

Executive Summary

The thesis titled "**Digital Literacy as Social Capital for Identification and Evaluation of Digital Competencies of the Undergraduate Students of the University of North Bengal**" aims to investigate the role of digital literacy as social capital in the identification and evaluation of digital competencies among undergraduate students at the University of North Bengal. The study begins with an introduction to the research problem and a literature review that discusses the concepts of digital literacy, social capital, and digital competencies. The literature review provides a theoretical framework for the study and highlights the importance of digital literacy and digital competencies in the digital age. The research problem identifies and evaluates the digital competencies of undergraduate students in the University of North Bengal affiliated colleges, focusing on digital literacy as a form of social capital. The study aims to investigate the level of digital literacy among undergraduate students at the University of North Bengal and to identify the social capital that digital literacy provides in terms of their digital competency. The research also seeks to evaluate the students' digital competencies in various areas, such as digital communication, creativity, security, and problem-solving. The study is significant because it will provide insights into the current state of digital literacy among undergraduate students and help identify areas where improvements can be made. The findings of the study can be used to develop strategies to enhance digital literacy among students, which can, in turn, improve their overall academic performance and future career prospects. The study will explore the concept of digital literacy as a form of social capital, which refers to the social connections, networks, and resources that individuals can access through their digital skills and competencies. It provides an overview of the hypotheses

and research questions addressed in the study focused on digital literacy, digital competency, and their impact on social capital among undergraduate students. The study explores the relationships between these variables and aims to understand the current state of digital literacy and competency among the target group. The study examines how socio-demographic variables correlate with digital literacy and digital competencies among undergraduate students, determines the existing level of digital literacy, and establishes criteria for identifying digitally competent undergraduate students, specifically focusing on those from NBU. This research focuses on the interplay between digital literacy, digital competency, and social capital among undergraduate students. It addresses hypotheses and research questions that collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the current digital landscape within the target demographic. The research addresses questions by examining the relationship between socio-demographic variables and digital literacy, assessing the current level of digital literacy among undergraduate students, and determining indicators of digital competency, especially among students from NBU. The research methodology chapter describes the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures used in the study. The research approach chosen for this study was quantitative, focusing on exploring relationships between variables through statistical analysis. This approach harmonised with the study's objectives, enabling objective data collection and assessing connections between variables.

The survey method was applied to delve into the digital literacy levels of undergraduate students attending colleges affiliated with the University of North Bengal. It highlights critical aspects of the study's population and sample selection

methodology, detailing the inclusion of all undergraduate college students affiliated with the University of North Bengal, West Bengal, India. The study encompasses six districts and 52 colleges under the University's jurisdiction. The research meticulously defines the population as the entire set of cases from which a sample is drawn, and the target population refers to all registered undergraduate students across different semesters (1, 3, and 5) from the 52 affiliated colleges. The total target population comprises 128,608 undergraduate students. The research employs a stratified random sampling method to ensure a representative study. The structured questionnaire is then distributed to selected undergraduate students using random sampling techniques, maintaining an unbiased representation. The population of undergraduate students from the University of North Bengal is showcased divided into three academic sessions (Session1*, Session2*, and Session3*) for different semesters. The total population counts 128,608 undergraduate students, with a consistent increase in enrolment observed across academic sessions. The distribution of colleges across the North Bengal region is presented, and the number of colleges included in the study is outlined for each district. The table highlights Darjeeling as the district with the most colleges (22), followed by Jalpaiguri (13), Alipurduar (10), Kalimpong (4), Uttar Dinajpur (2), and Cooch Behar (1). The questionnaire design was carefully crafted, considering the research topic, objectives, and background literature. The questionnaire encompassed three sections: capturing socio-educational backgrounds, assessing digital literacy, and evaluating digital competencies. The Likert Scale was employed to measure respondents' agreement levels with statements. The purpose of executing a pilot study involving 145 students from the Library and Information Science Department at the University of North Bengal was to improve the questionnaire quality based on

feedback. The data collected during the pilot study was subjected to analysis and the rectification of errors, resulting in the creation of the final version of the questionnaire for distribution. The Likert Scale, a well-established response scale, was utilised to measure the digital literacy levels of undergraduate students. Respondents rated their agreement levels on a scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." It underscores the meticulous planning and precise execution that underpin the success of a rigorous research study. This research delves into the intricate relationship between digital literacy and social capital among undergraduate students. The study demonstrates a positive correlation between digital literacy and social capital, revealing that students possessing higher levels of digital literacy also exhibit superior digital competencies. The undergraduate student demographic in the region is characterised by diversity in gender, college status, accommodation, discipline, year of study, medium of instruction, locale, and educational goals. The research underscores educational institutions' need to offer comprehensive access to diverse digital resources, effectively supporting student learning. Moreover, the research focuses on raising awareness and enhancing digital literacy among females in various districts. The study highlights areas for growth, such as bolstering device security and fostering a culture of seeking assistance when grappling with technical challenges or adapting to new software. Notably, the favoured means of instant communication and information retrieval differ across locales and genders. Significantly, social networking platforms predominantly serve personal purposes, ranking communication as the second most prevalent use. These platforms offer untapped potential for amplifying knowledge-sharing and information dissemination among undergraduate students. The research offers invaluable insights into the contemporary digital literacy

and social capital landscape among undergraduate students. It advocates for targeted strategies and interventions tailored to the distinct needs of diverse college student subgroups. By cultivating digital literacy skills among undergraduates, this research indicates the potential to positively impact their forthcoming academic and professional trajectories. To bridge existing disparities, additional research is warranted to explore specific facets of digital literacy where disparities persist and devise strategies to rectify the digital literacy gap. The study suggests that crafting tailored policies and interventions will contribute to elevating education quality and the overall well-being of college students. The research reaffirms that enhancing digital literacy skills within the undergraduate cohort promises to foster enhanced academic and professional achievements. Ultimately, this study underscores the critical importance of digital literacy education. It accentuates the pressing need for educational institutions to offer a broad spectrum of digital resources. The study recognises the prominence of specific app platforms and social networking sites within the undergraduate realm, underscoring specific digital literacy disparities. Consequently, the amplification of digital literacy among undergraduate students emerges as a pivotal factor in shaping their future academic and professional success. The study contributes valuable knowledge to inform strategies for fostering digital competence among undergraduate students at the University of North Bengal, emphasising the importance of tailored interventions and considering diverse socio-demographic factors.