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**Editorial note:**

Faculty of Humanities Teaching and Learning Colloquium 2025 (T&L Colloquium 25) hosted by the Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, South Africa took place in Rustenburg, South Africa, from September 9-11, 2025, with a rich and stimulating programme filled with inspiring keynotes, contributed papers, workshops and panels. This bi-annual colloquium brings together educators, researchers, students, policymakers, and community practitioners. The main theme of T&L Colloquium 25 was “Reimagining the Future of Humanities Knowledge and Pedagogy: Decoloniality, Technology and the Social Justice Imperative.” This special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Society And Education (JCSE)* contains Thirteen (13) selected papers presented at T&L Colloquium 2025. Selected contributions come from within and outside of South Africa and address a wide range of issues in humanities, decoloniality, technology and the social justice.

The introductory contribution by Tshifhiwa Ignatia Mashau provides an overview of research findings and trends related to the colloquium’s focus on the role of digital humanities and technology in supporting decolonial scholarship. The author’s article which titled “Decolonising digital health promotion in African higher education institutions: A justice-oriented literature review” develops a Digital Health Justice Framework to guide equitable and culturally responsive digital health promotion in African HEIs. A research article by Eyitayo Francis Adanlawo and Mpho Chaka follows with a discussion of emerging career pathways that foreground wellbeing and sustainable development, positioning humanities graduates as key contributors to sustainable and ethical futures. The authors identify novel professional opportunities in sectors including community engagement, policy development, and social innovation. They advocate for an expanded employability paradigm that integrates humanistic knowledge with sustainable development goals, underscoring the vital role of humanities disciplines in shaping resilient, inclusive societies.

The article by Nurain Aboo Mohammed evaluating the use of QR codes as a form of assessment in teaching and learning. The author confirms the potential of QR codes as both a useful and effective medium for assessment in educational settings. Samuel Chukwudi Agunyai and Victor Ojakorotu article “Analyzing the effect of the disconnection between the curriculum and Africa’s indigenous Knowledge on effective learning” argues that Africans’ realities still encompass indigenous knowledge on various levels that can be incorporated into the continent’s school curricula.

Other articles include: Examining the Impact of Digitalization and Inequality Post Covid -19 In Africa by Phuti Ignatius Moloto and Rosinah Pillay; The Omitted Conversation: Incorporating Teacher Union Scholarship for A Transformative Educational Agenda Within the Educational Landscape. Thembinkosi Zwane Trevor, David Matsepe; Examining factors behind an achieving institution: A scenario of secondary schools in Limpopo Province by Ngwako Solomon Modiba; Assessing the role of the COVID-19 catch-up recovery programme on learner performance in EFAL by Vele RJ, Tshikota and TM Badugela; Entrepreneurial Education and Sustainable Entrepreneurship Advancing Sustainable Development Goals in South Africa Through Small Businesses by Lazarus, M. and Beharry-Ramraj,

A; Mitigating Grammatical Ambiguity In English Prepositional Phrases At Dzindi Circuit Secondary School, South Africa by Farisani Thomas Nephawe; Exploring the Usage of Metadiscourse in Research Proposals Written by Honours Students by Mzamani Steven Khosa and Ernest Kwesi Klu; and Population Ethics and its implication for Developing Countries by Onwe Peter S. and Kelechi Johnmary Ani. Policy Windows and Missed Opportunities: An Institutional Analysis of How Teacher Unions Influence (or fail to influence) National Educational Policy Formulation by Zwane Thembinkosi Trevor, Matsepe David.

**Editor,**

**Prof. Mpho Chaka**

**North-West University, South Africa.**

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## EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION AND INEQUALITY POST COVID -19 IN AFRICA

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### Abstract

*The impact of the coronavirus (Covid-19) has changed economic, social, political life around the world. One of the most significant effects of the pandemic has been the accelerated adoption of digital technologies in many sectors of the global economy. The pandemic has thrust the world into a situation where people without access are completely excluded. Therefore, this study investigated impacts of Covid 19 in Africa. The analysis is based on the systematic review of secondary data on Covid 19 in Africa. This reflects the preference for living alone during pandemic in least developed country (ITU,2019). In low and middle –income countries the number of women who own a mobile phone is 10% less than men, and the number of women using mobile internet worldwide is less than 300 million (GSMA,2020). The literature in this article will fill the knowledge gap on how to conceptualise the relationship between digital inclusion and rising inequality in Africa. Given the heavy use of technology to meet basic needs such as health and education we need to understand the impact of digital divide on social equality. Information technology especially the internet will remain central to the post pandemic scenario, and innovation will facilitate its expanded use. With more than 3 billion people confined to their home, digital spaces are not only the main means of accessing information and services but also one of the few social interaction.*

