Digital Inclusion And Disability: Exploring The Impact Of Digital Media On The Lives Of People With Disabilities

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The rapid advancement of digital technology has reshaped media consumption globally, creating opportunities and challenges for differently abled individuals. This study investigates the digital inclusion of people with locomotor and visual impairments in Madhya Pradesh, focusing on their use of digital media for information, social interaction, and entertainment. By analyzing experiences, tools used, and barriers faced, the research highlights the significant role digital media plays in enhancing the quality of life for the differently abled. Through focus group discussions and data collection across various cultural zones, the study reveals widespread use of smartphones and social media among the differently abled. Despite the benefits, challenges such as online fraud and accessibility issues persist. The findings underscore the necessity for targeted training and subsidized internet access to bridge the digital divide and foster an inclusive digital society. This research aims to inform policymakers and organizations working towards the digital empowerment of differently abled individuals, aligning with the goals of the 'Accessible India Campaign. **Keywords:** Disability, Differently Abled, Digital Media, Digital Inclusion, Locomotor Disability, Visual Impairment, Accessibility

1.0. Introduction

With the advent of the new digital technologies, media is changing its form day by day. Media consumption in digital format is increasing across the globe. The increase in the accessibility of the devices capable of supporting digital media with increase in the internet access has provided the opportunity to the consumers to access in the media content for their varied uses like gaining information, sharing views, entertainment etc. Digital media has increased its reach among all the age groups of the society. Digital technologies break traditional barriers of communication, interaction, and access to information for persons with disabilities.

A study on '*Future of Digital Content Consumption*' in India predicted that the Indian digital media segment is set for disruption with growth expected to reach INR 200 billion (INR 20000 crores) by 2024 (Ernst & Young,2016). The demographics are all stacked in India's favour for digital consumption. The report further concluded that by 2017, India will have more than 350 million smart phones. Inexpensive smart phones and the rollout of 4G and 5G broadband infrastructure are rapidly coming together to leap from traditional distribution and democratize online access.

As per the study, conducted by PWC on Indian Digital Media Segments the CAGR media market of India will increase at a rate of 11.6% (2018-2023) as compared to 5% growth rate in the world. The study also concluded that India is projected to outpace the global growth rate in every segment of entertainment and media over the five years to 2014. The statistics clearly indicates the extensive use of digital media by the consumers across the country. With such extensive use of internet, the world has shifted to a digital society. A Digital Society is a modern, progressive society that is formed as a result of the adoption and integration of Information and Communication Technologies at home, work, education and recreation.

A quite new term called digital inclusion has been coined by the policy makers to address the issues of opportunity, access, knowledge, and skill at the level of policy. Digital inclusion has three broad facets: *access, adoption, and application*. These facets show the ultimate goal of creating digitally inclusive communities. Digital inclusion aims at connecting all the sections of the society together with easy access and simpler networks.

1.1 Digital Media and the Differently Abled

While looking at the unstoppable growth of digital media in all the forms across the globe, it is correct to say that digital media is strengthening its roots in all the sections of the society irrespective of their caste culture, religion, age, education etc. Digital media sources available these days have the potential to empower the differently abled or the persons with disabilities. Disabled children and young people have the same rights as non-disabled children and young people to participate in decisions and issues that affect them. This is outlined in both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). These rights focus on digital inclusion of the differently abled. World Health Organization (WHO) defines disability as an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.

Like any other individuals differently abled are becoming the active media participants these days. The ICT opportunity for persons with disabilities ICT enables the use of multiple means of communication - voice, text, and gestures - to access information and engage with others, and hence can help to address longstanding barriers of communication and interaction. They are accessing various digital media sources available these days for fulfilling their varied needs. With the evolution of technology, the society has been able to come a long way. This has also allowed the society to be more inclusive for people with disabilities. We are able to identify the possibility of staying connected and technologically apprised by the means of installing apps and creating a platform for the differently abled. They are using the various media sources for fulfilling their needs of sharing information, sharing their views, participating in the discussions, entertainment etc. They are even raising their voice regarding their various needs and rights through digital media sources. With the help of media, they even connect with various organizations working online for securing the rights of the disabled. Media also provides a platform for people with disabilities to voice the changes they want to see in expanding inclusion, education, employment, and advocacy opportunities.

1.2 Status of Differently Abled in India

Today, there are millions of people living with one or multiple disabilities. In India, the population with disabilities is around 26.8 million, constituting 2.21% of India's total population, if one goes by the 2011 population census data. Disability rights activists in India and various academicians working on disability issues, however, say that these numbers in the census are a very small percentage of the actual numbers. World Bank data on the total number of persons with disabilities in India suggests the number is between 40 and 80 million.

Whatever the difference between official figures and figures estimated by global institutions, what is clear is that persons with disabilities constitute a significant part of the Indian population. The numbers of the disabled are more than the total population of many countries in the world, and India has one of the highest numbers of people with disabilities globally (Jha, M, 2017). Persons with Disabilities Act of India, 1995 recognizes seven disabilities of an individual namely Blindness, Low vision, Leprosy-cured, Hearing impairment, Loco motor disability, Mental retardation and Mental illness.

Census 2011 reveals that in India out of the 121 Cr populations, 2.68 Cr persons are 'differently abled' which is 2.21% of the total population. Census 2011 has recognized disability under the Persons with Disabilities Act of India, 1995. Among the disabled population 56% (1.5 Cr) are males and 44% (1.18 Cr) are females.
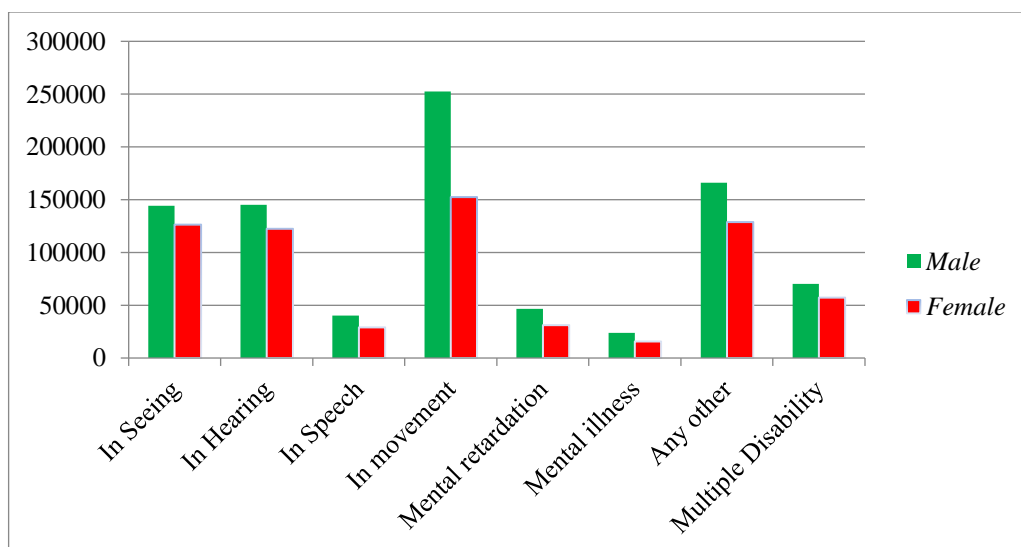
Source: *Census of India 2011*

