SJIF Impact Factor (2025): 8.688| ISI I.F. Value: 1.241| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2016 ISSN: 2455-7838(Online)
EPRA International Journal of Research and Development (IJRD)
Volume: 10 | Issue: 8 | August 2025 - Peer Reviewed Journal

ADVANCING DIGITAL EDUCATION THROUGH DR. AMBEDKAR'S VISION: PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra23556
DOI No: 10.36713/epra23556

ABSTRACT

This study examines how the visionary ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on education, social empowerment and justice might provide a crucial foundational framework for advancing digital education to promote social justice in the era of Artificial Intelligence. currently, the era of rapidly digitization and AI integrated educational systems offers transformative potential for teaching and learning then once again his thought becomes significant on the ground of social justice because this shift also raises critical concerns regarding educational equality, equity, accessibility and social justice particularly for historically marginalized segments of society. Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-steps thematic analysis technique discern to identify the themes and sub-themes across pertinent literature, peer-reviewed papers, case studies and policy documents sourced from databases like Scopus, ERIC and Google Scholar. The findings suggest a comprehensive approach to harmonize digital change with the tenets of justice, equality and brotherhood through the integration of conceptual insights and policy analysis. Ultimately, the article advocates for a socially responsive, Ambedkar-inspired digital education model that guarantees inclusivity for all learners in the AI-driven future, fostering a more equal digital society.

KEYWORDS: *Digital Education, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Social Justice.*

INTRODUCTION

The era of 21st century, where technology is redesigning almost every facet of our lives, then current education system experience stands also one of them at a critical juncture of revolutionary. Day by day transformation in education through digital technologies and the advent of various Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools is no longer a peripheral tool but a central pillar in educational policy and practice. Indian government initiatives like Digital India and after independence third the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aiming to become a digitally empowered society. Although, this significant aim of becoming a digitally empowered society is possible only when these rapid change in education sector will step forward with equal accessibility, equity and same quality of education (MHRD, 2020). Because, it is found in the studies that, the possibilities of deep-rooted inequities related to access, participation and representation is also appeared a serious concern, especially among historically marginalized communities such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and rural populations (Eubanks, 2018; Noble, 2018).

In this context, the advocacy of Dr. Ambedkar's philosophy is seeming relevant. He as the principal architect of the Indian Constitution and a lifelong advocate of social justice through education, firmly believed that *"Education is the milk of a lioness. Drink it, and you will roar"*, symbolizing education as a powerful force of empowerment and resistance against oppression (Ambedkar, as cited in Zelliot, 1992). Ambedkar's philosophy has emphasized liberty, equality and fraternity as the foundational principles of the society (Ambedkar, 1936). Thus, these principles must also guide the digital technology and AI revolution in education for achieving the aims of digital India mission and objectives of NEP 2020 at least.

As per the National Sample Survey (2017–18), only 24% of Indian households have access to the internet with much lower percentages in rural and marginalized communities. therefore, despite technological advancements India's digital divide remains a significant concern. Moreover, the rise of AI in education has raised critical ethical questions regarding algorithmic bias, linguistic and cultural exclusion and the lack of representation of marginalized groups in data sets that train AI systems (Noble, 2018; Eubanks, 2018). These developments risk reinforcing historical inequalities if not guided by a framework grounded in social justice.

Therefore, foremost priority of Ambedkar's philosophical advocacy for equal access of education to all has inspired this paper to explore the relevance and applicability of Dr. Ambedkar's educational philosophy. Indeed, how the visionary ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar on education, social empowerment and social justice might provide a decisive foundational framework for advancing

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digital education to promote social justice in the era of AI? This is the fundamental research question along with other research questions:

(a) How can Dr. Ambedkar's vision of education as a tool for social justice inform the development of AI-based digital education in India?

(b) What are the key digital and algorithmic barriers that affect marginalized learners in the current AI-integrated education landscape?

(c) How can policy and practice be aligned to ensure digital inclusion and prevent the reinforcement of social hierarchies in AI-driven education?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine Dr. Ambedkar's vision of education and its relevance in the digital era.
2. To analyse the impact of AI-based digital education on marginalized communities in India.
3. To identify the challenges and biases in AI-driven educational platforms that may hinder social justice.
4. To propose a framework for inclusive and equitable digital education inspired by Ambedkarite values.

