

**Research Article**

## **Empowerment through Digital Inclusion in an Era of Globalization**

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Date of Submission: 18/09/2020; Date of Acceptance: 12/12/2020

### **ABSTRACT**

Globalization has accelerated the process of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT due to the digital revolution has transformed societies, both: developed as well as developing. This process has been conceptualized as so-called 'informationalism' by Manuel Castells. The government of India has initiated digital initiatives as an inclusionary and empowerment measure for the marginalized sections of Indian society, especially for the rural population where the majority of the population till date live and derive their livelihood from agriculture in spite of a substantial increase in the tertiary sector. The proposed paper looks upon digital inclusion through CSCs at the grass-root level in rural India as a process of empowerment. CSC is a program initiated by the government of India under the e-Governance plan to provide a gateway to the rural and urban citizens/netizens, where they can receive various services provided by different departments of the Central and State governments. CSCs have been introduced under the PPP model. One of the objectives of the CSC is to promote entrepreneurship among the rural educated youth by giving them an employment opportunity of becoming the Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE). VLE as an owner of the CSC provides various government services to the rural and urban citizens by reaching the doors of the so far unreached due to a variety of reasons. CSCs role in the inclusion of the marginalized and excluded groups has been examined within the framework of a digital governance model. The paper is based on primary data generated from the two villages: one located in the Aligarh district and another in the Bhadohi district of Uttar Pradesh.

**Keywords:** CSC, Digital inclusion, Digital governance, Informationalism, Social exclusion

## SECTION-I

Globalization (Giddens, 1999; Held and McGrew, 2000, 2002) has played a role of strengthening the international financial institution and a changing geopolitical landscape through an ideological and policy shift through a technological revolution by ideological and policy shift in an economic, ideological, political and institutional project (Kennett, 2008, pp. 3-4).

Swyngedouw (2005) has pointed out that three-tier governance organizations are contributing to a rearrangement of the relationship between the state, market, and civil society. Which involves the externalization of some state functions through deregulation, privatization, and decentralization. The degradation of governance to incorporate the local practices and establishment and the improvement in the regulatory functions and other roles to supranational levels of governance, such as the EU, IMF, and WTO. The structure of governance is supplemented by polycentric outfits and horizontal networks of association between civil society, private, and state actors (Swyngedouw, 2005) functioning within that Hajer (2003) has mentioned as an 'institutional void'.

Both Globalization and Governance are interrelated with each other to shape the other. Globalization should be understood not as a dynamic, unavoidable power, and 'ascribed a sort of ubiquitous causal agency which has affected states and upon the structure of governance, yet rather as a process which unevenly and unexpectedly shapes the 'field of action' of governance structures. Domestic governance keeps on playing a key role in steering and supporting, to differing degrees, the pace, magnitude, and effect of global cooperation (Tickell and Peck, 2003, p. 163).

As Lake (2000) contends, globalization itself 'is the result of a specific type of governance established in the domestic political economy of the earlier industrializers' (Lake, 2000, p. 32).

Nonetheless, as power has become more diffuse inside 'an undeniably intricate structure of socio-economic forces and levels of governance' so the frontier of states to influence and take an interest in global governance has become more differentiated (Cerny, 1999, p. 190).

States have very different ability as far as practicing power inside and universally (Jessop, 2004). Be that as it may, in a global era, states with the aptitude to exercise power both economically and politically ought not to be translated as the 'unchallenged experts of the global economy'. Nor should we analyse that encountering the 'end of territoriality'. Generally for understanding contemporary politics and policymaking is that they include processes that are dynamic, differentiated, and dialectical (Kennett, 2008, pp. 12-13).

For Anthony Giddens, the conceptual essence of globalization is ‘time-space distancing’. Reverberating a shared factor in a lot, if not all, globalization theories, Giddens defines time-space distancing as ‘the intensification of overall social relations which connect far off regions so that nearby happenings are moulded by occasions happening numerous miles away and the other way around’ – social relations are ‘lifted out’ from the local context of interaction and rebuilt across space and time (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). In a particular variation of this spatio-worldly theme, David Harvey, in his now exemplary 1990 study. *The Condition of Postmodernity* contends that globalization speaks to another explosion of ‘time-space compression’ created by the very elements of industrialist improvement. While Harvey’s idea is like that of Giddens, the previous’ includes a normative critique of the global capitalist order and its restructuring whereas the latter would seem to be almost celebratory. What Harvey implies by time-space pressure is the procedure whereby time is reorganized in such a way as to reduce the constraints of space, and vice-versa (Robinson, pp. 133-134).

