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# Digital Literacy and Online Safety among Senior Citizens: An Evaluation of the Sach Ke Sathi

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## Abstract:
This study presents an in-depth evaluation of the 'Sach Ke Sathi, Vishvas News,and Jagran New Media, designed to promote digital literacy and online safety among senior citizens. As India's elderly population becomes increasingly active online, the risk of cyber fraud, misinformation, and digital vulnerability has grown substantially. Through a hybrid model of workshops—both virtual and on-ground—the Sach Ke Sathi initiative aimed to build awareness, develop preventive behaviours, and create a network of 'Sach Ke Sathi' champions who can further spread knowledge within their communities. This paper uses quantitative and qualitative analyses based on pre- and post-training survey data (N=671 and N=501 respectively) to assess the initiative's effectiveness. Findings reveal a marked increase in participants' awareness of phishing, password safety, two-step verification, and deepfake recognition. The paper concludes that structured, context-sensitive digital education programmes can significantly enhance cyber resilience among India's ageing population.

**Keywords.** Digital safety, Sach Ke Sathi, fact checking, digital

## Introduction (Background & Rationale)
The rapid digitisation of Indian society has fundamentally altered how citizens interact, communicate, and transact. While this transformation brings convenience, it has also introduced new risks, particularly for populations less familiar with emerging technologies—most notably senior citizens. According to the National Cyber Security Coordination Centre (NCSC, 2023), India witnessed a sharp rise in cyber frauds targeting elderly users, with schemes involving phishing, OTP theft, and social engineering becoming increasingly prevalent. Senior citizens, often less equipped to identify digital threats, represent a highly vulnerable group within this ecosystem.
To address these challenges, Vishvas News (the fact-checking vertical of Jagran New Media) under the banner 'Sach Ke Sathi: Sach Ke Sathi. The programme aimed to equip senior citizens with the skills to recognise scams, adopt safe online practices, and verify online information. It also sought to instil confidence among participants to engage safely in digital spaces while promoting intergenerational knowledge-sharing within families and communities. By focusing on the digital safety of an often-overlooked demographic, Sach Ke Sathi contributes meaningfully to India's broader digital inclusion and cyber hygiene objectives.

## Objectives
The specific objectives of this study and the Sach Ke Sathi programme were as follows:
1. To assess the baseline level of digital literacy and online safety awareness among senior citizens.
2. To implement targeted training sessions to enhance their understanding of cyber risks, password management, and misinformation.

3. To measure the impact of these training interventions using pre- and post-survey instruments.
4. To evaluate behavioural change indicators such as the adoption of two-step verification and awareness of phishing and fake news.
5. To propose recommendations for policy and programme expansion based on the observed outcomes.

**Methodology (Data Collection, Survey, and Training Process)**

The evaluation followed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative survey analysis with qualitative observations from training facilitators. The programme's hybrid approach incorporated both online and on-ground workshops across multiple Indian cities, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity. Each workshop was led by trained digital literacy experts from Jagran New Media and Vishvas News, using customised presentations, interactive quizzes, and hands-on demonstrations.

Prior to each session, participants completed a pre-training survey (N=671) to establish a baseline understanding of their digital habits and vulnerabilities. Following the workshops, a post-training survey (N=501) was conducted to gauge improvements in awareness and confidence levels. Survey items included questions related to smartphone use, experience with suspicious messages, understanding of phishing, password practices, two-step verification awareness, and the perceived risks of fake news and deepfakes. The resulting data were processed and analysed using Python and Microsoft Excel, with descriptive statistics and percentage comparisons illustrating pre- and post-training differences.

**Findings (Based on Data)**

The pre- and post-survey analysis revealed substantial improvements across all key awareness indicators. Before the training, 92% of participants reported regular smartphone use, but only 32% had heard of two-step verification (2SV) and just 38% could identify phishing-related terms. After the training, awareness of 2SV rose to over 90%, and 97% of participants correctly recognised signs of scam messages such as unsolicited links or urgent money requests.

Similarly, participants' understanding of fake news and deepfakes improved sharply. In the pre-survey, only 22% of respondents knew how to check if an image or video online was fake. Post-training results showed a 78% awareness rate, demonstrating the effectiveness of Sach Ke Sathi's fact-checking component. Confidence levels also improved significantly: 95% of post-training participants expressed confidence in spotting scams and reported intent to use stronger passwords and password managers.