**Keywords:** *Post-Covid -19, Digitalisation, Inequality and Digital divide*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and highlighted deep inequalities in societies from the most economically developed to the least economically developed countries. Existing socio-technical

inequalities are often reinforced and take on various forms of exclusion and vulnerability. Some are more noticeable than others, but not all. All excluded and vulnerable people have a voice. Many of these inequalities are being alleviated by digital technologies, such as social

hardship and lockdown measures replacing face-to-face interactions. Social exclusion is multidimensional and it is important to consider the heterogeneous space of social exclusion (Zang & Walsham, 2008). Furthermore, we need to further explain the intersections and interactions between different types of social divides and the implications of understanding digital inequality. The research team originally planned to study marginalized black women who experience sexism and racism. It opposes the tendency in critical social theory to treat individuals in independent, random situations, so-called "single-axis" analysis (Crenshaw, 1989). Digital tracking and tracing systems designed to stop the spread of the coronavirus could also exacerbate social exclusion. In China, individuals must provide a health code. Display digital (green, orange, red) before being allowed to use or enter public transport (Wang, 2020).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Digital Device**

Digital devices in 2019, only 53.6% of the world's population was online, compared to 19.1% in least developed countries (ITU, 2019). In rich countries like the UK, an estimated 5 million people are not connected to the internet (Allamann, 2020). On the one hand, digital education has been significantly promoted in response to such closures in most countries, while vulnerable students on the other side of the digital divide, especially those in poverty and with disabilities, are further affected. Are at a disadvantage (Martinez, 2020). Additionally, schools often serve as a source of healthy nutrition and social support for people from socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Although some countries have provided free laptops to disadvantaged students (Whittaker, 2020), these students face greater risks in terms of wellbeing and

mental health (Eyles, Gibbons, & Monte Bruno, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

In other words, digital exclusion has its roots in social inequality, but digital connectivity does not automatically solve social ills. Minimizing digital exclusion through accessories several studies have considered strategies to reduce the digital divide, with a particular focus on equipment provision.

Montgrave and Cullinane (2021) report that teachers believe that the use of laptops is the most helpful solution for disadvantaged students, indicating significant concerns about lack of access to performance devices. Julius & Sims (2020) and the Commissioner of Wales (2021) have pointed out, many schools already provide laptops and computing devices to children, but not all schools, especially those in the most difficult situations. Not every school can offer this. As a result, disadvantaged children living in disadvantaged schools are least likely to have adequate access to devices and are less likely to attend schools that can provide suitable devices, making them vulnerable to the effects of the digital divide. I receive it the most. Even where equipment is readily available, such as through school or government agreements, there are barriers to feasibility that prevent it. This (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2021). Efforts have been made to provide training and learning resources for parents, teachers, and students to use distance learning tools (Sharp *et al.*, 2020, 2021b).

The governments of each of the UK's four host countries have announced a range of programs to support access to distance learning, primarily focused on providing equipment and internet connectivity (Cambridge Assessment, 202, Bakker *et al.*, 2020a). Economic Impact of COVID-19 South Africa South Africa is one of the largest and most industrialized countries with a middle-income per capita economy,

and is relatively liveable compared to emerging markets and Africa. It is considered easy. The country's population is about four times larger. The average for Africa is US\$1,645.47 and she is one of the few countries on the African continent with a sustainable social protection system. Social protection systems consume 3.3% of GDP and support 56% of South Africa's population (StatsSA, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of people's lives around the world. It has spread to most countries around the world, including South Africa, which has imposed partial or complete containment. South Africa, the first country in Africa to record cases, has begun introducing one of the world's strictest lockdown measures. This is an important and essential aspect of equality policy development. Further research is needed on the impact of COVID-19 on existing inequalities and how relevant public policies can reduce the impact of the pandemic on marginalized groups. Estimates suggest that the number of middle-class households below the upper poverty line and the number of chronically poor households may have increased as a result of containment measures (World Bank, 2021).

