



## Digital Divide Working Group

Abstracts of papers accepted for presentation in the Online Conference Papers of the  
**International Association for Media and Communication Research<sup>1</sup>**

**IAMCR**

**nairobi2021.iamcr.org**

**July 2021**

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Version: 17/09/21

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1 These are the abstracts of the papers submitted to the IAMCR section or working group named above for presentation in the Online Conference Papers component of the 2021 annual conference.

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# **Digital inclusion and ethnicity: Comparative study of Russians and Yakuts**

## **Authors**

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## **Abstract**

The paper discusses digital inclusion of major and minor ethnic groups in Russia by comparing three broad categories of digital resources, identified in this study as components of the index of inclusion: ICT access, skills, and extent of engagement with technologies. Based on these components/sub-indices, we constructed index of digital inclusion for Russian context and tested it on a representative national sample of 765 Internet users (596 Russians, 196 Yakuts).

Our study showed that Russians use more platforms for online access (mobile phones, laptops, consoles, Smart TV, etc.) than Yakuts and access Internet through a bigger number of locations, not being limited to home and/or office only. They also have higher level of social, technical and creative ICT skills, and demonstrate higher levels of digital engagement and overall digital inclusion. We argue that the explanation here lies first of all in geographical domain, that is traditional location of ethnic minority (Yakuts) in a region that is less digitally advantaged in terms of Internet access, cost, speed and other factors (Far Eastern federal district), and not in ethnic factor itself.

We think therefore that this study is a good illustration of how the first and the second levels of the digital divide here interrelate and influence each other, leading to a situation when people with lower access to Internet and ICTs have lower skills and competences to use them, therefore risking to become digitally excluded and less advantaged in the modern digitalized world.

## **Submission ID**

92

# **Can Internet Traffic Promote Regional Tourism? —An Empirical Analysis Based on Baidu Index**

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## **Abstract**

The tourism industry has a high level of information sensitivity and has gradually played a prominent role in driving economic growth. With the development of information technology, smartphones and portable computers are becoming popular, and the Internet has become a necessary way for tourists to collect information and perform consumption transactions. "Internet plus tourism" makes our life convenient and shapes the perceptions of places as tourism destinations. However, it also causes problems such as uneven competence for internet use. Bad Public relations online can damage a brand and will further cause a reputation crisis in tourist destinations.

Can Internet traffic promote the development of regional tourism, or is it just a reflection of tourism fever? The research before mainly focused on specific tourist spots or regions, and mostly are qualitative. There was a lack of research on differences between regions and devices. Therefore, this study was conducted on the world's second-largest and most popular Chinese search engine "Baidu" as the data source of Internet traffic based on the 5A-level tourist attractions in 121 prefecture-level cities. The number of domestic tourist arrivals and domestic tourism revenue are used as indicators for regional tourism development, to investigate the influence of Internet traffic on its tourism development.

From 2011 to 2018, domestic tourist arrivals and domestic tourism revenue have been steadily increasing, and the total Internet traffic has shown an upward trend. The Internet traffic of the scenic spots coincides with the spatial pattern of regional tourism development, both showing the characteristics of "High in eastern and western, low in central". Use fixed-effects models to estimate the effect, region, and year effects are fixed to eliminate regional characteristics that do not change over time (such as social-cultural aspects, preferences, etc). The influence of natural environmental factors, economic factors, service facilities factors, traffic factors variables, and so on are controlled. The results show that the volume of online searches on the PC side and mobile phones increased by 1%, tourism revenue increased by 10.7% and 9.59%, respectively. The total, the PC-side, and the mobile online search volume increased by 1%, and the number of tourist arrivals increased by 6.80%, 8.07%, and 6.74%, respectively. Traffic on the Internet has had a significant positive impact on Eastern and Central China but has little impact on Western China. The Western parts did not pass statistical hypothesis testing, which may be due to the low travel satisfaction and word-of-mouth effect online should be encouraged. The scores of tourism attractions on websites are obtained, among which the eastern regions are the highest while western regions are the lowest. The model passes the instrumental variable(IV) estimation.

Internet is a vital way to provide tourists with diversified services of high quality. Media convergence can be observed and must be put in place to play a complementary role. Although the western region has abundant resources, its overall travel satisfaction still needs to be improved.

### **Submission ID**

142

## **The Rise of Smart ICT-Devices among Urban Chinese Senior Generation: a Cultural Perspective**

### **Authors**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to focus on the phenomena that the Chinese old have started to use smart products like smart phones and tablets etc. The project is interested in the questions of why, why not and how surrounding the phenomena: Why do the Chinese old start to use smart devices? Why not use other ICT products or at other time? How and what for are they using these smart ICT devices? These issues are investigated with a special focus on the cultural factors that promoted the rise of the smart devices among the old. The purpose of the study is to understand the cultural implications of the phenomena and to gain knowledge about the old people's issues with culture and identity. The research adopts qualitative research methods and conducts interviews with around 20 participants aged above 70 from the Chinese cities of Wuxi and Shanghai. Snowball sampling is adopted to reach more participants. The qualitative research adopts the research methods of in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and walk-along method to gain understanding of the topic.

### **Submission ID**

171

# **Data Citizenship: How do UK citizens think, do and participate with their data?**

## **Authors**

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## **Abstract**

As the Covid-19 pandemic took over the world, people's reliance on digital technologies and services became more critical than ever. In this context, it is paramount to understand the way people understand and engage with digital systems. This understanding will provide a foundation to develop education programmes that will provide citizens with the appropriate literacies to make the best use for their lives and wellbeing.

In this presentation we present the findings from the third phase of our Nuffield Foundation funded project Me and My Big Data: Understanding Citizens Data Literacies. Following an extensive literature review (first phase), and then a UK nationally representative survey (phase 2), we have conducted focus groups during Autumn 2020 with UK citizens. Throughout October until December our team conducted 15 focus groups with UK citizens via digital literacies centres across the UK, who were divided according to their literacy levels (indicated by the centres) as well as ages. After transcribing, coding and analysing the focus groups we have reached preliminary insights which we divide into the three dimensions of our data literacies framework Data Citizenship:

- **Data thinking (people's critical thinking of their data):** From the focus groups we realised that most people do not know what is data, they also do not know who they share their data with and what these organisations do with their data. Most people in our focus groups mentioned they care about online privacy but say they do not know what to do about it.
- **Data Doing (people's everyday practices with their data):** From the focus groups we realised that most people are not confident they can change their privacy settings. In addition and one of the most important insights is that most people do not post on social media for various reasons including: privacy concerns, thinking they have nothing important to say and worrying about social media conduct with their data. When we probed deeper our participants revealed that the majority of discussions are conducted in private messaging apps like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger.

- Data participating (people’s networked engagement with their data and their networks of literacy): From the focus groups we realised that most people ask their close friends or family when they are unsure about the quality of information (for example if it is misinformation or conspiracy theories) or want to learn new skills. In addition, most people do not know how to use data for civic action.

An insight that binds these dimensions together is that people’s thinking, doing and participating relate to their identity and communities of reference. For example, participants associated their practices and understandings to being “in IT”, “geek”, “teacher”, etc. As we mentioned elsewhere (Authors, 2020), people rely on their networks of literacy, which is the ways people engage with others, where and with which media to gain the understanding, skills and competencies in a way that fits them. What our focus groups indicate is that people’s networks of literacy can be a key point of intervention when designing education programmes.

## **Submission ID**

231

# **Behavioral Ladder for information-based income growth of urban populations with relative deprivation**

## **Authors**

Prof. Mingrui Ye - Communication University of China

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## **Abstract**

As the Covid-19 outbreak in early 2020 impact on the physical economy tremendously, some people in China urban area with relative deprivation use social media to seek new income sources or expand their existing income patterns, like promoting products on Wechat or Tik-tok for sales commission. This empirical study takes in-depth interviews as research method, in which “information-based income growth behaviour” is used to refer above behaviors, which requires the participator to apply professional skills in online communities through information literacy and Internet devices.

As cyber society reflects the structure of social reality and forms its own social structure (Peng,2020), this study aims to find specific impact of information literacy deficits in their capital enhancing practices and interrelation between digital divide and social divide they face. Refer to decision ladder framework(Rasmussen,1986), this study categorizes the income-generating behaviour into the following four stages: perception, planning, action and evaluation, analysing their interrelated effect effects systematically.

1)Perception: Individuals actively access or passively receive information related to achieving income growth and form basic perception of the income growth scenario. Problem in this stage is that the quantity and quality of information required to trigger behaviour are relatively limited, mainly reflecting limited information possession or source heterogeneity, and their information node in social network with less neutrality; 2)Planning: The integration of information and the planning of actions at this stage determine the effectiveness of subsequent actions. However, the planning of a large proportion of respondents lacked a systematic and holistic design partly due to their education and occupation acquisition. In some cases, their ignorance of the essential problems may cause the preliminary preparations and solutions fail to lead final success; 3)Action: Age is significantly related to users' participation and adaptability in the Internet ecology. Apart from that, even those equipped with Internet skills, insufficient expertise in a certain field resulting "coupling dilemma" in utilizing social capital. Their relatively fragile anti-risks ability intensifies their "rational-economic" characteristic, who are extremely sensitive to cost input(e.g.time, paid information products); 4)Evaluation: The reflective thinking process resulted some basis, such as the tendency to self-serving attributions, which directly led to lower attribution validity and consequently limited guidance for subsequent behavioral decisions.

Information-based income growth attempts can regarded as an approach to change economic dilemma of low-income group, which requires information literacy and social resources(e.g.social capital, knowledge cluster). Setback of interviewees also reflects that as the migration of production relations and social relations into cyberspace(Luo,2019), social inequality is being continuously reproduced in cyber space(Shi,2014). This study finds that after narrowing access gap and usage gap, the knowledge gap in behavior ladder of interviewees hinders their information access and capital-enhancing activity. Social stratification resulted the gap about technological capital and intellectual capital. This study compares a well-educated information-based income growth participator, finding that the distinction of taste judgement, owing to class differentiation (Bourdieu,1986), also constitutes the breakpoints in behavioral ladder, like resulting mismatch of products selection and targeted consumer preference.

## **Submission ID**

249

## **Digital divides: the case of a telephone information hotline in Bougainville**

### **Authors**

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## **Abstract**

In developing countries, digital solutions can be employed to overcome communications problems. This paper focuses on an interactive, mobile telephone-based platform to deliver referendum voter awareness in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (Bougainville), Papua New Guinea (PNG). The platform sought to overcome multiple communication divides that have challenged state-citizen information exchange and the process of post-conflict peacebuilding since the signing of the historic Bougainville Peace Agreement in 2001. The first divide is between the three geographical regions within Bougainville: south, central and north. The second divide operates between Bougainville and the rest of PNG. A third operates between PNG and other countries. The paper presents the findings of qualitative research conducted during the mobile hotline's operation, and places it in the context of the digital divide lens.

Late in 2019, the people of Bougainville voted in an historic referendum for political independence from PNG. The referendum was one of three pillars of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, which ended a decade-long conflict between Bougainville and PNG. Immediately before the referendum, a free-call, interactive, mobile telephone information hotline was developed by the Autonomous Bougainville Government in partnership with the Bougainville Referendum Commission, and supported by the governments of Australia and New Zealand. It aimed to provide factual voter information about the referendum and peace process. It was designed to address multiple communication challenges including widespread illiteracy, low and unequal access to media, and political sensitivities. The use of this kind of interactive mobile telephone platform was a national first. With people reporting up to 76 per cent access to mobile telephones across Bougainville[1], the hotline provided consistent, audio-based messaging. It was hoped that it would contribute to information equality, and an informed and peaceful referendum vote.

The Bougainville referendum was internationally regarded[2] to be informed and peaceful. This paper looks at the role of the hotline in this outcome, and its potential usefulness in the ongoing peace process. It takes the digital divide concept as a key lens and it incorporates literature from the field of information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D). The paper presents empirical findings and assesses the project's impact through qualitative research.

Overall, the findings found knowledge of the hotline was generally low. Despite this shortcoming, people thought the hotline should continue. Participants wanted information and viewed mobile telephone-based platforms as legitimate. Suggestions included increasing awareness of the service and

integrating it into face-to-face community activities. The findings also found sharp contrasts between digital access in the three regions of Bougainville.

As well as addressing ICT4D scholarship, the research also considers social inequities in terms of access to information. It looks at the interplays between government-citizen information exchange, media access, media literacy, political awareness and social inclusion. In addition, the research has practical implications for the post-referendum period in Bougainville, during which access to credible mass information will be critical to the maintenance of peace.