The Government of India is taking various initiatives these days for including the differently abled in the main stream of the society. It aims to facilitate a common integrated platform, enabling and positive environment and ICT tool for the differently abled. Honorable Prime Minister of India has coined a new term for disabled i.e., 'Divyangs'. The Indian Government, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, has shown tremendous commitment to address some of the core issues of Accessibility, Education, Employment for People with Disability through Seven stated goals of his government, such as e-learning, accessibility provisions, comprehensive rights bill, special funding for skill development of Especially Abled People etc. Among the disabled population 56% (1.5 Cr) are males and 44% (1.18 Cr) are females. In the total population, the male and female population is 51% and 49% respectively.

2.21 % of the total population of India is differently abled which constitute of 2.68 crore persons. The government is taking various initiatives focusing on improving the quality of life of the differently abled and building an inclusive society for them. In this regard, various campaigns like 'Accessible India Campaign' and others are going on. The government is also taking various steps for promoting media awareness, literacy and participation amongst them. The researcher feels that there is a need to study the digital inclusion of the differently abled. With the growing use of digital media in various sectors it will be interesting to know how the differently abled perceive it. The researcher feels that there is a great need of the studies focusing on the digital media reach, awareness, needs and barriers that the differently abled face. This research can facilitate the government and the various organizations working for the welfare of the differently abled on the needs, gaps, tools used and barriers faced by them while accessing digital media. This will help the concerned authorities in taking the corrective actions and achieving the goal of 'Accessible India'.

1.3 Research Objectives
i.   To study the tools used by the differently abled for accessing digital media.
ii.   To understand the experiences of the differently abled accessing digital media.
iii. To study the barriers faced by the differently abled while accessing digital media.

2.0. Review of Literature

Barnes et. al. (1999) says that traditionally, disability has been related to characteristics with the individuals. If a person has a functional incapacity, for example moving difficulties, loss of sight or hearing, this person is regarded as disabled. Grönvik (2007) suggests that the different understandings of disability give practical challenges to researchers doing surveys. While need for definitions exists in both qualitative and quantitative studies, it is particularly clear in the latter. According to a subjective definition of disability a person conceives it selves as having an impairment, and voluntary includes oneself to the category `disabled person´. A subjective definition of disability results in a sample of people who are self-labeled as disabled. (Thomas et.al, 2007)

Hedlund (2007) concluded administrative disability as legislations often contains definitions of what is considered to be a disability in relation to a certain benefit and this categorizing can be used to separate people who are eligible for support from the state depending on their disability status (those who are disabled `enough´ to receive support. According to this definition a person who is granted a certain benefit intended for disabled people, is considered and defined as disabled.

Functional definition of disability can be considered as the definition of disability given by WHO in 2001 as an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.

2.1. Medical Model of Disability
This medical model approach is based on a belief that the difficulties associated with the disability should be borne wholly by the disabled person, and that the disabled person should make extra effort (perhaps in time and/or money) to ensure that they do not inconvenience anyone else. Under the medical model, the impairments or differences should be 'fixed' or changed by medical and other treatments, even when the impairment or difference does not cause pain or illness. The medical model looks at what is 'wrong' with the person and not what the person needs. It creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence, choice and control in their own lives.

2.2. Social Model of Disability
Mike Oliver, has produced a variant of the social model of disability. The model assumes that human nature, and the resultant choices that individuals can make for themselves and for others, are determined by the structure and ideology of society. The social model of disability is a result of how society is organized, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. This model always looks at ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people. When these barriers are removed, disabled people can become independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.

2.3. Digital inclusion and differently abled:

Accessible ICT can level the playing field for persons with disabilities across life domains including education, employment, e-governance and civic participation, financial inclusion, and disaster management. However, earlier divides may persist and new divides may be created when ICT-enabled development is not accessible to persons with disabilities, leading to an uneven distribution of benefits. (World Development Report,2016). ICT can facilitate disability inclusion in some of the most crucial areas in development programming: education, employment, access to governance and civic participation, financial inclusion, and disaster management. ICT is providing opportunities and making life easier for the disabled by innovations in quick successions. People with different kinds of disabilities are now able to communicate with each other and learn through the tools available for the purpose through ICT.

Raja (2016) in his study concluded that the internet and ICT can facilitate the social, economic, and civic participation of persons with disabilities. The use of multiple ICT channels to deliver services and multiple formats for the content delivered can allow persons with different disabilities to access information and communication in the manner in which they can comprehend and prefer. The internet and ICT are becoming a key driver of inclusive development because of their growing pervasiveness in the delivery of public and private services coupled and the increasing ability to use everyday consumer ICT devices as assistive devices.

Emily Redmond (2014) in her focus group study on a self-advocacy group of 30 disabled people to find out more about the barriers to digital inclusion facing disabled people, and their thoughts and opinions of technology in general.

Dandamudi (2015) opines that differently abled people are no different from normal people in using technology, if they are also considered as the end users. Providing a Barrier free built environment is taken as a major consideration these days. However, technology should act as an advantage for differently abled people by helping them mobilize things on their own. Using the present-day technology, one should always see to provide maximum benefits to the differently abled people that may not be possible without these inventions. The technological advancements benefit the differently abled people not only in assisting themselves, but also in accessing everything possible.

Sharma (2017) a disability rights advocate opines that digital inclusion of persons with disabilities not only stands to benefit the millions living with disabilities but also older persons and persons with limited language skills. It is not common knowledge but several popular mainstream technologies were actually developed for persons with disabilities. She argues that campaign like Digital India campaign, the Start-up India campaign or even the recent move towards a cashless and digital economy need to ensure that persons with disabilities are benefited as well. It is thus important for policymakers, technology giants and citizens to talk about digital inclusion for persons with disabilities.

Panda, J.K (2017) in his research on digital inclusion of the disabled's concluded that like any other individuals differently abled are becoming the active media participants these days. The internet and ICT can facilitate the social, economic, and civic participation of persons with disabilities. The use of multiple ICT channels to deliver services and multiple formats for the content delivered can allow persons with different disabilities to access information and communication in the manner in which they can comprehend and prefer. The adoption and use of accessible ICT for inclusion is dependent on many actors in the ecosystem including government service providers, educators, employers, development practitioners, and the ICT industry. Efforts should focus on raising their awareness and building their capacity to successfully implement barrier-free digital environments and service provision.

