



Digital Inclusion in Burundi: A Comparative Study of Rural Communities amidst the Digital Divide

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Abstract

Digital inclusion and the digital divide are critical issues in rural African communities, particularly in contexts where access to information technologies is limited. The study employs qualitative research methods including interviews and observations to gather insights from participants across different rural districts in Burundi. Data analysis involves thematic coding to identify common themes related to perceptions of digital inclusion and the barriers faced by rural populations. Rural residents expressed varying levels of interest and utility in digital services, with a notable proportion (35%) preferring traditional forms of communication over digital alternatives. Despite initial enthusiasm for digital solutions, there are significant challenges in terms of infrastructure, affordability, and digital literacy that hinder full digital inclusion among rural communities in Burundi. Policy recommendations include investing in community-based digital literacy programmes and improving broadband internet access to bridge the digital divide and enhance citizen engagement.

Keywords: *African geography, Digital divide, Information society, Rural development, Technology adoption, Qualitative research, Community studies*

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