[1] [https://www.abg.gov.pg/uploads/documents/Bougainville\\_Audience\\_Study\\_-\\_Phase\\_2\\_June\\_2019\\_-\\_Final\\_Report\\_-\\_Compressed.pdf](https://www.abg.gov.pg/uploads/documents/Bougainville_Audience_Study_-_Phase_2_June_2019_-_Final_Report_-_Compressed.pdf)

[2] <https://www.transparencypng.org.pg/tipng-bougainville-referendum-observation-report/>

## **Submission ID**

420

# **How does the Internet shape digital village: A systematic literature review on digital development in rural China**

## **Authors**

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## **Abstract**

Focusing on how the Internet shapes digital village, this paper reviews the studies on digital development in rural China. “Digital village” is an ideal type concept, which could be divided into technological and humanistic dimensions, according to Chinese government’s top-level design. Two questions are addressed by this literature review: 1) What are the characteristics of the “digital village” in terms of digital connectivity and digital inclusion? 2) How do government agencies, market capital, and rural culture interact with the Internet In rural China?

We used 9 digital terms and 4 rural terms generated a total of 36 search queries. The database “CNKI” ([www.cnki.net](http://www.cnki.net)) was used, which is a key national research and information publishing institution in China, covered the cross-disciplinary scope of this paper. The search was finished on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021.

The 36 search queries identified 3221 potential papers. Eventually, 634 papers met the criteria of dealing with China rural areas and being published in Chinese-language, CSSCI journals.

A coding framework was created through induction. By quickly previewing abstracts, four main themes and ten sub-themes were identified based on the similarities in research themes and perspectives. From the dataset of 634 papers, 94(14.83%) analyze the level of rural digitalization, dealing with connectivity and inclusion issues. 38.96%, 29.34% and 16.88% focused on the Internet as policy, capital and culture respectively.

In this article we found that the digital connectivity of rural areas in China differs greatly in different regions since the 21st century. At least 8 empirical research shows that with the exception of Sichuan Province and Jiangxi Province, the digital connectivity of rural areas in East and South China is significantly higher than that of rural areas in central and western provinces. Broadband access to the internet and home ownership of communication terminals are the most frequently used quantitative indicators. Studies from information science, economics and communication have all shown that in terms of digital inclusion, the digital divide between urban and rural areas in China has decreased. Smartphones are considered to have played a big role since 2014.

In addition, papers under the theme of “Internet as policy” have shown that the Chinese government plays a leading role in rural ICT access, ICT use and ICT expectance. After 2018, they started to establish a digital rural government system, which is considered an effective complement to top-down organizational communication. Studies on the theme of “Internet as capital” and “Internet as culture” explored the interaction between digital platforms and rural residents. 101 articles analyze Taobao village, a typical product of e-commerce development in rural China. Most of the researchers identified e-commerce platforms and social media as positive drivers of village digitization. A few criticized on the popularity of Tik-Tok and its impact on local culture.

We believe the key to understand digital development in rural China lies in the interdisciplinary study with empirical materials. This kind of research perspective is currently lacking, especially in the issue of rural residents’ digital life.

## **Submission ID**

511

# **Catch Up in the Era of Smart Media: A Study on Chinese Empty-Nest Elders' Attitudes and Usage towards Smartphones**

## **Authors**

Ms. Liping Yang - Communication University of China

Ms. Siqi Liu - Communication University of China

## **Abstract**

**Background:** Older adults were often considered having trouble in adapting to digital life (Aula, A, 2005; Galen A. Grimes et al., 2010). With aging population increasing, the generational digital divide has become an important social global issue (L. Abad Alcalá,2014). As for China, the percentage of internet users aged over 50 reached 22.8% in June 2020, and this number has been climbing in the last 5 years (CNNIC,2016-2020). While there have been lots of studies on the general access and usage of information and communication technology (ICT) (Dimaggio P, et al.,2001; Riggins F J and Dewan S,2005; Peacock, et al.,2005), its application among some specific groups including empty-nest elders, has not been fully explored (Xu Fang and Ma Li, 2020). Some research shows that nowadays the digital divide based on PCs turns to smartphones (Puspitasari L and Ishii K, 2016), and the smartphone use has become a new dimension of the digital divide (Lee H et al., 2015).

**Research Questions:** The elderly's capability of Internet use could influence their well-being (Chan Michael,2018) and social engagements (Martin A, 2009; Mark Tyler et al., 2018). During the coronavirus pandemic, some Chinese empty-nest elders in lack of intergenerational support were faced with the digital Health Code Dilemma, which could impede their travel (Liang F, 2020). This paper presents a qualitative interview study on Chinese empty-nest elders' attitudes towards smartphones, particularly on the reasons deciding smartphone adoption, the motivational factors and challenges in the smartphone adaptation process.

**Research Methods:** We used a snowball sampling method to conduct face-to-face interviews with 20 Chinese empty-nest elders (50+). The interviews were semi-structured. The questions included but were not limited to "how did you get your smartphone" "which App do you often use and why" "how do you think of the smartphones" "would you recommend smartphones to your friends". These questions were designed to explore the empty-nest elders' attitudes and usage towards smartphones multi-dimensionally. The interview time ranged from 30 to 60 minutes.

**Findings:** Our finding indicates that (1) The empty-nest elders tend to have low perceived ease of use towards smartphones and therefore some interviewees gave up using them. (2) The empty-nest elders

regard smartphone usage as a learning behavior, which mostly requires independent interest, intergenerational support and peer support; (3) Some empty nesters use smartphones in diversified ways. Initially, smartphone use was for maintaining social contact, and gradually expanded to obtain entertainment information. The smartphone even became a production tool among some empty-nest elders.

**Theoretical Ponderation:** These findings lead us to rethink about the digital evolution in the perspective of empty-nest elders. The good news is that they are not holding a completely passive attitude towards smart media. In fact, smartphones are easier to learn than PCs. If the empty-nest elders were well guided, the new digital divide could be significantly narrowed. Furthermore, multi-agent solutions are raised to try to improve the current circumstances to enhance the digital acquisition of empty-nest elders.

**Keywords:** Digital Divide, Aging Population, Empty-nest Elders, Smartphones

## **Submission ID**

516

# **Conceptualisation of Techno-Environmental Habitus**

## **Authors**

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Dr. Maria Laura Ruiu - Northumbria University

## **Abstract**

This paper conceptualises the techno-environmental habitus to explore differentiation among media users and their climate change awareness by adopting a dynamic concept that took into considerations both pre-existing conditions and the interaction with the technological field of action. The paper investigates the characteristics of multi-layered dispositions to climate change in the UK through an online survey of a representative sample of the UK population (N=1013). Results suggest that, despite the predominance of advocacy positions, four different techno-environmental habitus show a fragmented landscape, but also a “chameleon” transformative capacity of habitus given that some common traits are shared by the groups. Beyond the four different patterns related to techno-environmental attitudes, one of the most interesting aspects relates to fatalistic techno-environmental habitus, which presents some traits common to scepticism and advocates, but tends to be discouraged in taking action. The identification of the nuances of techno-environmental habitus is relevant for climate change policy implementation, because they may facilitate or hinder both individual and

collective action.

## **Submission ID**

537

# **The digital divide in the Global South: Are we posing the right questions?**

## **Authors**

Ms. Cathleen LeGrand - University of Leeds

## **Abstract**

Concerns about the digital divide and the urgent need to solve it have been around since at least 1999, when the UNDP *Human Rights Report* observed that the “gap between haves and have-nots ... is widening” (United Nations Development Programme, 1999, p. 57) in the emerging era of “global information networking” (p. 57). Early optimism that this gap would close has not been realized—and has been further belied by the brutal realizations of technological insufficiencies exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conceptualizations of the divide have evolved from the “binary” (Gunkel, 2003) condition of physical access to recognition of multiple dimensions of constraint that include motivational, skill, and usage factors (van Dijk, 2005), and economic, political, and cultural ones (Fuchs & Horak, 2008). In the Global South, contested territories of development, decolonization, and the neoliberal agenda complicate the matter.

This paper, derived from the first stages of work on my doctoral thesis, was inspired by my personal experience working in small academic libraries in two heterogeneous locations in the Global South: Bhutan and The Bahamas. Fifteen years of practice on one side of the “digital divide” illuminated that its conceptualizations may not capture the range of barriers that exist in the Global South, where even the most basic, “necessary access” (Mansell & Wehn, 1998) to ICT may not exist. Immersive practical experience in the Global South reveals access constraints that are hard to perceive from above, and suggest that the variety of commercial solutions envisioned as remedies may not provide long-term impact.

From the perspective of a practitioner on the ground in the Global South, continuing calls for a postcolonial approach (Shome, 2016) or the “de-Westernization” of media studies (Curran & Park,

2000) seem relevant and meaningful. Such work can “productively unsettle” (Shome, 2016, p. 257) the assumptions and expectations that shape considerations of the divide and how to address it.

The catalog of solutions—open access; open-source platforms; low-cost devices; “offline” digital systems; high-tech, low-tech, and no-tech methods of backhaul for “last-mile” coverage—demonstrate that a wide range of approaches have been tried. We can learn lessons from and imagine new alternatives by paying attention to solutions now in the graveyard—they are remnants of continuing struggle. We can also look at examinations of grassroots improvisation and “frugal innovation” (Rai, 2015, p. 985) that suggest that flexible and low-tech resources and channels, which include print and analog options, remain crucial parts of the information landscape.

## **Submission ID**

543

## **Cross-cultural complexities in digital inequalities research: A Case Study of Kuwait**

### **Authors**

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Ms. Miriam Rahali - The London School of Economics

### **Abstract**

The world of communication is changing rapidly, with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), such as the internet and mobile phones, facilitating the spread of knowledge and interactions across borders in previously unimagined ways. Questions are being asked about whether the benefits of this digitization process are equally distributed between and within countries. As well, this transformation has yet to remove global disparities in research into digital inequalities. Research focusing on Western countries continue to dominate, even as those in the Global South show widely varying patterns in how technologies are adopted and used in practice. Cross-national and cross-cultural comparative research on ICT engagement outside of this Western sphere is of great importance. Cross-cultural research methodologies, however, are not well-developed in this field. When this type of

research takes place, instruments created for Western contexts are often uncritically adopted in other regions, such as the Middle East. Recognition of these challenges motivates the *From Digital Skills to Tangible Outcomes (DiSTO)* research project, which is based on an original theoretical framework that hypothesizes distinct paths to achieving positive, and avoiding negative, outcomes from ICT use. Translations, cognitive interviews and pilot testing were undertaken to construct and test survey instruments sensitive to the local contextuality of engagement, while still allowing broader comparisons. This provides insight into the theoretical and empirical linkages between digital and traditional inequalities in ways that explore both their universal and contextual aspects. The question that this particular paper addresses is how the national and cultural context of Kuwait influences people's understanding of questions concerning digital skills and engagement. Findings from cognitive interviews conducted for the adaptation of the global DiSTO methodology to Kuwait demonstrate important variations and similarities in item interpretation by respondents. Among the points of divergence between groups were issues of language use, socioeconomic conditions, residency status, and perceptions of social desirability. Articulating technical terms and balancing colloquial dialects with Modern Standard Arabic, were among the most common translation issues faced. The individual characteristics most consistently affecting responses included economic status, education, and relevant personal experiences—including level of familiarity with survey taking itself. With expatriates constituting approximately two-thirds of Kuwait's population, significant efforts were made to minimize the influence on scale interpretation due to cultural particularities. The primary challenges to operationalizing social and cultural resources were thus minimizing conceptual ambiguities across respondent groups for this diverse and largely expatriate population, thereby calling into question the extent to which global conceptualizations reflect local realities in increasingly cosmopolitan and digitized societies. Solutions are proposed to make large-scale population research around digital inequalities comparable, while remaining sensitive to local specificities.

## **Submission ID**

629

## **Deconstructing '(Big) Data' for Development**

### **Authors**

Mr. Michael Kim - University of Miami

### **Abstract**

References to big data are ubiquitous, no less so in development discourse. These massive digitized datasets continually generated through interactions with online communication technologies, are aggregated and reproduced into resources that fuel major economic activities worldwide. The value of

‘data’ then has been recognized and crowned metaphorically as the ‘new oil.’ In line with this trend, researchers and institutions across disciplines and across public/private sectors have increasingly begun to investigate the role of big data in social transformation.

However, the proclaimed data revolution may be overly optimistic as envisioned in the datafication’s ‘brave new world’ (Couldry & Yu, 2018). Notwithstanding the pro-social potentials of *datafication*—a process by which social action is transformed into quantified online data, allowing real-time tracking and predictive analysis (Mayer-Schoenberger & Cukier, 2013)—a growing body of ‘critical data studies’ (CDS) has called for attention in response to big data, not least the problematic ideology of *dataism* (Van Dijck, 2014), *data surveillance* (Zuboff, 2015), *data colonialism* (Couldry & Mejias, 2019), and *big data divide* (Andrejevic, 2014).

Nonetheless, as part of the wider domain of information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D), the nascent field of ‘data for development’ (D4D) is keen on harnessing data *for* the efforts of international development, ascribing power and agency to big data as the thrust for social change (Cinnamon, 2020). Data, seen in this context, is believed to enhance capability and precision for evidence-based decision making, strengthen project accountability and sustainability, and analyze development progress to reduce poverty and improve living standards. Yet, as the CDS suggest, uncritical acceptance of data as ‘autonomous’ actors of development overlooks questioning the structural inequalities and ideological domains of data extraction, access, representation and control—all of which mirrors and/or exacerbates inequalities and injustices on the ground (Cinnamon, 2020; Hilbert, 2016).

