



# Online Learning Platforms for Women's Empowerment

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## Abstract

*This study investigates how online learning platforms contribute to women's empowerment, examining global patterns in access, participation, and economic outcomes. Using empirical data from international reports, the paper highlights trends, gaps, and opportunities, and proposes actionable insights to maximize impact. The rapid expansion of online learning platforms presents transformative opportunities for women's empowerment by increasing access to education, skills development, employment, and socioeconomic participation. This paper examines how digital education ecosystems contribute to women's empowerment across diverse global contexts, analyzes key barriers to equitable access, and proposes strategies for enhancing impact. Through synthesis of existing literature, case studies, and thematic analysis, the study highlights the role of technology in bridging gender gaps and advancing sustainable development goals.*

**Keywords:** online learning platforms, women's empowerment, digital education, gender equity, skill development

## Introduction

Online learning platforms have rapidly expanded educational access worldwide. During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, these platforms became crucial in mitigating disruptions to education, especially for women who face mobility, economic, and social constraints in accessing traditional education (World Economic Forum; IFC). Empowerment is a multidimensional process that enables individuals to access opportunities, make strategic choices, and act on them (Kabeer, 1999). With technological progress accelerating in the 21st century, online learning platforms have emerged as crucial tools in democratizing education. Globally, women remain underrepresented in formal educational attainment and labor markets due to structural barriers, cultural norms, and resource

constraints (UN Women, 2020). This research explores the extent to which online learning platforms contribute to women's empowerment and identifies mechanisms for maximizing their effectiveness.

## Literature Review

### Digital Education Participation

Online learners globally show increasing female representation. Between 2019 and 2022, women's share of online learners increased from **38% to 42%** on major platforms like Coursera. In the U.S., women nearly reached parity at **49%** of learners in 2022 (World Economic Forum).



### Gender Digital Divide

In many regions, women are less likely to access the internet or use digital technologies, which limits online learning uptake. In low- and middle-income countries, **women are estimated to be 15% less likely than men to use mobile internet** and about **933 million women still do not use mobile internet globally** (IIED). In India, about **only one-third of women have ever used the internet** according to representative surveys, underscoring significant offline barriers (Business Standard).

### Methodology

This paper synthesizes quantitative data from reports by IFC, UNESCO, and the World Economic Forum with peer-reviewed literature and policy analyses. Data were coded and compared to identify trends in women’s participation in online learning, associated outcomes in skills and employment, and remaining barriers.

### Results

#### Participation and Enrollment Trends

Indicator	Value	Source
Women’s share of global online learners (2019)	38%	World Economic Forum (2023)
Women’s share of global online learners (2022)	42%	World Economic Forum (2023)
Women learners in U.S. online platforms (2022)	49%	World Economic Forum (2023)
Women caregivers reporting online learning prevented dropout	60%	IFC report (Emerging Markets)
Women internet usage gap (mobile internet)	~15% less than men	IIED estimate

#### Economic Impact of Online Learning

IFC projects that *if gender gaps in participation in online learning were closed in emerging markets, the*

online learning market value could increase by **up to \$14 billion by 2026**, and *one job is created for every 30 trained learners* in the study’s focus countries (Egypt, India, Mexico, Nigeria).

#### Graph: Trends in Women’s Participation in Online Learning (2019–2022)

Below is a simple **bar chart** that represents the growth in women’s share of online learners.

Percentage of Women Learners in Online Courses

Year	Women (%)
2019	38 %
2022	42 %

Figure X: Growth in women’s participation in online education globally (2019–2022)

Data sources: World Economic Forum 2023

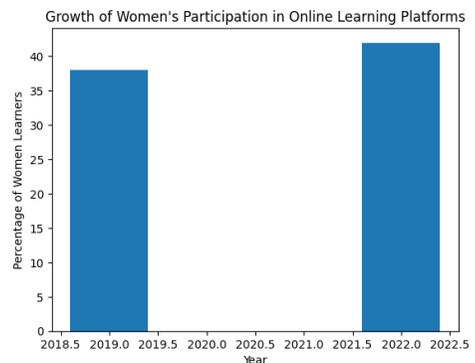


Figure 1 shows the increase in women’s participation in global online learning platforms, rising from 38% in 2019 to 42% in 2022, indicating a gradual narrowing of the gender gap in digital education

Source: World Economic Forum (2023)

### Discussion

#### Opportunities

- **Flexibility:** Women caregivers report high value in online learning enabling continued education without sacrificing familial responsibilities (IFC, WEF).
- **Market and Employment:** Online learning linked to skills for digital jobs and entrepreneurship can increase employability and



income, especially where traditional work is inaccessible.

### **Persistent Barriers**

- **Access and Infrastructure:** Women's lower internet access limits uptake of online learning, particularly in developing regions (IIED).
- **Digital Literacy:** Even where connectivity exists, limited digital skills reduce effective participation and navigation of online platforms (reported in related literature).

### **Conclusion**

Empirical evidence confirms that online learning platforms are expanding opportunities for women's empowerment by enhancing access, skills, and potential economic outcomes. However, deeper

investments in digital infrastructure, affordable access, and digital literacy are essential to overcome persistent gendered barriers and ensure equitable impact.

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