## **2.2 ACCESSORIES MINIMIZE DIGITAL EXCLUSION**

Several studies have considered strategies to reduce the digital divide, with a particular focus on equipment provision. Montgrave and Cullinane (2021) report that teachers believe that the use of laptops is the most helpful solution for disadvantaged students, indicating significant concerns about lack of access to performance devices. As Julius & Sims (2020) and the Commissioner of Wales (2021) have pointed out, many schools already provide laptops and computing devices to children, but not all schools, especially those in the most difficult

situations. Disadvantaged children living in disadvantaged schools are therefore least likely to have adequate access to devices and are least likely to attend schools that can provide suitable devices, and therefore are most vulnerable to the effects of the digital divide. Even where equipment is readily available through school or government agreements, there are barriers to feasibility to prevent it, (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2021). Efforts have been made to provide training and learning resources for parents, teachers, and students to use distance learning tools (Sharp *et al.*, 2020, 2021b). The governments of each of the UK's four host countries have announced a range of programs to support access to distance learning, primarily focused on providing equipment and internet connectivity (Cambridge Assessment, 202, Bakker *et al.*).

## **2.3 IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON THE ECONOMY**

South Africa is one of the largest and most industrialized countries with a middle-income per capita economy and is considered relatively livable from emerging economies and Africa. The country's population is about four times higher. The average in Africa is \$1,645.47 and it is one of the few countries on the continent with a sustainable social protection system. The social protection system consumes 3.3% of GDP and serves 56% of South Africa's population (StatsSA, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of people's lives around the world. It has spread to most countries around the world, including South Africa, which has imposed partial or full containment. South Africa, where the first infections were recorded in Africa, has begun to impose one of the strictest lockdown measures in the world. This is an important and essential aspect of equity policy formulation. Further research is

needed into the impact of COVID-19 on existing inequalities and how related public policies can mitigate the pandemic's impact on marginalized groups.

Estimates suggest that the number of middle-class households below the upper poverty line and the number of chronically poor households may have increased as a result of containment measures (World Bank, 2021). COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on semi-skilled and unskilled workers as well as female-headed households who have locked down basic communication devices and services for discovery destination. their services on an online platform. This further exacerbates existing income inequalities, with higher prevalence among blacks, who are already most disadvantaged (Nwosu, 2021). Various studies conducted have found that smartphone owners, mainly men, urban dwellers and young adults, tend to own more internet-connected devices. People in the midst of many inequalities such as class, race and gender, living in rural areas, and older people are less likely to be digitally displaced (OECD, 2012).

#### **2.4 VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE GENDER INEQUALITY**

Around the world, more men than women use the internet, but less so in least developed countries (ITU, 2019). In low- and middle-income countries, women own 10% fewer mobile phones than men, and 300 million women worldwide have reduced their mobile internet usage (GSMA, 2020). This digital divide undermines women. The ability to adapt to the adversity of the pandemic, both in terms of work and home life. Based on data from 104 countries, 67% of healthcare workers are women (Boniol *et al.*, 2019). In most societies, women have taken on greater responsibilities for family and household chores during the pandemic, including additional housework, some schooling, and caring for the elderly and sick. Women

perform the bulk of the invisible work in the home (Danielson & Erickson, 2020; Houghton, 2017) and are at greater risk due to the pandemic.

However, it is important to note that women's experiences vary depending on their socio-economic status and the cultural norms to which they are exposed. Research on the digital divide needs to move beyond the simple concept of digital divide and focus on the accessibility and use of technology within specific populations. In doing so, it is useful to map the most visible disparities, and it is important to remember that digital inequality is closely linked to individuals' positions within multiple systems of power. For example, the gig economy is often ignored in recent waves. Historically, research takeover has been a precarious and precarious undertaking. Table 1 below shows some agreement between the current telephone survey and the 2017/18 RIA Access Survey in terms of representativeness of the telephone survey. Both surveys reflect that South Africa's population is slightly skewed towards women, a feature shown in central data. However, women are overrepresented in RIA surveys. The data also shows that South Africa is becoming more urbanized. 64% of the country's population lives in urban areas, while 36% of her live in rural areas.

#### **2.5. THE ADVANTAGE OF GIG WORKERS IN AFRICA**

Platform-based vulnerabilities are specific to the way stage work is organized. These vulnerabilities incorporate specialist misclassification, data asymmetries, and the culture of observation (Bajwa *et al.*, 2018). In spite of the fact that, in the gig economy, individual freedom to specialists is understood as flexibility to select managers, employments, working hours and put of work, investigate is starting to appear that labourers do appreciate significant opportunity but are obliged by

algorithmic controls set up by advanced work stages (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016; Wood *et al.*, 2019). It has been said within the writing that platforms' utilize of algorithmic administration, innovative control of work prepare and rating framework unequivocally affect workers' independence. An attempt to combat unemployment in South Africa, Malinga and Mngase (2021) see the gig economy as an opportunity for unemployed South Africans to learn in-demand skills and gain global recognition. In addition, providing jobs to job seekers around the world, South Africa's digital services could lead to the creation of 66,000 jobs in the country's ICT sector by the end on 2021 (Malinga & Mungadze, 2021). This may be of particular interest to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), as the gig economy is considered an alternative to traditional forms of employment for low-and middle –income regions and has the potential for progressive development (Kuek *et al.*, 2015, UNDP, 2015). Lastly given that many of Africans potential workers are unlikely to have had the opportunity to benefit from formal employment, part time work has significant benefits to the lives and livelihoods of these workers (Anwar & Graham, 2021).

