

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY IN MATERIAL WELL-BEING AMONG MOTHERS

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Abstract. The presence of mothers in digital technology and internet access creates a complex journey. Mothers' socioeconomic status and cultural background significantly influence mothers' use of digital tools to empower and challenge their role in digital domain challenges. This connection of technology to motherhood not only shapes their online experience but also defines their role in society, shapes their identities, and helps change perceptions of motherhood in the digital age. The research explores the impacts of digital access within the context of mothering and recognises the challenges in culture and socio-economic contexts in the digital age. This study presents the concept and theoretical model of mothers' use of digital access. The theoretical framework is based on Matricentric Feminism and Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions. These theories will shed light on the connections between mothers and the digital environment, including how socioeconomic status affects mothers' use of digital media on their socio-economic status and culture influences the media devices that mothers from different backgrounds use, and the various forms of mediation that mothers use. These connections provide us with insights into ways in which culture and socioeconomic status mediate maternal thought in the context of digital access, emphasising the importance of establishing inclusive digital environments that empower mothers of all backgrounds.

Keywords: *mothers, digital access, SES, culture*

Introduction

The digital era has permanently changed how we engage with the outside world, and mothers are no different. The informative applications provided on the internet have equipped mothers with essential knowledge, empowering them to become confident and effective caregivers (Dyurich and Oliver, 2020) since mothers are expected to play the role through the mother's expertise and the expert knowledge she is expected to acquire (Byrt and Dempsey, 2022). As this digital information was shared and shared, mothers who had access to the content began discovering information or suggestions regarding their parenting responsibilities (Sawalha and Karnowski, 2022). Digital access allows mothers to share status, photos, videos, and other forms of content, of their cultural identity with the world (Wibowo et al., 2023). While digital access undeniably offers the role in disseminating the motherhood notion through its portrayal in the media, it also presents potential downsides, The “ideal mother” ideologies often result in emotions of stress, shame, and guilt (Zirakbash et al., 2023), particularly when considering cultural contexts (Von Wong, 2023), it needs to be studied deeper.

Unlike in earlier times when mothers raised children in a closely-knit neighbourhood filled with other mothers in a similar situation, nowadays, mothers communicate

digitally within geographical boundaries where diverse cultural backgrounds each mother has access not only to communicate, but also to share cultural values, beliefs, and norms and this is a unique opportunity to observe the influence of social media on the cultural integration process. However, with its positive potential, social media has also raised concerns. However, it raised sparked questions about whether social media as a whole has a positive or negative impact on mothers in socioeconomic status and cultural integration (Tai et al., 2023). Social media in cultural integration is a difficult process with lots of challenges. Even though social media has a lot of potential to improve our understanding of other cultures, filter bubbles, polarisation, privacy concerns, and security issues must be addressed to make sure that cross-cultural interactions on these platforms go smoothly and benefit society as a whole. Asia, from China, Helsper (2021) dissects various forms of socio-digital inequalities along dimensions of traditional socio-economic, socio-cultural, and individual gaps. These inequalities are tantamount to “social media news deserts” that, driven mostly by access, literacy, and engagement styles, disadvantage certain groups in society to deprived exposure to important political, public affairs, and social information (Barnidge and Xenos, 2024).

Variation of rural households indicates that each has its unique socioeconomic background and the households in rural areas have differentiation in their economic performance (Rashid et al., 2023). Rural areas adjacent to the urban regions have been facing development pressures, encroachment of urban activities, environmental deterioration, and straining infrastructure (Vorodam et al., 2022). Socio-economics is driven in shaping mothers’ interactions within social hierarchies in mothering experiences, mothers who are underprivileged or in vulnerable situations (such as mothers of disabled children, refugees, or migrant women facing language problems) are prone to feel pressure (Sow et al., 2022). Higher socioeconomic individuals seem to adjust themselves to culturally sanctioned ideas and practices while lower socio-economic status has been related to a better awareness of others’ feelings and a propensity for acts of kindness because of the need to rely on others due to limited access to resources and education (Zafar et al., 2023). As for skill sets, relying upon information on the internet could empower mothers, to be more confident in their role even so, mothers need to have the skill to evaluate online information critically, distinguish reliable sources from misinformation, and find trustworthy resources, it could potentially expose harmful misinformation or disinformation to their surroundings (Vodă et al., 2022). This is even worse when there is a lack of current technology and innovative ideas to help improve efficiency, which mainly involves agricultural and livestock rearing.

