# Online Learning:DALIT Students of kerala and Digital Divide

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## Abstract

Amidst the pandemic, professional and academic activities shifted into online and digital mode. However, marginalized communities in developing countries find it challenging to participate in essential online activities. This paper analyses the challenges faced by the deprived communities (Dalit) of Kerala (a state in India). Through the survey, the researcher intended to assess the availability and digital competency of various ICT devices required for accessing online learning of the students of Dalit villages. The paper shows that a smartphone is a prominent tool for online education, but only 20% of the sample have free access to it, and 80% have only limited access to it; in addition, 70% of smartphones are owned by parents. Moreover, the paper evaluates the factors affecting online education due to the digital divide and suggests proper and effective initiatives on authority. 90% of the student community under study considered the lack of smartphones and poor connectivity as extreme barriers to online learning. The majority are thought to lack ICT training and lack of competency as unnecessary barriers. The majority of the sample are excluded from the advantages of online learning and are not aware of the vast opportunities of ICT facilities. This study confirms that digital inequality is a reality that needs to be addressed immediately, and the scope of initiatives for bridging the digital divide should be expanded to make a digitally inclusive society. The participants insisted on improving existing ICT infrastructure facilities such as uninterrupted power supply, internet connectivity, and shared community centers.

**Keywords**: *Digital divide, Information poverty, online learning, Dalit students.*