## **2.6 THE IMPACT OF INCREASING DEGITALIZATION**

The utilize of video and sound conferencing apparatuses is expanding essentially, and businesses will be extending their innovation framework to oblige this increment. This will lead to expanded speculations in transfer speed extension, organize gear, and computer program leveraging cloud administrations. As representatives gotten to be usual to working from domestic, assembly, and considering approximately doing trade online, companies will move to working from domestic as the run the show instead of the special case. This has been received

by numerous companies (Akala, 2020; BBC News, 2020; Khetarpal, 2020) that have the digital infrastructure to handle the specified stack and transmission capacity. Instruction is another division that has seen an emotional move to online modes of exchanges. Since the lockdown started, schools and colleges around the world have moved classes to video conferencing stages such as Zoom and Google Meet. In expansion to these synchronous educating strategies, offbeat stages such as XandCoursera have moreover expanded enrollment (Shah, 2020). Some educational educate, such as the College of Cambridge within the UK and California State College within the US, are as of now moving to completely online mode for the following scholarly year (Unused York Times, 2020). Computerized change innovations such as cloud, Web of Things (IoT), blockchain (BC), counterfeit insights (AI), and machine learning (ML) are expanding the number of innovations organizations utilize to convert to blockchain (BC). Technology provides an opportunity to form secure and dependable data control components (Upadhyay, 2020).

As instruction and healthcare administrations move into the computerized domain, BC gives the capacity to safely confirm certificates, restorative records, wellbeing records, and prescriptions. Research into the plan of such frameworks and how to preserve their ease of use and convenience will become increasingly vital. Another issue is planning frameworks that work with keen contracts. That's, how contracts are confirmed, how these contracts are planned in complex process chains including numerous specialists, and how assertion methods related with contracts are dealt Moreover, IS investigate may point to administrative perspectives of BC in terms of what must be scrambled and shared (e.g., verification of news and data sources) and how security is overseen.

| Indicator       | RIA Phone Survey 2021 | RIA 2017/18 After Access surveys |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Male            | 43%                   | 48%                              |
| Female          | 57%                   | 52%                              |
| Urban residents | 64%                   | 64%                              |
| Rural Residents | 36%                   | 36%                              |

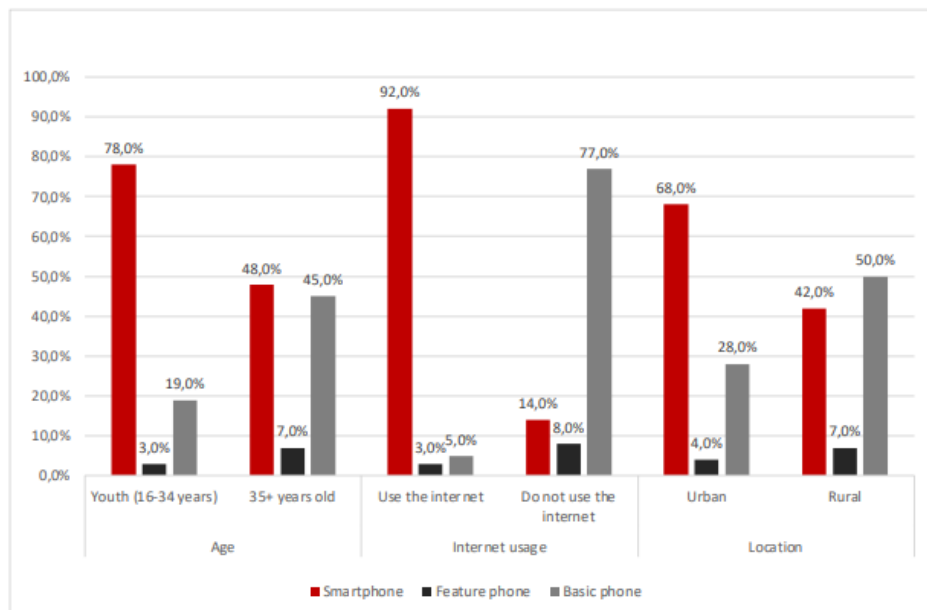
***SOURCE ADAPTED FROM RIA PHONE SURVEY 2021; STATISTICS SA, 2021***

Figure 1 below shows the smartphone disparity between people living in urban and rural areas.

