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E-GOVERNANCE: CATALYST FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTANABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

E-governance plays a pivotal role in fostering gender equality and sustainable development by harnessing information and communication technologies to address the unique challenges faced by women. Through enhanced access to information and services, e-governance platforms empower women, particularly those in remote areas, by bridging geographical gaps and ensuring they can easily access vital resources such as healthcare, education, and legal support. These platforms facilitate inclusive decision-making processes, offering women a digital space to voice their opinions and actively participate in policy discussions, thus contributing to more representative governance. Financial inclusion is another key aspect where e-governance shines, providing women with access to digital financial services, which can significantly bolster their economic participation. Moreover, e-governance supports women's education and skills development through online courses and training programs, fostering digital literacy

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that is necessary in today's technology-driven world. By enabling transparent monitoring and evaluation of gender-related policies, e-governance ensures accountability and informs evidence-based decision-making to address persisting disparities. Additionally, e-governance initiatives contribute to the reduction of gender-based violence by establishing secure online reporting mechanisms and promoting preventive measures. They also play a vital role in supporting women entrepreneurs, offering online marketplaces, business registration services, and networking opportunities. Furthermore, by disseminating information on sustainable practices and environmental policies, e-governance contributes to environmentally conscious policies, aligning with the broader goals of sustainable development. In essence, the strategic implementation of e-governance emerges as a powerful tool in advancing gender equality and sustainable development, fostering inclusivity, and leveraging technology for positive social change.

Keywords

E-governance, Digital literacy, Decision-making, Gender equality, Sustainable development, Environmental policies, financial inclusion.

E-governance is the access to information and services through ICT. It is the use of ICT by the public sector to improve information and service delivery. It encourages e-participation of the citizens in decision-making and makes the government more efficient, accountable, and transparent. This plays a pivotal role in increasing gender equality and sustainable development by exercising Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). It makes the bridge for geographical gaps and empowers women, particularly those in remote areas by providing access to vital resources such as education, legal support, and healthcare. It cultivates the voice and opinion of women

by offering them digital space or platform. They actively participate in policy discussions and other matters. It also offers initiatives supporting women entrepreneurs, business registration services, offering online marketplaces and networking opportunities. Digital financial services are another central aspect for women that can bolster their economic participation. Moreover, it supports skill development, enhancing digital literacy which is necessary in a technology-driven world. Additionally, e-governance contributes to reducing gender-based violence by providing secure online reporting mechanisms and promoting preventive measures. Fundamentally, e-governance is a powerful tool in promoting gender equality and sustainable development.

This research paper presents the significant role of e-governance in gender equality and sustainable development. It is recognized as an instrument for the promotion of gender equality. The use of ICT and online services contributes to the development of women in multiple facets. E-governance is the practice of information technology for conveying government services, exchanging information, communication transactions, and interactions within the entire governance framework. It is the interaction between the government and the citizens that enables citizens to take advantage of the various services of ICT. Through ICT services, citizens can message directly to the officials, and easily cast electronic votes, and online payments of taxes and bills. The use of ICT and online delivery services provides new opportunities for women in civil services. It provides equal opportunities for men and women in every place whether it is a workplace or public sector. E-learning and e-training are the online interactions between the government and employees. It is an authentic platform where all the government facilities are available 24 hours beyond physically waiting in lines at government brick-bound offices. It implies E-democracy wherein direct interaction is performed between the electorate (general public) and the elected government electrically.

Women are the ones who cushioned the effects of the crisis to a greater extent. This situation is demonstrated by the increase in

poverty, informality, violence, unemployment, and living conditions. In recent years, technology has changed the condition at an exponential rate, particularly in digital technologies. In the field of education, digital education also plays a pivotal role in creating new resources for women in remote areas. It is the generation of digital content. E-governance is the key to promoting the development of high-quality educational content. There are various government educational platforms for women who are unable to attend physically that are free of gender bias and stereotypes, and also free of cost for those who are unprivileged women, and also easy to access.

Inclusive digital transformation is a driver for reversing inequalities and digital divides throughout the life cycle of women. Opportunities exist to ensure access, use, and appropriation of different digital goods and services, as well as to appropriate and be producers and creators of technology. However, if conditions for the active and equal participation of women in this area are not considered, there is a risk of maintaining and deepening the structural challenges of gender inequality. A digital ecosystem is an open, adaptive, and distributed sociotechnical system that includes a complex network of organizations and institutions that dynamically interact and collaborate to create and distribute value in a digital environment (Brynjolfsson, & McAfee; 2014; Tushman, & O'Reilly, 2016). It is made up of companies from the productive sector, the educational and research system, and has a set of regulations that provide a framework for the ecosystem. A digital ecosystem involves three dimensions: new modes of information and content production; different social behaviour related to the use and consumption of goods and services; and an economic and social impact that is more important than that of information and communication technologies considered in isolation. This implies considering the set of services and requirements of different nature that are provided from and through telecommunication networks, the set of infrastructures that enable the provision of such services, as well as the interaction between service providers of different natures that constitute the extended value chain of Internet services (Katz, 2015).

In conclusion, the confluence of e-governance, gender equality, and sustainable development paints a complex tapestry of opportunities

and challenges. The digital revolution, as embodied by e-governance initiatives, holds immense promise in reshaping educational paradigms, fostering economic empowerment, improving healthcare outcomes, and enhancing political participation for women. The transformative potential of digital technologies is evident in the positive impacts witnessed across various sectors.

The persistent digital gender divide, coupled with inherent biases in technology adoption, poses a significant barrier to realizing the full potential of e-governance in promoting gender equality. Access to technology, digital literacy, and socio-cultural norms must be addressed comprehensively to ensure that the benefits of digital advancements are inclusive and equitable.

As we navigate this evolving landscape, it is imperative for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars alike to collaborate in devising inclusive strategies. The adoption of gender-sensitive policies, educational programs to bridge digital divides, and ongoing dialogues on the ethical implications of digital interventions are essential components of a comprehensive approach.

Furthermore, the nuanced challenges associated with privacy concerns in healthcare data, potential biases in political participation, and the need for a gender-sensitive approach in economic empowerment underscore the intricate nature of this relationship. The success of e-governance in contributing to sustainable development hinges on addressing these challenges with a holistic perspective.

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