

The Digital Divide and Its Impact on Society. A Study Conducted in Mysuru

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Abstract:-AbstractThis study explores the multi-dimensionality of the digital divide and its wider socio-economic implications in the context of Mysuru, Karnataka, a fast urbanizing tier-2 city of India. Macroscopic infrastructure programs have been successful in increasing baseline connectivity, but there is a huge gap in digital literacy and productive use of these technologies. The paper examines the transition from basic hardware access (first level divide) to advanced operational skills (second level) and concrete socio-economic outcomes (third level) based on an empirical primary dataset of 54 residents surveyed (57.41% male, 42.59% female; 62.96% aged 18-60). The reliability test of the scale indicated that the instrument was robust with Cronbach's Alpha of 0.858. The empirical data shows that 51.85% of the respondents have reliable daily access to the internet at home, but there are significant systemic vulnerabilities.

A high level of lack of confidence in using digital devices independently to complete online forms or downloads is reported by approximately 24.08% of participants. Furthermore, 44.45% of the respondents feel socially isolated or excluded from community dialogues as they are not online. Importantly, descriptive statistics indicate high mean scores indicating that low digital proficiency is a major barrier to job opportunities and the growth of remote businesses (Mean = 3.63) and makes it difficult for people to independently access essential e-governance platforms such as the Gruha Lakshmi portal and land records (Mean = 3.56). Furthermore, a Pearson Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 30.963$, $p = 0.014$) indicates a significant statistical relationship between the availability of daily high-speed internet and the receipt of formal educational or familial digital support.

The study concludes that connectivity is not a sole determinant of upward social mobility and highlights the urgent need for human-centric policy interventions that prioritize localized literacy campaigns to mitigate deepening societal stratification.

Keywords:-(Digital divide, digital literacy, socio-economic inequality ,Mysuru ,e-governance)

Topic:- The Digital Divide and Its Impact on Society: A Study Conducted in Mysore

Introduction:-

In the present-day world, access to digital technology has evolved from a symbol of privilege to a crucial factor in socio-economic mobility. The "digital divide," generally defined as the gap between individuals, households and geographic areas with access to modern information and communication technologies (ICT) and those without, is no longer a technological issue but a critical axis of social inequality. As public governance, financial systems and education systems rapidly transition to digital-first platforms, the lack of adequate access or literacy results in systemic exclusion from the modern economy.

The digital divide in developing countries, such as India, is multi-dimensional and complex. Macro-level initiatives like 'Digital India' and democratization of mobile data have unleashed an unprecedented tech revolution, but the benefits are unevenly distributed. Deep divisions persist along demographic fault lines that run through rural-urban divides, economic strata and

generational gaps. One segment of the population is leveraging digital tools to engage in complicated financial trading, remote corporate employment, and higher education, while a substantial parallel demographic cannot even access basic public online services or remote learning material. This fracture ensures that the digital deficit does not just reproduce existing socio-economic inequalities, but actively accelerates them.

To fully grasp the mechanics behind this disparity, the macro-level statistics must be connected to localized, empirical realities. This study is set in Mysore, Karnataka, which uniquely captures the contradictions of India's digital transition. Mysore, a leading tier-2 city, is at the crossroads of rapid modernization and urban expansion. Though certain sections of the district are prospering with the incorporation of technology, peripheral zones, low-income urban pockets, and excluded communities still face different levels of digital seclusion. Its most profound impact is felt in the education sector and grassroots economic activities where the lack of ownership of devices and basic digital literacy skills directly affects the development path of the next generation.

Although the digital divide has been well documented at the national or state levels in the existing literature, there is an important research gap in understanding how these divides function dynamically in tier-2 ecosystems experiencing rapid urbanization. This study aims to fill that gap. Drawing on primary data directly collected from communities in Mysore, the paper discusses the underlying factors behind digital disparities, evaluates immediate consequences for social and educational equality, and points to scalable solutions to improve digital literacy for all.

