

Senior Citizens and Digital Technology

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Abstract:

Aging is associated with declines in individuals' physical and mental abilities. Technological assistance can improve Senior Citizens independence, functional performance, and health. The purpose of this study was to explore experiences regarding limitations to use technology in daily life among Senior Citizens. This qualitative study was conducted on twenty Senior Citizens referred to Urban area Ujalaiwadi in Kolhapur. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using conventional content analysis. aging-related limitations (physical and mental limitations), individual limitations (educational limitations, limited access to technology and limitations related to the appliances. Senior Citizens experience multiple barriers to use technology in their daily life. Educational interventions may enhance Senior Citizens utilization of technology in daily life of this population.

Key Word: Senior Citizens, Digital Technology,

Introduction:

Technology now supports or streamlines many day-to-day activities. This continued technological development is occurring alongside the aging of global populations, creating opportunities for technology to assist Senior Citizens in everyday tasks and activities, such as financial planning and connecting with friends and family. New technology also has the potential to provide timely interventions to assist Senior Citizens in keeping healthy and independent for longer. Aging is a phase of human life. Over the recent decades, socioeconomic and technological advances and increased life expectancy were associated with the growth of Senior Citizen population universally. Health and physical abilities decline with age. In this study, the technology related to Senior Citizen daily life is defined as electrical household appliances. Electrical household appliances are electrical technologies developed for day-to-day use. These appliances include devices related to entertainment, communications, and home or office activities. Evidence indicated that there were different limitations to the use of electrical appliances among Senior Citizens.

Objectives:

The purpose of this study was to explore Senior Citizen experiences of limitations regarding the use of Digital Technology and electrical appliances in their daily life.

Research Methodology:

This qualitative study was conducted on twenty Senior Citizen referred to Urban area Ujalaiwadi in Kolhapur. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using conventional content analysis. Data were collected via face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The main interview questions were “Think about your daily life. What are the greatest needs and challenges you have? What does the word technology bring to your mind? Which electrical appliances (Computer, cell phone, and digital TV, Microwave, Washing Machine) do you use during your daily life? What are the limitations you experience during the use of technology? What are the benefits of Digital Technology?”

Result and Discussion:

Definitions:

Senior Citizen

The definition of "Senior Citizen" or "elderly" varies across different contexts, cultures, and countries. Generally, it refers to people who have reached a certain age

threshold beyond which they are considered to be in their later stage of life. In many developed countries, the age of 65 is used as a threshold to define "older people" or "seniors". However, the World Health Organization (WHO) has defined "older people" as individuals aged 60 years and above. It's worth noting that age is just one factor in determining how we categorize individuals. Other factors such as health status, functional ability, and social roles are also taken into consideration.

Digital Technology

Digital technology refers to any technology that uses digital signals to represent and process data. It includes a wide range of electronic devices, software applications, and communication networks that rely on digital data processing and storage.

Some examples of digital technologies include:

- Computers and laptops
- Smartphones and tablets
- Digital cameras and camcorders
- Digital music players and streaming services
- E-readers and digital books
- Video conferencing and online collaboration tools
- Social media platforms
- Cloud computing and storage services
- Artificial intelligence and machine learning tools
- Digital technology has revolutionized many aspects of modern life, from the way we communicate and access information to the way we work, learn.

Data were collected via face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Data collection was continued until data saturation when no new data were obtained from the interview. The data saturation was obtained after interview with twenty Senior Citizens.

After the beginning of old age, physical and mental functioning is reduced by 1.5% annually. Studies reported that about 42% of Senior Citizens experience mobility limitations and about 55% experience chronic pain. These issues lead to decreases in quality of life and the ability to perform physical activities. Cognitive impairment is another age-related problem that reduces Senior Citizen functional abilities. Aging also affects individuals' social activities and contribution that can result in social isolation and depression. Due to these issues, independence and ability to perform daily activities decline in Senior Citizens. Evidence indicated the prevalence of age-related deteriorations in activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living, and mobility. The utilization of technology may potentially improve cognitive and sensory motor functioning and independence among Senior Citizens. For example, smart dishwashers and stoves with remote controls can help older adults with mobility limitation to independently perform their daily activities. Smartphones also can help Senior Citizens improve their social contribution, social support, and cognitive abilities and reduce their depression. However, studies indicated gaps in research regarding the use of technology among Senior Citizens.