Against the problematic discourses of big data and D4D, and in our continued effort towards critical ICT4D studies, this paper aims to deconstruct discourses of ‘(big) data’ in global development. As the world embarked on a new development agenda in 2015 with ‘sustainability’ as the keyword (Sustainable Development Goals; SDGs), practical application of big data *for* development seemingly outpaced critical consideration of big data *in* development. Moreover, empirical analyses of the data discourses *about* development are still limited in the field.

Examining major reports and publications produced between 2015 and 2020 by the bilateral (i.e., US, UK, Germany) and multilateral (i.e., UNCTAD, UNDP, UNICEF, ITU, World Bank) development institutions, and drawing on literatures from CDS and D4D, we scrutinize contemporary discourses surrounding the notion of ‘(big) data’ in the context of international development and social change. Particularly, our aim is to deconstruct the assertions of D4D that naturalize the process of data extraction hidden under the name of ‘development,’ whereby they resort to the expansion of capitalistic appropriation of human behaviors, furthering the digital divide between the data rich and the poor.

## **Submission ID**

647

# **Fostering digital literacy in the elderly as a means to survive and social contact in the reality of the post-pandemic era**

## **Authors**

Ms. Fan Zhang - Communication University of China

Ms. Anyi Xin - Communication University of China

Ms. Xiran Wang - Communication University of China

Dr. Runjue Wang - Communication University of China

## **Abstract**

After the outbreak of the Covid-19, the digitalization process of China's aging society has accelerated and many problems have emerged. Over the long term, to effectively solve the digital survival dilemma of the elderly in the post-epidemic era, who are regarded as digital refugees, improving their digital literacy should be the nuclear method. This research focuses on Antu County, Jilin Province, China, and attempts to study the willingness of the elderly in the region to improve their digital literacy, explore the influencing factors, and then find that practical paths can improve or maintain the willingness. Combined with population data, 50 families with the elderly are selected as the research samples through stratified random sampling. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews and participatory observation are adopted in the investigation. Besides, considering the particularity of “relationship” in Chinese rural society, from the perspective of “Differential pattern”, circle-layer based on “relationship” is brought into analysis framework.

Analyzing research data through content analysis and dualistic logistic regression, the study finds that there is a willingness to improve digital literacy among the elderly, and the intensity of this willingness is significantly different between the normal and abnormal periods. The difference presented as: in the abnormal environment, the willingness of the elderly to improve their digital literacy is significantly enhanced, and it shows a downward trend when the environment tends to be normalized. Based on it, we further explore the factors affecting the willingness and find that: (1) In the pandemic, survival demand, which is the core digital need of the elderly, is the dominant factor leading to a significant increase in their willingness, so when the urgency of survival demand is reduced after the pandemic, the will to promote also falls back. (2) Whether in normal or abnormal periods, among the individual factors that affect the willingness, education level, and economic level are the constant explicit factors. (3) Different relationships have different effects on the willingness of the elderly to improve their digital literacy, and those that might take effect are mainly divided into four dimensions: intimate circle-layer, neighboring circle-layer, local circle-layer, and macro social circle-layer. And the study

finds that in the normal period, intimate circle-layer and neighboring circle-layer are more significant factors. While in the abnormal period, the influence degree of local circle-layer and macro-social circle-layer are significantly enhanced, making the influence degree of four factors have little difference.

Therefore, there are three ways to improve and maintain the willingness of the elderly to improve their digital literacy in the post-epidemic era, including: (1) Strengthening the propaganda of the inevitability of digital transformation, and strengthening public service of digital literacy training and aging adaptation of digital products; (2) Universalizing digital knowledge and providing specific assistance to the elderly in the community; (3) In the long run, social circle-layer can be the key to promote or maintain the will of the elderly.

**Keywords:** the elderly; digital literacy; relationship; circle-layer; influential factors of will

## **Submission ID**

699

# **Theorizing digital inequality in Russia: Russian model of the digital divide**

## **Authors**

Prof. Elena Vartanova - Lomonosov Moscow State University, Faculty of Journalism

## **Abstract**

In this presentation, we discuss digital inequalities in Russia, approaching them from three main angles – access to ICTs, digital skills, and benefits people get from online engagement. Previous studies of the digital divide in both global and national contexts (van Deursen, & van Dijk, 2015; Mutsvairo, & Ragnedda, 2019; Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2019) showed that digital divide is a multi-faceted issue that has been developing in the course of time and is noticeably affected by the changing reality, including recent challenges brought up by the pandemic. We argue that digital divide today should be approached as a complex phenomenon, embracing many different forms, levels, aspects and manifestations, and certainly not being limited to binary divisions based just on users' access or skills (van Dijk, 2017).

Our presentation focuses on empirical dimensions of the digital inequality on a country-wide/Russian level analyzing the issue of the digital divide as both theoretical and practical phenomenon, and arguing that Russia represents a unique model of the digital divide that is not typical for other regions of the world (Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2021). Vast territory, unique multiethnic and multicultural character of the society, traditionally important role of the state, remaining differences in economic and

technological development between federal districts and particular regions of the country, as well as many other factors contribute to this unique Russian model.

Following up on this, we discuss possible ways to overcome and to prevent the digital divide in Russia, with a focus on media policy and digital engagement through media literacy playing a crucial role in this process. Lastly, we present findings of the survey we recently conducted with colleagues from Lomonosov Moscow State University, analyzing and comparing digitalization progress in several republics of Russia (Tatarstan, Yakutia, Far East, Altai and others), as well as specific challenges these regions face within a unique Russian model of the digital divide.

## **Submission ID**

818

# **“Communication Obstacles in Online Classes during Covid-19 Pandemic: An Assessment of Undergraduate Students in Bangladesh”**

## **Authors**

Ms. Tabassum Nuha - Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP); Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Mr. Md. Ashraful Goni - Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP); Dhaka, Bangladesh.

## **Abstract**

### **Abstract**

The global education system is going through an unparalleled disruption with the advent of the Covid-19 Pandemic. This Pandemic has changed the traditional classroom scenario. Nowadays online education is considered a new paradigm in teaching and learning. In response to the global crisis, worldwide educational institutions have started to take online classes with the help of digital platforms. As a response to this global pandemic, Bangladesh has followed the same. Therefore the study aimed to make a contribution that allowed to find out the obstacles that undergraduate students confront during the online classes and how these obstacles are related to students' socio-economic status, background knowledge. To find out the communication obstacles this study utilized the quantitative approach to determine the relationship between multiple demographic variables by generalizing the data. In order to acquire empirical data about undergraduate students' communication obstacles, the authors collected data from an online survey where 324 respondents participated from 17 different universities. The study adopted the diffusion of Innovation, knowledge gap, and uses and gratification theories to explain

the phenomenon. Diffusion of innovation has been applied to find out if the students face any trouble or fear in online classes by using new technology in the Covid-19 pandemic. The knowledge gap theory helped to analyze the relationship between the socioeconomic status and background knowledge of the students in attending the online classes. Through uses and gratification theory it has been observed if the students are really satisfied with the media they choose for the online classes. Findings of the study showed that in the case of gender, there is no specific one that faces obstacles the most. There are some variables such as device, residential area, institutions, and internet speed that play a significant role in case of facing communicational obstacles. The major challenges faced by the students causing the obstacles are lack of a stable internet connection, device problem, financial crisis, psychological obstacles, lack of interaction, and fear of using new technology. The study identified that there is a significant relationship between the students' socio-economic status, background knowledge, and the obstacles they confront during online classes. The study has also provided some recommendations to overcome the communicational challenges based on the findings.

**Keywords:** Online Class, Covid-19, Digital Platform, Undergraduate students, Bangladesh, Communication Obstacles

### **Submission ID**

912

## **MPS overview - COVID-19 Pandemic and its impact on academic practices in South Asia**

### **Authors**

Dr. Padma Rani - Manipal Institute of Communication, MAHE

Dr. Sadia Jamil - Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Khalifa university of Sciences & Technology

Prof. Glenn Muschert - Khalifa university of Sciences & Technology

Dr. Bhanu Acharya - University of Ottawa

Prof. Maithili Ganjoo - Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies

Dr. Manjushree Naik - Manipal Institute of Communication

## **Abstract**

The Covid-19 pandemic was reported in China in December 2019 and by March 2020 had spread across the world. The world faced a lockdown due to the pandemic. South Asian countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Maldives, and Pakistan were also severely affected by the pandemic. The measures taken by the government to prevent the spread of the coronavirus ranged from severe lockdowns to social distancing and minimum people to people interaction. Governments came up with restrictions which affected academic institutions. Academic institutions were shut down. Alternatives method of academic delivery had to be found. Virtual classrooms or online teaching was adopted to keep the academic processes running. The teaching-learning process adopted during the pandemic had its benefits and challenges. Some of the challenges faced in virtual classes were network issues, training, awareness to use various applications, personal touch and interaction due to connectivity issues.

South Asia had 30.077% of the population who use the internet in 2018. In 2019 only 51% of the population has mobile Internet subscriber penetration (gsma.com). The panel would discuss how the countries of South Asia coped up with academic delivery during the pandemic. The first hurdle to virtual academic delivery was learner's access to infrastructure to access the content. The second battle was having strategies and materials for teaching online. Some of the issues that the panel will focus on is how educational institutions were affected by the digital divide at usage level, skill levels and outcome levels.

## **Submission ID**

936

## **Inclusion or Exclusion: Digital Survival of the Disabled in the Digital Age in China**

### **Authors**

Mr. Ke Chen - guangdong

Mr. HUA GUANGCAN - Nanyang Technological University

### **Abstract**

In recent years, the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have made it accessible for people with disabilities (PWDs) to widely accept social information, but it also has brought challenges and opportunities simultaneously to the practice of integrating PWDs into society. In previous studies, scholars have made multi-dimensional analysis of the digital survival of PWDs, but

they have not been able to get rid of the gaze of the healthy group on the disabled, and lack of self-examination and observation research within PWDs.

In China, the number of people with disabilities is approximately 85 million, which is a value that cannot be ignored. However, under the current Chinese social environment, most of the disabled groups appear on the mass media and social networks as "strong-willed person" and "recipients". The single media image has caused the audience to misunderstand PWDs and failed to fully and truly disclose their living conditions in mainland China and a series of problems encountered.

Therefore, relying on the living background of PWDs in Mainland China, this research uses a combination of online ethnography and in-depth interview research methods, combined with the researcher's own disability life experience to implement the research. Researchers conduct research on the digital information acquisition behavior and social survival status of PWDs from the two living spaces of real society and digital society, revealing the contradiction between social exclusion and digital inclusion faced by PWDs in mainland China in the current context. It also indicted the possible threats and problems of the digital society and looked forward to its prospects simultaneously.

Research suggests that in China today, PWDs still encounter discrimination from the real society; under the survival pressure, many disabled people seek to utilize the Internet for personal social communication and information acquisition. Based on the anonymity of the Internet, PWDs can choose to expose or conceal their personal disability tags to integrate into the digital society. However, the emergence of the digital society has also brought new risks to the survival of disabled groups, such as Internet addiction and privacy leakage. In fact, the development of technology has never been objectively equal; it is the product of social survival and naturally has social attributes, but this nature is hidden. In the face of the struggles of PWDs in the real society and the digital society, we should think more about how to reduce various inequalities in society and how to create an equal, inclusive, and open social environment.

## **Submission ID**

952

## **How Does the Digital Feel? Divisions in Outcomes of Elderly Users' Interaction with Digital Media**

### **Authors**

Prof. Tobias Olsson - Malmö University

Dr. Dino Viscovi - Linnaeus University

## **Abstract**

During the last 25 years, the scholarly debate on digital divides has gone through different phases. After having started off with a largely binary focus on access to technology, in the late 1990s – paying great interest in “ICT haves and have nots” – the second phase brought users’ skills and online activities to the fore: How do skills for making use of digital media vary? What differences are there in patterns of usage between different groups of users?

According to recent assessments, however, the debate has now reached its third phase, during which divides in terms of “differences in Internet outcomes” (Scheerder et al., 2020; see also van Dijk, 2020) has become a more important area of investigation. The notion of outcomes refers to what people obtain from their use of digital devices. That is, who benefits from them and in what ways?

Inspired by this recent shift in the debate, this paper approaches one instance of outcomes. It focuses on outcomes in terms of how elderly (65-90 years) users’ encounters with and use of digital media make them feel: How does it affect their sense of comfort and wellbeing? The analysis pays specific attention to how these feelings vary with users’ access to material, social and discursive resources (Olsson et al. 2019). The overarching research question is: How do feelings of comfort and well-being vary between ICT-users with different levels of resources?

The analysis draws on data derived from a recent Swedish survey (November/December 2020). From a simple random sample of 2 500 Swedes aged 65-90 years, we received 1614 responses, which equals a gross response rate of ca 65%.