Review of literature:-

Foundational Frameworks & Comprehensive Systematic Reviews

Bridging Digital Divides: a Literature Review and Research Agenda for Information Systems Research Authors: Polyxeni Vassilopoulos & Eli Hustad Year of Publication: 2021 Overview: A sweeping review of information systems literature exploring how structural inequalities have adapted to modern ecosystems. It outlines how advanced technologies like data analytics require deep digital awareness to navigate effectively, risking new forms of systemic exclusion. **Levels of digital divide:** A Review Literature Author: Kajal Shaw Year of Publication: 2025 Overview: This study provides a structured review of how early technological determinism evolved into contemporary digital inequality frameworks. It uses thematic coding to break down the first (connectivity), second (skills), and third (tangible outcomes) layers of the divide. **Bridging the Third-Level Digital Divide in Thailand** Author: A. Pukdeewut Year of Publication: 2024 Overview: Analyzing nationwide survey data from over 43,000 respondents, this paper explores the modern "benefit divide." It identifies how regional income levels, age, and individual digital confidence create distinct patterns in how effectively people leverage the internet across institutional, economic, and social domains. **What is the harm of the digital divide that must be the object of digital inclusion work and strategies? A systematic review** Author: C. Ewuoso Year of Publication: 2025 Overview: A systematic review focusing heavily on the normative ethics of technological disparities. The paper details the real-world economic, democratic, and personal harms that arise when communities lack digital awareness and are excluded from digital inclusion strategies **Digitalization, Psychological Well-Being, and the Third-Level Digital Divide: Survey Study During the COVID-19 Pandemic in China** Author: F. Lin Year of Publication: 2025 Overview: This empirical study bridges technology with mental health. It examines how unequal digital usage and capabilities alter an individual's ability to cope with offline social stressors, showing how the digital divide directly impacts psychological well-being. **Digital divide: a literature review** Authors: Jo Ireland & Santi Lestari Year of Publication: 2025 Overview: Published out of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, this review synthesizes how digital gaps manifest within educational systems. It tracks variables such as family socio-economic status, geography, and parental attitudes to understand how gaps in foundational digital literacy form. **AI and the digital divide in education** Author: M. A. Matjie Year of Publication: 2026 Overview: This study presents global case studies evaluating how artificial intelligence shapes or bridges the educational

divide. It discusses how generative AI tools risk reinforcing existing educational marginalization unless they are integrated with localized pedagogical strategies **The impact of the three-level digital divide on the mental health of rural residents: A study from China** Authors: Yu Ding & Yunhui Ai Year of Publication: 2026 Overview: This study utilizes longitudinal panel data to measure how stratified access, usage, and perceived utility impact rural populations. It finds that while an access gap harms residents' self-assessed sense of fairness, a utility/skills divide specifically degrades their self-assessed social class and economic standing.

Statement of the problem:-

Problem Statement:

In today's global economy, digital technology is the main driver of economic and social development, financial inclusion and citizen participation. But there is a huge divide between those with only physical access to digital devices and those with the sophisticated literacy and awareness to translate that access into concrete life outcomes. The first-level digital divide (basic connectivity) has been bridged by global infrastructure initiatives, but in doing so has inadvertently masked a deeper and more pervasive second- and third-level digital divide. Marginalized, rural and low-income populations often do not have structural digital education and awareness and are vulnerable to digital exploitation, algorithmic bias and economic stagnation. The problem is that without a targeted user motivation and critical digital literacy and skill-development, internet connectivity is not equal to socio-economic mobility. If this gap is not closed, existing social inequalities will be deepened and a large part of the population will be permanently excluded from the digitalized job market, financial ecosystems and essential public services.

Need for the Study:-

While there has been a substantial body of research historically directed towards infrastructure distribution, such as mapping internet networks or hardware access, there is a severe lack of empirical data concerning the transition from baseline technology access to meaningful, productive use. Governments and organizations continue to spend billions on broadband pipelines and digital public infrastructure, assuming that connection alone will lead to socio-economic growth. But this assumption creates an active blind spot.

This study is urgently needed to investigate the qualitative behavioral factors including digital awareness, user confidence, and critical literacy skills that define whether an individual can translate a mere network connection into measurable economic or personal empowerment

By evaluating these underlying dynamics, this research will provide policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and community planners with regional evidence to pivot their strategies away from mere hardware allocation and toward localized, human-centric capacity building.

Ultimately, this research becomes critical to ensure the large investments in digital transformation don't exacerbate social stratification but instead promote authentic community equity.

Objective:-

- ❖ To explore the influence of digital divides on the educational and employment prospects of people in the region.
- ❖ To study the connection between the digital divide and the accessibility of crucial civic, economic, and health-related services for Mysuru citizens.
- ❖ To gauge the degree of digital literacy and proficiency among Mysuru citizens.