METHODOLOGY

As Braun & Clarke, (2006) stated that, Thematic research is appropriate for analysing patterns, narratives and emerging discourses across diverse texts and domains especially when addressing interdisciplinary subjects like education, technology and policy. Therefore, this study employs a thematic and conceptual approach rooted in Ambedkarite philosophy and critical theory. Secondary Data sourced from policy documents like NEP 2020 and Digital India documents, literature on AI and digital exclusion to education from different databases to examines how caste, power and access intersect in AI and tech-mediated learning. The framework aligns with critical digital pedagogy (Selwyn, 2016), Concepts of digital justice (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2016) and AI ethics (Noble, 2018). The analytical process followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework of Familiarization with the data, Coding meaningful text units, generating themes, reviewing themes, Defining and naming themes and producing the report. Additionally, elements of descriptive review are used to synthesize literature and policy perspectives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

(1) Ambedkar's educational philosophy advocate education as a means to equality, rationality and empowerment (Zelliot, 1992). He viewed it as more than only a tool for economic advancement because in his view education was a pathway to self-respect and social liberation. Ambedkar declared that *"Cultivation of the mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence"* (Ambedkar, as cited in Moon, 1979) which highlights the role of critical thinking in dismantling caste hierarchies. His advocacy for universal education challenged caste-based exclusions and asserting that denying education is the deliberated acceptance of the tool for oppression.

(2) Digital Justice and AI Ethics: With the rise of digital and AI-powered learning platforms, the need for digital justice (equitable access, digital literacy, and inclusive participation) has become urgent (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2016). And, AI ethics also raises concerns around algorithmic bias, transparency and data privacy. Noble (2018) argues that AI systems often replicate societal prejudices due to biased training data, risking further marginalization in educational settings.

(3) Digital Divide and Marginalization: Only 10.8% of rural households had internet access in 2017–18 (NSO, 2019). Studies shows that students from marginalized groups struggled with online learning due to poor connectivity, device unavailability and low digital skills during COVID-19, (Kumar et al., 2021; Nanda & Choudhury, 2021). It shows that the digital divide in India continues to disadvantage SC/ST communities, rural populations.

(4) AI in Education and Equity: Study shows that AI tools promise personalized learning and efficiency but they may exacerbate inequality if not inclusively designed (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). NLP tools often fail regional or indigenous languages (UNESCO, 2021), and prophetic analytics may reinforce caste/class stereotypes (Eubanks, 2018). Hence, AI in education must reflect Ambedkar's vision and empowering the marginalized not reinforcing exclusion.

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THEMATIC DISCUSSION

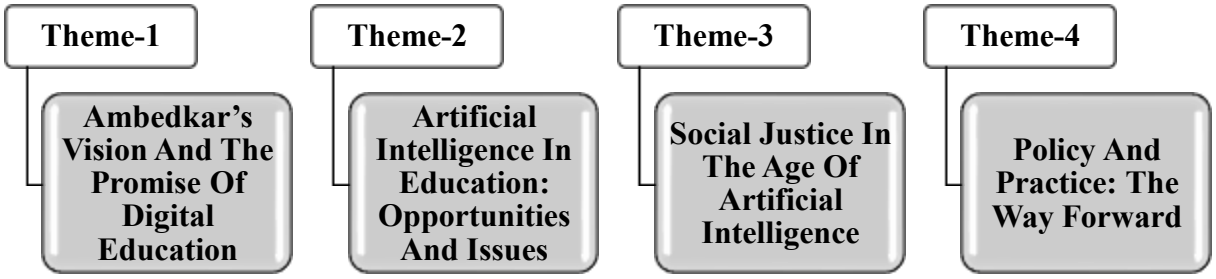

Figure 1: Systematic SmartArt hierarchy list for thematic discussion.

