

An Analysis of the ICT Empowerment of Asian Southern Women from the Perspective of "Global South"

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ABSTRACT. *The worldwide dissemination of ICT (Information Communication Technology) is accompanied by the “gender digital divide” caused by the unfair distribution of ICT resources. Fortunately, the concept of “Global South” promote the ICT empowerment of women in poor areas of Asia. We analyzed Grammy Bank Women's Phone Project in Bangladesh, the SEWA project in India, and the data information agency in Delhi. It is found that these projects value women's altruistic qualities and friendly expression style, encourage them to participate in community management, enhance their sense of self-efficacy, and emphasize the use of community relationships to create a “field”, thereby reducing women's anxiety and resistance to using ICT. It provides a reference path for future ICT Southern women's empowerment practices.*

KEYWORDS: *“Global South”, Information Communication Technology, Women's empowerment*

1. Introduction

Women's empowerment is defined as a multi-dimensional and gradual process [1]. Women obtain, develop, and exercise their due rights and powers in life, and strengthen their participation in the economic, political, and social and cultural fields. The pace of innovation in emerging technologies is gradually accelerating, and the information and communication sector is growing rapidly. The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women announced in 2002: "Information and communication technologies can provide women with multiple ways to empower women in society, politics, and economy." People have begun to realize the huge potential of ICT in promoting gender equality. The concept of the "Global South" believes that the development gap already exists not only among nation-states, but even within a country, there is an information technology-poor "South" and information technology-rich "North". Therefore, the "Global South" advocates that the southern region should try to "decouple" from the northern region/country, focusing on local characteristics rather than the universality of Western industrialization models, and getting rid of the dependent status.

2. "Global South", ICT and women's empowerment

2.1 About "Global South"

The concept of "Global South" is based on the "Third World". The countries referred to by the "Third World" are mostly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They are basically independent but their overall national strength is relatively weak. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the international power structure has undergone tremendous changes. The South and the North no longer use nation-states as the only distinguishing indicator. The scope of the term "global south" goes beyond the geographical concept and focuses more on the "location of knowledge production". Cornell once pointed out that the production and dissemination of gender knowledge is concentrated in the West, and the "other" can only exist as a rich case study [2]. The renewal of the concept from "Third World" to "Global South" is based on the current situation of world market liberalization with multinational media companies as the forefront and ICT technology as one of the driving forces. Communication research from this perspective pays more attention to the communication of various countries, the distribution of information and communication resources between and within countries [3]. We can say that the concept of "Global South" is affected by the popularization of ICT, which in turn affects the coordination and distribution of ICT resources within the country.

2.2 The role of ICT in women's empowerment

ICT(Information and Communications Technology) refers to a set of diversified technical tools and resources, including telecommunications, television and radio broadcasting, computer software, hardware and services, and electronic media. According to the latest figures released by the International Telecommunications Union, with the popularization of ICT, the "gender digital divide" increased from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016 [4]. Even within the group, the Internet penetration rate of European women is far Higher than Asia-Pacific women. The role and function of ICT in enhancing gender capabilities has gradually attracted attention. Scholars have focused on testing the effects of ICT in helping women in economic, political, and social and cultural empowerment. It is essential to empower women with economic power. The reception and dissemination of information depends on the operation of capital, knowledge and power. A study by the African Commission for Women's Economic Empowerment in Uganda found that information technology provides women's organizations with direct and inexpensive means of communication and promotes the efficiency of collective production and sharing of knowledge. Jain believes that ICT has changed the definition of "work" and "work" places [5]. Political empowerment involves women's right and ability to participate equally in the decision-making process. Scholars such as Ami discovered that VFH distributed Sada devices (similar to MP3 players) to women during the Afghan parliamentary elections, which helped women track the election process and improved women's speaking opportunities in the family and the community [6]. Social empowerment

points out that women's mastery of ICT is a tentative challenge to the existing cultural structure. There are gender differences in Internet use, but at the same time it also provides women with opportunities to build their own identity and help rebuild their lifestyle [7]. Community researchers have defined "empowerment" as the process of obtaining, participating and cooperating on three levels: focusing on the individual; focusing on the organization or interpersonal relationship; focusing on the wider social level such as the community [8]. The following will analyze the ICT empowerment projects for women in southern Asia from these three dimensions.