Based on a strategic selection of survey questions the paper will construct, firstly, an index to measure respondents’ self-reported valuation of their everyday usage in terms of comfort and wellbeing. By applying multiple regression analyses, the paper will reveal, secondly, how elderly users’ sense of comfort and wellbeing varies with their access to material, social and discursive resources as well as, for instance, their number of years of online experience.

## **Submission ID**

953

## **From digital utopia to the platform power: an explanatory framework of surveillance capitalism in China**

### **Authors**

Prof. Jing Xu - School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University

Dr. Yin Shan - School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University

Dr. Fan Ji - School of Journalism and Communication, Peking University

## **Abstract**

The digital-driven technology has reconstructed the relationship among the state, the society and the citizen. The digital technology has given birth to the digital platform, in which people's lives are largely depend on. The super platform is the de facto controller of data resources, most of them are personal data. People's lives are greatly predicted and influenced by the big data analytics. Given this backdrop, there is a growing concern that people will become total 'naked' in the platform surveillance.

Such concern is not entirely unreasonable. We are living in the platform society. People can do anything what they want by using mobile phone: reading news, shopping, and social contact, etc. They are deeply immersed into a virtual space, created by the platform. Their ideas, beliefs, behaviors and intentions can be easily mastered by the platform. Their privacy does not exist.

The digital platform has redefined the scope of space and shaped the way of people's thinking. The digital platform has construed a new form of social bond, and is subverting the traditional social structure. The platform is replacing the function of the state to some extent. Meantime, the state actively taps digital technology into industry upgrading, national governance, and social progress. Therefore, the digital platform and the state has achieved a deep integration. Such integration brings about the innovative-diffusion of digital productivity, which generates massive implications on the institution, industry, and ideology.

According to the case of China, this paper attempts to establish such an explanatory framework. The surveillance capitalism is construed through four stages of digital platforms: understand-utilise-construct-consolidate. Only then the platform can form an kind of operation mechanism. Facing such a situation, scholars have to review its pros and cons, metaphors and risks. We have to be cautious to the emergence of super platform, preventing them from being over-commercialized. Consequently, the platform can keep its value of neutrality and public attributes.

## **Submission ID**

977

# **What about us? Experiences of journalists covering Covid-19 in Argentina. Compassion Fatigue & Digital Divide**

## **Authors**

Dr. Carolina Escudero - University of Missouri

## **Abstract**

An increasing body of media research suggests that journalists are struggling to balance their personal and professional boundaries in terms of emotions, and that during the pandemic this situation appears to have worsened. This is because the coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic is still highly stressful for communication professionals, above all in countries such as Argentina where the number of infections and high mortality rates have rarely diminished. Faced with this context of stress and uncertainty, this study looks to demonstrate the lack of protocols “Care of the self” (Foucault), to which are added the diverse experiences of journalists covering the pandemic from their homes, seen as pertaining to the digital divide.

Drawing on interviews with (30) thirty Argentinean journalists, this study explores their exposure to the stress which, in many cases, is manifested in compassion fatigue, to which is added the stress linked to the digital divide, when socio-cultural issues arise such as the lack of the equipment needed for working from home (type of computer, poor Internet connection, no specific workspace at home).

It is of interest to this study to take into account the concept of “Care of the self” and its relationship with situations of digital divide, the latter within that confirmed by recent studies which consider that classifying the digital divide as a technological problem and as a matter of adoption, means to ignore other variables such the overall socio-cultural, educational and political background (Ragnedda, 2020; Vartanova & Gladkova, 2019).

In addition, the findings suggest that constant exposure to situations like covering the pandemic together with digital divide experiences leaves them with no space in which to assess their emotions, leading them to fatigue such as compassion fatigue.

Compassion fatigue is a form of traumatic stress that results from repeated encounters with victims of trauma and traumatic situations. Most often studied in counselors, nurses, and first responders, this study applies the concept to journalists who often encounter the same victims and traumatic scenes.

## **Submission ID**

993

# **“I’m Missing Out” – How Perceived Disadvantages from Non-Use Influence the Intention to Use the Internet**

## **Authors**

Ms. Kiran Kappeler - University of Zurich

Ms. Noemi Festic - University of Zurich

Prof. Michael Latzer - University of Zurich

## **Abstract**

In today’s information society, using the internet is essential for living a fulfilled life. The covid-19 pandemic has increased the internet’s relevance in daily life: Due to societal lockdowns, staying in touch with friends and family or purchasing everyday goods suddenly required using the internet. Not using the internet is increasingly related to severe disadvantages. Therefore, bridging the gap between internet users and non-users is vital. To identify elements that facilitate bringing non-users online, focusing on factors that influence their willingness to use the internet is crucial (e.g., Chia et al., 2006; Pan & Jordan-Marsh, 2010; Peng et al., 2012).

Whether a person wants to adopt a certain behavior depends on the attitudes they have towards it (Davis, 1985; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Previous studies have shown that sociodemographic background influenced internet attitudes and the intention to use the internet (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2015; van Dijk, 2020). Therefore, this article asks: *How do sociodemographic background and internet attitudes influence non-users’ intention to use the internet?*

We propose a mediated relationship between sociodemographic background, internet attitudes and the intention to use the internet, which we test with a structural equation model. The non-user sample ( $N=151$ ) was drawn from representative data of Switzerland collected through computer-assisted telephone interviews in 2015 ( $N=1,121$ ), when 87% of the Swiss population aged 14 and over used the internet. Internet attitudes were measured two-dimensionally in terms of perceived negative effects of internet non-use: non-users were asked how socially excluded and how disadvantaged they feel because they do not use the internet.

The results of the structural equation model ( $Chi^2=10.379$ ,  $p=.408$ ,  $df=10$ ,  $Chi^2/df=1.038$ ,  $CFI=.995$ ,  $TLI=.989$ ,  $RMSEA=.019$ ,  $SRMR=.042$ ) reveal that sociodemographic background did not influence the intention to use the internet directly. However, men perceived stronger negative effects of internet non-use ( $B=-.261$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and this was indirectly associated with a stronger intention to move online. Feeling excluded and disadvantaged due to internet non-use was positively associated with a higher

willingness to use it ( $B=-.707, p<.001$ ). Additional results revealed that proxy internet use, i.e., asking someone to do something online, correlated significantly with intended use ( $r=-.284, p<.001$ ).

To conclude, the data shows that internet attitudes are a relevant influencing factor on intended use. The results highlight the importance of internet attitudes and proxy-use for the intention to use the internet and consequently for internet adoption. Therefore, non-users' internet attitudes and indirect contact through proxy-use are promising starting points for evidence-based policies aiming to increase internet use among current non-users in cases where disconnection appears involuntary. Future research should more diligently study the influence of non-users' internet attitudes on intended use by including more dimensions of attitudes in the analysis. Moreover, it should further investigate possible barriers that prevent people who intend to use the internet from adopting it.

## **Submission ID**

1002

## **MPS paper - Challenging Experiences of Virtual Classroom During the Pandemic: Lessons From Nepal**

### **Authors**

Dr. Padma Rani - Manipal Institute of Communication

Dr. Bhanu Acharya - University of Ottawa

### **Abstract**

Nepal implemented a countrywide lockdown on 24 March 2020 as a consequence of COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Then, a series of lockdown orders were introduced until the end of December 2020 that severely affected academic practices from primary to tertiary levels. When all the physical teaching learning and pedagogical process were completely stopped for months, government encouraged conducting virtual class and online examination system. However, there were several issues appeared relating to multiple layers of the digital divides from access to ICT devices (which included the ability to afford such devices, and availability of digital infrastructures such as Internet and electricity), knowledge and the ability to use those ICT devices. The digital divides, on the one hand, severely affected students' and parents ability to afford, manage and use the online teaching classes; on the other hand, teachers, academic institutions, and concerned government agencies did not have enough knowledge and preparation on how to teach courses, how to conduct examinations, and how to engage students effectively during the online sessions. As a result, the academic endeavours of educating students during the pandemic were resulted in a big failure, and, rather, the consequences of

COVID-19 reinforced another layer of digital divide among Nepali students and teachers: those who could access and use the online sessions, and those who could not. My presentation will share Nepal's challenging experiences of virtual teaching during the pandemic in 2020 and outline some of the lessons learnt and strategies to tackle such challenging experiences.

### **Submission ID**

1057

## **MPS paper - Student's perception of online learning and evaluation in India during the Covid-19 pandemic**

### **Authors**

Dr. Padma Rani - Manipal Institute of Communication

Dr. Manjushree Naik - Manipal Institute of Communication, MAHE

### **Abstract**

E-learning or online learning has become a compulsory mode of education in the wake of the pandemic crisis of COVID -19. The pandemic has affected all over the world (Remuzzi & Remuzzi, 2020). The commencement of the novel coronavirus made right from social rituals to economies in the world (Schulten, 2020) ravaged. The circumstances confronted the educational system as well all over the world and compelled the traditional way of teaching to shift to an online mode overnight. The entire system of education right from elementary to tertiary level is collapsed following the lockdown period of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 not only in India but across the globe. Academic institutions that were previously unwilling to change the pedagogical approach had no option but to shift to online teaching and learning mode.

Technological revolution and the developments took place has smoothened the process of online education (McBrien et al., 2009). Online learning is defined as “learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using different devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, etc.) with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere (independent) to learn and interact with instructors and other students” (Singh & Thurman, 2019).

The study is a portrayal of online teaching-learning modes adopted by Indian Colleges, Institutions and Universities for the teaching-learning process and consequent evaluation of the studnets. The study looks forward to a rationally enriched opening for students as well as the educational institutions to further future academic decision making during possible hard times.

To find out the student's perception towards e-learning, the paper studies the primary data from the student community from various colleges, and universities through Google forms. Stratified sampling method has been adopted in this study. The findings of the study reproduce the impact of online learning on students' and their interest in using online learning resources to augment their performance.

Keywords: COVID-19, Lockdown Period, Education, Online learning, Perception

## **Submission ID**

1062

# **Information Divide, Elusive Identities and Estranged 'Sociality': Life in Pandemic Constructed Digital Fortresses**

## **Authors**

Dr. S.R. Sanjeev - Mar Ivanios College

## **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped an 'abnormal-normal' that has diffused the idea of distancing in real world and proximity in virtual-real conversational arenas. Thus, communication processes have migrated to an inorganic field where boundaries and borders have no particular significance. Experiential engagements have become redundant in such processes. Bridging of the digital divide and increased access to technology were expected to replace the direct experience of social engagements and seen as a way forward to escape the standstill caused by the lockdowns and restricted mobility. However, this notion was soon dispelled because of the mundane and mechanical nature of interactions in digital fields. Although, extensive global conversations have taken place on the social, cultural, economic and political fallouts of the disaster, the ruptures and differences among the participants have surfaced lucidly.

It would be appropriate to problematize digital divide in order to address the 'information divide' which can be characterised by differential ability of people to process information. It has caused agony on identity affirmations of people as they had to encounter bombardment of multitude of ideas and conflicting versions in a pandemic-driven communication ecosystem. Such disruptions are the results of ever-growing conflict between truth and lies, order and anarchy and can also be attributed to mis/dis information campaigns. 'Digital citizenship' and 'privacy in networks' are some mythical concepts for many since it has been elusive in fear stricken world. After being subjected to data extraction, datafication and data appropriation, loss of self-hood was another problem to ponder with for those who lack agency in a digital atmosphere. Quite often, online experiences of the real world create a

sense of submission and inertness among many, thus building a favourable atmosphere for installation of digital fortresses across the world. Such digital fortresses have imprisoned identities and self-expressions. This phenomenon was asymptomatic but the pain was real.

Pandemic denied 'sociality' to mankind. 'Sociality' refers to a value system which respects other individuals, provides equity in expressions for all, irrespective of their agency, and embraces certain social norms that hinge on modernity, gender neutrality, secularism and democracy. The pandemic was instrumental in transforming the real world into a digital fortress in which panopticon practices were largely accepted without questions. This can be found in the surveillance methods, health data collection without informed consent, and forcible quarantine measures. Indian lessons have demonstrated inadequacies of systems such as fact checkers and myth busters to counter the information divide. This has caused disastrous effects such as polarisation, social ostracism, repressive measures by governments, and denial of legal and constitutional safeguards.

This paper is an attempt to delineate the manifests of 'information divide' in a digital world, and struggles for identity affirmations in a pandemic-induced digital panopticon where sociality is denied to people. This exploratory enquiry also tries to look at how processes of digital communication that claimed access, freedom, and expression have masked democracy by making the pandemic an excuse.

## **Submission ID**

1071

# **Exploring Digital Inequalities in Political and Civic Engagement: A Study on the Influence of Socio-demographic Factors among Youth of West Bengal, India**

## **Authors**

Dr. K. S. Arul Selvan - Indira Gandhi National Open University, School of Journalism and New Media Studies

Ms. Madhumita Das - Indira Gandhi National Open University, School of Journalism and New Media Studies

## **Abstract**

India's digital inclusion shows an extraordinary phenomenon. Internet penetration in India is the world's second-largest and as of 2020, there are 673 million users, approximately 54% of the Indian population (TRAI, 2020). More than 73 percent of India's internet population consists of mobile

internet users (Statista, 2020). India is considered a mobile rich nation, mainly due to the lack of ICT infrastructure to provide broadband connectivity through optical fibers.