1. AMBEDKAR'S VISION AND THE PROMISE OF DIGITAL EDUCATION

Figure 2: SmartArt basic chevron process for Ambedkar's vision and promises of digital education.

a) *Education as a Means of Social Liberation:* For Ambedkar, education was not merely academic instruction, but a revolutionary act which enabling oppressed communities to challenge systemic inequalities and assert their rights (Zelliot, 1992). He argued that education as a fundamental tool for individual dignity collective social emancipation and achieving social justice. His statement *"Educate, agitate, and organize"* (Ambedkar, as cited in Moon, 1979), positioned education as the cornerstone of a just and equitable society. In this way, digital education holds transformative potential and technologies such as online platforms, AI-based learning systems and open educational resources (OER) can democratize access to quality education across geographic and socio-economic boundaries. Indeed, it is ideally fulfilling Ambedkar's vision of universal and emancipatory learning.

b) *Linking Ambedkar's Ideas to Digital Inclusion and Empowerment:* The principle of digital inclusion resonates closely with Ambedkar's ideas of social and educational equality. His insistence on universal access to education provides a moral and political basis for demanding equal access to digital infrastructure and digital literacy today. Digital education, when equitably implemented, can reduce barriers for historically marginalized groups, including Dalits, Adivasis, and rural learners. However, to truly align with Ambedkar's legacy, digital systems must not only be accessible but also culturally and linguistically inclusive. As Gurumurthy and Chami (2016) argue, digital justice requires more than access, it demands active participation, representation, and voice. Ambedkar's philosophy encourages us to examine who designs digital tools, who benefits from them, and whose knowledge is valued critical questions in AI-based education systems.

c) *Relevance of Ambedkar's Thought in a Tech-Driven Education System:* In the age of Artificial Intelligence, Dr. Ambedkar's emphasis on rationality, critical thinking, and democratic values is more relevant than ever. AI in education often operates through opaque algorithms that make decisions affecting students' learning paths, assessments, or even access to opportunities. Without transparency and accountability, these systems risk replicating the very forms of exclusion that Ambedkar sought to eliminate (Eubanks, 2018; Noble, 2018). Moreover, Ambedkar's call for fraternity, a sense of social solidarity is vital in the design of inclusive educational technologies. As UNESCO (2021) warns, AI tools must be developed with a rights-based approach to ensure that no learner is left behind, especially in diverse societies like India. An Ambedkarite model would require fair AI-driven learning, democratic governance, ethical data practices, and affirmative inclusion in digital education planning.

2. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EDUCATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

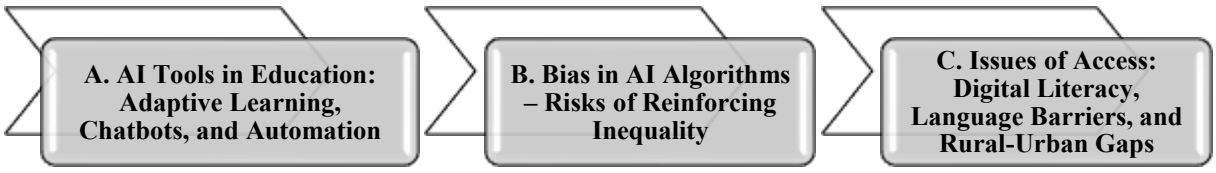

Figure 3: SmartArt chevron accent process of leveraging artificial intelligence in education.

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(a) *AI in Education: Adaptive Learning, Chatbots, Automation:* AI is personalising learning, automating administrative duties, and increasing student involvement in education. Adaptive learning platforms use machine learning to tailor material and pacing to students' learning styles and performance (Holmes et al., 2019). AI-powered chatbots answer frequently asked questions and tutor students in real time, reducing educator workload (Luckin et al., 2016). Automating grading and feedback lets teachers focus on student development. These technologies could improve learning, democratize access, and minimize teacher shortages and infrastructure impediments. In India, such technologies can reach underserved communities with few competent educators. This promise has equity, bias, and access restrictions.

(b) *AI Algorithm Bias-Inequality Reinforcement:* AI systems are not neutral, despite their potential. Training data typically reflects social disparities and cultural prejudices. When AI technologies ignore learners' socio-cultural variety, algorithmic education decision-making can repeat and worsen socioeconomic stratifications (Noble, 2018; Eubanks, 2018). Caste, class, gender, and language are profoundly ingrained in Indian education. AI models may disfavour underprivileged pupils if these elements are ignored. Based on previous data, AI-based predictive analytics may classify SC/ST students as low performers, perpetuate stigma and limit chances (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). Ambedkar's appeal for liberty, equality, and fraternity (Moon, 1979) pushes us to critically assess and redesign AI systems to avoid historical exclusion.

