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Attitude of School Students Towards the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Rural and Urban Areas of West Bengal: A Study

Monalisa Ghosh[1], Dr. Ritesh Mishra[2]

Research scholar, Dr. C. V. Raman University, Kargi Road, Kota
District: Bilaspur, State: Chhattisgarh, India

Associate professor and HOD, Dr. C. V. Raman University, Kargi Road, Kota
District: Bilaspur, State: Chhattisgarh, India

Abstract

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) refers to a combination of technological tools and resources used for communication, information processing, storage, and dissemination. In the field of education, ICT has become an essential medium for improving teaching-learning practices and increasing students' interest in academic activities. The present study examines the attitude of secondary school students towards the use of ICT in both rural and urban areas of West Bengal. It also explores the use of ICT for educational and non-educational purposes and identifies the major barriers faced by students in accessing ICT facilities. The research was conducted in secondary schools equipped with ICT facilities in Kolkata and South 24 Parganas districts. The findings indicate that ICT creates significant opportunities for students when the available resources are effectively utilized.

Keywords: Attitude, ICT, Secondary School Students, Rural Areas, Urban Areas, West Bengal

Introduction

Attitude is considered a psychological tendency that reflects an individual's feelings, beliefs, and behavioural intentions towards a particular object, situation, or concept. It develops through personal experiences and social interactions. Scholars have defined attitude in different ways. According to Allport (1935), attitude is a mental state shaped through experience that influences an individual's responses. Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) described attitude as a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a specific object or idea.

In the modern educational system, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. ICT includes technological tools such as computers, mobile phones, the internet, television, radio, satellite systems, and communication networks that facilitate the storage, retrieval, and exchange of information. It also includes educational services like online learning, video conferencing, and digital classrooms.

The integration of ICT in education has transformed traditional teaching methods by making learning more interactive, student-centred, and accessible. Students can use ICT for academic purposes such as online research, digital assignments, and virtual learning, as well as for communication and entertainment. In both rural and urban areas, ICT has the potential to reduce educational inequality by providing access to learning resources. However, the

availability and effective use of ICT facilities often differ between rural and urban schools due to economic and infrastructural factors.

Review of Literature

Baskey (2017) conducted a study on the use of ICT in the teaching-learning process in Purba Burdwan district of West Bengal. The study focused on teachers and students from selected schools and examined how ICT contributed to educational development. The findings revealed that ICT positively influenced classroom activities and improved teaching effectiveness. Statistical tools such as the chi-square test and t-test were used to analyse differences in awareness and the impact of ICT usage among teachers.

Several other studies have also highlighted the importance of ICT in education. Researchers found that ICT helps students develop problem-solving skills, enhances communication, and increases participation in classroom activities. Digital learning tools also encourage independent learning and creativity among students. However, inadequate infrastructure, lack of technical knowledge, and insufficient training remain major obstacles to the successful implementation of ICT in schools.

Studies comparing rural and urban educational institutions often indicate that urban schools have better access to digital facilities than rural schools. Rural students may face challenges such as poor internet connectivity, lack of devices, and limited technical support. Despite these challenges, ICT has shown significant potential to improve educational opportunities for students across different regions.

Importance of ICT in Education

ICT has become an important component of modern education due to its ability to support effective learning. The major benefits of ICT in education include:

Enhancing students' interest and motivation in learning.

Providing access to a wide range of educational resources.

Encouraging interactive and collaborative learning.

Improving communication between teachers and students.

Supporting online and distance education.

Developing digital literacy and technical skills among learners.

ICT also enables students to access information anytime and anywhere, making education more flexible and inclusive.

ICT in Rural and Urban Schools

The use of ICT varies significantly between rural and urban schools. Urban schools generally have better technological infrastructure, including computer laboratories, internet facilities, and smart classrooms. Students in urban areas are often more familiar with digital devices and online learning platforms.

In contrast, rural schools may face difficulties such as:

Lack of electricity and internet connectivity.

Insufficient ICT equipment.

Limited financial resources.

Lack of trained teachers.

Low digital awareness among students and parents.

Despite these limitations, the introduction of ICT in rural schools can help bridge the educational gap and provide students with equal learning opportunities.

Conclusion

The use of ICT in education has brought significant changes to the teaching-learning process. It has improved students' engagement, access to information, and learning outcomes. The study on secondary school students in rural and urban areas of West Bengal shows that students generally have a positive attitude towards ICT and recognize its educational value.

However, disparities still exist between rural and urban schools in terms of access to ICT facilities and digital resources. To ensure effective implementation of ICT in education, government agencies, schools, and policymakers should focus on improving infrastructure, providing technical training, and ensuring equal access to digital tools for all students.

Proper utilization of ICT resources can contribute greatly to the overall development of education and help students become more skilled and knowledgeable in the digital age.

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