The structure decides the base on the other hand with the time the society has transformed from the mode of production to mode of development. In the mode of development, society has transformed from the appropriation of surplus labor to the development. A technological paradigm is a particular way of organizing the material base of society across (potentially) the full range of contexts, not just the economy. A technological paradigm is characterized by the most advanced technologies and methods (the nucleus), but in the long term it alters the organization of the entire base of the society. Under industrialism, agriculture did not lose its importance (Stadler, 2006, p. 29). Manuel Castells in his theory of informationalism has evolved in the trajectory from the mode of production to the mode of development to informationalism. Informationalism, according to him, instant from post-industrial society. The features of informationalism are a) Self-Expansion, b) Recombination and c) Distributional flexibility were conspicuously absent in the post-industrial society (Castells, 2010).

The present paper highlights the empowerment of rural citizens because one of the CSC Project Initiated by the Government of India in the year 2006. One CSC per six villages. With it, progress the Government initiated the CSC 2.0 Scheme in August 2015. To improve accessibility of technology in providing digital services to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country (GoI, 2015). The project which is based upon the network of three tier structure. In which the VLE was the rural educated youth who run the CSC centre to provide various kind of services to the citizens. The CSC scheme has a 3-tier implementation framework as follows. At the ground level Village Level Entrepreneur to help the citizens. At the second level is the Service Center Agency to look after the network structure of the VLE Center. At the third level would be the State

Designated Agency (SDA) - to facilitate the state schemes in the best possible way through SCA to VLE for the citizens.

### **Objective of CSC**

1. A CSC is an IT enable front-end delivery points for Government, private and social sector services to rural citizens of India in an integrated and seamless manner.
2. A CSC is managed by Local unemployed, educated youth providing opportunities for direct and indirect employment.
3. CSC aims to provide access to information, backed with relevant infrastructure and end-to-end services that would allow the rural population, the opportunities to enhance their quality of life (GOI(DIT), May 2017).

The idea of informationalism or information society has been buttressed by other social scientists for example Herbert Schiller's notion of market, J. Habermass role of a public sphere in democracy, and the notion of surveillance in the writing of Anthony Giddens. The theory of informationalism is based on the fast pace of change in the society in which the world is moving towards information where the main core is 'Knowledge upon knowledge itself is the main source of productivity'. The structure of network society was created by the intersecting nodes which connect the individual. But in the virtual world or in network society some get connected and some not, those remain unconnected or disconnected due to whatsoever reason become part of the digital divide process.

The digital divide is a process in which some actors are unable to access digital resources due to various reasons. Not only is digital divide a process, where the vulnerable groups are denied access to digital resources, but also they are becoming the victim of the corruption process incurred in the e. Governance system. Thus the present paper successfully highlights the process of corruption indulge in the approach of e. Governance. The plausible explanation for becoming the victim of such vulnerability may be the caste, religion and may be many more reasons.

## **SECTION-II**

### **Area of Study**

The Village Thakurganj is located at 270 54' N latitude and 780 5' E longitudes in the Jawan Sikanderpur Block of Aligarh District. The demographic composition of the village is divided into different castes and religions (Uttar Pradesh, C. 2011a). The name of the other village is Phulganj. It is situated in Lat 25°23 'N. and Long 82°34 'E in Bhadohi District located at the distance about thirty miles from west of Varanasi. The

town of Bhadohi, which gives its name to the Pargana and the Tahsil, twelve miles north-east of Gopiganj and about three miles south of the river Varuna. It is connected with Jaunpur by a provincial highway and with Gopiganj by a metalled road running via Gyanpur connecting the road from Bhadohi to Suriawan and Parsipur (Uttar Pradesh, C. 2011b). The primary data has been taken from the Post-Doctoral report, submitted to ICSSR on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019. The empirical data is collected through the inductive logic of inquiry. It has been collected through the non-probability sampling method. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been generated from the two villages. From each village hundred respondents were collected based on Judgmental sampling. The schedule is used as a technique for the collection of quantitative data. The paper includes four tables generated through primary data and the two tables i.e., Table 1 and 4, which is generated through the secondary data by using district census handbooks of each village separately. The paper includes two case studies. Case study number one is from the village Phulganj (Sudo name) and the case study number two is from the village Thakurganj (Sudo name).

### First Village: Thakurganj

The Table 1.1, shows that the total number of respondents and their caste breakup and caste categories are such that it includes Eighty four number of the respondents from the Hindu religion and sixteen respondent from the Muslim religion. The representation of the respondents in the study is like Forty one respondents are from the high caste category which includes the caste like Baniya, Brahman and Thakur. Thirty three respondents are from the backward caste category which includes the caste like Alvi, Alvi, Bhagel, Bharbhuj, Bhurji, Faqeer, Kumhar, Lodhe, Muneeri and Rabbani. Respondents from Dalits include the Dhobi, Harijan, Jatav and Koili.