2.4. Social Media Usage of Differently Abled

Shigri (2017) opines that the individuals from the disabled community have been able to successfully integrate themselves in to the online community through social apps that have been made usable through accessibility features and the technology. These social apps play a vital role in formulating a better place for them to engage with others in their community and the society, voice their opinions and concerns, and spark conversations. Nevertheless, improved innovations can definitely allow a vast number of disabled users to have accessibilities to the outside world in a tractable manner.

Asuncion et al. (2012) on his study on the social media used by the students with disabilities concluded that students with disabilities, not unlike their non-disabled peers, are using social media for school and non-school related activities. The results of this study indicate accessibility issues do exist. Students find difficulty in watching the videos without the subtitles and the in accessing the sites where there the access is restricted to CAPTCHA entry. He further states that the goal of providing a fully inclusive learning environment for all, then faculty and others who are involved in social media adoption and use must better understand the needs of these students and take proactive steps to assure that the tools they use enable full participation of these learners.

Alper et.al (2017) in their research found out that adults and children with significant speech and expressive language impairments—across race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality—are adapting a variety of social media and new media platforms as ways to communicate in innovative ways, from creating an iTunes playlist to curating an array of photos on Pinterest. Their transformational use of new communication technologies and social media educates society about broader definitions of what human communication might truly be. Assistive technology policies denying access or making access to social media very difficult for people

with significant speech impairments restricts their personal relationships and societal participation, and in turn, also denies society the opportunity to learn from those who engage in communication in unique ways.

2.5. Differently Abled and Digital Divide

Information is considered an integral part of all human activity and the information technology plays an important role to shape the lives of the people in the society. The modern information technologies have brought the information revolution which is responsible for creating the "digital divide" between those who have and do not have access to information technology which segregates the "info-rich" from the "info-poor". (Chaudhary et.al, 2005).

Access to information technology is no longer considered a luxury but rather, a valuable resource and an important survival tool to fully participating in society (Goggin and Newell 2007). Although access to information technology (IT) and computer ownership has quickly increased, many people still lack access to these resources (Mirza et al. 2006). Such a digital divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' highlights how marginalized groups have less access to information technology. Indeed, disability is often an overlooked aspect of the digital divide and should be taken into consideration when exploring digital inequality (Adam and Kreps 2006). It is vital that information technology become more accessible for people with disabilities because it can play an important role in providing information, rehabilitation and social inclusion (Arrigo 2005).

Evidence also suggests that information technology can provide people with disabilities with a new set of tools for social participation and personal development enabling them to find new contacts with others in a similar situation (Anderberg, 2007).

There are various studies addressing the issue of "digital divide" for the disadvantaged group of people like the unemployed, elderly or rural people but less studies sheds light on the people with disabilities addressing the 'disability divide'. Aqili et.al. (2008) in their research focus on several dimensions of the digital divide that pertain to service as well as the responsibilities of libraries and emphasize on the role of librarians and information professionals in bridging the digital divide. The phrase 'digital divide' applies to the gap that exists in most countries between those people who are provided ready access to the tools of ICTs and those who are without such access or skills. The reason may be socioeconomic factors, geographical factors, educational, attitudinal and generational factors, or it may be due to the physical disabilities.

Many barriers remain in accessing information technology for people with disabilities despite government policies and standards concerning the usability, accessibility and universal design of the Internet (Arrigo 2005). As such, people with disabilities are less likely   as compared to the other population to as a whole to use computers or the internet (Mirza et al. 2006). There is a huge gap between the internet usage of the disabled and the persons without disability. Some estimates suggest that approximately 25% of people with disabilities use the Internet compared to 56% of people without disabilities (Kaye 2003).

Huang and Russell (2006) states, "People with disability are only half as likely to have access to the internet as those without a disability". To overcome these problems, users need to receive adequate training and educational opportunities that can enhance their use of the computer and internet with the help of essential skills like evaluating search engines, choosing alternate keywords and initiating their own searches to achieve optimal results in their quest for information.

3.0. Research Methodology

The Research Methodology Adopted to complete this research work is Mixed methods research which is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e. g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. This study included the people who suffers motor Disability and visually impaired disability and how they could be able to grow themselves in terms of education, employability and various other sectors. So, in this particular study, researcher emphasis upon various aspects related to the inclusion of digital media in the growth and development of the disabled people and more importantly to focus upon the grey area which is covering various aspects related to role and impact of digital media in enhancing the quality of living standard of the disabled people. Moreover, researcher has chosen these two kinds of disability among the various because it's the most prevalent over Madhya Pradesh region the data says that out of 2.21% of the disabled people of Madhya Pradesh most of them are belonging to motor Disability and visually impairment. These two categories are the top two kind of disability in Madhya Pradesh. This research work has been divided into two significant methods of data collection (i.e.) Firstly, the Focused Group discussion and then survey method tools have been adopted for data collection. The data for the present study has been collected between July 2022 -May 2023. Focus group discussions (FGDs) is conducted to collect qualitative data on the experiences and perspectives of differently-abled individuals in Madhya Pradesh regarding the use of digital media. The participants are selected through purposive sampling, taking into consideration factors such as age, gender, and type of disability.

A semi-structured interview guide is used to facilitate the discussion, which will cover topics such as the accessibility and usability of digital media, the impact of digital media on their lives, and the challenges faced by them while using digital media. The findings from the FGDs are provide valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of differently-abled persons regarding the role and impact of digital media in their

lives. The data collected from the FGDs is used in conjunction with the quantitative data collected through surveys to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research question.

The quantitative and qualitative data is then analyzed using appropriate methods, such as descriptive statistics, regression analysis. By combining both quantitative and qualitative data, a mixed-method research design is helpful to triangulate the results, validate findings, and provide a more complete understanding of the topic.

4.0. Data Presentation and Analysis

FGD-01

Group discussion of visually impaired people was organized in Sagar city of Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh. This group discussion was organized through a voluntary organization working for the welfare of the visually impaired. The total number of members in this group discussion was 9.

The main points that came up in this group discussion are as follows.

During the group discussion, most of the members said that they are using various applications of new media in their daily life. Digital media has played a significant role in transforming their life. In this, one of the members also said that earlier only radio was the only means for entertainment, but in the era of digital media, many options have been available with them.

Almost everyone had access to digital media in group discussion, but more than 80 percent of the visually impaired members in group discussions said that they were not getting much benefit from digital media. They feel that the benefits can be increased.

During the group discussion, people who are visually impaired from new media hope that they can get more benefit from the development of technology as well as adding new applications. In addition, most of the members in the group discussion believed that many changes had taken place in their lives after the use of digital media as they have become self-sufficient in doing many activities. Earlier life which seemed tough as there was a lot of dependency, the path has become easier after the use of new media. Although during the group discussion some members said that they do not use applications like online payment, as there are security concerns.

FGD-02

A group discussion was organized for locomotor disabled in Jabalpur city of Mahakaushal zone of Madhya Pradesh. This group discussion was organized through a voluntary organization working for the welfare of locomotor disabled. The total number of members in this group discussion was 10.