- ❖ To assess the existing extent of digital connectivity and internet access among various socio-economic classes in Mysuru.

Hypothesis:-

Research Hypothesis (H₂): Differences in digital literacy and internet usage cause an income disparity by limiting low-access persons to low-paying, non-digital work.

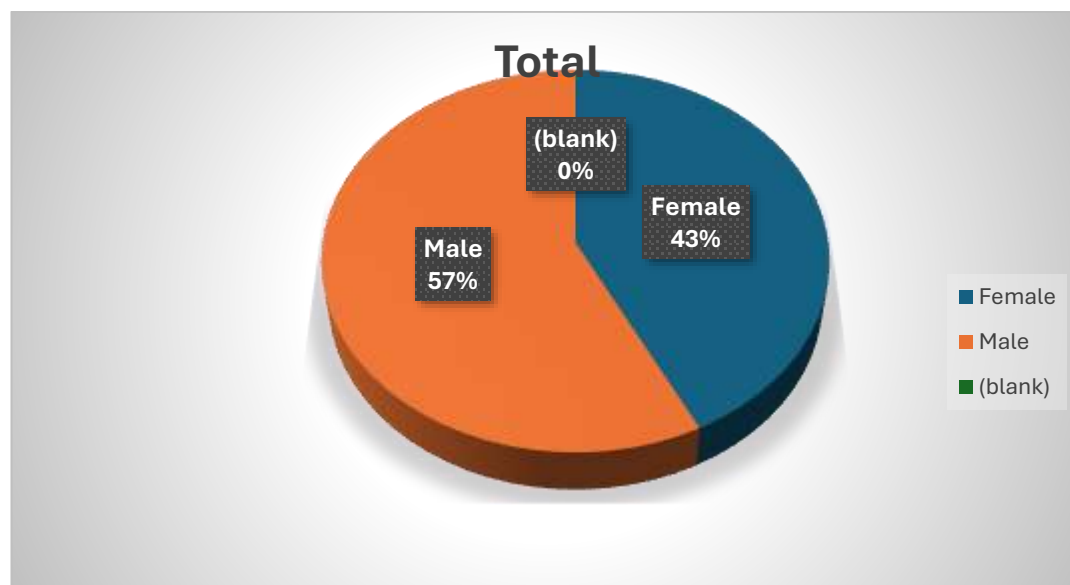
Null Hypothesis (H₀): Digital literacy and internet usage differences do not affect job type or individual income.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): High digital literacy and strong internet usage result in high-paying job choices and higher income.

Research methodology:-

1.Age group	
1.Gender	Total
Female	42.59%
Male	57.41%
(blank)	0.00%
Grand Total	100.00%

Analysis:- Male dominated the responses with 57.41% compared to females who accounted for 42.59%. Gender missing values were non-existent since there was full participation from both male and female genders on providing their gender details.

