

Review Form 3

Journal Name:	South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics
Manuscript Number:	Ms_SAJ SSE_128947
Title of the Manuscript:	Exploring the Gendered Digital Divide in Haryana District (India)
Type of the Article	

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PART 1: Comments

	Reviewer's comment	Author's Feedback <i>(Please correct the manuscript and highlight that part in the manuscript. It is mandatory that authors should write his/her feedback here)</i>
Please write a few sentences regarding the importance of this manuscript for the scientific community. A minimum of 3-4 sentences may be required for this part.		
Is the title of the article suitable? (If not please suggest an alternative title)		
Is the abstract of the article comprehensive? Do you suggest the addition (or deletion) of some points in this section? Please write your suggestions here.		
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Review Form 3

<p>Optional/General comments</p>	<p>The study highlights a pertinent issue of the gender-specific digital divide, which is integral to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). Its focus on understanding disparities in ICT access, affordability, and skills among women is timely and relevant. The collection of data from four districts in Haryana—selected based on the SDG index for quality education—adds a regional perspective that enhances the study's contextual depth. By using mobile phones as a proxy for ICT and employing parameters like ownership, employment status, and skill levels, the study adopts a practical and measurable approach. Furthermore, the application of the chi-square test with significant p-values (<0.05) strengthens the statistical validity of its findings.</p> <p>However, the study has several limitations that affect its comprehensiveness. First, the sample size of 120 respondents across four districts may be insufficient to generalize findings beyond the study area. A larger sample size could yield more robust and representative results. Additionally, the reliance on mobile phones as the sole proxy for ICT access overlooks the broader spectrum of digital technologies, such as laptops, internet access, and e-learning platforms, which could provide a more holistic understanding of the digital divide. While the focus on gender is justified, the study does not consider the intersectionality of other social factors like caste, income level, and the rural-urban divide, which may exacerbate or mediate gender disparities.</p> <p>The study's emphasis on employment status as a determinant of affordability is logical, but it fails to account for other socioeconomic factors, such as household income, government subsidies, or alternative support systems, that might influence affordability. Moreover, while the selection of districts based on the SDG index provides some context, focusing on only four districts limits the study's geographical scope and may overlook broader state-wide or national trends. The methodological approach also has gaps, such as the lack of clarity regarding respondent selection, raising concerns about potential sampling bias. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data for ICT skills may not always yield accurate insights, as such responses can be influenced by subjective perceptions.</p> <p>The interpretation of results is another area where improvements are needed. While the chi-square test indicates statistical significance, the study does not discuss effect sizes or the strength of relationships, which limits understanding of the practical implications of the findings. A more detailed analysis of the magnitude of these disparities would provide valuable context for policy and intervention strategies.</p> <p>To enhance the study, several improvements are suggested. Increasing the sample size would ensure greater representation and improve the generalizability of findings. Expanding the definition of ICT access to include other tools and platforms, such as laptops, internet connectivity, and digital applications, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the digital divide. Additionally, incorporating an intersectional analysis that examines how gender disparities intersect with caste, income, and rural-urban divides could yield deeper insights into the systemic nature of these inequalities.</p> <p>The study could also benefit from exploring the policy context by discussing the role of government initiatives, such as "Digital India" or state-level programs in Haryana, in addressing the digital divide. This would help in identifying gaps and opportunities for policy intervention. A mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative data with qualitative insights from interviews or focus groups could enrich the findings and provide nuanced perspectives on the challenges faced by women.</p> <p>To address issues with data reliability, the study should consider developing standardized assessments for ICT skills instead of relying solely on self-reports. This would provide a more objective evaluation of skill levels. Expanding the geographical scope of the study to include additional districts or comparing Haryana's findings with other states could highlight unique regional challenges and successes. Furthermore, actionable policy recommendations, such as implementing targeted digital literacy programs for women, providing subsidized ICT access, or linking employment initiatives with ICT training, would enhance the study's practical value. Conducting a longitudinal study to track changes over time could also offer insights into the long-term effectiveness of interventions.</p>	
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PART 2:

	<p>Reviewer's comment</p>	<p>Author's comment (if agreed with reviewer, correct the manuscript and highlight that part in the manuscript. It is mandatory that authors should write his/her feedback here)</p>
<p>Are there ethical issues in this manuscript?</p>	<p><i>(If yes, Kindly please write down the ethical issues here in details)</i></p>	

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