(c) *Access issues such digital literacy, language barriers, and rural-urban gaps:* Indians struggle to access AI-enhanced education due to the digital divide. The National Sample Survey (2019) found 10.8% of rural households having internet connectivity, compared to 42% in metropolitan areas. The situation is exacerbated by inadequate digital literacy, especially among first-generation learners and vulnerable communities. Language limitations also limit inclusion. Most AI learning platforms and tools are in English or Hindi, marginalizing regional and tribal language learners. In Nagaland, Jharkhand, and Odisha, where language diversity is high, this exclusion restricts participation and learning. Ambedkar saw these systemic constraints as justice issues, not technical obstacles. To be emancipatory, AI-powered digital education must prioritize equity in access, localized content development, and inclusive design (UNESCO, 2021; Gurumurthy & Chami, 2016).

3. SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Figure 4**: **SmartArt basic process for social justice in the age of artificial intelligence.

(a) *Who Benefits and Who Gets Left Behind?* In theory, Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds the promise of democratizing education. Yet in practice, it often mirrors and magnifies existing social inequalities. The primary beneficiaries of AI-driven educational tools tend to be those with stable internet access, digital literacy, and proficiency in dominant languages—largely urban, upper-class, and upper-caste groups (Noble, 2018; Eubanks, 2018). On the other hand, rural learners, women, Dalits, Adivasis, and people with disabilities often find themselves excluded due to structural barriers, such as inadequate infrastructure, cost of digital devices, and culturally irrelevant content (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2016). From an Ambedkarite perspective, this disparity is more than a technological issue—it is a continuation of social injustice. Dr. Ambedkar warned that without structural reform, any policy or innovation risks reinforcing the privileges of the few at the cost of the many. Hence, unless inclusive AI frameworks are intentionally designed, these technologies will exacerbate the educational and social divides they claim to solve (Zuboff, 2019).

(b) *AI and Caste/Gender/Class Concerns in Educational Access:* Without critical data and algorithms, AI in education can reproduce casteist, patriarchal, and classist biases. The outputs of most AI technologies exclude underprivileged communities since their data sets are incomplete (Noble, 2018). Predictive analytics used for admissions or performance tracking may unintentionally designate oppressed caste or low-income students as underperformers, limiting intervention and opportunity (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). Digital systems are also rife with gender prejudices. Studies suggest that AI apps often reinforce gender stereotypes and underrepresent women's achievements in educational content and recommendations (UNESCO, 2021). This, paired with caste and class inequities, creates a triple burden of exclusion that AI might surreptitiously reinforce as objectivity. Ambedkar believed in affirmative inclusion, ensuring equitable opportunity and outcomes for historically excluded groups. AI tools must be created with critical caste and gender perspectives to provide representative and empowering content, language, and pedagogy.

(c) *Educational AI-Based Decision-Making Ethics:* Transparency, accountability, and consent are major ethical concerns with AI in education. Many AI-based decisions like grading, student profiling, and resource allocation are undertaken by opaque algorithms without explanation or redress (Eubanks, 2018). Vulnerable students may not be knowledgeable enough to question these judgments, which disproportionately affects them. Student data gathering and utilization in AI systems require immediate attention. Many Indian educational institutions lack ethical data governance procedures, and data privacy

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regulations are still growing. Using AI to monitor attendance, performance, or behaviour without informed consent increases surveillance and misuse risks (UNESCO, 2021). AI systems in education must be efficient and just, according to Ambedkar. They must follow liberty, equality, and dignity in the constitution. Participatory AI design, ethical data practices, and grievance redressal, especially for historically marginalized pupils, are required.