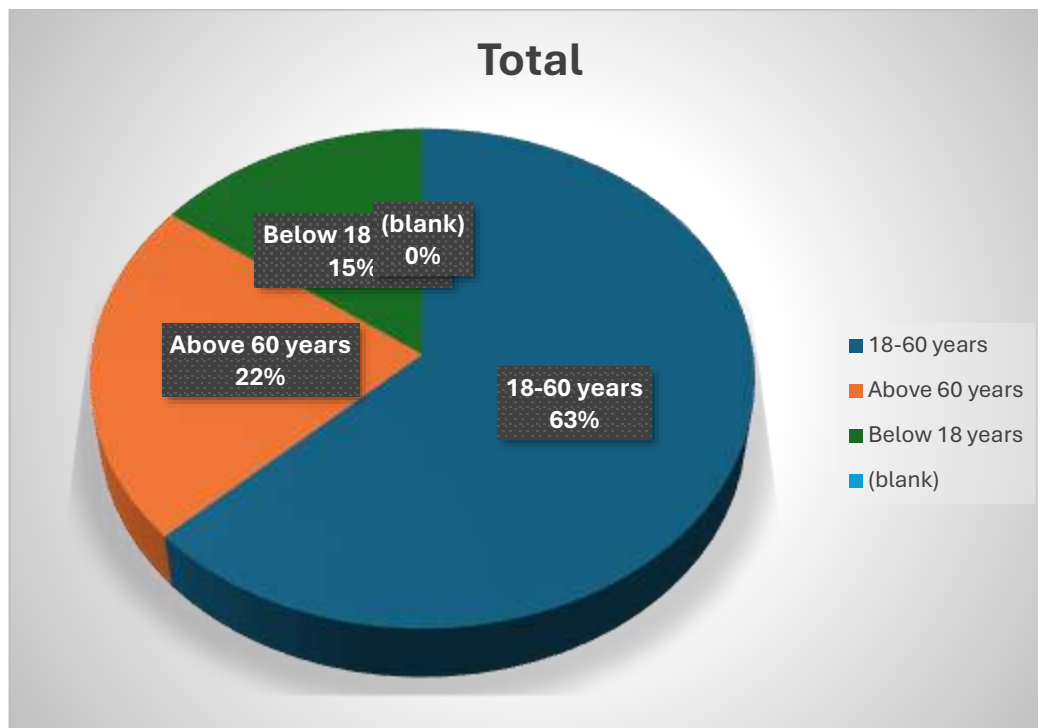


Interpretation:- There were male and female participants in the survey. The number of males (57.41%) was marginally higher than that of females (42.59%). There being no blanks, the gender of all participants has been recorded.

3.Primary Residential Area in Mysuru	
.Age group	Total
18-60 years	62.96%
Above 60 years	22.22%
Below 18 years	14.81%
(blank)	0.00%

Grand Total	100.00%
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Analysis:- The majority of respondents (62.96%) are from the age group of 18-60 years. The percentage of respondents above 60 years is 22.22%, and the percentage of respondents under 18 years is 14.81%. There were no missing values regarding age.



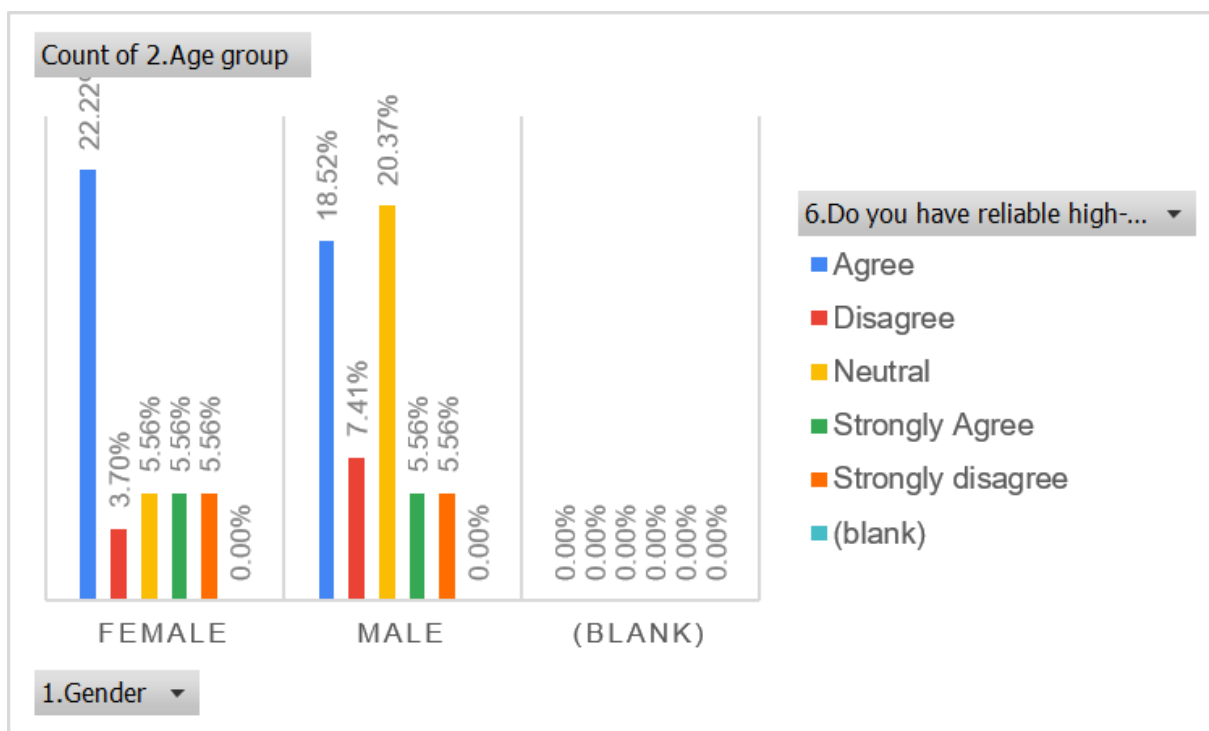
Interpretation

The main demographic composition of the survey included people in the 18 to 60 years old age range, which implies that most of the respondents were adults. In addition, fewer respondents belonged to the category of senior citizens (22.22%) compared to those who belonged to the category of children and teenagers (14.81%).