The main points that came up in this group discussion are as follows.

During the group discussion, most of the locomotor disabled said that they are using various applications of New Media in their daily life. Earlier, there was a problem in commuting. For every work, one had to go from one place to another, but now due to digital media, this problem has been got rid of.

The polio affected member involved in this group discussion said that earlier every other day had to go out of the house for some work or the other. For this, there was dependence on the family members, but now with the use of digital media, one has to go out only once in a month. All the work is completed with the use of digital media. He says that he has not gone to the bank for several months. He has been doing online banking

Another member of the group discussion said that digital media became their source of employment. He has studied up to post graduation in commerce, now he is working as an accountant of some businessmen from home.

Overall, it can be said that digital media has brought a change in their lives. Members also said that earlier there was a film or television tool for entertainment, but now all kinds of facilities are available in the mobile in his hand. Some of them have shown concern because of the online problems like phishing and fraud marketing.

Basis on the inferences drawn from the focus group discussion, questionnaire has been designed.

Given below is the table and graph no 6.18 the researcher has shown the study frequency and percentage of the respondents rated their use of digital devices according to their preferences.

Digital Media Preference
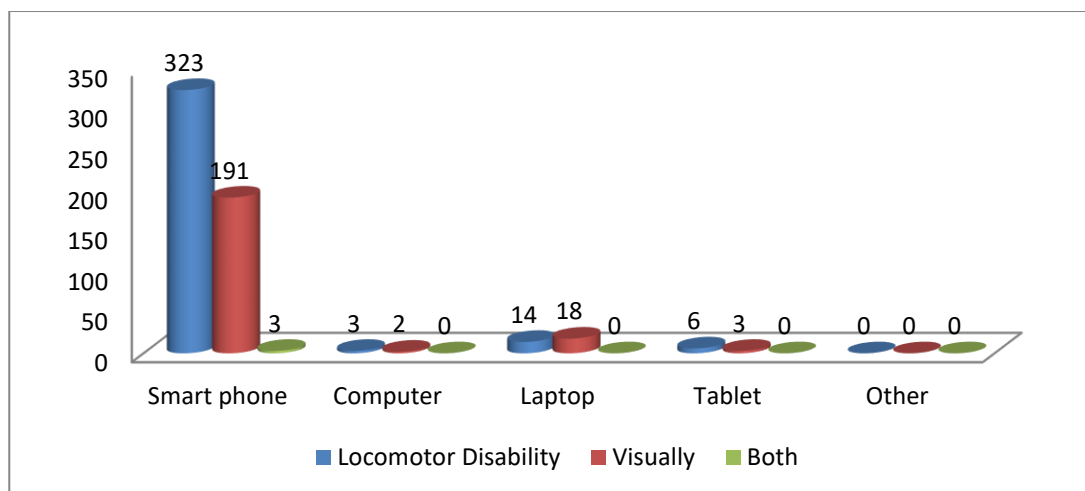
Graph-4.1

In the above graph, the study has been presented to the respondents to evaluate the use of their digital devices according to their choice. 517 respondents have ticked smart phone as their first choice of digital device,5 have ticked computer as their first choice of digital device, 32 have ticked laptop as their first choice of digital device and 9 have ticked tablet as their first choice of digital device. Most of the locomotor disabled i.e. 323 are using smart phone as their first preference device. Only 2 visually impaired are using computer as their first preference device

Given below is the graph 4.2, the researcher has shown the frequency and percentage of the study about which devices are internet enabled from the respondents.

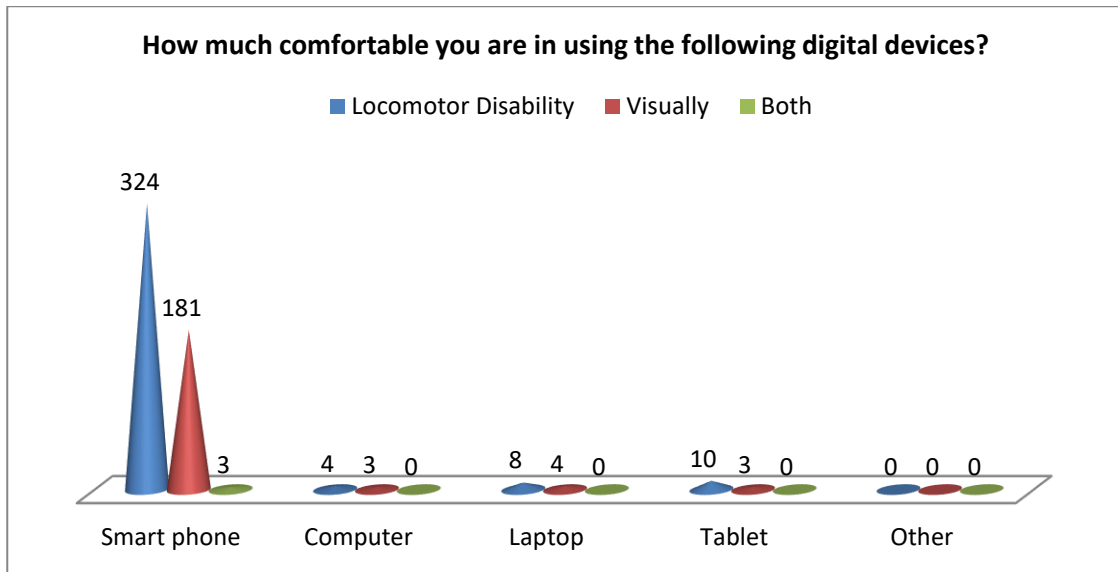## Which devices are internet enabled?
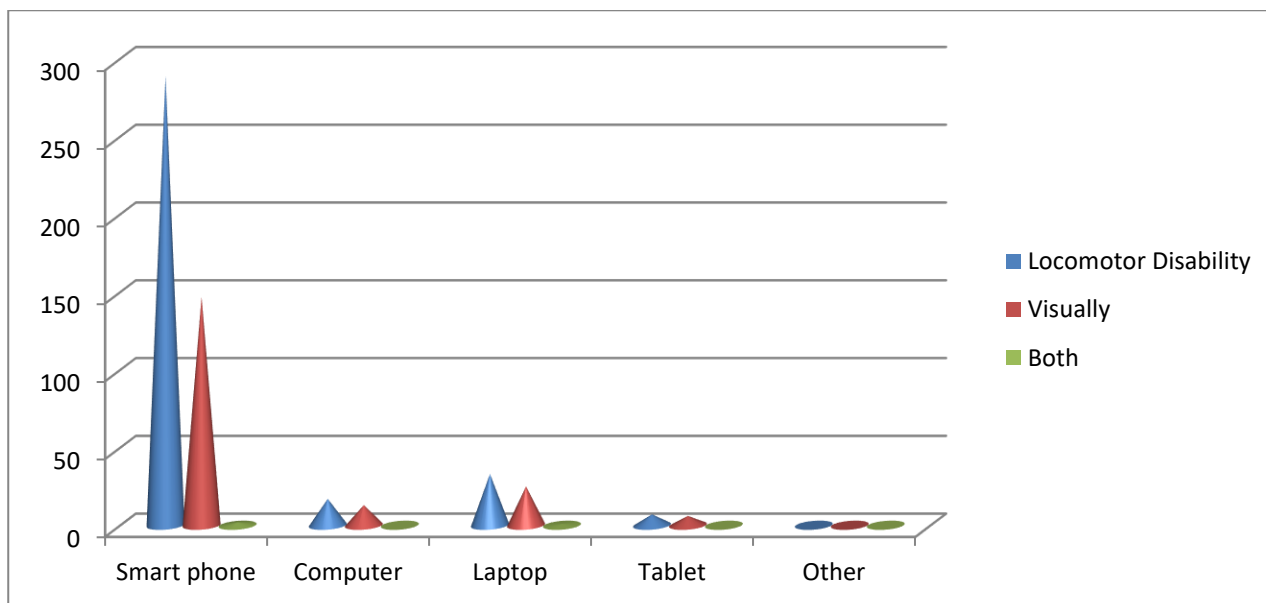
Graph-4.2