Table 1.2, shows that there are various caste categories that availed the services. There are 31.18% of the respondents from the high caste category that have availed the various services from the CSC. There are 34.41% of the people those who have availed the services from the backward caste category. There are 34.41% of the people those who have availed the services from the Dalit Caste category. Thus the table shows that CSC is playing a convenient role for the villagers in availing the online services. The three

**Table 1: Population of Thakurganj**

Name of village	Area of village in hectares	No. of house holds	Total population (including institutional and houseless population)			C D Block-Population in the age-group 0-6		
			Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Chherat Sudhal	690.90	1049	6376	3398	2978	907	491	416

Source: (District Census Handbook)

**Table 1.1: Religion and Caste of Respondents**

Caste Categories and Jatis	Hindu	Muslim	Grand Total
<b>High Caste</b>	<b>41</b>		<b>41</b>
Baniya	8		8
Brahman	5		5
Thakur	28		28
<b>Backward Caste</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>33</b>
ALVI		4	4
Bhagel	4		4
Bharbhuj		4	4
Bhurji		4	4
Faqeer		2	2
Kumhar	12		12
Lodhe	1		1
Muneeri		1	1
Rabbani		1	1
<b>Dalits</b>	<b>26</b>		<b>26</b>
<b>Dhobi</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>5</b>
Harijan	6		6
Jatav	11		11
Koili	4		4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: (Karimi, A. 2019, p. 45)

**Table 1.2: Caste Wise Services Availed From CSC**

Services availed	Caste categories			Total
	High caste	Backward caste	Dalits	
<b>Adhar card</b>	7.53%	16.13%	8.60%	<b>32.26%</b>
Birth certificate	1.08%	2.15%	0.00%	3.23%
<b>Caste certificate</b>	1.08%	3.23%	8.60%	<b>12.90%</b>
Death certificate	1.08%	1.08%	2.15%	4.30%
Domicile certificate	1.08%	1.08%	4.30%	6.45%
<b>Income certificate</b>	3.23%	2.15%	5.38%	<b>10.75%</b>
Khasra/khatauni	3.23%	0.00%	0.00%	3.23%
Online exam form	1.08%	0.00%	0.00%	1.08%
Online pension	0.00%	0.00%	1.08%	1.08%
Online ration	2.15%	3.23%	2.15%	7.53%
Online scholarship	3.23%	4.30%	0.00%	7.53%
Pan card	6.45%	1.08%	2.15%	9.68%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>31.18%</b>	<b>34.41%</b>	<b>34.41%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: (Karimi, 2019, p. 47)

most frequently used services are Aadhaar, caste and income. 32.26% of the respondent have availed the services of generating Aadhaar. 12.90% of the respondent have availed the services of generating caste certificate. 10.75% of the respondents have availed the service of generating income certificate from the CSC.

The Table 1.3, shows that 16.67% of the respondent has paid twice the actual amount for availing the service from High caste. Whereas 40% of the respondent has paid twice of actual amount from the backward caste. Whereas 26.67% of the respondent has paid twice of actual amount. In total 83.33% of respondents have paid twice the actual amount. 3.33% of respondents has paid thrice or more times of the actual amount. While 13.33% of the respondents has paid the actual amount.

**Table 1.3: Caste wise extra amount paid for availing the service of Adhaar**

Services availed	Caste	Extra amount paid			Total
		Actual amount	Twice of actual amount	Thrice or more times of the actual amount	
Adhar card	High caste	6.67%	16.67%	0.00%	23.33%
	Backward caste	6.67%	40.00%	3.33%	50.00%
	Dalits	0.00%	26.67%	0.00%	26.67%
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>13.33%</b>	<b>83.33%</b>	<b>3.33%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: (Karimi, 2019, p. 47)

## Second Village: Phulganj

Table 2.1, shows that the Eighty one number of respondents from the Hindu religion and nineteen are from the Muslim religion. The respondents belong to the different caste categories. Respondents from High caste represent nine. It consists of the caste like Mishra and Rai. Respondents from Backward caste represent Seventy one. It includes the caste like Ansari, Bhatt, Chauhan, Lohar, Maurya, Nai, Patel, Prajapati, Shah, Yadav. Respondents from Dalits include the Chamar, Musahar and Saroj.