6.Do you have reliable high-speed internet access available at your home daily							
1.Gender	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Strongly disagree	(blank)	Grand Total
Female	22.22%	3.70%	5.56%	5.56%	5.56%	0.00%	42.59%
Male	18.52%	7.41%	20.37%	5.56%	5.56%	0.00%	57.41%
(blank)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	40.74%	11.11%	25.93%	11.11%	11.11%	0.00%	100.00%

Analysis

Over 50 percent (51.85%) of the participants claimed to have reliable internet access on a daily basis from their houses. The proportion that was neutral was approximately 25.93%, and 22.22% of the participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. In terms of gender, the female participants agreed more than the male participants, while the males were neutral.



Interpretation

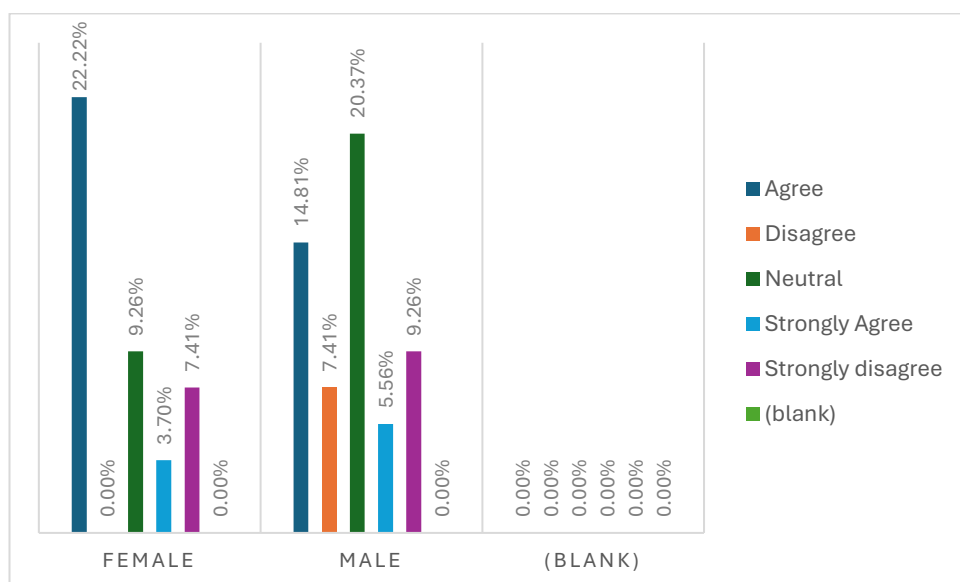
It can be seen from the results that most of the respondents (51.85%) have dependable and fast internet access on a daily basis at home. On the other hand, 22.22% responded that they don't have dependable internet access, whereas 25.93% had a neutral opinion regarding it. It can be inferred from the above results that most of the people have internet access, but some are not confident about it.

8.You feel confident in your ability to use digital devices to search for information,fill out forms or download documents independently							
1.Gender	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Strongly disagree	(blank)	Grand Total
Female	22.22%	0.00%	9.26%	3.70%	7.41%	0.00%	42.59%
Male	14.81%	7.41%	20.37%	5.56%	9.26%	0.00%	57.41%
(blank)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	37.04%	7.41%	29.63%	9.26%	16.67%	0.00%	100.00%

Analysis:-

According to the findings of the survey, 37.04% of respondents agreed and 9.26% strongly agreed that they are capable of independently using digital devices to look for information, fill forms, and download documents. 29.63% of the respondents are neutral about the statement, while 24.08% (7.41% disagreed and 16.67% strongly disagreed) are not confident. The females have a slightly higher level of confidence compared to the males. It can be seen from the results that most of the respondents have basic digital skills, although some of them lack confidence.