In the above diagram, the study related to which devices are internet enabled from the respondents has been presented. 438 respondents have said that their smart phone is internet enabled whereas only 13 tablets are internet enabled.

Given below is the graph no. 4.3, the researcher has shown the respondents in terms of frequency and percentage of the study about how comfortable they are in using digital devices.

Comfortable in using the digital devices

How much comfortable you are in using the following digital devices?

■ Locomotor Disability   ■ Visually   ■ Both

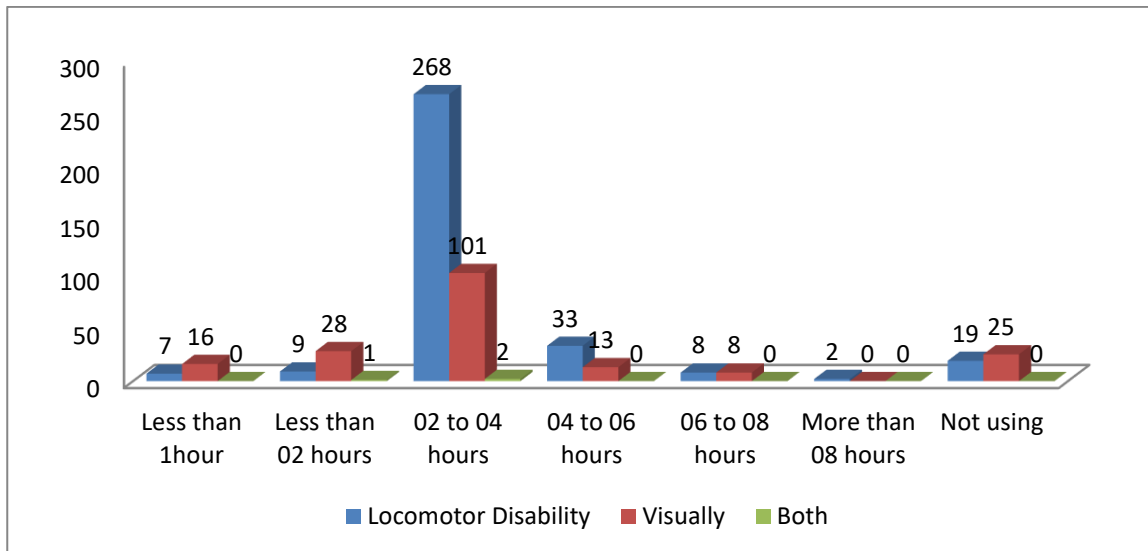|	Smart phone	Computer	Laptop	Tablet	Other
	324	4	8	10	0
	181	3	4	3	0
	3	0	0	0	0

Graph-4.3

In the above diagram, the study related to how comfortable you are in using digital devices has been presented from the respondents. When asked to rank about their comfortableness in using the digital device then 508 respondents are most comfortable in using the smart phone, 7 are most comfortable in using the computer,12 are most comfortable in using the laptop,13 are most comfortable in using the tablet.

Given below is the graph no. 4.4, the researcher has shown the respondents in terms of frequency and percentage of the study about how much time they spend using smart phones every day.

Time spent using smartphone daily

	Less than 1hour	Less than 02 hours	02 to 04 hours	04 to 06 hours	06 to 08 hours	More than 08 hours	Not using
Locomotor Disability	7	9	268	33	8	2	19
Visually	16	28	101	13	8	0	25
Both	0	1	2	0	0	0	0

■ Locomotor Disability   ■ Visually   ■ Both

Graph-4.4

In the above diagram, the study related to how much time the respondents use smart phone daily has been presented. 23 respondents are using it less than 1 hour,38 respondents are using it less than 2 hours, 371 respondents are it for 02 to 04 hours,46 respondents are using it 04 to 06 hours,16 respondents are using it 06 to 08 hours, 2 respondents are using it more than 08 hours.44 respondents are not using it.
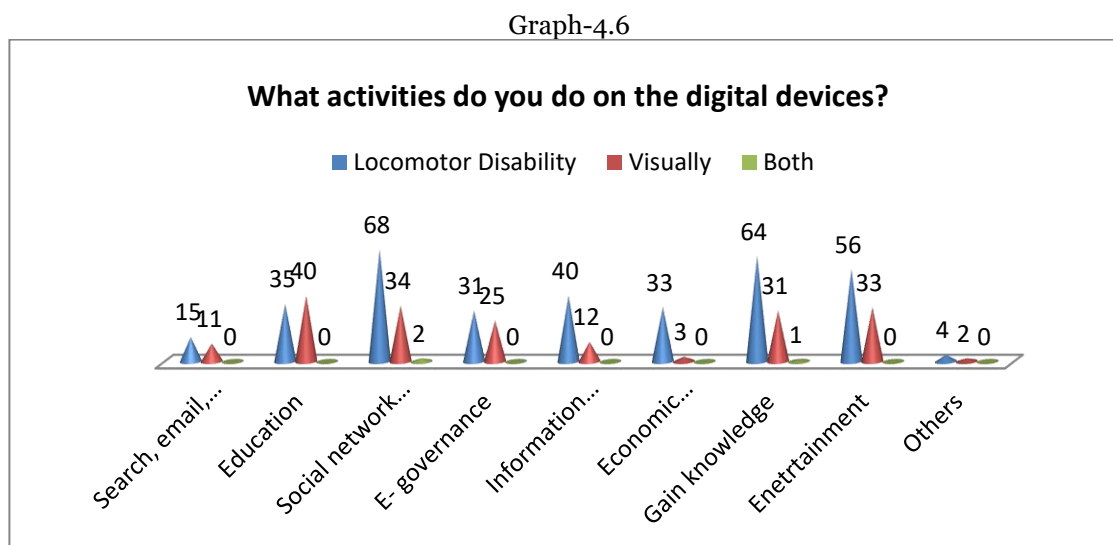
Given below is the graph no. 4.5 the researcher has shown the respondents in terms of frequency and percentage of the study about why they use digital devices.