4. POLICY AND PRACTICE: THE WAY FORWARD

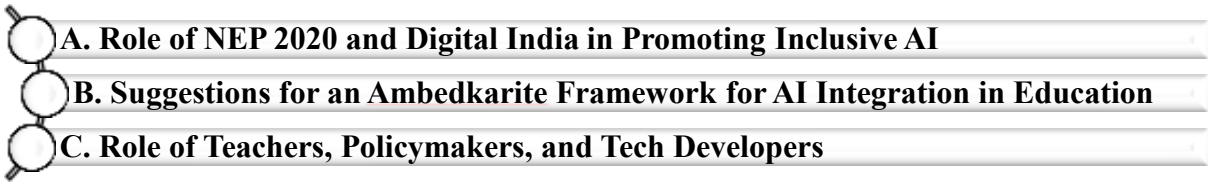

Figure 5: SmartArt vertical curve list for the way forward.

(a) *Inclusive AI Promotion by NEP 2020 and Digital India:* The NEP 2020 and Digital India project offer strategic opportunities to include equity and inclusion in education's digital transformation. NEP 2020 emphasises using technology to improve teaching, learning, and evaluation and bridging the digital divide through the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) (Ministry of Education, 2020). These frameworks must go beyond access and efficiency. The adoption of AI in education must prioritize social justice. Critical study demonstrates that without intentional inclusion methods, the Digital India plan risks replicating the very exclusions it claims to erase (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2016). Digital platforms are growing, but they are generally urban-centric, English-dominated, and unavailable to rural and vulnerable people. These rules must be aligned with Dr. Ambedkar's distributive justice vision to ensure that AI-driven education benefits all students regardless of caste, class, gender, or region.

(b). Possible Ambedkarite Framework for AI Integration in Education: An Ambedkarite paradigm for AI in education must be justice-oriented, inclusive, and participatory. The framework would include:

1. *Affirmative Inclusion:* AI algorithms and platforms should be developed with affirmative action principles, ensuring that marginalized groups are not only included but prioritized in access, content, and support mechanisms.
2. *Participatory AI Design:* Engage teachers, learners, and community stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, particularly Dalit, Adivasi, and rural groups—in the co-design of educational AI tools, ensuring cultural relevance and local language accessibility (UNESCO, 2021).
3. *Bias Audits and Ethical Oversight:* Regular evaluation of AI systems to audit algorithmic bias, and the establishment of independent regulatory bodies to ensure accountability in educational technologies (Noble, 2018; Eubanks, 2018).
4. *Equity-First Data Governance:* Collect and manage student data through ethical, transparent, and decentralized systems, with strict consent protocols and protection from surveillance and profiling (Williamson & Eynon, 2020).
5. *Caste-Gender Sensitization in EdTech:* AI systems must be trained using datasets that are representative of India's social diversity and must undergo caste, gender, and linguistic sensitivity training in their design and application.

(c). Role of Teachers, Policymakers, and Tech Developers: Achieving justice-oriented digital education demands collaborative and transformative roles from all stakeholders:

1. Teachers must be trained not just in digital tools, but also in critical digital pedagogy understanding how technology can either liberate or marginalize depending on its use. They are key in mediating AI's impact on learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Holmes et al., 2019).
2. Policymakers must ensure that education and technology policies are aligned with the constitutional vision of social justice. This includes mandating inclusive AI standards, public investment in digital infrastructure for marginalized areas, and community-based oversight.
3. Tech developers must take responsibility for designing equity-driven AI systems. This involves inclusive user research, transparent algorithms, and a shift away from market-centric models toward socially responsive innovations.
4. Ambedkar's legacy demands that education be a weapon for liberation, not a tool of exclusion. In the age of AI, his vision must guide us to create technological systems that dismantle, rather than reinforce, social hierarchies.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

The intersectional analysis between Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's educational vision and the rise of AI in education reveals critical thematic and conceptual understanding are as following:

(b) *(a)Conceptual Synthesis:* Indeed, Technology in itself is not inherently emancipatory but undeniably can say that its societal impact depends on the values embedded in its design as well as how it is implementing on the related grassroot level. Therefore, embedded values in the design and implementation process of any technology direct regards with social justice. And, when these embedded values guided by Ambedkarite principles like equality, liberty, fraternity and justice then Digital education and AI in education can serve as a transformative instrument for social justice. On the other side, In the absence of deliberate inclusionary practices certainly AI risks deepening historical inequalities (Noble, 2018; Eubanks, 2018). The

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analysis also affirms that while AI offers potential for personalized learning, efficiency and scalability, these benefits are often inaccessible to students from marginalized castes, rural backgrounds, and economically weaker sections, due to barriers like low digital literacy, language incompatibility and infrastructural gaps (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2016; UNESCO, 2021).