Table 2.2, shows that there are various caste categories that availed the services. There are 3.91% of the respondents from high caste categories that have availed the various services from the CSC. There are 60.94% of the respondents who have availed the services from the backward caste categories. There are 35.16% of the respondents those who have availed the services from the Dalit Caste categories. Thus the table shows that because of the CSC. The villagers are convenient for availing the services. 20.31% of the respondent has availed the services of making aadhaar. 17.19% of the respondent has availed the service of making caste certificate. 10.94% of the respondent has availed the service of making income certificates. Thus the table shows that the

**Table 2: Population of Phulganj**

Name of village	Area of village in hectares	No. of house holds	Total population (including institutional and houseless population)			C D Block-Population in the age-group 0-6		
			Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Ahamadpur Phulwariya	56.22	347 2	296	1,201	1,095	363	193	170

Source: District Census Handbook

**Table 2.1: Religion, Caste Breakup and caste categories**

Caste categories and Caste Breakup	Religion		Total
	Hindu	Muslim	
<b>High caste</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>9</b>
Mishra	1		1
Rai	8		8
<b>Backward caste</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>71</b>
Ansari		9	9
Bhatt		9	9
Chauhan	14		14
Lohar	2		2
Maurya	12		12
Nai	11		11
Patel	4		4
Prajapati	8		8
Shah		1	1
Yadav	1		1
<b>Dalits</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>20</b>
Chamar	10		10
Musahar	2		2
Saroj	8		8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: (Karimi, 2019, p. 91)

various kinds of services are available by the respondents from the village. When the Table 2, and the Table 2.1, we see the awareness rate among the Dalit caste categories is 18% but the services they have availed is 35.16%.

The Table 2.3, shows that 7.69% of the respondents have paid twice the actual amount for availing the service from High caste. Whereas from backward caste 3.85% of the respondents have paid twice the actual amount. 46.15% of the respondents have paid twice the actual amount and 7.69% of the respondents have paid thrice or more times of the actual amount. In total 19.23% of respondent has paid twice of actual amount

**Table 2.2: Caste wise services availed from CSC**

Services availed	Caste categories			Total
	High caste	Backward caste	Dalits	
<b>Adhar card</b>	1.56%	11.72%	7.03%	<b>20.31%</b>
Bunkar card	0.00%	0.78%	0.00%	0.78%
<b>Caste certificate</b>	0.78%	13.28%	3.13%	<b>17.19%</b>
DD online	0.00%	0.00%	0.78%	0.78%
Domicile certificate	0.00%	7.03%	2.34%	9.38%
IGRS	0.00%	0.00%	0.78%	0.78%
<b>Income certificate</b>	0.00%	8.59%	2.34%	<b>10.94%</b>
Khasra/Khatauni	0.00%	0.00%	0.78%	0.78%
Online exam form	0.00%	1.56%	3.13%	4.69%
Online pension	0.00%	0.78%	0.00%	0.78%
Online railway ticket	0.00%	0.00%	0.78%	0.78%
Online ration	0.78%	3.91%	1.56%	6.25%
Online scholarship	0.00%	10.94%	8.59%	19.53%
Online work related to education	0.00%	0.00%	1.56%	1.56%
Pan card	0.78%	1.56%	0.78%	3.13%
Work related with photocopy/print out	0.00%	0.78%	1.56%	2.34%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3.91%</b>	<b>60.94%</b>	<b>35.16%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: (Karimi, 2019, p. 93)

**Table 2.3: Caste wise extra amount paid for availing the services of Adhaar**

Services availed	Caste	Extra amount paid			Total
		Actual amount	Twice of actual amount	Thrice or more times of the actual amount	
Adhar card	High caste	0.00%	7.69%	0.00%	7.69%
	Backward caste	3.85%	46.15%	7.69%	57.69%
	Dalits	7.69%	19.23%	7.69%	34.62%
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>11.54%</b>	<b>73.08%</b>	<b>15.38%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: (Karimi, A. 2019, p. 94)

from Dalit, 7.69% of respondent have paid thrice or more times of the actual amount whereas 7.69% of the respondent have paid actual amount from the Dalit caste category.