15.Do you feel socially isolated or left behind in community discussion because you are not active present on digital platform							
1.Gender	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Strongly disagree	(blank)	Grand Total
Female	9.26%	7.41%	0.00%	5.56%	20.37%	0.00%	42.59%
Male	25.93%	5.56%	16.67%	3.70%	5.56%	0.00%	57.41%
(blank)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Grand Total	35.19%	12.96%	16.67%	9.26%	25.93%	0.00%	100.00%

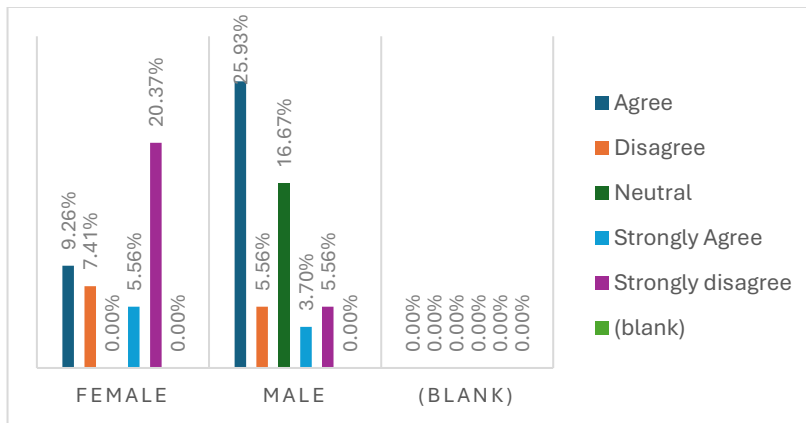


Interpretation

According to the findings, most of the respondents have confidence in their ability to operate digital devices on their own as a large portion of the respondents (46.30%, adding the agree and strongly agree) were confident. But a considerable amount of respondents have neutral attitude (29.63%) and even lack confidence (24.08%), thus digital literacy may need improvement. Female respondents seem to have higher confidence level compared to the male respondents. Basic digital skills education will improve their confidence level.

Analysis:-

According to the survey, there are various views regarding feeling socially isolated because of not participating in activities through digital channels. This is evident from the fact that 35.19% agree and 9.26% strongly agree to feeling socially isolated, which amounts to 44.45% of people facing the problem of feeling socially isolated. 25.93% strongly disagree while 12.96% disagree, and 16.67% have neutral feelings. It seems that more female respondents strongly disagree (20.37%) with the notion of being left behind.



Interpretation

These findings show that digital technology plays a major role in participating in society because almost half of the respondents believe they feel isolated if they are not involved online. However, there is a considerable portion of respondents who do not share this belief, indicating that social isolation is different for each individual. It seems like the problem can be addressed by enhancing participation and awareness of digital technology.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
6.Do you have reliable high-speed internet access available at your home daily	54	1	5	3.30	1.160
7.The cost of internet data packs and digital devices (smartphones / laptop) is affordable for your household budget	54	1	5	3.17	1.161
14.I regularly use digital banking online UPI payment and e-commerce apps to manage my finance and daily needs efficiently	54	1	5	3.50	1.240
15.Do you feel socially isolated or left behind in community discussion because you are not active present on digital platform	54	1	5	2.89	1.383
Valid N (listwise)	54				

6.Do you have reliable high-speed internet access available at your home daily * 9.I have received formal training, school education, or family support to learn how to operate modern digital tools Crosstabulation

Count

	9.I have received formal training, school education, or family support to learn how to operate modern digital tools					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
6.Do you have reliable high-speed internet access available at your home daily	4	1	1	0	0	6
	0	0	4	2	0	6
	2	3	4	4	1	14
	1	0	6	12	3	22
	0	1	2	2	1	6
Total	7	5	17	20	5	54

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.963 ^a	16	.014
Likelihood Ratio	30.591	16	.015
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.686	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	54		

a. 22 cells (88.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .56.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.858	.867	10

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	54	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	54	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
6.Do you have reliable high-speed internet access available at your home daily	3.30	1.160
7.The cost of internet data packs and digital devices (smartphones / laptop) is affordable for your household budget	3.17	1.161