India is the country with the world's largest youth population; 65% of its population belongs to this category of people. Youth's attitude, skill, and usage of mobile internet are essential for the most populous democracy. Does own a mobile phone with the internet can confirm the civic and political engagement of youth? In the age of the mobile revolution, material access is not a barrier. Still, attitude and skill differ outcome of internet usage, and in the case of civic and political engagement of youth, the same can be contextualized. Internet information literacy promotes adolescence' civic engagement (Kim, 2015). Digital inclusion can affect youth's civic and political engagement. It is evident in the researches on the digital divide and inclusion that socio-demographic differences influence digital practices. So, it can be assumed that neither broadband nor mobile internet access through a mobile phone alone confirms participation in the civic and political arena. The barriers in the tangible outcome of mobile internet should be understood scientifically.

The study would use the resources and appropriation theory of Van Dijk (2005) as a theoretical framework. The four-stages of technology appropriation: attitude, material access, skills, and usage would help the outline of factors in the research. The civic and political outcome of mobile users would be explored from the perspective of digital inequality

The study aims to understand the influence of socio-demographic (e.g., age, gender, educational qualification) inequalities on the digital political and civic engagement of youth. The objectives are formed to find out the relationship between socio-demographic factors and technology appropriation and engagement.

The objectives of the research are the followings:

1. To explore the relationship between socio-demographic factors and youth's attitude towards internet usage.
2. To explore the relationship between socio-demographic factors and youth's skills of using mobile internet.
3. To explore the relationship between socio-demographic factors and youth's civic and political engagement through mobile internet.

The research is purely empirical, and it would report contemporary contextualization with the support of the concept, the third level of the digital divide. The research objectives would be explored using a mixed approach in the sub-setting of the urban, semi-urban, and rural population in West Bengal (a state in India). The data collection method would be the survey method (probability sampling method) and in-depth interview (non-probability sampling method). The researchers would develop a

standardized tool for the survey. The findings of the research would enrich the discourse of digital inequalities from the Indian perspective.

Keywords: Mobile Phone, Socio-demographic Factors, Skill, Attitude, Youth, Political Engagement, Civic Engagement

## **Submission ID**

1135

# **Performance, causes and countermeasures of the new digital divide: an analysis based on Chinese health QR code**

## **Authors**

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Ms. Shiyu GUO - Renmin University of CHina

## **Abstract**

The prevention and control of the Covid-19 pandemic is a huge task confronting every single country in the world. In China, the "health QR code" attached to individuals' smartphone is considered an important means of epidemic prevention. Individuals entering public places often need to scan the code for health condition confirmation. The popularization of the code has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of large-scale social governance and is one of the highlights of the "digital" anti-epidemic in China.

However, such highly informationized means have brought troubles to many senior people who do not have the ability or willingness to use smart devices: they cannot complete the action of showing or scanning the health QR code, which prevents them from entering public places to live their normal life, such as entering a hospital to seek medical treatment, or going shopping, or taking public transportation, and so on. Based on this, this study believes that the phenomenon of digital divide has become more serious today. The current digital divide not only affects people's access to information, but also begins to affect people's normal life.

In the study, through the sampling method of snowball, 10 senior people were tracked, observed and interviewed in-depth by the researcher (7 days for each), the performance and influence of health QR code on senior people's life were sorted out from the phenomenological level. Subsequently, researchers analyzed causes of this phenomenon, such as political factors, commercial factors and others; finally, this study summarizes the improvement measures taken by the Chinese government to

address this phenomenon, and puts forward some countermeasures, hoping to enable relevant people and groups to bridge the "digital divide", and to guarantee the universality of public services, and improve the effectiveness of government governance.

## **Submission ID**

1346

## **Why pay for an internet connection if you can't afford the device to connect?**

### **Authors**

Dr. Jenny Kennedy - School of Media and Communication, RMIT

Dr. Indigo Holcombe-James - School of Media and Communication, RMIT

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the complexity of affordability as it pertains to digital inclusion. We argue that there is a tension between individual and collective objectives, obfuscating the dynamics between the two, with consequences for how we understand affordability. In doing so, this paper contributes to a small but growing evidence base on the critical impact of affordability on digital inclusion (Breunig and McCarthy, 2018; Bureau of Communications and Arts Research, 2017; Ogle, 2017; Ogle and Musolino, 2016; Thomas et al., 2020; Wise, 2013).

We examine evaluation data from a program called Connected Students which provides technology kits to 100 low-income households with at least one youth between the ages of 15-18 in secondary education. Funded by a leading Australian telecommunications provider, and delivered in partnership with a local secondary school, Connected Students aims to remove affordability barriers to digital inclusion by providing households with a laptop and highspeed, unlimited broadband internet for up to two years. Our evaluation of the program generates deeper understanding of the affordability barriers to digital inclusion.

Connected Students was initially designed to mitigate affordability barriers to digital inclusion at a household level by providing each participating household with an internet connection only. Consultation with the school, however, indicated access alone would not result in digital inclusion for their students as these households lacked not only affordable access, but sufficient devices. Accordingly, each participating student was also provided a laptop. While the digital exclusion of the individual student was resolved, the influence of the collective intervention was impacted.

This shift of focus during the initiation of the program – towards the student, and away from the household – through stakeholder consultation is a useful example of how digital inclusion policy work and interventions tend to become individual-centric. This focus on the individual is reflected in literature on methods: individuals tend to be interviewed, surveyed, and observed at the expense of understanding social contexts and their influence (Helsper, 2017).

In seeking to understand the affordability barriers confronted by low-income households, we aimed to better account for the influence of such social contexts. Our research methods engaged with the collective through whole household interviews and technology tours, and both household and individual surveys.

Through the data we identify the relationship between the affordability of individual device access, and the affordability of household internet connection. For households struggling to manage the monthly costs of access, the upfront cost of individual devices is too high. No matter how fast or free the provided broadband connection, digital inclusion for the collective household remained untenable without individual device access.

We thus identify a tension between the digital inclusion of the individual and that of the collective. This tension demonstrates the dynamics between individual and collective inclusion, and shapes how we understand affordability. In demonstrating this, we move towards a theorisation of contextual structures that acknowledges the tensions between individual and collective objectives and further unpacks the complexity of affordability for digital inclusion.

## **Submission ID**

1358

# **Evaluation and Analysis of Multi-dimensional Information Poverty of Rural Residents: A Survey of Central and Western China**

## **Authors**

Prof. Jianjie Tao - Sun Yat-sen University

Ms. Ziyi Yin - Sun Yat-sen University

Ms. Jingke Lin - Sun Yat-sen University

## **Abstract**

Information is the core resource of contemporary society. As with other resources, the distribution of information among different regions and groups is unfair, leading to information poverty, which is particularly serious in rural areas. We design a multi-dimensional information poverty indicator system for rural residents, including five dimensions: Education level, information ability, information environment, information infrastructure and information behavior, and 11 specific indicators: Educational background, monthly phone bill amount, Internet skills, information organization setup, information access channels, objective information difficulties, broadband access, computer ownership, internet usage time, the application of the information in production planning, and the application of the information in agricultural sales. From August 2019 to January 2020, we conducted questionnaires in rural areas in six central and western provinces of China (Hunan, Anhui, Henan, Ningxia, Guizhou, and Tibet), and collected 1,284 questionnaires, 1,038 of which were used to evaluate the Multidimensional Information Poverty Index. Based on the questionnaire data, we use the "Alkier-Foster Method" proposed by Alkire and Foster of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative to calculate the multidimensional information Poverty level of farmers, and decomposed MPI by region and dimension. The research further analyzes the factors affecting the generation of multi-dimensional information poverty from the rural residents' characteristics, family characteristics, economic capital, social capital, and information capital.

We conclude that multi-dimensional information poverty is common in rural areas of central and western China. After regional decomposition, research shows that there are differences in MPI in the central and western regions, and the multi-dimensional information poverty is more serious in the western regions. After dimensionality decomposition, we find that education level and information infrastructure contribute more to multi-dimensional information poverty than other dimensions. Based on the binary logistics regression model, age, per capita annual income, and the number of WeChat friends all significantly affect the generation of multi-dimensional information poverty of rural residents in central and western regions, and there are other differences in the significant influencing factors of central and western regions. In western China, the probability of multi-dimensional information poverty is higher for poor rural residents. In the central region of China, rural residents whose families mainly live on agriculture and who do not have the position of village cadres are more in need of information help. The recognition of the importance of information will also significantly affect the probability of the occurrence of multidimensional information poverty. According to the research conclusion, our research puts forward the countermeasures and suggestions to solve rural information poverty in the end.

## **Submission ID**

1372

# **Digital inclusion in the regions: An exploration of Aguascalientes, Guanajuato and Jalisco, in Mexico**

## **Authors**

Dr. Dorismilda Flores-Márquez - Universidad De La Salle Bajío

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the geographies of digital inclusion in the central region of Mexico, by approaching the cases of Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, and Jalisco. These are geographically neighbouring states, and have economic and political similitudes, but also present differences in internet access. The inquiry aims to identify the socio-spatial logics of digital inclusion in the region, by contrasting indicators of internet and human development, through secondary data analysis and documentary research.

Previous studies have emphasized the complexities of digital divide, and their roots in previous asymmetries, such as the educational level, gender, age, income, and region, that impact the access of population to digital technology and, consequently, affect the exercise of human rights, such as citizenship and participation, education, health, employment, information, and freedom of expression. Particularly, research on the internet geographies perspective has contributed to approach the state of digital inclusion among the regions and has found disparities even in countries with high levels of internet access (Blank, Graham & Calvino, 2018; Chaparro Mendivelso, 2017; Graham, 2008; Helsper & Reisdorf, 2017; Pick & Sarkar, 2015; Trappel, 2019; Warf, 2021).

In this way, the theoretical framework is based on digital inclusion and internet geographies perspectives, to focus the socio-spatial dimension of access and uses of the internet, by highlighting and visualizing the differences among regions. As Blank et al (2018) have emphasized for the case of the UK, “there are two major reasons to suspect that geographic differences may be important: apparent regional differences and the urban–rural divide” (p. 83).

Methodologically, this research involves three phases. This paper corresponds to the first one, that consists of the exploration and contrast of official data on internet access (users and households), alphabetization, political participation, as well as the human development index, from local, national, and international sources. This information is contextualized in relation to local development plans and government reports.

The preliminary results show disparities among the states, that are sharpened at the level of municipalities in terms of urban/rural, but also of metropolitan areas / industrial corridors face to other urban areas. This has a correlate in the public policies, that are oriented towards economic

development, through the strengthening of industry and competitiveness.

## **Submission ID**

1393

# **Digital Divide and Digital Feedback in China's Third-tier Cities: Social Media Using in Families**

## **Authors**

Ms. Xinyu Li - Communication University of China

## **Abstract**

Despite China has become an internet developed country, digital divide has inevitably emerged due to the uneven development of regions and the aging of China's cities. The intergenerational differences in media use are particularly obvious in families of third-tier cities in China (Cities with a permanent population of more than 1 million and a per capita GDP of less than US \$5,000), and there is a significant divide in the media use behavior of the middle-aged and the elderly. The purpose of this research is to investigate the intergenerational digital divide and digital backfeed phenomenon in China's third-tier cities, and explore how families face the contradiction of the digital divide, and how they carry out digital backfeed to narrow the digital divide.

The definition of digital backfeed is developed from cultural backfeed. The concept of cultural backfeed is described by western scholars as "the process in which children influence their parents in consumption-related knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Ward, 1974). The generational gap in modern society is largely manifested as the digital generation gap, and the corresponding cultural backfeed is mainly realized through digital backfeed (Zhou Yuqiong, 2015). Digital feedback is the expression of the initiative of the family as a community, and it is an important practice that the digital divide can be filled by the family members.

This research adopted field research and in-depth interview as research method, and Lu 'an, Anhui Province, a third-tier city in China has been chosen as a case study. Through an in-depth investigation of the grandparents and descendants of 30 families, this research primary found that there is an clear digital divide in the use of social media among the old, middle-aged and young generations in third-tier urban families in China, including the number and frequency of social media use, the mastery of social media functions, the habits and purposes of social media use. Besides, digital backfeed behavior is also

affected by the willingness of both backfeed parties, family relationship and individual acceptance ability, which produces great difference in effect.

At present, the study has completed the survey of 25 families, but there are still five in-depth interviews of families that have not been completed, and the research will continue.