The following table summarizes these results:

| Indicator | Pre-Training (%) | Post-Training (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Heard of Two-Step Verification (2SV) | 32 | 90 |
| Aware of Phishing Scams | 38 | 92 |
| Know Fake News/Deepfakes Harm | 67 | 94 |
| Can Identify Scam Messages | 41 | 97 |
| Confident Spotting Scams | 44 | 95 |

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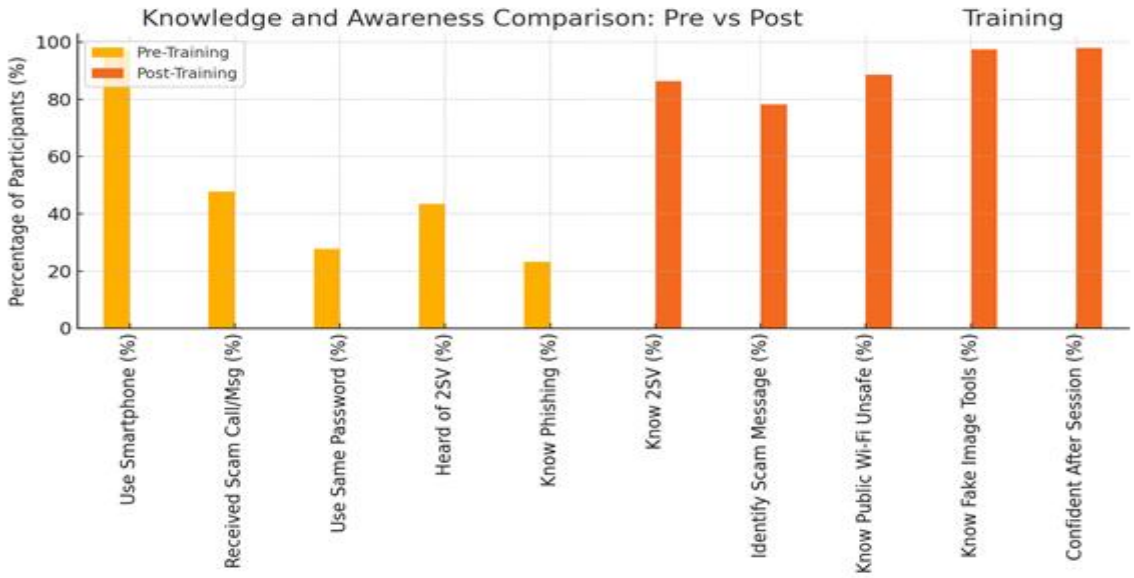



**Sach Ke Sathi: Digital Awareness Survey Report**

This report summarizes the results of the Jagran Digi Kavach Digital Awareness Survey, conducted to measure the improvement in participants' understanding of online safety, cyber fraud awareness, and digital literacy through pre- and post-survey assessments.