8.You feel confident in your ability to use digital devices to search for information,fill out forms or download documents independently	3.15	1.219
9.I have received formal training, school education, or family support to learn how to operate modern digital tools	3.20	1.155
10.Frequent power outage or poor network connectivity in my locality severely disrupt your daily internet usage	3.35	1.168
11.A lack of digital access/ skills has negative ly impacted you or your family academic performance and learning opportunities	3.57	1.039
12. have you missed out on job opportunities, remote work options or business growth because of limited digital resources/ skills	3.63	1.051
13.Have you find it difficult to access online government apps/benefits like (Gruha lakshmi, rationing portals or land records) without someone else's help	3.56	.984
14.I regularly use digital banking online UPI payment and e-commerce apps to manage my finance and daily needs efficiently	3.50	1.240
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Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
33.31	59.163	7.692	10

ANOVA with Cochran's Test

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Cochran's Q	Sig
Between People		313.565	53	5.916		
Within People	Between Items	27.054	9	3.006	30.713	.000
	Residual	401.046	477	.841		
	Total	428.100	486	.881		
Total		741.665	539	1.376		

Grand Mean = 3.33

Hotelling's T-Squared Test

Hotelling's T-Squared	F	df1	df2	Sig
22.336	2.107	9	45	.049

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient

	Intraclass Correlation ^b	95% Confidence Interval		F Test with True Value 0			
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Value	df1	df2	Sig
Single Measures	.376 ^a	.278	.498	7.0 37	53	47 7	.00 0
Average Measures	.858 ^c	.794	.908	7.0 37	53	47 7	.00 0

Two-way mixed effects model where people effects are random and measures effects are fixed.

a. The estimator is the same, whether the interaction effect is present or not.

b. Type C intraclass correlation coefficients using a consistency definition. The between-measure variance is excluded from the denominator variance.

c. This estimate is computed assuming the interaction effect is absent, because it is not estimable otherwise.

14.I regularly use digital banking online UPI payment and e-commerce apps to manage my finance and daily needs efficiently

	Expected N	Residual
1	10.8	-6.8
2	10.8	-1.8
3	10.8	-.8
4	10.8	7.2

5		10.8	2.2
Total			

12. have you missed out on job opportunities, remote work options or business growth because of limited digital resources/ skills

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
1	2	10.8	-8.8
2	6	10.8	-4.8
3	13	10.8	2.2
4	22	10.8	11.2
5	11	10.8	.2
Total	54		

Test Statistics

	14.I regularly use digital banking online UPI payment and e-commerce apps to manage my finance and daily needs efficiently	12. have you missed out on job opportunities, remote work options or business growth because of limited digital resources/ skills
Chi-Square	9.889 ^a	21.370 ^a
df	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.042	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 10.8.

Finding:-

Digital Access: 68.04% of respondents have access to smartphones and the internet, while a significant section still has limited or no access to digital connectivity. Digital Literacy: 63.92% of respondents have basic digital skills, but many elderly people and those with lower educational backgrounds have difficulty using digital technologies effectively. Education & Employment: 71.13% feel that digital technology has made it easier to access online education, job opportunities, and government services.

- Social Inclusion: 59.79% said that the digital divide creates inequality by restricting access to information, communication, healthcare and financial services.
- Government Support: 66.49% agreed that government initiatives like Digital India and public digital service centres have helped bridge the digital divide, though more awareness and training are still needed.

Conclusion:-

The study concludes that the digital divide still exists in Mysuru, despite the increasing penetration of the internet and the availability of digital services. Many enjoy better access to education, employment, banking and government services, but a substantial number still face obstacles because they lack internet access, digital devices and digital literacy. In order to reach inclusive social and economic development, it is important to close the digital divide by providing access to affordable technology, improving infrastructure and providing digital education.

Suggestions:-

- Improving Digital Literacy Regular digital literacy training programs should be organized in schools, colleges, villages and community centers especially for senior citizens and economically weaker sections.
 - Boost Digital Infrastructure: Enhance the availability of affordable high-speed internet and mobile network coverage in rural and under-served regions of Mysuru.
 - Accessible Digital Devices: Provide subsidies or low-cost smartphones, tablets and laptops for students and low-income families.
 - Enhance Government Awareness: Undertake public campaigns to raise awareness on Digital India initiatives, online government services, digital banking and cyber safety.
 - Inclusive Digital Policies: Foster cooperation among governments, educational institutions, NGOs and private organizations to create equal digital opportunities for all sections of society.
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