Due to the growing number of users, utilising digital technologies has become a place for a multicultural population of mothers to share their experiences as a nurturer. This raises questions about how accessing the internet supports a range of cultural expressions in a global community. Furthermore, the internet is evolving and changing continuously (Wibowo et al., 2023). This paper aims to seek the impact between cultural background and technology usage and highlights the importance of considering diverse cultural perspectives to promote equal access to digital resources and enhance cross-cultural communication over the internet.

Literature review

Digital technologies are now a part of everyone's everyday life, and mothers now have the chance to use resources that are not limited by geography (Sawalha and Karnowski, 2022). Accessing the vast quantity of information and knowledge that is available online is the goal of digital access, which aims to use and benefit from digital technologies. Meikeng (2023), "Malaysians are reading more books", states The National Library of Malaysia provides evidence that 69.8% of parents whose kids were in the 7-12 age range used digital resources, including e-books, online platforms, and educational apps. Data show that mothers were engaged in these digital resources and eager to gain knowledge. Nonetheless, it is crucial to remember that not all demographic groups have equal access to or benefits from online technologies (Afzal et al., 2023). Among mothers, having access to the Internet does not always equate to having good digital abilities, some mothers use the Internet on their own and are at the basic user level and encounter difficulties in maintaining resources current, applicable, and easily obtainable, which may affect the quality and accuracy of the information while also considering cultural sensitivity (Rahayu and Haningsih, 2021). This situation worsens in cases where there is a lack of new technology and innovative interventions that will assist in boosting the productivity of their economic activities, which mainly involve agriculture and livestock rearing (Rashid et al., 2023).

Materials and Methods

Attention must be diverted to the merging of both mothering and digital access to yield a successful outcome. With the aim for this merge to function, Matricentric Feminism and Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimension theory are used as a reference to set a strong foundation. These theories will give an insight into how mothers and the digital landscape operate based on the socioeconomic status that influences mothers' digital media use based on their economic and social resources and how culture will impact different mothers' backgrounds with media devices and apply various types of mediation as mothers.

Feminism mothering theory (Andrea O'Reilly, 2019)

A subfield of feminist theory called feminist mothering theory examines the relationship between feminism and motherhood. It challenges existing assumptions and views about nurturing as it examines the place of women in society. This theory aims to address issues including social expectations, inequality by gender, and the effects of patriarchal structures on mothers' experiences. Maternity is not only an identity, it is a historically and socially constructed activity, as highlighted by O'Reilly (2019) introduction to matricentric feminism. This perspective challenges the idea that motherhood is built and that women are mainly driven by it. To empower women by learning about other women's motherhood experiences, this point of view sees mothering as a subjective experience. A feminist movement that is centred on mothers' experiences and issues is called for by matricentric feminism, which recognises the special struggles women endure under patriarchal structures and seeks to incorporate and empower mothers in feminist discourse and society.

Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions (Geert Hofstede, 2011)

This theory is a framework that describes six dimensions of national cultures. These are Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Long/Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence/Restraint. These dimensions help in understanding cultural differences and predicting interactions between people from different cultures. Power Distance refers to the extent to which less powerful members of organisations accept and expect unequal power. This theory highlights how societies view hierarchy and inequality, with some being more accepting of inequality than others. For example, in societies with low power distance, there is an emphasis on equality and minimized power differences (*Figure 1*).