3. Analysis of ICT empowerment practices for women in southern Asia

The new media technology is empowering "everyone". With the concerted efforts of the United Nations, governments and various NGO organizations, they have carried out fruitful practical attempts in the fields of agricultural economy, health, and anti-domestic violence relying on new technologies such as portals, handheld electronic devices, and smart cards.

Table 1 Some practical cases of ICT empowering women in southern Asia

project name	countries	Empowerment area
The Lumbini CMC project	Nepal	Education, adult literacy,
Self-Employed Women's Association	India	Market research
Union Information and Service Centres	Bangladesh	Public Service
Demonstrator application grant scheme	Malaysia	Remote work
Women to Women video project	Pakistan	Community infrastructure
Network Referral System	Uganda	hygiene
"Infolady" project	Bangladesh	Hygiene, Daily life support
Women's Network Equality in Decision Making	Albania	Political Participation
Lebanese Alternative Learning	Lebanon	education

3.1 ICT empowerment practices of women in southern Asia focusing on the individual dimension

Empowerment in the personal dimension emphasizes that people are independent and autonomous, can understand themselves according to the theory of fairness and justice, and they have the potential to change themselves and society. Yunus, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006, founded Grameen Bank and later Grameen Banks Women Phone project, mainly for women in economic poverty and extremely low education in China. For microfinance services, 96% and above of loan targets are women, and the loan repayment rate has been stable at 98% for a long time. The project believes that women's empowerment is not realized spontaneously, and

focuses on tapping their potential.

Women at the bottom of Bangladesh's society have low mobility, face complex relationships within the family and undertake more family labor, have a high sense of responsibility to the family, and have outstanding qualities such as tolerance, caution, diligence and thrift. They are eager to get rid of poverty and have a strong desire to cherish borrowing opportunities to avoid damage to their reputation caused by defaulting on loans. Rouf and Kazi surveyed 60 Grameen Bank female telephone project participants, and found that more than 80% of the study participants lead decision-making in their families; more than 90% support their children's education financially; 91% reported that They manage daily expenses together with family members [9]. In addition, the proportion of female borrowers visiting local councils, public schools, and participating in community activities has also increased significantly. Online microfinance services are becoming a "liberating force", which has a positive impact on women's outlook on money and community-wide lending relationships, Thereby boosting women's empowerment in the family and community spheres [10].

The SEWA project, which started in the Sigottawali district of Andhra Pradesh, India, has also captured the potential of women's personal qualities in promoting women's use of information and communication technologies for political and civic participation. This project allows women to participate in the 24-hour citizen-to-citizen (C2C) and citizen-to-government (C2G) government decision-making process through e-government tools [11]. The SEWA project believes that compared with male leaders, women are more adaptable in a complex and changeable working environment, and are more inclined to democratic decision-making, and less arbitrary behaviors, so as to develop strong and flexible leaders. Therefore, the project believes that not only give women a voice, but also choose rural women as information leaders and managers to ensure that women can truly participate in the decision-making of national economic development activities.

3.2 ICT Southern Women's Empowerment Practice Focusing on Interpersonal Dimensions

Empowerment at the interpersonal level believes that when the oppressed are encouraged and guided by the group, the interpersonal network of the oppressed will be transformed into a kind of social capital, and the oppressed will be more awakened in it. The sense of security that group cohesion brings to members will stimulate women's in-group preferences, promote mutual sharing and communication of information among members, and form a certain kind of circle of exchanges. The TWU project (Taiwan Women Up program) that emerged in Taiwan pays more attention to the "weak" among the digitally disadvantaged groups who lack basic computer skills-middle-aged and elderly women, and provides them with various software, computers and other electronic equipment and ICT courses. Middle-aged women have always been regarded as a group that lacks representation in the use of new media. However, the TWU project has long implemented a unique "group model". Intimacy serves as a glue to promote the acceptance and use of ICT

by middle-aged women.