Reason for using digital device

Graph-4.5

Why do you use digital devices?
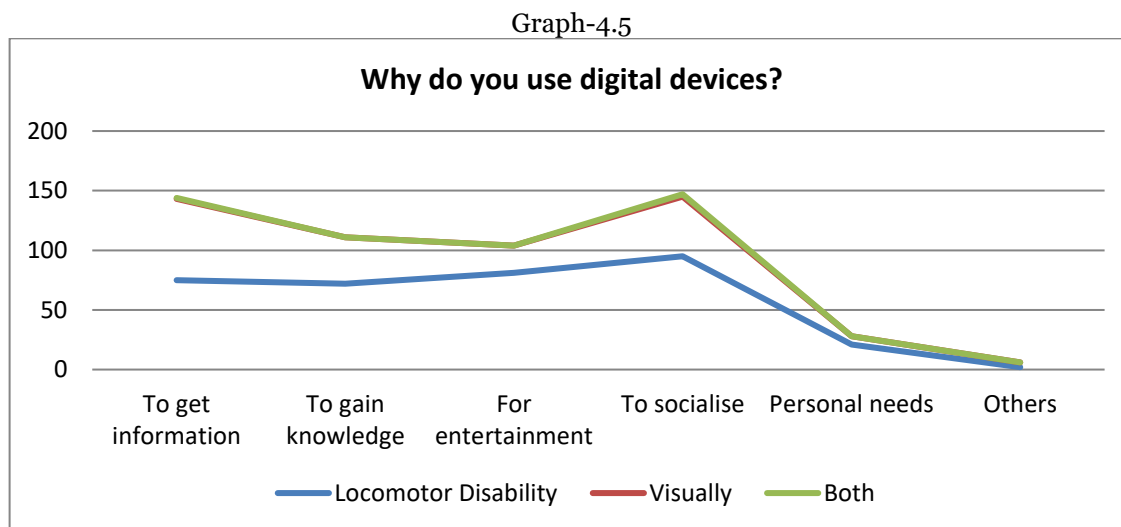
In the above graph, the study related to why respondents use digital devices is presented. The respondents have been asked about their first priority for usage.144 respondents have said that they use digital device to get information,111 said that they use digital device to gain knowledge,104 said they use digital device for entertainment purpose,147 said they use digital device for socialising,28 said that they use it for personal needs whereas only 6 respondents are using it for other uses. Most of the locomotor disabled i.e. 95 are using it for socializing. Most of the visually impaired i.e. 68 are using the digital device for getting information.

Given below is the graph no. 4.6, the researcher has shown the respondents in terms of frequency and percentage of the study about what activities they mostly do on digital devices.

Activities on digital devices

Graph-4.6

What activities do you do on the digital devices?

In the above diagram, the study related to what activities the respondents do on digital devices is presented. 104 respondents have selected social networking as their first priority ,96 respondents have selected gaining knowledge as their first priority. According to the disability most of the locomotor disabled i.e. 68 use the digital devices for social networking. Most of the visually impaired i.e. 40 use the digital devices for education purposes.

Given below is the graph no. 4.7 the researcher has shown the reason for the highest use of digital device of the respondents in terms of frequency and percentage.

Specify the reason for the highest usage of the digital device.

Graph-4.7
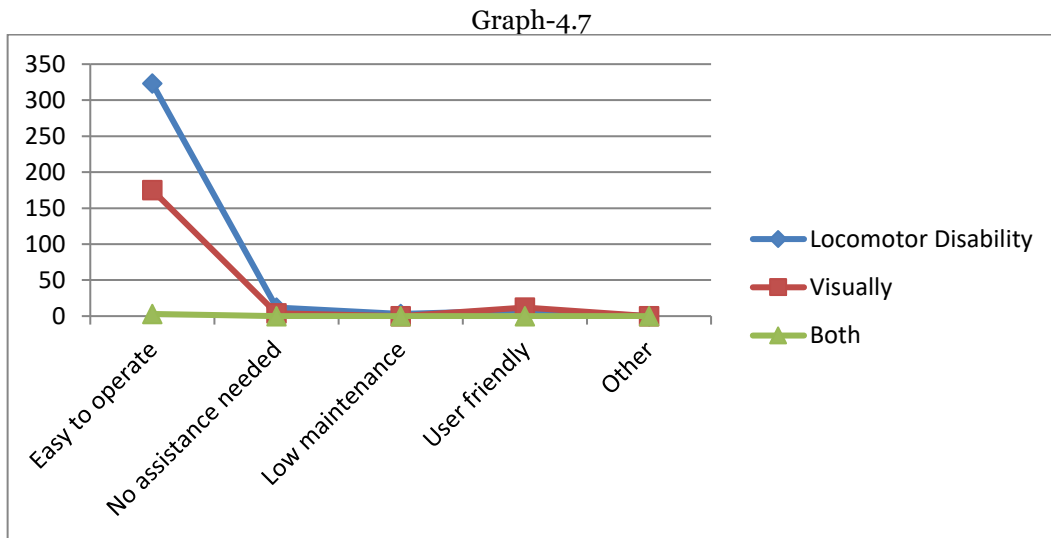
In the above table and diagram, the study related to the highest use of digital device of the respondents is presented. Most of the respondent i.e. 50 have said that they use smart phone because it is easy to operate. Given below is the table and graph no. 4.8, the researcher has shown the frequency and percentage of the study related to the difficulty in operating the digital devices of the respondents.
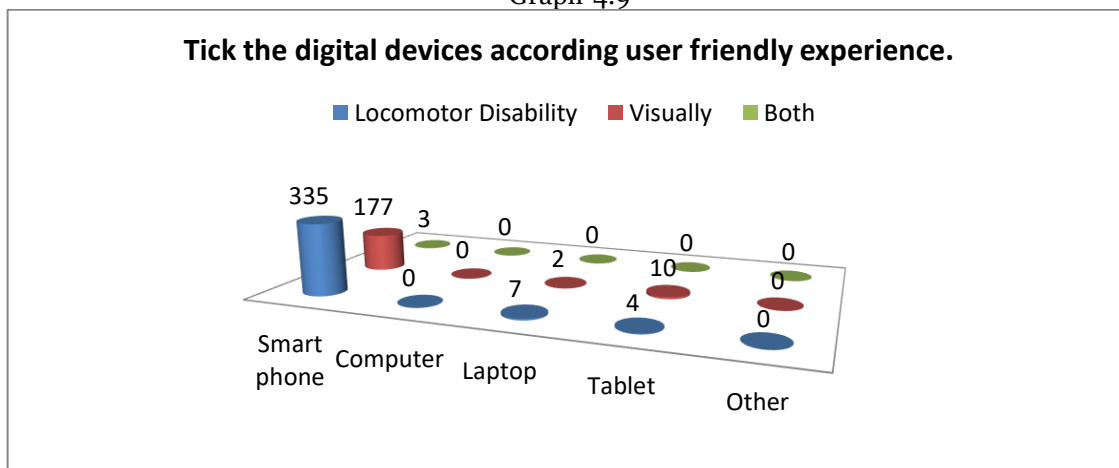
Digital devices on the basis of difficulty in operation experienced

