

"A man is
great by
deeds, not by
birth"
-Chanakya

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**Factors Affecting Digital Inclusion:
A Processual Perspective on Continuity and Variability in Digital Engagement**

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Factors Affecting Digital Inclusion: A Processual Perspective on Continuity and Variability in Digital Engagement

Abstract:

The notion of digital inclusion is central to digital adoption and use, yet extant literature conceptualizes it as a state to be achieved, supported by predefined enabling conditions. While prior studies have acknowledged the multidimensionality and embeddedness of digital inclusion, they continue to privilege linear, goal-oriented and largely irreversible trajectories of digital use. This paper advances an alternative conceptualization of digital inclusion as a variable, circumstantial and processual phenomenon shaped by fluctuations, reversals and context dependent exclusionary shifts. We argue that digital inclusion is not an end state to be achieved but a continuous state of engagement. Building on and refining the Factors Affecting Digital Inclusion (FDI) framework, we reorient it to foreground digital inclusion as a dynamic process influenced by the interaction of external institutional and governance structures, ecological conditions of use within immediate environments, and individual agency and its intersections with demography, literacy, habits and risk perceptions. The refined framework is an attempt to shift the notion of enabling factors as precursors to a fixed outcome, in this case digital inclusion, towards a notion of the role of these factors in sustaining, destabilizing or reshaping digital engagement over time. We use the FDI framework that was originally developed to identify factors that play a role in digital inclusion to reuse it this time to theoretically elaborate the processual dimensions of digital inclusion. We do this by re-examining the data through a temporal and process-oriented lens in order to identify how the factors interact, fluctuate, and at times destabilize digital engagement over time. Hence we attempt to contribute a more realistic analytical lens for examining digital behaviour through applying the FDI framework. We further offer insights for designing, governance and evaluation of inclusive digital initiatives.



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