### **Submission ID**

1419

## **Size matters: Locality of residence and media use in later life**

### **Authors**

Dr. Dennis Rosenberg - Ben Gurion University of the Negev

Dr. Galit Nimrod - Ben Gurion University of the Negev

### **Abstract**

Various factors determine the use of media in later life. Nevertheless, spatial inequalities among older media users have been accorded little attention in academic research. This study aimed at exploring differences in variety (number) and intensity (duration) of both traditional and new media use among older adults residing in various types of localities. Data were obtained from the second wave of the ACT (Ageing + Communication + Technology) cross-national survey, comprising 7,927 Internet users aged 60 and over from seven countries. The statistical analyses used in the study were Chi-square and ANOVA tests, and linear regression as a multivariate technique. The results indicated that spatial differences concern variety of media use to a greater extent than its intensity, especially with regard to use of traditional media via new devices. Overall, residents of large cities exhibited greater variety and intensity of media use than did their counterparts from smaller localities, especially rural ones. These findings supported the *social stratification hypothesis*—according to which individuals from more privileged social backgrounds have better media literacy, use media to a greater extent, and benefit from its use more than people from disadvantaged groups. The findings should be considered by practitioners and policy makers.

### **Submission ID**

1451

# **Human-machine Communication: A New Divide or a Bridge across the Divide?**

## **Authors**

Dr. Huimin Gao - shanghai university

## **Abstract**

Intellectual media application has become a routine in daily life. It is a prominent expression in digital life. So, robots or chatbots driven by AI have become a new medium in the social network. With the emergence of autonomous characteristics of the intelligent machine, social robot is a combination of physical traits, to exist in the way of "body". Therefore, just as Peters had expected that the body will once again become a factor that cannot be ignored in cultural communication study. In the era of intelligent communication, when social robots as communicators interact with humans, the interpersonal communication is transformed into human-machine communication. Technology has brought convenience to different activities in society, and human-machine communication has become an imperative. Studies have shown that over 60% of Internet traffic is generated by machines, including robots, information collectors, hacker tools and spammers. The COVID-19 epidemic of the past year has undoubtedly accelerated the process. Amid this trend, the issue on digital divide is inevitable. Over 20 years have passed since Clinton issued his prescient warning about the digital divide — a reminder that the challenge of technological inequality is not new. Will human-machine communication create a new divide or cross the divide in AI era? Given this, we conducted a new project on intellectual communication to address this issue. As we all known, speaker robots such as Amazon Echo, Baidu Xiaodu are on the rise, reshaping people's lifestyle with a natural way of interpersonal communication. Accordingly, this research is conducted by mixed methods. The method of in-depth interview on the speaker robots' users and designers will be adopted in this research. The research field is located in the home life where the intelligent speech robot is applied. The interview groups are classified into the youth, the middle-aged and the elder from China, with sample size of 200-300. This survey was conducted by cellphone, internet, WeChat and QQ; The duration of this interview is above half an hour. The aim of this research is to dig into the mechanism or structure of a new trust relationship between human and machine, in order to testify the human-machine Communication is a new divide or a bridge across the divide, with the reflection of the social impact of human-machine interaction. On the one hand, this paper is to figure out the potential bias in the algorithms and underlying datasets driving AI the unintentional consequence exists to widen, rather than reduce, opportunity and achievement gaps; On the other hand, to find the new opportunities for the social relationship network embedded by AI and robot in epidemic time. Based on these, some strategies will be proposed to avoid the risks in the digital society in this paper.

## **Submission ID**

1504

# **Life Stories of Chinese Youth: Generation Post-1980s/1990s/2000s and Their Domestication of the Internet**

## **Authors**

Mr. Yinfeng Gao - Beijing Union U

Dr. Mengdi Tao - Tsinghua University

## **Abstract**

Since Internet was first introduced to China, a certain generation has grown up with the background of developing ICTs and kept pace with the time. China has 940 million internet users, among which people aging from 20 to 39 make up the majority (CNNIC,2020). They are known as net generations or digital natives, a.k.a Chinese Generation Y (Long & Wang, 2015). In China, most people prefer to identify them as generations in the 1980s and 1990s, a generation happened to grow up with the Reform and Opening-up (Shen, 2020), whose life experiences are inextricably linked to social progress. Nowadays, the post-2000 generation emerges to be a new force of internet users. From “grown digital” to “born digital”, these young fellows take new ICTs as granted, and are known for their mobile-savvy and intelligent literacy.

This paper tries to examine the internal differences of generations after the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s drawing on domestication of technology to explore how internet technology accelerates the progress of socialization and how their life experience of Internet contributes to digital literacy. Theory of domestication tried to answer how technologies as both cultural material and material culture (Mackey, et al. ,2008) negotiate with individuals’ everyday life experiences.

This research was carried out through life-history interviews, focusing on the interaction between life span and social development. Life history is a new tool for studies of internet history. All individuals’ memories constitute a bottom-up cultural history of media (Dhoest, 2015). The authors interviewed 30 people by means of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. 10 interviewees were born in 1980s, some of whom are not strictly digital natives since they first met internet in their childhood or adolescent period, however they witnessed the great-leap development of ICTs; 10 interviewees were born in 1990s and accessed internet at primary stage and the others were born in 2000s are now facing a new trend of mobile technologies and artificial intelligence. Each interview lasts 60 to 90 minutes,

exploring their life trajectory, from firstly engaged with internet to domesticating ICTs, which helps to reveal the diversity and richness of ordinary netizens' technology experiences and skills.

In this research, life experiences show great impacts on domestication of technology in aspects of appropriation, objectification, conversion and incorporation, which helps youth to reproduce the meaning of cyberspace through everyday life media experience (Pan, 2014). Then we further discuss 3 stages contributing more to digital natives' cognition of current media environment: 1) first contact to internet, 2) adolescent period, 3) entrance to college. To a large extent, these time nodes facilitate the domestication of Internet.

These vivid experiences represent the socio-cultural environment in which young people live, explain how they acquire the ability of digital literacy, and also help young people form the basis of self-understanding in their memories to better understand their own level of online literacy. Meanwhile, their experiences also reveal the intergenerational differences and commonalities in the acquisition of online literacy skills, showing the process of technological change and shift.

## **Submission ID**

1549

# **Analysis on “Digital Divide” Phenomenon of Web-Based Teaching Activities Amid COVID-19 Epidemic**

## **Authors**

Ms. sang sina - Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Dr. DeGe JILE - Renmin University of CHina

## **Abstract**

At the beginning of 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic spread rapidly in whole-land China. People across the nation therefore joined together for fighting the disease. In order to avoid large-scale transmission and gathering, the government took measures like advocating people staying inside their houses for quarantine, prolonging Spring Festival holiday. Social isolation forces various businesses turning their ways to the Internet-based ones, inducing thereby serial reformations of social activities and working styles. People use mobile payment which can avoid the contacts of cash payment, employ online conferences, remote office work to assure the resumption of work and production. The “Health Code” on phones became the proof of commuting. All these preventions were done for protecting people from transmitting between different places and gathering in great numbers.

Given the above situations, Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China issued the notice that was titled as *Use Online Platforms, Stop no Classes with Schools Suspension* on January 29, calling for thorough cooperation between education departments at all levels and schools for its implementation. This paper takes “Digital Divide” as the perspective of research, studies the increasing dependence of students to the Internet during online teaching period, the therefore amplification of their differences in Internet accesses and facilities – those differences interweave distinctively with more deep social issues such as gaps between urban and rural areas, people of different levels of incomes, as well as imbalanced development among separate areas. The “Digital Divide” phenomenon thereby takes its shape. This paper also studies on the possible completion of this notice in the future.

## **Submission ID**

1600

## **Assessing online learning experiences of the differently abled students in India during Covid-19 pandemic**

### **Authors**

Ms. Bhavna Upadhyaya - Jagran

Dr. Jayanta Panda - Jagran

### **Abstract**

The Covid -19 pandemic has brought a devastating effect on all of us. The differently abled are amongst the severely affected community during this pandemic. Digital has become the new normal. Though the differently abled community was already experiencing accessibility issues but the increasing digital culture has intensified the concern. Due to the outbreak of Covid -19 pandemic, educational institutions have been facing a lot of challenges. The digital divide has become even more visible in the society. Equal and accessible quality education for differently abled students was already a matter of concern and the abrupt shift to online learning has raised several questions linked to our approach towards inclusive learning. The outbreak of the pandemic has made this transition a challenge for the differently abled students. Differently abled students who constitute around 40 lakhs in the age group of 5-19, (Census, 2011) have been disproportionately impacted by the disruption caused by Covid -19. The social distancing guideline has intensified the complexity for the differently abled. Though online classes were being conducted by many academic institutions during the lockdown but it appeared to have limited benefit for the differently abled students. The students have suffered lack of support and technical assistance during the online classes. Internet accessibility has always remained a challenge for differently abled but sudden shift to online classes have widened the digital divide. This

paper aims at understanding the experiences of the differently abled students with the onset of the online education culture. It also aims to assess the challenges they encountered during online classes. The paper also explains the factors that resulted in the low inclusion and the limited benefits to the differently abled students. The paper focuses on the differently abled students with hearing, vision and speech impairment. Structured questionnaire has been designed to understand the responses of the school going students from 12-18 years age group. Focus group discussion has also been conducted to understand the perspective of parents and educators associated with the differently abled students.

**Keywords:** Covid -19, differently abled, online classes, digital divide, digital inclusion, accessibility

## **Submission ID**

1625

# **The Silent Blind: A Case Study of Digital Disability Divide in Film Access in China**

## **Authors**

Prof. Xuan Tang - Communication University of China

Mr. Zhongrui Chen - Communication University of China

## **Abstract**

In this era, technology, especially visual communication technology, is a great extension of our sensors. With visual communication technology, people are able to observe and perceive the world in a much wider range of time and space. However, blind and partially sighted people can get little help from this visual communication, in other words, their voice has been absent and silent for a long time. According to the *Annual Report 2019* from World Blind Union, there are over 253 million blind and partially sighted children and adults in the world, while 17.32 million, or 6.8% of those visually disabled people are in China (WBU, 2019). The deficiency or partly deficiency of visual information prevented people with visual disabilities from fully understanding films and other forms of visual communication. This inaccessibility further prevented them from joining social discussion and intercourse. Therefore, they have little access to the daily public discussion on visual contents, and this means that their social circles might be hardly expanded, but shrank, comparing to sighted people. Would the advance of technology actually enlarge the digital disability divide between sighted and visually disabled people?

Visual communication technology has made a great leap if we take AR\VR\MR into consideration, but digital disability divide did exist between people with impairments and those without impairments.

Apart from internet, we suppose that films and other visual products that are increasingly popular in society can lead to serious digital disability divide.

It comes to our mind that whether it be possible for the visually disabled people to break their silence in public discussion with the accessibility brought by audio described films. Based on earlier researches, we are interested in the following subjects: to what extent could audio description improve the visually disabled people's understanding of films; through films with audio description, or described films, how much could the visually disabled people attain common subjects with sighted people and participate in offline public discussion; could described films promote the participation in online public discussion; is the digital disability divide still expanding, even with the assistance of described films?

In order to discover whether or not viewing described films influences the social interaction of visually disabled people, we conducted a series of experiments in China, discussing the possibility of narrowing the digital disability divide, and enhancing the discourse power of visually disabled people in public fields, by improving visual accessibility construction. We invited two groups of visually disabled people (25 each group) to cinemas and played one described film and one normal film separately. Oral surveys and follow-up observation have been conducted after playing. Our preliminary results indicate that described films can bring a new form of visual accessibility to visually disabled people, prominently promoting their participation in offline discussion, while much less effective on online discussion. We also find out the defects of described films production mode that is limiting visually disabled people's in-sync participation in public discussion about films and other visual contexts, e.g., copyrights, production period, etc..

## **Submission ID**

1723

## **Feminist Activism, Digital Exclusion and Power Dynamics of Internet: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Twitter Campaigns #VisibleWikiWomen and #SheTransformsTech**

### **Authors**

Ms. Sneha Gupta - University School of Mass Communication, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University

Dr. Kulveen Trehan - University School of Mass Communication, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University

## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

An equal world is an enabled world (International Women's Day Theme 2020). The link between technology and women's rights is clearly reflected in SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Bridging the digital gender divide would enable women to seize opportunities in the industries that are shaping our collective future for strong, sustainable and inclusive growth. This gap is of concern both in terms of engagement (access, participation and representation) of women as well as potential unintended biases that may be embedded due to a lack of diversity. This exploratory study using MMR design examined the content of two global new media advocacy campaigns aimed at encouraging inclusion of women voices in the global technology conversation and improving digital sustainability of feminist data- #VisibleWikiWomen and #SheTransformsTech. The five emergent themes Feminist Activism, Knowledge Inequity and Gender Inequality on Wikipedia, Power Dynamics in the Digital Sphere, Cultural History and Marginalization of Women and Technology for Women Empowerment may bring novelty to future gender study discourses. These discursive categories and themes can aid to further build new media advocacy frameworks, and achieve UN SDG-5 goal.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

The paper adopted mixed method research (MMR). Critical Discourse Analysis of the two online campaigns #VisibleWikiWomen and #SheTransformsTech was done. Secondly the data was collected via semi-structured online interviews with new media campaign specialists to obtain perspective on corporate involvement, communication strategy and the desired outcomes to underline the relevance of digital skills and the role of digital infrastructure in digital sustainability.