Graph-4.8
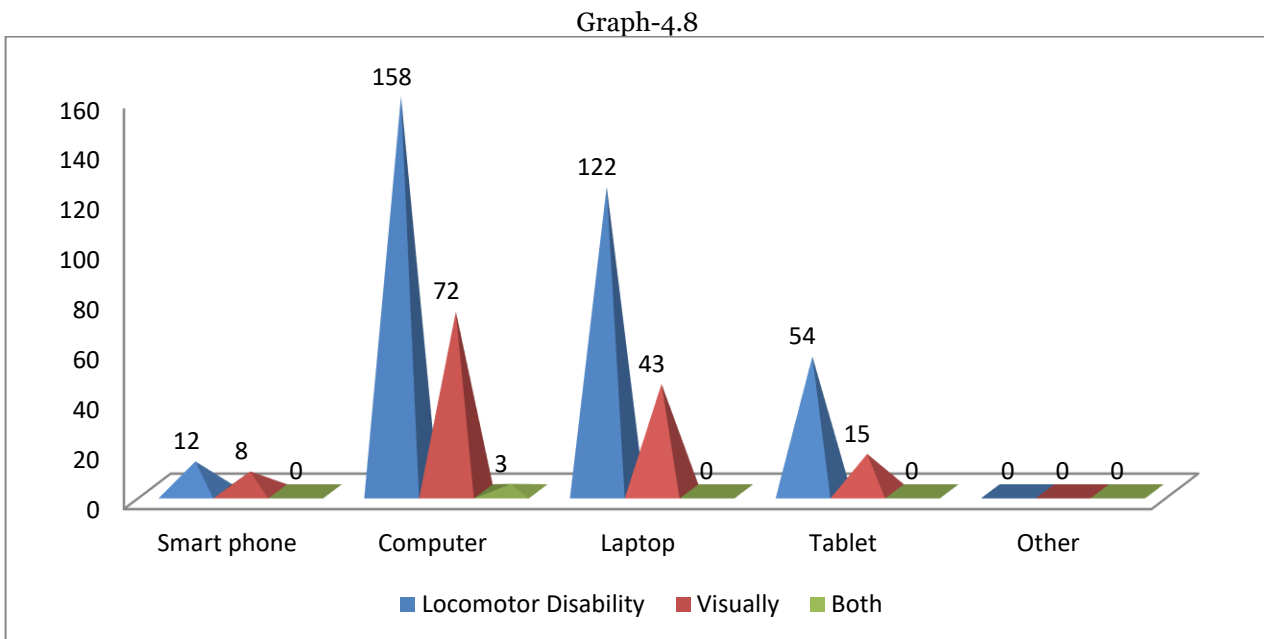
In the above table and graph, the study related to the difficulty in operating the digital devices of the respondents is presented. Most of the respondents i.e., 233 face difficulty in operating the computer. Only 20 respondents face difficulty in operating smart phone.158 locomotor disabled face difficulty in operating computer and 72 visually impaired face difficulty in operation.
Given below is the table and graph no. 4.9 the researcher has shown the respondents' experience of digital devices in terms of frequency and percentage.

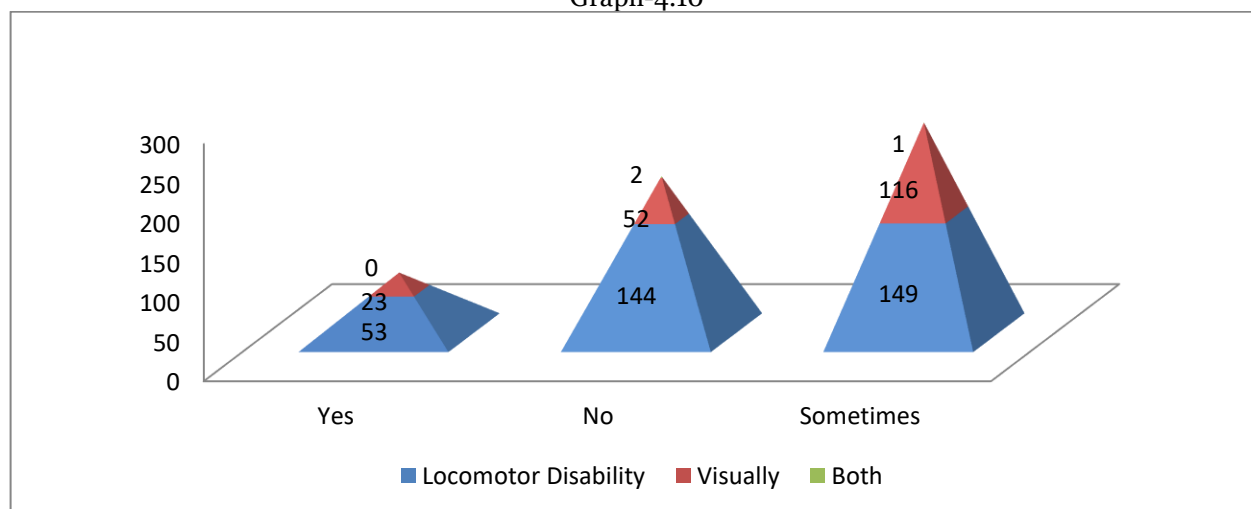**Digital devices according user friendly experience.**

Graph-4.9

Tick the digital devices according user friendly experience.

■ Locomotor Disability   ■ Visually   ■ Both

335   177   3   0   0   0   0
0   0   2   10   0
7   4   0
0

Smart phone   Computer   Laptop   Tablet   Other

In the above table and diagram, the study related to the experience of digital devices of the respondents is presented. 515 respondents feel user friendly experience while using smart phone.