(c) *Gaps in Existing Policy and Practices:* Despite the inclusive intent of NEP 2020 and Digital India, significant policy gaps persist such as- (i) Digital equity is not adequately defined or operationalized in AI-driven education policies, (ii)There is no mandate for auditing algorithmic bias or ensuring representational fairness in educational AI systems (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). (iii) Existing EdTech solutions often reflect English-medium and urban-centric assumptions and marginalizing vast sections of learners who do not fit into these frameworks. (iv) The voices of Dalit, Adivasi, gender-marginalized and rural communities are largely missing in AI policy consultations and EdTech design processes (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2016). Therefore, the absence of Ambedkarite ethical and pedagogical framework in AI integration results in a disconnect between constitutional ideals and technological realities.

(d) *Positive Examples of Inclusive Digital Practices:* Despite of various gaps, there are also several innovative and inclusive digital initiatives that demonstrate the possibility of social justice by AI and EdTech in practice. Such as- (i) The DIKSHA platform by the Ministry of Education has made efforts to localize content in regional languages and provide offline access through QR-coded textbooks improving outreach in under-resourced areas (MOE, 2020). (ii) Pratham's "Hybrid Learning" model has leveraged community-based digital learning using low-cost devices and vernacular content, enabling children from disadvantaged backgrounds to access educational resources in familiar languages and formats (Banerji & Chavan, 2021). (iii) IT for Change's feminist and caste-aware digital pedagogy initiatives provide models for how technology can be co-designed with marginalized communities to reflect their lived realities and resist structural exclusions (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2016).

These examples though limited in scale but underscore the need for systemic replication and policy integration of inclusive practices to address the constitutional promise of Article-21(A) education for all.

PRACTICLE RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that digital education and AI-based systems contribute to equity and social justice in line with Dr. Ambedkar's vision, the following strategies are proposed:

1. *Designing AI Tools with Inclusivity in Mind:* (a) AI-powered educational platforms should be designed with multilingual capabilities, low-bandwidth functionality, and regional adaptability. (b) Developers must actively audit for algorithmic bias and embed affirmative action logic that benefits students from marginalized castes, genders, and regions (Noble, 2018; UNESCO, 2021).
2. *Community-Based Digital Learning Centers:* (a) Establish local digital learning hubs in rural, tribal, and urban-poor communities that serve as inclusive spaces for digital access, learning, and dialogue. (b) These centers should prioritize Dalit, Adivasi, and minority youth, enabling contextual learning, cultural relevance, and community ownership (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2016).
3. *Caste-Sensitive Digital Policies:* (a) Government policies must explicitly recognize the intersection of caste and digital access, and include reservations and representation quotas in EdTech development and distribution (Rawat, 2020). (b) Curriculum content on AI ethics should integrate critical caste and social justice perspectives.
4. *Ethical AI Standards for the Education Sector:* (a) Introduce and enforce AI ethics guidelines for EdTech providers, covering transparency, explainability, data privacy, and fairness. (b) Regulatory bodies must include social scientists, educators, and marginalized community representatives to ensure accountability.
5. *Teacher Training on Inclusive Tech Use:* Offer teacher training on inclusive digital pedagogy, critical AI engagement, and tech-mediated support for marginalised learners (Holmes et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

In the age of AI and digital revolution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's "Educate, Agitate, organize" rings truer than ever. Technology must be used to fight exclusion and create structural fairness, but education is the key to freedom. AI and digital education must consciously fit with Ambedkar's ardent constitutional values of equality, liberty, and fraternity. AI in education must be based on human dignity, ethical design, and communal empowerment, especially for marginalized groups. This paper challenges educators, policymakers, developers, and civil society to look at digital education through an Ambedkarite lens and create inclusive, uplifting solutions. Learning must be smart and fair in the future.

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