### **Findings**

The paper identified 17 categories and 5 themes that discuss digital divide and power dynamics of the Wikipedia, the broader internet. The categories like Building a Feminist Internet. Fighting Invisibility During Global Pandemic, Visual Gender Gap, and Gender Biased Digital Heritage, Monolinguisism of Internet, Wikipedia building Gender Bias AI become relevant to further build digital advocacy frameworks, and achieve UN SDG-5 goal. Findings will aid in enlisting variables for digital gender advocacy matrices to support UN SDG-5.

### **Originality**

This study contributes to the debates on digital advocacy and digital inclusion by combining interest group and social media studies and presents a comprehensive analysis of digital advocacy for bridging the digital gender divide to further the UN SDG-5 goal.

### **Practical implications**

Disruptive digital technologies are growing with built in gender bias due to lack of gender diversity in development of technologies, women leadership, access, participation and representation. With the convergence of shifting corporate social responsibility trends, untapped NGO value, and pressing development challenges there is tremendous potential for driving social impact and business innovation. The study can be utilized by different stakeholders to ensure that available data are mined, analyzed and reported to capture progress on gender equality in a comprehensive way to further the UN SDG-5 goal.

Keywords

Feminist Activism, Digital Inclusion, Gender Equality, UN Sustainable Development Goals, Digital Advocacy, Global Social Justice.

### **Submission ID**

1730

## **From Vulnerability to Hypervulnerability: Who Determines Mediated Communication Holds the Power**

### **Authors**

Dr. Jessica Wendorf Muhamad - Director, PEAKS Research Laboratory; Assistant Professor, Florida State University

Ms. Pooja Ichplani - Doctoral Student, Florida State University; Research Associate, PEAKS Research Laboratory

### **Abstract**

COVID-19 has (re)established ways in which information and communication technologies (ICTs) play an integral part of daily life for a few segments of the population (De et al., 2020). For these individuals, ICTs are normative and in crisis offer effective channels for/or communication. This has been particularly salient among engaged scholars and/or those who have centered their work in participatory research approaches and have had to reconceptualize how they reach individuals. Driven by an urgency to maintain as well as sustain ongoing efforts in community-based work, researchers have turned towards mediated forms of communication. However, a central tenet of participatory research is inclusion – at all levels – of community members. If one considers power differentials (hierarchical systems) as a barrier to true engagement and participation, then it is equally important to consider the power dynamics between researcher(s) in the field and community members. By selecting mode and channel of communication, some may conceptualize this as *bridging*, but deciding *for*

instead of *with* (community members), researchers could inadvertently create new digital divides while perpetuating power structures that negate community voices.

Stemming from cultural imperialism, a viewpoint that promotes the norms of the dominant groups onto marginalized populations (Gibson & Selinger, 2005), technological determinism presumes that technology drives development. Similarly, researchers who choose communication channels *for* and not *with* community members may be perpetuating cultural hegemony. Choosing mediated communication tools to presume intellectual (Stripling & Pitts, 1990; Jaeger & Bowman, 2005) and physical access are one in the same, and that dominant groups (i.e., those highly technologically literate) hold no power in the system, is a misconception. As such, this paper explores how work on complex social issues – particularly inequalities and inequities – among the most vulnerable could have continuance without promoting technological deterministic ideals. The argument here is not then to not attempt to continue work in community, but instead to recognize that any choice in this context may aggravate vulnerability.

Central to understanding the digital divide is understanding the concepts of granularity and contents (Doong & Ho, 2012). Whereas *granularity* focuses on the levels at which the divide occurs, *contents* is about the activities surrounding the gap. This paper focuses on intentionally inclusive actions (contents) and their role in potentially perpetuating the divide. The arguments set forth follows Feenberg's (1991) perspective that the diffusive process of ICTs can be understood as a “scene of struggle” (p. 14). Further, they present physical access without intellectual access as potentially oppressing and also carrying struggle. In a similar way, this paper explores whether mediated communication in times of crisis as a means to remain connected to community members for whom face-to-face communication is more normative and equitable is (merely) a *physical access* level strategy. Concluding with the indispensable mechanisms of technology as an “amplifier” for development – as identified by Toyama (2011), the paper urges researchers to be cognizant about the critical interplay of access, capacity and motivations of participants to capitalize on ICTs to foster spaces for inclusive development.

## **Submission ID**

1827

## **Digital tools, working remotely and productivity: The Case of Kenya, 6 months after the first COVID-19 case was reported**

### **Authors**

Ms. Josephine Mule - Daystar University

## **Abstract**

Tools, since pre-industrial times were meant to increase efficiency in carrying out tasks. From a hoe to a tractor, from a typewriter to a laptop computer, the idea being to do more or better. The way people communicate, and information circulates has been altered due to technology. The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated organizations to have their employees working remotely to minimize their exposure to the virus during commute and in crowded offices (Amekudzi-Kennedy, Labi, Woodall, Chester & Singh, 2020). Digital tools seem to be at the center of working remotely. Employees are using some form of digital tool to interact with work colleagues: in meetings, in transferring and collaboratively working on files, in submitting completed tasks among other things.

Existing literature including, Hunter (2019) and Agostoni (2020) argues that remote working boosts productivity and creativity. This has been attributed to not wasting time on commute, reduced interactions with toxic colleagues and relaxed environments devoid of the formality in the conventional workplace. However, Zammit (2020) investigated the impact of remote working from a manager's perspective and found that the experience for employees has not been without incident including unstable internet connections, frequent power outages and subtle family interruptions that have affected the ability to deliver on tasks.

This study will seek to explore productivity of employees as they work remotely using digital tools in Kenya. The data will be based on the first six months since the first coronavirus case was reported in Kenya, i.e. 15th March 2020 to 15th August 2020. Sampled employees will range from those employed in start-ups to international organizations. It will sample employees at different levels, from junior to management positions and with varying propensity in relation to digital tools. Data will be collected using questionnaires submitted online and follow up interviews which will be conducted to further understand the responses from the questionnaires. The data will be analyzed qualitatively, and emerging themes will be examined to ascertain how they contrast with comparative studies in other countries. The findings will clarify the Kenyan context on the use of digital tools in working remotely and its impact on productivity.

## **Submission ID**

1944

## **Digital literacy of young community mobilisers for COVID-19 response in South Sudan**

### **Authors**

Dr. Agnese Pastorino - UNICEF/Sorbonne University

## **Abstract**

During the implementation of a community feedback project in South Sudan, led by UNICEF Communication for Development Unit and funded by CDC Atlanta, several difficulties due to digital divide needed to be tackled in order to respond to COVID-19 outbreak. The paper wishes to present how increasing the digital literacy of young community mobilisers – through a methodological protocol – contributed to overcome some of these challenges.

Methodologically, the project used an online platform such as ONA and developed a specifically designed protocol for data collection and analysis both online and offline.

Most young people in South Sudan don't have their own computer; therefore, UNICEF provided an easy-to-use device, such as a Tablet. Initially, data collection in the households was mainly done offline, in paper format, due to the limited digital literacy and technological capacity of young community mobilisers. Following households' visits, the information was transcribed and translated through the use of Tablets, sent to the ONA platform, finally coded and analyzed.

Bi-weekly trainings increased the digital literacy of young social mobilisers, which represented a first step toward the reduction of digital divide in South Sudan. They learned how to use Tablets to collect and analyze data online/offline.

Nevertheless, digital divide implied unpredictable delays in data collection and capacity building, especially for the most remote areas. During the project implementation, COVID-19 restrictions banned travel in the country; therefore, online trainings had to be organized with the field offices and the apps on the Tablets were installed in Juba to be sent to the fields. These online training activities encouraged the partner to strengthen their Internet connectivity in areas such as Yei, Morobo, Kajo-Keji.

COVID-19 outbreak positively impacted on digital divide in South Sudan, the use of digital tools were adopted, Internet connectivity was improved and digital skills were provided.

## **Submission ID**

1973

## **Digitods' digital media uses and parental mediation: an urban-rural comparison study in China**

### **Authors**

Dr. Wenqin CHEN - Communication University of China

## **Abstract**

### Background

“Digitods”, born after 2008, are the first cohort growing up with portable digital devices; Their digital engagement and its interaction with parents’ mediation have received greater academic attention. This comparison study focuses on exploring how digital media uses of preschoolers and media parenting practices vary in urban and rural China. The purpose is trying to identify the digital activity patterns of Chinese preschoolers and how the urban-rural settings and parents’ mediation could shape their digital life.

### Methods

A three-stage random-probability sample of 2481 children aged 3-7 years was used to represent preschoolers from different districts in Mainland China. Among Chinese 31 provincial areas, a sampling frame was constructed with cluster analysis which reflected Chinese regional economic development and education quality. 10 provinces were selected from 4 stratifications. Online questionnaires were distributed in 16 kindergartens by local teachers. The urban sample came from a random-selected kindergarten in the developed cities of 6 province (Shanghai, Shaanxi, Jiangsu, Shandong, Hubei, Jiangxi). The rural sample was collected from kindergartens through convenience sampling in 6 provinces (Guizhou, Shaanxi, Yunnan, Gansu, Shanghai and Zhejiang). Chi-square tests were used to determine the differences in children’s digital access and usages. Regression analysis was used for identifying the predictors of children’s usages of smartphone and tablets.

### Findings

- Digitally connected families have become a mainstay in Chinese society. Media ownership was relatively high for television and smartphones in general. The urban-rural gap of children’s digital media exposure was prominent. Urban children’s exposure to computers, tablets and e-readers was relatively higher. Children in rural areas spent slightly more time in smartphones; their access to tablets was positively correlated to SES indicators. Smartphone and tablet were used (1) as “edutainment tools” regardless of urban-rural settings, mainly as an extension to television in terms of children program consumption; (2) a game player for urban children at large; (3) an alternative to babysitter or toys for more urban families.
- Parental mediation in children’s media usage was measured with three indicators: co-use, time limits and content restrictions (especially apps choosing). Parental co-using mostly took place in consumption of television and smartphones in general. However, more urban children used screen media (TV, tablets, and smartphones) without companionship. More urban parents regulated their

children's digital activities by implementing both time limits and content restrictions. By app-choosing strategies, age ratings in apps were mentioned mostly in both areas. In comparison, rural families relied more on instructions of apps and education institutions, and urban parents preferred trying the apps personally.

- Indicators of parental mediation, sociodemographic and socioeconomic factors (i.e., gender, age, region, income and education) were used to explore their impacts on children's digital content usages. In general, parents' positive attitudes towards digital media encouraged education-purposed uses. Parental co-using, apps-gatekeeping contributed to education uses and restricted game behavior. In urban/rural settings, urban children's game engagement over smartphone was associated with child maintenance and region, rural children's digital activities of education and game were affected by SES factors.

## **Submission ID**

2000

## **Everyday struggles with South Africa's unequal mobile infrastructure**

### **Authors**

Dr. Alette Schoon - Rhodes University

Prof. Marion Walton - University of Cape Town

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the social and technological worlds of the large numbers of South Africans who are seemingly "less connected" owing to intersecting social, economic, infrastructural and communicative marginalisation. It presents findings from a research project on mobile connectivity from 2016, the Izolo study. This paper draws from data from two research sites: a low income area in Cape Town, and a rural area in the Eastern Cape. Participants include unemployed youth, pensioners, and those involved in a range of precarious work and odd jobs including home repairs, child care, hair-dressing, sewing, recycling, driving and traditional practices. Through interviews that reconstituted "diaries" of the previous day's activities, expanded with digital traces such as call logs and media, participants pieced together stories about their day that fleshed out the narrative of the logged data stored on their phones. In this way they documented everyday experiences of mobile communication infrastructure. These stories foreground the vast range of practices involved in the maintenance of connectivity and constant struggles to access communicative infrastructure and data. Rather than passively accepting being disconnected, participants demonstrated extraordinary levels of agency to maintain connectivity,

harnessing social connections to maintain shared, tenuous and peripheral digital connections. Forms of invisible and gendered labour often arose in response to failures of articulation in systems, for example, older women participants played a key role as communication hubs. The women themselves were not highly connected via digital infrastructure, but they were available, reliable, and socially highly connected. While each individual mobile diary tells the story of a person, and may reveal her encyclopedic knowledge of zero-rated packages, or his innovative ways to manage digital storage on a small memory card, collectively the diaries tell another story. It is the story of mobile infrastructure in South Africa, and how such infrastructure prescribes and represents an ideal or ‘authorised’ user through its affordances, a user that is decidedly not the marginalised low-income users of our study. It reveals anti-poor data tariff structures, applications that assume constant digital connectivity and access to the cloud, devices designed for rapid obsolescence and broader infrastructural inequalities of mobile coverage that privilege wealthy suburban users. Participants often needed to negotiate inbuilt assumptions of communication formats designed for such “always connected” users. We argue that South Africa’s mobile infrastructure allows wealthier “authorised” users to take connectivity obstacles in their stride, but that it leaves others less connected, in a semi-permanent state of “infrastructural inversion”, thus in a constant process of diagnosis, maintenance and repair of such connectivity. Participants expended extraordinary energy on maintaining such connectivity because their mobile phones enabled a range of deeply meaningful practices that transcended narrow instrumentalist assumptions about mobile phone usage among economically marginalised people. In line with recent scholarship from the global south, leisure practices often dominate, but other deeply symbolic mobile practices include organizing rituals, expressing obligation towards elders and extended family and the skilled interweaving of multiple modernities.