Given below is the graph no. 4.10, the researcher has shown the frequency and percentage of the study that whether the respondents are able to create content on digital devices.
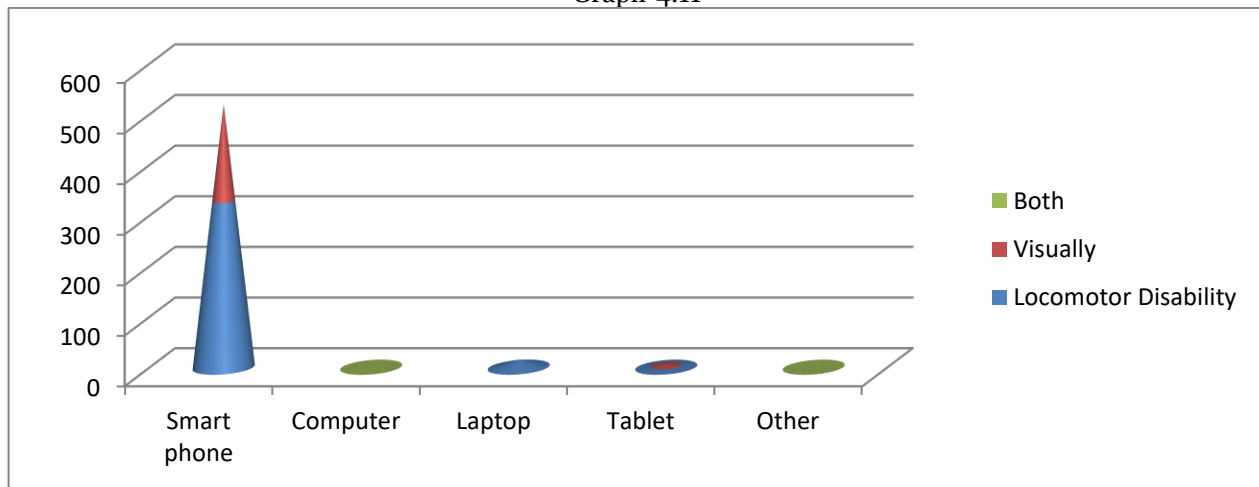
Are you able to create content digital devices?

Graph-4.10

300
250
200
150   0   2   1
100   23   52   116
50   53   144   149
0

Yes   No   Sometimes

■ Locomotor Disability   ■ Visually   ■ Both

In the above diagram, the study related to the ability of the respondents to create content on digital devices has been presented. 266 respondents have said that they are able to create online content sometimes.

Given below is the no.4.11, the researcher has shown the frequency and percentage of the study related to the digital devices on which the respondents are capable of creating content.

**Digital devices on which the content is created most easily**

Graph-4.11

In the above diagram, the study related to the digital devices on which the respondents are capable of creating content has been presented. 520 respondents have said that on the smart phones they are able to create the content most easily. Amongst the types of disabilities also smart phone is the first priority for creating content. Given below is the table and graph no.4.12, the researcher has shown the frequency and percentage of the study related to the difficulties the respondents experience using digital media.

Barriers experienced while using digital media.

Graph-4.12
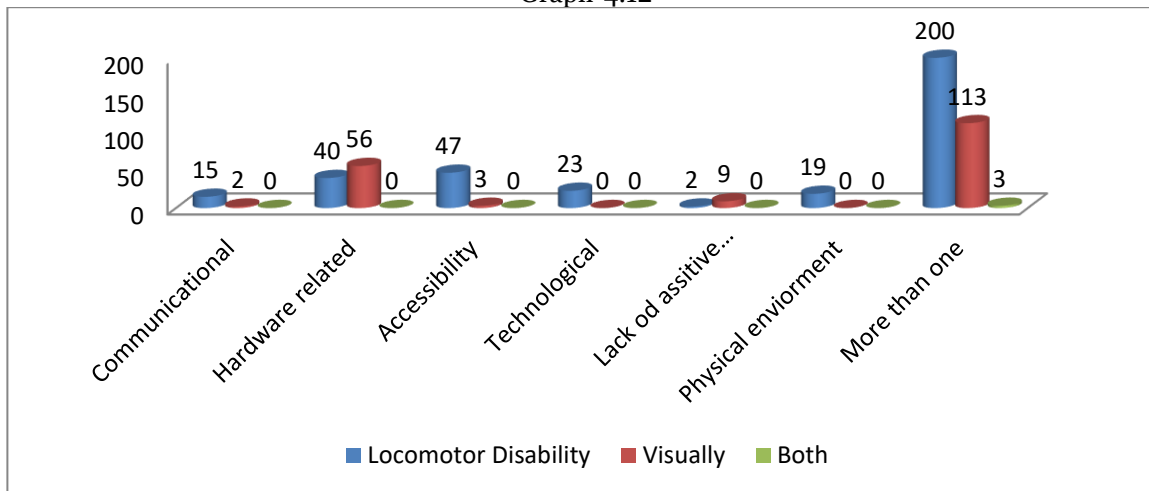
In the above graph, the study related to the difficulties experienced by the respondents using digital media is presented. Most of the respondents i.e., 316 face more than one difficulty while accessing digital devices.

5.0. Findings

In group discussions, locomotor-disabled individuals expressed widespread use of various New Media applications in their daily lives. This shift has significantly reduced the need for physical commuting, allowing tasks like banking, e-governance, and education to be accomplished from a single location. Employment opportunities have expanded due to this digital accessibility. Dependency on family members for outdoor tasks has decreased, with many now only needing to leave the house once a month, as most activities can be completed digitally.

Earlier, entertainment options were limited to film or television, but now, with the availability of mobile and laptop platforms, a wide range of entertainment facilities are accessible. Locomotor-disabled individuals noted a slight change in social behavior towards them due to increased digital engagement.

Most respondents' own smartphones, with a minority having tablets. Reasons for not owning a digital device vary, including financial constraints, accessibility issues, and lack of confidence in usage. Visually impaired individuals face particular challenges, with some feeling deprived of certain activities due to lack of access.

Smartphones are the preferred digital device among respondents, primarily used for social networking and gaining knowledge.

Respondents generally feel a positive difference in their lives due to digital media devices, with smartphones being the favored device for ease of operation. However, many face difficulties operating computers, particularly among locomotor-disabled individuals. Assistance is often needed for computer operation, whereas smartphones are generally used without assistance.

Many respondents are capable of creating online content, with smartphones being the preferred device for content creation. Despite these capabilities, a significant portion of respondents face multiple difficulties accessing digital devices.

6.0. Conclusion

The study highlights the transformative role digital media plays in the lives of individuals with locomotor disabilities and visual impairments in Madhya Pradesh. Despite the historical challenges faced by the differently abled, the advent of digital technology has markedly improved their quality of life. Digital media provides essential benefits in terms of entertainment, education, and information, significantly reducing their dependency on others. The research indicates that a majority of the respondents are proficient in using smartphones, which are preferred for their ease of use and user-friendly experience.

However, the study also uncovers barriers such as difficulties in operating certain digital devices and the need for assistance, particularly with computers. Furthermore, there are concerns regarding online fraud and phishing, highlighting the necessity for targeted digital literacy training. This training should empower the differently abled to use digital devices effectively and safely.

To enhance digital inclusion, it is recommended that digital devices and internet access be made more affordable for the differently abled. The positive impacts of digital media, including increased social networking, knowledge acquisition, and improved independence, outweigh the challenges faced. Continued efforts are essential to ensure that digital advancements benefit everyone, fostering a more inclusive and accessible society.

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