



# Digital Inclusion and the Digital Divide in Rural African Communities: A Qualitative Exploration

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## Abstract

Rural communities in South Africa face significant barriers to accessing digital technologies, exacerbating existing social inequalities. A purposive sampling approach was employed to gather data from participants who use digital devices for educational purposes in two rural districts of South Africa. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, focusing on challenges, opportunities, and perceptions regarding digital technology access and usage. Participants reported a significant disparity in internet connectivity and device availability between urban and rural settings, with only 30% having reliable high-speed internet at home. The qualitative data indicates that while some communities show signs of embracing digital education, widespread digital inclusion remains hindered by infrastructure limitations and affordability issues. Investment in broadband infrastructure and targeted digital literacy programmes are recommended to bridge the gap between urban and rural educational opportunities.

**Keywords:** *Africanization, Community Participation, Digital Divide, Empowerment Studies, Participatory Action Research, Social Inclusion, Technological Barriers*

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