Data shows that 68% of people living in urban areas use smartphones, compared to 50% of people living in rural areas. Mobile

phones are the most commonly used device for internet access in South Africa. According to this study, more than 78% of young people use smartphones compared to the population over 35 years old.

Figure: 1 Type of phone ownership by geographical location



Source: Adapted from Ria Phone Survey, 2021

Figure 2 below shows that internet use is unequal across groups, with wealthier

groups certainly using it more and faster than lower-income groups.

This will further widen socio-economic inequalities and widen disparities in internet usage among the population. Mobile phone survey data shows that the majority (88%) of South Africa's white

population uses the internet, compared to 60% of the coloured population and 28% of the black Indian population. These results show racial disparities in South Africa.

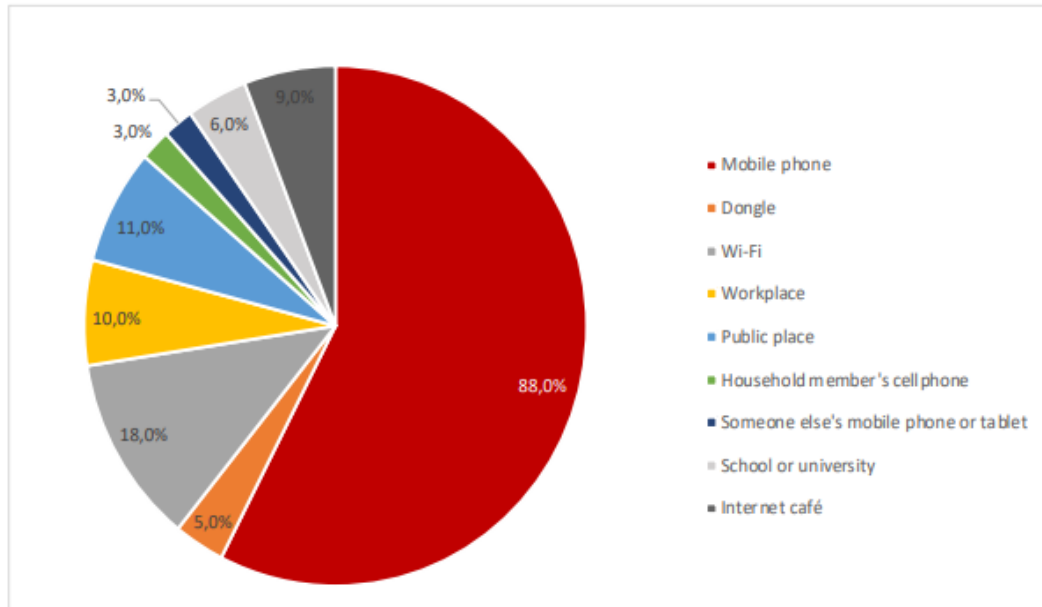


**Figure 2: Source: Adapted from Ria Phone Survey, 2021**

### 3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The paper's core contribution is thus to provide for the first time a systematic understanding of the growing inequalities arising for some of those in the global South who use digital systems. The conceptualization developed here contributes not just to a general understanding but provides researchers with a specific and operationalizable framework that can address a variety of questions, including the how's, what's, who's, and whys of this emerging form of digital inequality in the global South. Technology developers and providers must:

See the subjectivities of people behind the label "user" and consider how gender, race, class, and other structural constraints come into play. People may be faced with situations in which their potential and abilities are realised. And ultimately with

the impact that digital technologies have on them. For example, working-class women, immigrants, and refugees may be unable to use smartphones due to a lack of social capital or support. To find better job opportunities or receive social security benefits.

Therefore, there is relationship between control and vulnerability. Designers and providers of technology need to understand the subjectivity of people behind the designation of users, the gender, racial, and other structural constraints that can limit the space of possibilities and capabilities faced by individuals, and by extension the digital. One needs to consider how technology can impact users' lives. For example, a lack of social capital and support may prevent working-class women, immigrants and refugees from using smartphones to find better job opportunities or access benefits. Bridging

the digital divide therefore requires not only technology and skills training, but above all coordinated interventions and support networks that address some of the

fundamental vulnerabilities of disadvantaged group.

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