



Impact of Social Media on Women Economic Empowerment: A Study of Girl Students in Government Degree Colleges of Anantapur District

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Abstract: The rapid expansion of social media has created new pathways for career awareness, skill development, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy among young women. Social media platforms are increasingly functioning as informal learning environments that provide access to job information, online courses, entrepreneurial content, and financial knowledge. This study examines the impact of social media usage on various dimensions of women's economic empowerment among girl students in Government Degree Colleges of Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh.

A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 240 students using a structured questionnaire covering social media access, career awareness, skill development, entrepreneurial orientation, and financial confidence. The data were analysed using percentages, mean scores, correlation, and chi-square tests to test the proposed hypotheses.

The results reveal that social media usage has a significant positive relationship with career awareness, skill development, entrepreneurial motivation, and financial confidence. Correlation analysis shows moderate to strong positive relationships between social media usage and skill development ($r = .67$), career awareness ($r = .54$), and financial confidence ($r = .64$). However, while awareness of entrepreneurship and income opportunities is high, actual participation in income-generating activities remains moderate, suggesting a gap between motivation and implementation. The study concludes that social media acts as an enabling tool for women's economic empowerment, particularly among rural and low-income students, but requires institutional support and structured digital skill initiatives.

Keywords: *Social media, women's economic empowerment, career awareness, employability, entrepreneurship*

Introduction

Women's economic empowerment is widely regarded as a critical factor for inclusive growth and sustainable development. It involves not only access to employment and income but also the ability to acquire skills, make independent economic decisions, and participate actively in economic activities (Kabeer, 2012). In many developing countries, women's economic participation is constrained by socio-cultural norms, limited access to resources, and unequal opportunities in education and employment.

The growth of digital technologies has significantly transformed the information landscape. Social media platforms, once primarily used for communication and entertainment, have evolved into tools for education, networking, entrepreneurship, and financial awareness. Platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and Telegram provide access to tutorials, job information, professional networks, and income-generating opportunities at minimal cost (OECD, 2018).

For young women, particularly those from rural and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, social media serves as an accessible source of career guidance and skill development. Studies have shown that digital platforms enhance employability by providing exposure to professional networks and learning resources (Hampton & Wellman, 2019). Social media also enables women entrepreneurs to overcome traditional barriers such as mobility constraints and limited market access (Chen et al., 2020).

In districts like Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, where industrial development is limited and female workforce participation remains low, social media can play a transformative role. Girl students in Government Degree Colleges often have limited exposure to career guidance, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial opportunities. In such contexts, social media acts as an alternative knowledge ecosystem that supplements formal education.

However, the increasing reliance on social media also raises concerns related to misinformation, digital dependency, and unequal access to digital skills. While social media has the potential to empower, its actual impact depends on how effectively it is accessed and utilized (Duffy & Hund, 2019).

Most existing studies focus on urban populations or examine isolated dimensions such as employability or entrepreneurship. There is limited research examining the integrated impact of social media on multiple dimensions of women's economic empowerment, particularly among government college students in backward districts. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining the influence of social media on career awareness, skill development, entrepreneurial orientation, and financial confidence among girl students in Government Degree Colleges of Anantapur District.

Review of Literature

Global Studies: Globally, digital technologies have been identified as key enablers of women's economic empowerment. Kabeer (2012) emphasized that access to information and resources is essential for enhancing women's agency and economic independence. The OECD (2018) reported that digital platforms provide access to learning resources, professional networks, and flexible work opportunities, thereby improving employability.

Hampton and Wellman (2019) observed that women who actively engage with educational and professional content on social media exhibit higher career awareness and employability readiness. Chen et al. (2020) found that social media helps women entrepreneurs overcome barriers such as limited mobility and restricted market access.

UNICEF (2020) highlighted the role of digital literacy in promoting gender equality and financial independence. However, Duffy and Hund (2019) cautioned that without adequate skills and institutional support, social media may reinforce existing inequalities.

National Studies: In the Indian context, social media has emerged as a significant platform for career guidance and entrepreneurial exposure. Agarwal and Lenka (2016) reported that social media positively

influences entrepreneurial intentions among women by providing exposure to digital markets and mentoring communities.

Kumar and Priya (2020) observed a positive relationship between social media usage and employability skills among college students. Rao and Rani (2021) emphasized the role of digital platforms in improving financial literacy among youth.

However, Mehta (2022) noted that despite high awareness levels, actual participation in income-generating activities remains limited due to structural constraints such as lack of capital, family restrictions, and inadequate institutional support.

State-Level Studies: Studies in Andhra Pradesh indicate that social media has increased awareness of career opportunities and government schemes among women. Reddy and Srilatha (2019) found that WhatsApp and YouTube are widely used for career guidance and skill development.

