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A Systematic Review of The Digital Divide Experienced by Migrant Women

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Abstract

The digital divide (or DD) has been a problem for migrant women who suffer from insufficient ICT skills, a lack of smartphone/tablet devices, and language barriers. These issues can deepen their social exclusion and hamper their utilization of online services. Researchers have already observed the benefits of digital usage among women migrating abroad, such as obtaining legal information, improving transnational parenting performance, and seeking employment (see Chib et al., 2013; Parreñas, 2006; Thomas & Lim, 2017). Yet, the problematic side of the DD faced by female migrants has been under-examined. In view of this research gap, a systematic review was conducted to investigate the DD items and factors from the existing literature. Studies (n=19) were selected by searching through six social science databases. The findings suggest that migrant women face a series of problems when trying to use digital resources: poor-quality digital access in the destination country, misinformation online, economic expenses associated with ICT utilization, patriarchal norms reinforcing gendered skill deficits, and being monitored by male partners, among others. Concerning the outcomes of ICT utilization, migrant women can encounter hardships in accessing services, face employment inequality, and lose opportunities to engage with public institutions. The study contributes to the literature by summarizing a 17-item list of digital divide factors faced by migrant women and recognizing the need for future empirical research to adopt an intersectionality lens, triangulation of multiple types of data, as well as longitudinal designs.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Migration, Migrant Women, Systematic Review