## **Submission ID**

2017

## **Reflections on coloniality of power through digital technologies in a Global South context**

### **Authors**

Mr. Tatenda Chatikobo - Rhodes

Prof. Lorenzo Dalvit - Rhodes University

### **Abstract**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are often viewed as a positive and necessary disruptor, and an essential catalyst for advancing development everywhere, including the Global South.

However, scholars, ICT experts and the populace are increasingly pointing out to the potential of digital technology to sustain and reinforce hegemonic relations of control, exploitation and violence. Aligned with this critical tradition, the emerging concept of digital colonialism points to the extensive and excessive use of complex technological systems to exploit human's networked relations for capital gain. Save for a limited range of issues (e.g. state surveillance and thwarting freedom of expression in developing countries), the digital colonialism debate is mainly framed through Global North's worldview and episteme. Relatively little is documented in scholarly publications about the perceptions of digital colonialism through the lived experiences of 'invisible' people in the Global South. In this paper, I will critically investigate local experiences of digital colonialism through a decolonial lens in Dwesa, a marginalised and rural community located in the former homeland of the Transkei in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Since 2006, Dwesa has been the site of the Siyakhula Living Lab (SLL), a multidisciplinary ICT project providing free access and maintenance of ICT infrastructures, ICT and mobile training, and co-creation of e-services. I will critically analyse some of the existing peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, conference proceedings documenting the SLL intervention to explore Dwesa community's perceptions of digital technologies and the SLL project in relation to coloniality as advanced by decolonial scholars such as Dussel, Quijano, Mignolo, Maldonado-Torres and Santos. In this paper, coloniality refers to the persistent relations of domination, exploitation and violence as a legacy of the colonial encounter. I will specifically pay attention to the vertical and horizontal hierarchies of power and control through digital technologies in Dwesa.

## **Submission ID**

2034

## **Girls dropping out of Online education in India during Covid-19 pandemic - A site of overlapping challenges**

### **Authors**

Ms. Niranjana Prem - Thirdview

### **Abstract**

The Government of India declared an unprecedented shift to online learning practices during the lock down. Internet, Direct to Home Television and Radio were used as modes of Instruction. Each came with their infrastructural access issues – only 4 percent of rural households had a computer, 15 percent had an Internet connection, 5.25 percent had DTH subscriptions. According to the Oxfam Inequality Report of 2020, of the poorest 20 percent households in India, only 2.7 percent have access to a computer and 8.9 percent to Internet. According to National Statistics Office Report of 2017-18, only

12.5 percent of India's 350 million students have access to smartphones, and only 23.8 percent households have any access to the internet. A report by Quacquarelli Symonds on mobile data showed 40.2 percent of the users surveyed reported poor connectivity, while 56.6. reported signal issues.

The 2011 census of India showed female literacy rate to be 65.5 percent, 16.6 percent less than their male counterparts. In 2020, A Right to Education report notes that 40 percent of girls between the age of 15 to 18 years, do not go to school. Education in India is considered the only means of achieving economic and social upward mobility. The Covid 19 Pandemic has cut off this important access to growth. The number of girls dropping out of secondary school is predicted to be around 10 million, as per a Right to Education Forum policy brief published in 2020. Through the pandemic and the lock down, due to economic duress, girls were the first to be pulled out of education. The resources of a family are directed towards the boy, who are to be bread winners in the future. Studies have consistently reported girls role being limited to engaging in household chores and looking after their siblings. Reports of their exposure to early and forced marriage, violence, trafficking, poverty and early pregnancies increased drastically.

This context has pushed the intersection of Gender, Education and Digital Divide into spotlight. India was dragged into a technological solution to access education. It can be safely concluded that this effort at faux leapfrogging has left entire sections of the population behind. Marginalised communities - women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and religious minorities - were severely affected. This paper will study the digital divide conversation during the pandemic with reference to girl child education in India through the reports that were published from February 2020 to the present. Some studies urge India to ride the wave of the technology impetus to bridge the digital divide. Innovations at the local level have been reported across India where multi-pronged approaches that combined community involvement with low-tech or no technology, were applied successfully to ensure continued girl child education. A call for a more inclusive approach to access to digital literacy, awareness of digital rights, engaging cultural drawbacks has been made in some of the studies. The Paper will study these approaches, compare, and analyse them to arrive at an understanding of how they enable inclusion.

## **Submission ID**

2197

## **Restricting Access: The curious case of 'step-up' apps and platforms in India**

### **Authors**

Dr. Aditya Deshbandhu - Indi

Ms. Shatakshi Huddar - IPM

Ms. Kanchana Manilal - IPM

## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to understand the cultural and societal logic that shape access of online apps and platforms in a country like India. By attempting to understand how the engagement offered on such platforms not merely shapes the overall experience, but can also serve as a barrier to entry, the democratic nature of these platforms comes into question.

This paper argues that in a world where the medium (the internet/world wide web) constantly evolves (Lister et al. 2009) and so do the platforms, new users from countries like India find it difficult to navigate platforms and interfaces that have constantly been reshaped (Gillespie, 2010). To find a space for themselves in the network society (Castells & Cardoso, 2005) they gravitate towards newer platforms to accrue necessary technological and social knowhow before moving to more established ones. As established platforms seek to provide optimal experiences to their users, their architecture and underlying mechanics become increasingly opaque (Holmes, 2005). By examining five sets of platforms and their interfaces this study looks at how efficiency, design sensibilities, intuitiveness, and specific language from the platform serve as barriers to entry to new users. The findings from the analysis are used to identify the characteristics of step-up platforms and the various attributes in their design that allow users to view them as such.

In the specific context of India, the role of step-up apps is significant as the country's government has been ushering a digital central narrative. As a major chunk of the population moves suddenly to an online existence it must rely on apps and platforms for e-governance, payments, livelihoods, and crucial information. However, in the ongoing geo-political tussle with China a significant number of these step-up apps have been made inaccessible systemically, leaving the digitally vulnerable without the requisite spaces to acquire essential understanding on navigating and making the internet their own. The findings of this study should offer insights into how 'step-up' platforms are essential for a democratic digital existence.

## **Submission ID**

2317

# **The impact of smart phone use on the intimacy of visually impaired people**

## **Authors**

Prof. Min Wang - author

Ms. Xin Liu - Wuhan University

## **Abstract**

Visually impaired people (VIP) have “a clear disadvantage” in the process of being selected as a romantic partner (Kapperman et al., 2017, p. 369). According to Comprehensive Assistive Technology Model, the use ICT-based assistive technology might expand their sexual and reproductive activities via strengthening the “Activities Attribute” (Wang & Wu, 2021). This study investigates how VIP use smart phone, an ubiquitous assistive technology, to seek online dating and establish intimate relationships, focusing on the specific benefits and risks brought by phone use in the process of seeking and establishing intimate and marital relationships.

The study conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with VIP aged from 20 to 50 who provide massage services or receive such training in massage parlors in China from November 23, 2020 to January 2021. We found that the use of smart phones has greatly expanded their social circles, and strengthened their integration into both visually impaired and sighted communities, because social media provide them a low-cost, little-mobility, and instant way for one-to-one and one-to-many communication. But this convenience doesn't benefit their establishment of marital relationships equally by gender. Female VIP using smart phones tend to have greater advantage in choosing a marriage partner due to current social-economic and demographic structure of China. VIP, either male or female, tend to establish an ideal persona through impression management, enriching their interpersonal communication and strengthening intimate relationship. Indeed, the use of smart phones creates favorable conditions for VIP's mental quality and psychological state. Meanwhile, the use of smart phones to establish intimacy also gets involved with certain risks, particularly internet frauds and online deception, which might cause material damage and spiritual injury to VIP who needs special safeguards. The emerging critical disability theory was employed to analyze these risks.

**Keywords:** smart phone; intimate relationship; benefits; favorable conditions; risks

## **References:**

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## **Submission ID**

2343

# **Information Seeking and Information Evaluation of Older Adults During the Pandemic in Turkey in Terms of Digital Inequality**

## **Authors**

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Dr. Beren Kandemir - Hacettepe University Institute of Social Sciences

Dr. Gül Şahinkaya - Akdeniz University Institute of Mediterranean Civilizations Research

## **Abstract**

This study discusses the findings of the 120k613 reference numbered field research project granted by The Scientific And Technological Research Council Of Turkey. The aim of the study is to determine the information seeking behaviours of older adults (65+) before and during the Covid-19 pandemic period and to reveal how they evaluate this information, by this analysis we see how differences in these practices feed inequalities in the society and the role of the Internet in this process within the context of aging. Although predominantly it is considered as a homogeneous category in the digital inequality literature, it is known that older adults are a heterogeneous group, which this heterogeneity leads to different experiences of inequalities. In the study, what kind of the media repertoires (traditional media and new media ecosystems) (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Hasebrink & Domeyer 2012; Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017) the older adults have before and during the pandemic, from which sources they access information, the level of reliance on the information obtained, and their digital capital status (Ragnedda et al., 2020; Ragnedda, 2020) were ascertained. To be able to do that, data was collected from the sample group (n=1075) representing the 65 years and older population of Turkey. From the relational sociological point of view, participants' pre-and post-pandemic media repertoires, reliance on the

informational content obtained regarding the pandemic, and digital capital status (ownership and competence) were ascertained with the intersection of their gender, age, social class.

During the pandemic, the information needs of people has increased all over the world. At the same time, a significant portion of the previously offline work has started to be done online. Thus, media and ICT use have increased and become more important, which has brought along some problems. The increasing information requirement has enhanced the amount of information as well as the amount of disinformation and misinformation, moreover, misinformation can spread faster than information. In this process, ICT access and usage gap have become more evident, which can make older adult, who are already disadvantaged in terms of ICT, more disadvantaged.

Based on our findings, we found that older adults mainly watch television as a primary source of information before and during the pandemic. Even though they have smart phones (almost half of the participants) due the lack of digital skills, they use basic opportunities of smart phones. When the results of the research are considered in the context of digital capital ownership, it has revealed that the level of associating with digital technologies by older adults are very low. Moreover, doubting the accuracy of information rate among the older adult population is also very low. The low rate of doubting the accuracy of the information obtained by older adults who use different media repertoires synchronously, is a phenomenon that should be deliberated over. There is a significant difference among older adults based on class. This phenomenon shows that the media literacy is a basic cognitive skill required for all segments and populations of society, especially older adults.

## **Submission ID**

2371

# **Digital divide and the pandemic: How Russian and Chinese youth perceive Internet memes related to the COVID-19**

## **Authors**

Dr. Olga Smirnova - Lomonosov Moscow State University, Faculty of Journalism

Dr. Galina Denissova - Lomonosov Moscow State University, Faculty of Psychology

## **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought dramatic changes to all spheres of life. These changes triggered an immediate response from the media, including social media, which kept posting not only up-to-date information about this most relevant issue but also users' reactions to it. The new challenge has revealed well the new aspects of the digital divide in global and national contexts (van Deursen, & van

Dijk, 2015; Mutsvairo, & Ragnedda, 2019; Vartanova, & Gladkova, 2019) “How the epidemic messages affect the public sentiment is an important issue with both theoretical and practical value” (Fang & Haochen, 2020).

The project presented in this paper focuses on the use of Internet memes related to the COVID-19 pandemic by young people in Russia and China. The need for studying such important processes as socialization and self-actualization in media practices of the youth audience in digital media culture is also emphasized (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020). The selected sample contains 108 respondents (n=108), including 50 Chinese and 58 Russian university students (both Humanities and Engineering), enrolled in different degree programs. It includes 36% men and 64% women. Respondents’ age groups are: 39%, 18 to 22 years old; 46%, 23 to 27 years old; 15%, 28 to 32 years old.

The study consisted of two procedures and the first one was a survey among respondents about their attitude towards Internet memes related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The questionnaire included basic questions about the social media used by the respondents and their functions (entertainment, distraction, emotional experience, communication, identification, information, compensatory and contact functions), respondents’ preferences for different types and topics of memes, the perception and influence of memes on the respondents. The second procedure involved a test for the perception of specific Internet memes by the respondents. The sample was selected from popular memes in the Russian and Chinese Internet sectors. The results showed that there are ethnoculturally differences in usage of Internet and perception of the internet-memes as an actual media form. In this regard, the Russian and Chinese respondents share a common view on basic issues related to the functions, content, and form of Internet memes, as well as the key trends in their impact on people during the COVID-19 pandemic. The above argues in favor of a “post-national” global picture, even despite the differences in the perception of Internet memes on the same topical subject.

## **Submission ID**

2390