Lakshmi and Narayana (2020) reported that social media enhances visibility and customer reach for women entrepreneurs. Prasanna and Devi (2021) observed that social media positively influences career aspirations among girl students, although disparities in digital access persist across regions.

Research Gap

Most studies focus on urban populations or isolated dimensions such as employability or entrepreneurship. Limited research examines the integrated impact of social media on multiple dimensions of women's economic empowerment among girl students in government colleges, particularly in backward districts. This study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis in the context of Anantapur District.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine social media access and usage patterns among girl students.
2. To analyse the influence of social media on career awareness.
3. To assess its role in skill development and employability confidence.
4. To examine its impact on entrepreneurial orientation.
5. To study its influence on financial awareness and economic confidence.
6. To identify challenges associated with social media usage.
7. To suggest measures for effective utilization of social media for women's economic empowerment.

Hypotheses

- H₁: Social media usage is significantly related to career awareness.
H₂: Social media usage positively influences skill development and employability confidence.
H₃: Social media exposure significantly affects entrepreneurial orientation.
H₄: Social media usage significantly improves financial awareness and economic confidence.
H₀: Social media usage has no significant impact on women's economic empowerment.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design. The research was conducted among girl students enrolled in Government Degree Colleges in Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh.

A sample of 240 students was selected using stratified random sampling based on year of study and area of residence. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of 26 items covering demographic profile, social media usage, career awareness, skill development, entrepreneurship, and financial confidence.

The collected data were analysed using percentages, mean scores, correlation analysis, and chi-square tests.

Results and Analysis

Social Media Usage Patterns: The study found that 81.3% of respondents regularly use social media. The most commonly used platforms were WhatsApp (73.3%), YouTube (59.6%), and Instagram (43.3%). The primary purpose of social media usage was education (78.3%), followed by career guidance (37.9%).

Correlation analysis indicated a moderate positive relationship between time spent on social media and skill development ($r = .62$), as well as career awareness ($r = .54$).

Hypothesis Testing

Social Media and Career Awareness (H_1): A majority of respondents (87.9%) agreed that social media helps them stay informed about job opportunities and career options. The correlation between time spent on social media and career awareness was significant ($r = .54$). Chi-square analysis also indicated a significant association between social media usage and career awareness.

Result: H_1 accepted.

Social Media and Skill Development (H_2): About 82.9% of respondents agreed that social media helps them develop employment-related skills. Approximately 75% reported learning income-oriented skills through social media platforms. The correlation between social media usage and skill confidence was strong ($r = .67$).

Result: H_2 accepted.

Social Media and Entrepreneurial Orientation (H_3): Nearly 75.8% of respondents reported that social media motivates them to consider entrepreneurship. About 92.1% were aware of online earning opportunities. Chi-square analysis indicated a significant relationship between social media usage and entrepreneurial motivation ($p = .011$).

Result: H_3 accepted.

Social Media and Financial Confidence (H_4): Around 79.2% of respondents agreed that social media encourages financial independence, and 87.5% expressed confidence about their future economic independence. Correlation between financial literacy and confidence was strong ($r = .64$).

Result: H_4 accepted.

Overall Hypothesis Result

Since all specific hypotheses were accepted, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. Social media has a significant positive impact on women's economic empowerment.

Discussion

The findings indicate that social media plays a significant role in enhancing career awareness, skill development, entrepreneurial motivation, and financial confidence among girl students. The high proportion of respondents using social media for educational purposes demonstrates its transformation into a digital learning platform.

The positive correlations between social media usage and empowerment indicators support earlier studies that highlight the role of digital platforms in improving employability and entrepreneurial intentions (Kumar & Priya, 2020; Agarwal & Lenka, 2016). Similarly, the strong relationship between financial literacy and economic confidence aligns with the findings of Rao and Rani (2021).

However, the moderate level of actual income-generating activities suggests a gap between awareness and implementation. This finding is consistent with Mehta (2022), who noted that structural barriers often prevent women from translating digital exposure into economic participation.

Recommendations

1. Integrate digital skill development programs into college curricula.
2. Provide mentorship and incubation support for student entrepreneurs.
3. Promote financial literacy through structured digital campaigns.
4. Encourage purposeful and career-oriented social media usage.
5. Establish partnerships with online career and freelancing platforms.

Conclusion

The study confirms that social media significantly contributes to women's economic empowerment among girl students. It enhances career awareness, skill development, entrepreneurial motivation, and financial confidence. However, the gap between awareness and actual income-generating activities indicates the need for structured institutional support.

With appropriate guidance, mentorship, and digital skill initiatives, social media can serve as a powerful catalyst for women's economic development, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged regions.

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