Digital India Programme, and 85% were aware of Mee Seva. The higher Mee Seva awareness reflects proximity to service centres. 45% use Mee Seva regularly and 40% occasionally, indicating strong adoption. Certificate services dominate usage (40%), followed by utility bill payments (25%) and welfare scheme applications (20%).

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Ease of Access	Excellent / Good	75
	Average / Poor	25
Service Satisfaction	Highly Satisfied / Satisfied	77
	Neutral / Dissatisfied	23
Time Saving (Agree/Strongly Agree)	Yes	78
Transparency	Neutral / Disagree	22
	Excellent / Good	75
Digital Literacy	Average / Poor	25
	High	30
	Moderate	50
	Low	20

Table 2: Service Experience and Digital Literacy among Women Users Source: Primary Survey Data (2024–25)

75% rated ease of access and transparency as Excellent or Good, affirming Mee Seva's single-window design. 77% expressed overall satisfaction. 78% agreed that Mee Seva saves significant time — a critical finding given women's time poverty from domestic responsibilities. 50% of respondents reported moderate digital literacy, 30% high, and 20% low. The 20% low-literacy segment requires dedicated intervention.

Empowerment Variable	High / Improved	Moderate / Same	Low / Not Improved
Access to Welfare Schemes	50%	35%	15%
Financial Inclusion	55%	30%	15%
Confidence in Technology	46%	39%	15%
Economic Empowerment	40%	42%	18%
Decision-Making Ability	52%	30%	18%
Overall Empowerment	48%	37%	15%

Table 3: Women's Empowerment Outcomes through Mee Seva Source: Primary Survey Data (2024–25)

The empowerment findings are strongly positive. 85% of respondents reported High or Moderate welfare scheme access; 85% reported improved or maintained financial inclusion; 82% reported High or Moderate economic empowerment; 52% reported improved decision-making; and the headline finding — 85% of women reported High (48%) or Moderate (37%) overall empowerment through Mee Seva. The 15–18% reporting low empowerment across variables are concentrated among those with low digital literacy and infrequent usage.

4.1 Hypothesis Testing

H₁ — The chi-square test confirmed a statistically significant association between Digital India awareness and Mee Seva utilisation frequency ($\chi^2_{\text{cal}} > \chi^2_{\text{crit}}$ at $df = 2$, $\alpha = 0.05$). Women who were aware of Digital India used Mee Seva significantly more often. H₁ is accepted.

H₂ — A statistically significant relationship was found between educational qualification and digital literacy. Graduate and post-graduate women reported substantially higher digital literacy. H₂ is accepted.

H₃ — A significant positive association was confirmed between frequency of Mee Seva usage and overall empowerment levels. Regular users were significantly more likely to report High overall empowerment. H₃ is accepted.

5. DISCUSSION

The empirical evidence establishes Mee Seva as an effective women's empowerment platform within the Digital India ecosystem. The time-saving benefit (78% agreement) is particularly significant: by compressing multi-day, multi-office administrative processes into single-visit digital transactions, Mee Seva releases time that women can redirect to productive economic activities. The welfare scheme access rate (85% high or moderate) reflects Mee Seva's role as a gateway to India's extensive social protection system — maternity benefits, social pensions, self-help group registrations, DBT enrolments, and educational scholarships — which are disproportionately critical to women's household welfare. The financial inclusion improvement (55%) supports Jyothi's (2022) findings and confirms that digital service platforms accelerate women's financial empowerment when integrated with schemes such as Jan Dhan Yojana and Direct Benefit Transfer.

The acceptance of all three hypotheses provides statistical validation for three important policy propositions: investment in Digital India awareness campaigns will directly drive Mee Seva utilisation; improving women's educational attainment will organically build their digital literacy and digital service uptake; and expanding Mee Seva access will translate into measurable empowerment gains. The digital empowerment paradox — where the most digitally excluded women (low education, low literacy) are also those who need government services most urgently — underscores the need for assisted access mechanisms, community-based facilitation, and mobile digital literacy camps as complementary interventions to the Mee Seva platform itself (Uma Devi, 2023; Sharma, 2020).

6. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Key Findings

- 78% of women were aware of Digital India; 85% were aware of Mee Seva; 45% are regular users.
- 75% rated ease of access and transparency as Excellent or Good; 77% expressed overall service satisfaction.
- 78% agreed Mee Seva saves significant time — a major dividend for women burdened with domestic responsibilities.
- 85% reported High or Moderate access to welfare schemes; 55% reported improved financial inclusion.
- 82% reported High or Moderate economic empowerment; 52% reported improved decision-making ability.
- 85% reported High (48%) or Moderate (37%) overall empowerment — the headline finding of the study.
- All three hypotheses accepted: awareness drives utilisation; education builds digital literacy; usage delivers empowerment.
- 20% of respondents reported low digital literacy; internet connectivity, language barriers, and socio-cultural constraints remain the primary challenges for the bottom 15–20%.

6.2 Suggestions

- Conduct regular digital literacy camps for women in local languages at Mee Seva centres and community spaces.
- Expand Mee Seva centres to underserved villages with mobile Mee Seva vans for remote areas.
- Develop multilingual Mee Seva interfaces covering Telugu, Urdu, and Hindi to improve accessibility.
- Integrate digital safety and cybersecurity awareness into all women-targeted digital literacy programmes.

- Leverage self-help groups, Mahila Mandals, and ASHA workers as awareness ambassadors for Digital India schemes.
- Introduce dedicated women's service windows at Mee Seva centres for comfort, privacy, and faster service.
- Include digital literacy for girls in school curricula from secondary level onwards to build long-term capacity.

6.3 Conclusion

This study provides primary-data-based evidence that Mee Seva, as a component of the Digital India Programme, has meaningfully contributed to women's empowerment in Hyderabad, Telangana. With 85% of respondents reporting high or moderate overall empowerment, strong service satisfaction, significant time savings, improved welfare access, and better financial inclusion, Mee Seva emerges as a successful instrument of gender-inclusive digital governance. The statistical acceptance of all three hypotheses provides theoretical grounding for the digital empowerment–governance access link. However, the 15–20% of women who remain digitally excluded demand urgent policy attention through targeted literacy, infrastructure, and outreach interventions. As India advances toward its Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, ensuring that digital empowerment reaches every woman — not merely those already digitally literate — must be a non-negotiable development priority.

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