Lewin's "holistic research view" emphasizes the relationship and interaction between people and the environment. He puts forward the formula of people's behavior: $B=f(PE)$, human behavior (B) is a function of individual (P) and environment (E) And change with the changes of the two. In the process of collective learning of ICT by middle-aged women, the group as a "field" becomes a social support force to create an atmosphere where "everyone faces the same operational difficulties" for the female individuals in it, thus reducing the time when learning new skills Fear of difficulties and anxiety. Therefore, the ICT courses provided by the TWU project provide space for social motivation, sense of belonging and exchange assistance. Social support from team members, including attachment, guidance, and reliable alliances, are the main factors that support them to stay in the TWU project and learn ICT [12].

In addition, the altruistic qualities of female volunteers in the TWU project have also become an important factor in the motivation of individuals to share ICT knowledge with others. Hafkin believes that when women have access to technology, they often share technology with other women, thereby "promoting a multiplier effect and becoming a role model" [13]. The TWU project encourages female volunteers to engage in participatory learning, and because most of the members come from charitable organizations, they can pass on ICT technology to more women through a group of many, point-to-face mutual assistance. Altruism is a kind of pro-social behavior, and positive psychologists put forward the concept of "giving is getting", demanding the release of emotional impulses that contribute to the development of positive social energy. The team mode promoted by the TWU project accelerates the flow of emerging technologies and drives the lagging ones in sinking propagation.

3.3 ICT Southern Women's Empowerment Practice Focusing on Community Dimensions

The Datamation Foundation, a data information registration charitable trust for Muslim women in Delhi, India, takes "women's empowerment" as one of its development goals, and has successively established information kiosks and community multimedia centers. In terms of providing job opportunities suitable for women and increasing women's economic income, the agency established the Jafrabad Gender Resource ICT4D project center with the help of UN Women and Children's Agency, mainly to provide female groups in marginal areas with basic computer knowledge, embroidery, etc. Take the course. In addition, women can also participate in community information management and help cooperatives sell agricultural products or craft products with basic programming skills through local community browsers. It mobilizes more women to become "lobbyers", thus launching a community women's mobilization campaign, setting up female community groups on the status quo of sexual harassment, girl abuse, and prenatal selective abortion in Delhi, and providing online services to women in crisis Legal intervention.

Compared with the individual and small-scale interpersonal dimensions, the community dimension relies more on the members' sense of identity to strengthen the project's strength and scope of assistance to southern women. Social identity theory points out that people actively define social reality and their position in society compared to others, thereby establishing their social identity on a psychological level. Over the past 70 years, data and information agencies have been sinking into the "unconnected" communities where people below the poverty line in India have been living for many years, or uniting multiple communities to build technology centers. Familiarity with the geographical environment, cheap interpersonal communication, and collaborative effects among female groups make it easy for them to have an in-group preference for data information institutions, and constantly modify their position in the coordinate system of the relational self and the collective self, and regard themselves as in The indispensable power of spreading ICT. Compared with material data, this change of concept is more valuable for the sustainable development of women's ICT empowerment practices in southern Asia.

4. Conclusion

"Global South" injects new vitality into the concept of the ICT empowerment project for women in southern Asia. A series of successful ICT women's empowerment projects that have emerged in Asian countries have confirmed that it is feasible and meaningful for the South to seek independent development of women from their own countries in various fields. However, it cannot be ignored that the emergence of the "gender digital divide" is based on the "digital divide". Gender inequality in the use of ICT is actually an institutionalized extension of inequality in socio-economic status, so economic empowerment will always be an important prerequisite. In addition, as Mohammad mentioned in a survey in the Bangladesh Union Committee Information Center, women's empowerment does not happen automatically after ICT access or implementation [14]. In more cases, male-dominated power elites control the specific allocation and use of ICT resources, and women's ICT empowerment is essentially affected by the intricate community power relations.

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