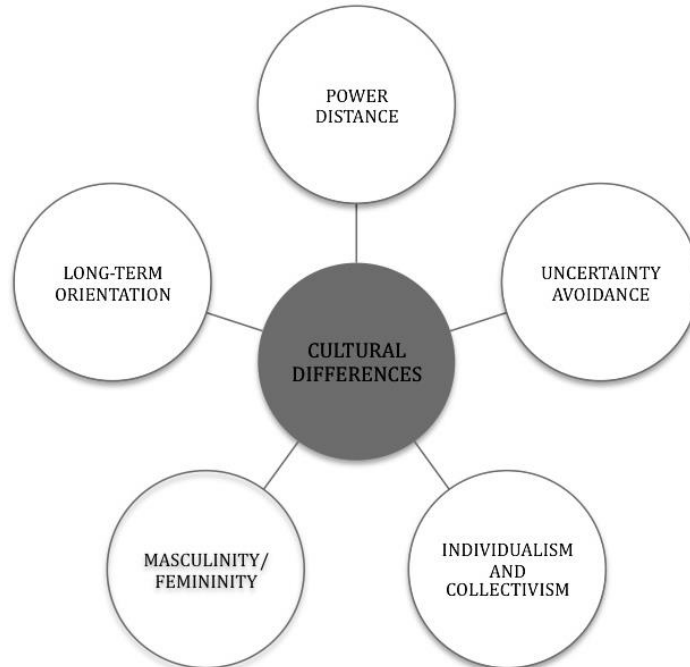


Figure 1. Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions.

Results and Discussion

Proposed conceptual model

Proposed conceptual model in maternal thinking, socio-economic status, and culture of digital connectivity among mothers (*Figure 2*).

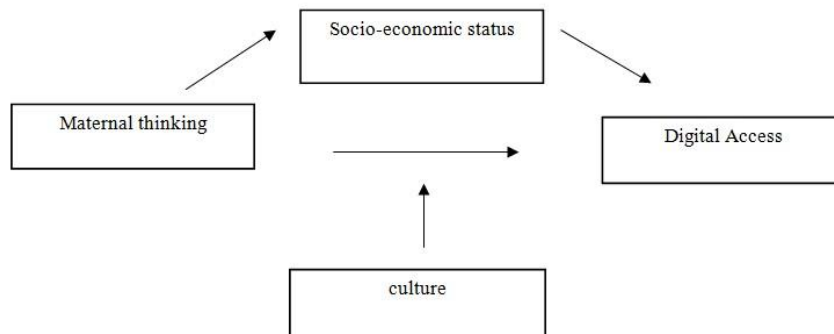


Figure 2. Proposed conceptual framework.

Maternal thinking among mothers in digital access

The digital landscape has transformed the way mothers engage with technology, shaping their experiences and perceptions. O'Reilly (2019), under patriarchy, moms face oppression both as mothers and as women. Because of this, moms require a matricentric kind of feminism that is structured around and for their unique identity and role as mothers. The role of digital technologies in shaping mothers' experiences during the transition to parenting is important (Wu, 2021). Mothers who engage in digital access, evaluate their preparedness and suitability for motherhood. This relational digital surveillance involves monitoring their actions and bodies as they transition into parenthood, influencing their sense of goodness and readiness for motherhood (Hall et al., 2023). Research by Lāma and Lāma (2023) explored how Latvian-speaking mothers on Twitter use the platform to connect and share their experiences with mothers utilised Twitter to offer and receive informational, emotional, and even physical, self-belonging support from one another, creating a virtually safe place for navigating the challenges and joys of motherhood. The use of digital technologies by mothers has extended beyond connectivity. It serves as a tool for immediate access to health information to support parenting practices and address tensions related to "good motherhood" (Facca et al., 2023). However, not every mother are the same. Mothers like vulnerable ones, navigate digital technologies for maternal roles, even so, highlighting the challenges they face and their needs in utilising digital platforms (Zirakbash et al., 2023). Another research Moreover, The study of surveillance in digital spaces raises critical questions about privacy, self-perception, and societal expectations placed on mothers as they navigate the complexities of parenting in a digital age.