### Case Study 1: (From Phulganj)

Lalit Yadav, a final year student of diploma in polytechnic was not interested in pursuing a job. He did not want to leave his village or work for any multinational company. He was twenty-one years old and the eldest child of the family, thus making him the family's

breadwinner and responsible for handling farming of the crops. He had two younger brothers who looked after a small grocery shop. To utilize the benefits of his qualification, he decided to open a small internet café. Meanwhile, he came to know of the Common Service Center (CSC), a scheme by the government of India, which aimed at providing the facility of creating official documents and other information regarding government schemes to the citizens. A Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) was required to open a CSC. For becoming a VLE, he should have been a rural educated youth who would act as a mediator in facilitating citizens and informing them about the government services available. He would need to apply through the online registration portal of CSC. After getting approval from the concerned department, Lalit opened the center in the village at his place. He informed the investigator that there were various kinds of services available on the portal of CSC, like aadhaar, passport, PAN (permanent account number) card, insurance, other e-district services of various departments like revenue, Urban Development, Health and Family Welfare, Panchayati Raj, Social Welfare along with Department of Women Welfare and Child Development. These departments provided services like online cast certificate, income certificate, domicile certificate, *khasra* and *khatauni*, birth certificate, death certificate, online widow application, online financial assistance for women under the dowry scheme, online legal aid to women in dowry harassment, online application for the marriage grant of widow's daughter, online scheme to promote widow marriage, online application for marriage grants, online copy of *kutumb* register, etc. Other online services were also provided, namely Education Cyber Gram Yojana, Women Digital Literacy Programme, Legal Literacy Project, NIELIT Services, NIOS Services, Online English Speaking Course, Cricket Strokes (Learn Cricket Online), Basic Computer Course, Tally Certified Program, Tally Kaushal Praman Patra, e-Pashu Chikitsha, CSC NIELIT Center, NIELIT-Accreditation Center, E-LEGAL SERVICES, i-Scholar i30 IIT-JEE 2017 1yr Online Course, Competitive Exam Prep-IIT/PMT/Banking, Banking Services Digi Pay, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), B2C Services like Bill Payment, VLE Bazaar, Agriculture, Travel Services online booking for Bus, Airline, IRCTC, and hotel booking.

Lalit told the investigator that he had mentioned these services on the shop's name board for the awareness and convenience of the villagers. He was happy to be a VLE in the village. He said that at present, his CSC center had enough workload of online form filling and other work for which he needed workers to assist him. He had employed two more educated youngsters at his center. Further, he added that there were many farmer applicants who had applied for availing the government scheme that waived off farmer's loans. However, in case of a spelling error in any legal document such as an aadhaar card or a bank passbook of the applicant, they would not be eligible for availing CSC's services. Thus, the question of taking responsibility arose: should the government be

blamed for not being precise with its process of documentation, or should the rural illiterate be held responsible for not having the correct details? The other question to be probed was whether the vulnerable were empowered at all, or were they made more vulnerable with the digitization program in light of the system's own inefficiency to provide accurate and error-free documents to the citizens?

### **Case Study 2: (From Thakur Ganj)**

Rajendra Singh, a villager from Thakurganj belonged to the *Koili* scheduled caste. His socioeconomic status placed him above the poverty line. He lived with his two sons and three daughters in a semi-*pucca* house. His daughter Sita was a student of tenth grade, and Rajendra Singh seemed optimistic about her education. Sita went to the Common Service Center for the online submission of her examination form. She also went to Jan Seva Kendra along with her school friends, which happened to be in the proximity of her school. CSC was not only helpful to her but to all her schoolmates as well, who filled online forms for the board exam, got them printed, and then applied for an online scholarship. She was excited to share that with the help of these provisions, she could easily apply online for her admission into colleges for further studies. She wanted to become a doctor and be able to support her father financially. She was happy because of the CSC in her village. Her father was a laborer and could not go out at the cost of his work to fill the forms. But now Sita was self-dependent and could visit and apply for various things as per their requirements. Through CSC, she had applied for her caste certificate, income certificate, online scholarship forms, and other services.

### **CONCLUSION**

Globalization has impacted the governance system. It has transformed the working structure in the era through communication technology by replacing the old procedures of documentation with new and easy procedures of making documents. The use of Information Communication Technology through the Common Service Center has helped the rural unemployed and downtrodden section of the society in generating important documents from their village locally. They do not need to visit their respective *tehsil* for important documents like domicile, Aadhaar, caste certificate, and so on. Thus, CSC has emerged as a new model for governance under the public-private partnership. It has played a role of inclusion for rural citizens and provided an opportunity for the rural educated youth of employment in the tertiary sector.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to acknowledge my sincere thanks to the Indian Council of Social Science Research for funding the author to carry out her Post-Doctoral Research work. Without

their sincere support financially it won't be possible to carry out the field work and to draw any meaningful output for the policy makers to implement the programme with much more efficiency.

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**How to cite this article:** Karimi, A. and Matin, A. (2021) 'Empowerment through Digital Inclusion in an Era of Globalization', *Journal of Exclusion Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 278-289.