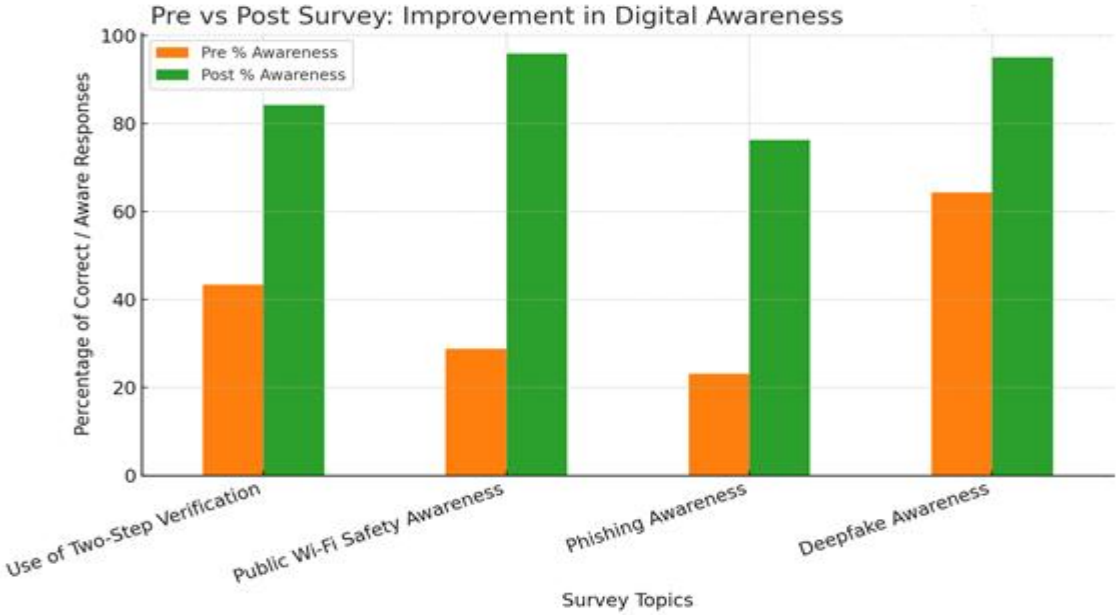
**Key Findings Summary**

The comparison between pre- and post-survey responses highlights significant improvements in key areas of digital awareness among participants. The areas of improvement include:

1. Use of Two-Step Verification
2. Public Wi-Fi Safety Awareness
3. Phishing Awareness
4. Deep fake Awareness

## Visual Comparison

The chart below illustrates the percentage improvement in awareness levels across survey topics.




## Detailed Comparison Data

| Topic | Pre % Awareness | Post % Awareness |
|---|---|---|
| Use of Two-Step Verification | 43.37% | 84.23% |
| Public Wi-Fi Safety Awareness | 28.76% | 95.81% |
| Phishing Awareness | 23.10% | 76.25% |
| Deep fake Awareness | 64.23% | 95.01% |

The Sach Ke Sathi awareness initiative successfully enhanced participants' understanding of digital safety. Post-survey data indicates that over 90% of respondents now recognize the importance of using secure methods such as two-step verification and avoiding unsafe online practices like public Wi-Fi for banking. This demonstrates a positive behavioral shift toward safer digital habits.

## Discussion (Impact & Implications)

The Sach Ke Sathi initiative has demonstrated measurable impact in bridging the digital literacy gap among India's senior citizens. The increase in awareness and confidence highlights not only the success of the training content but also the appropriateness of the hybrid delivery model. Senior participants appreciated the contextual relevance of examples—such as identifying fraudulent calls, OTP scams, and fake social media posts—which made the sessions relatable and practical.

One of the critical insights from the analysis is that awareness alone does not guarantee behavioural change; however, Sach Ke Sathi's approach—emphasising repetitive reinforcement through post-session materials and follow-ups—significantly improved long-term retention. The initiative's 'three-step reach model' further enhanced impact: registration

engagement, content-sharing within peer groups, and amplification through Vishvas News and Jagran's social media platforms. This multi-layered outreach ensured sustainability and scalability of learning outcomes.

While Vishvas News' expertise in misinformation detection added a fact-checking dimension unique to this programme. The model also aligns with India's National Cyber Safety and Digital Inclusion goals under the Ministry of Electronics and IT, offering a replicable framework for similar interventions targeting other vulnerable populations.

## Conclusion & Recommendations

The Sach Ke Sathi: initiative successfully demonstrates how collaborative digital literacy programmes can mitigate the risks faced by senior citizens in an increasingly digital India. The results of this study clearly show improved understanding of phishing, password management, and misinformation detection. The model's success lies in its accessibility, community engagement approach, and post-training reinforcement, making it an exemplary model for public-private partnerships in digital safety.

## Recommendations include:

1. Expanding the initiative to cover semi-urban and rural regions, where elderly digital inclusion remains low.
2. Introducing refresher modules and follow-up surveys six months post-training to track retention.
3. Integrating family participation to encourage intergenerational learning and accountability.
4. Developing a mobile application version of Sach Ke Sathi materials in multiple Indian languages for broader accessibility.
5. Strengthening partnerships with governmental and non-profit entities to scale the model nationwide.

Overall, the Sach Ke Sathi model offers a sustainable, data-driven framework for empowering vulnerable demographics through digital literacy and safety education.

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