The socio-economic status of maternal thinking in digital access

The mediation of the socio-economic status of maternal thinking among mothers in digital access focuses on the role of mothers as mediators in shaping their engagement with digital technologies. Research highlights from Sciacca et al. (2022), that parental mediation, particularly maternal involvement, is crucial in influencing how mothers access and interact with digital platforms. A study from Baliç (2023) seeks to comprehend the complex dynamics of contemporary mother labour by reflection and meditation on the first seven years of being a mother. The study clarifies how, in a modern, non-Western setting, the type and nature of mother labour have changed. It focuses especially on how adding the personal and professional domains, together with digital technologies, might make it difficult to differentiate between various facets of a mother's job. Another study found unpaid digital care work sheds light on the various responsibilities encompassed within a mother's role in managing digital access, emphasizing the significant efforts involved in mediating their own digital experiences (Heaselgrave, 2023). Maternal perceptions of screen time's impact on their well-being are essential in understanding how mothers navigate digital access and can influence their own cognitive and social well-being, indicating a mediating model where maternal perceptions affect their actual screen time behaviors to parental behaviors and interactions, underscoring the importance of maternal behaviors in shaping individual outcomes (Koşkulu et al., 2021). A study by Wu et al. (2023) recruited participants from two public junior high schools in Shandong Province, China with 482 mother-adolescents, ages ranging from 33 to 54 years. In terms of educational levels, 16.4% of

the mothers had reached junior high school or lower, 39.4% had reached senior high school, and 44.2% had attained a bachelor's degree or higher. Even so, regarding monthly income, 8.9% of mothers earned less than 2000 RMB, while the majority ranged from 2000 RMB to over 5000 RMB. This study showed how mothers' frequent phone use while neglecting their children (phubbing) is linked to harsh parenting behaviours like yelling and criticism. Interestingly, the study also suggests that the impact of harsh parenting on adolescents' emotional and behavioural problems was stronger for girls compared to boys. This research highlights the potential negative consequences of phubbing and the importance of considering both mothers' emotional state and adolescents' gender when exploring parent-child relationships.

The cultural effect of maternal thinking in digital access

The cultural effect as a moderator of maternal thinking among mothers in digital access is a complex interplay influenced by socio-economic disparities, digital engagement, and cultural norms (Van Cleef, 2020). This dimension shows how much a society's members try to reduce uncertainty to deal with their anxiety. The simplest definition of uncertainty avoidance is the level to which a culture perceives change to be dangerous (Hofstede, 2011). Women from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds may face challenges in accessing digital information sources, impacting their ability to engage with online platforms for parenting support and information (Goto et al., 2021). The digital divide may make worse inequalities, influencing how mothers from varying backgrounds communicate and seek support in virtual spaces. The crucial part, the intersection of cultural and digital media can influence how mothers navigate motherhood online. The study of young parents and digital technologies highlights the challenges faced by mothers in navigating cultural pressures and health expert advice in the digital age (Zirakbash et al., 2023). Understanding these dynamics is crucial in comprehending how cultural norms, socio-economic factors, and digital engagement intersect to shape maternal thinking among mothers in digital access. Another study found by Holmes and Atkins (2023) delved into how mothers use and navigate maternal selfies concerning their identities and experiences. The researchers explored the perception of mothers being "invisible" in family photos and how selfies can offer a platform for self-expression and reclaiming their presence. However, the research also acknowledges that cultural pressures surrounding acceptable depictions of motherhood and the potential for online judgment can influence and limit these self-expressions.

Conclusion

Exploring how mothers share their maternal thinking in digital access and how this interaction is influenced by socio-economic status and culture is crucial for understanding the complexities of modern motherhood. The digital age indeed offers a platform for mothers to express their opinions, access parenting knowledge, and challenge traditional norms. However, the challenges in access to digital resources based on socioeconomic status backgrounds have to be deepened, to discover the inequalities among mothers, affecting how they communicate and seek online support. Cultural norms also play a significant role, in shaping representations of motherhood and influencing how mothers navigate in digital landscapes. By examining these intersections, we can gain insights into how socio-economic status and culture mediate

maternal thinking in digital access, highlighting the need for inclusive digital spaces that empower all mothers regardless of their background.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that no conflict of interest is involved with any parties in this research.

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