

The Strategy for Promoting Women's Digital Literacy, Obstacles, and Realizing their Potential in the Digital Age

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Abstract

This research article examines the concept of digital literacy among women, their communication and mobility abilities. The author analyzes the insufficient digital integration of women and conducts an analysis to identify the main aspects of this strategy, including the development of educational programs, the organization of training courses and workshops on digital skills, as well as enhancing the integration of women into the digital era.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Internet, Digital Technologies, Educational Programs, Social Media

The modern digital age is accompanied by the dynamic development of technologies that influence all spheres of people's lives and activities, including social and political processes. However, despite the wide opportunities provided, many women still experience difficulties in using mobile phones and cannot use social networks. Moreover, in the era of digital technologies, it is very important to pay attention to this, to build the potential and opportunities for women, as failure to understand and recognize this gender gap threatens the development and safety of women. Studying this topic allows us to determine the optimal ways of integrating women into the digital age and the opportunity to gain financial freedom through social networks.

Expanding access to digital technologies for women will expand their economic opportunities and improve their position in the labor market, especially considering the impact of digital transformation and automation on employment opportunities - a study conducted in 30 countries showed that women's jobs are more at risk of automation, namely 70 percent or more.¹ If another 600 million women and girls could gain access to online services worldwide, this could lead to an increase in GDP of \$18 billion.² In order to ensure equality and protection of women's rights in the digital environment, it is important to pay attention to international legal standards aimed at

¹ Dabla-Norris, E., & Kochhar, K. (2018, November 16). *Women, technology and the future of work*. International Monetary Fund Blog.

² Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament. (2018). *The underlying causes of the digital gender gap and possible solutions for enhanced digital inclusion of women and girls*.

creating a more inclusive digital society in which women have equal opportunities in the field of digital literacy and access to information and communication technologies.

International legal standards aimed at ensuring equal digital rights for women include a number of documents and treaties developed and adopted by international organizations and member states, such as: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provide the foundations for protecting women's rights in the digital environment. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The SDGs include Goal 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Within this goal, there are indicators, such as increasing women's access to information and communication technologies and reducing the gender gap in digital literacy.

The Digital Skills Initiative: This initiative, supported by the UN, aims to improve digital literacy among various population groups, including women. It provides resources and training on basic IT skills. The Global Pact for Digital Education: This initiative calls for the development and implementation of strategies to improve digital literacy and access to education using digital technologies, which may also include a particular focus on the gender aspect. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU): The ITU works on developing standards and recommendations for digital literacy, including measures to eliminate gender inequalities in this area. This includes conducting research, sharing experiences, and developing guidance documents.

However, as practice shows, in many countries, including Europe and Central Asia, 52 million women do not have access to mobile internet.³ Compared to men, women in the ECA region are four percent less likely to use mobile internet, although they are two percent more likely to own mobile phones. With a few exceptions, women in this region are also less likely to use the Internet for personal use.⁴ One of the main reasons for this gap, apart from the fact that women lack digital skills, is that they are also subject to restrictions from their families due to existing stereotypes and "cultural norms". For example, some parents, when raising children, are stricter with girls when it comes to mobile phones or the use of social networks, considering this "unacceptable" for a girl. Moreover, social norms and gender biases in educational materials and methods, lack of support from family and teachers often discourage girls and women from choosing STEM programs and professional activities in these fields.⁵

Today, millions of women are mastering SMM to gain financial freedom simply by having a phone or computer nearby. Many women, while sitting at home, are earning a stable income by mastering these skills. However, not everyone understands

³ GSMA. (2021). *Connected Women*. The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2021.

⁴ International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

⁵ Directorate General for Internal Policies, European Parliament. (2012). Women in ICT.

this as an "opportunity", or their partner's ban on blogging or using social networks is a stumbling block to realizing women's potential. Another important factor of alienation is general access to education and literacy levels in society. Women with secondary education are six times more likely to use the Internet than women with primary or lower levels of education.⁶ Therefore, it is necessary to raise awareness and create digital literacy campaigns that can expand the understanding of the functionality of devices, the Internet, and the prospects opened by connecting to the network. Programs aimed at developing digital technology skills in both formal and informal education, as well as gender-oriented training for teachers, can reduce the gender gap in digital literacy.

However, there is the problem of cyber violence, which represents various forms of negative behavior in the digital space aimed at infringing on the rights and dignity of others, and this problem also affects women and girls. This form of violence is difficult to track and combat, but certain measures can be taken to improve safety. These measures include promoting synergy between various stakeholders to raise awareness of this issue and change the public attitude that normalizes gender-based violence on the Internet, ensuring the development of legislation, programs, applications and social networks with a gender perspective, as well as increasing the contribution of women leaders and activists in developing Internet and social media standards.⁷ Despite this, phones and internet skills still increase women's sense of safety, especially if they return late from work, and having a phone in the presence of a suspicious person is especially important.

Moreover, in order to attract girls to the ICT sector, the "GAP" Women's IT Club was created, initiated by the Ministry for the Development of Information Technologies and Communications in partnership with the Technology Park of Software Products and Information Technologies (IT Park).⁸ An event called "Digital Generation Girls 2022" was held, where more than 3,000 girls participated and were trained in mobile programming, digital design, SMM, PR and business analytics. The goal of this project is to eliminate the gender barrier and stereotypes that ICT is exclusively mastered by men, with a call for girls to become not only users, but also, as noted, authors of digital solutions.

Conclusion

Ensuring equal digital rights for women is an important aspect of the harmonious development of society. International legal standards play a key role in this process, and their strengthening and improvement is necessary to achieve equality

⁶ World Wide Web Foundation. Women's Rights Online. Translating Access into Empowerment.

⁷ Stauffer, B. (2020). As online gender-based violence booms, governments drag their feet. Human Rights Watch.

⁸ Expanding women's participation in the ICT sphere.yuz.uz

and protect women's rights in the digital age. The political scientists, scientific communities, the private sector, and international organizations should strengthen business relationships for greater integration of women into the digital age. In Uzbekistan, many reforms have also been adopted in recent years that encourage girls and women to build their capacity in the field of digital technologies. In Navoi, a conference was held on the topic "The Role of Women in the Sustainable Development of Science, Technology and Innovation in Society", which focused on promoting girls in scientific and innovative activities, initiatives implemented to support women, creating conditions for female students to master professions for free, further enhancing their authority in cultural, educational, political and economic activities.

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