In this research shown that 40% of Senior Citizens aged 60–70 years were able to use smartphones and 35% used the Internet to find answers to their health-related questions and 43% were using computers in 2024. In this study, the technology related to Senior Citizens daily life is defined as electrical appliances. Electrical household appliances are electrical technologies developed for day-to-day use. These appliances include devices related to entertainment, communications, and home or office activities. Evidence indicated that there were different Limitations to the use of electrical household appliances among Senior Citizens. It was shown that physical problems, such as visual impairments, back pain, and hand tremor, were the main barriers for older adults to use technologies, such as computer and the Internet. The study showed cognitive problems as

the most important barrier related to the use of cell/smartphones, computers, and tablets in older adults. It was found that the major barrier to the use of digital appliances, such as cell phones, among older adults was inefficiency in the English language. To improve healthy aging, there is a need to enable older adults to have access to new technological resources. There is a gap in knowledge regarding barriers related to the use of technology in daily life among older adults.

Motivate senior citizens for using digital technology

There are several ways to motivate older people to use digital technology:

- **Demonstrate the benefits:** Show them how digital technology can help make their lives easier, more efficient, and more enjoyable. For example, show them how they can use video chat to stay in touch with family and friends who live far away, or how they can use online shopping to avoid going out in bad weather.
- **Provide support:** Offer them support and assistance with using digital technology. Many older people may feel intimidated by technology, so it's important to be patient and provide clear instructions.
- **Find the right device:** Help them find a device that suits their needs and abilities. Some older people may prefer a tablet with a larger screen, while others may prefer a smartphone with bigger buttons.
- **Start with simple tasks:** Start with simple tasks such as sending an email or using a search engine. This will help build their confidence and make them more comfortable with using digital technology.
- **Highlight the importance of staying connected:** Explain to them how important it is to stay connected with friends and family, especially during times when they may not be able to see them in person.
- **Provide training and classes:** Offer training and classes specifically designed for older people to help them learn how to use digital technology. Many community centers, libraries, and senior centers offer such classes.
- **Show them examples:** Share success stories of other older people who have embraced digital technology and how it has made a positive impact on their lives.
- **Make it fun:** Incorporate fun activities into their use of digital technology, such as playing games or exploring new websites. This can help make the learning process more enjoyable and less intimidating.

Be patient: Be patient and offer support as they learn how to use digital technology. It may take some time for them to become comfortable with it, but with practice, they can learn to use it effectively.

It's important to approach the process of motivating older people to use digital technology with patience, understanding, and a willingness to help. With the right support and guidance, many older people can learn to embrace digital technology and enjoy its benefits.

Digital technologies which are appropriate for beginning

For beginners, some of the most appropriate digital technologies include:

- **Smartphones:** Smartphones are easy to use and have many features that are useful for staying connected with others, such as video chat and messaging apps.
- **Tablets:** Tablets are also user-friendly and offer a larger screen for easier viewing. They are great for browsing the web, checking email, and playing games.
- **Social media:** Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can be an easy and fun way for beginners to connect with family and friends.
- **Email:** Email is a simple and effective way to communicate with others, and most smartphones and tablets come with an email app pre-installed.
- **Online shopping:** Online shopping is a great way to avoid going out in bad weather or when it is difficult to travel, and many websites offer user-friendly interfaces.

- Video chat: Video chat platforms such as Zoom and Skype are great for staying connected with loved ones who live far away.
- Online banking: Many banks offer user-friendly online banking platforms that allow users to check their balances, transfer funds, and pay bills from their computer or mobile device. When starting with digital technology, it's important to choose a device or platform that is easy to use and has clear instructions. It's also helpful to start with simple tasks and gradually build up to more complex ones. With practice and patience, even beginners can become comfortable using digital technology.

Online Shopping: Many older people have found online shopping to be a convenient way to shop for groceries, clothing, and other items from the comfort of their own homes.

Benefits of Technology for Senior Citizens

Mental stimulation:

Regular internet use has been shown to **reduce the risk of dementia** because it helps improve cognitive functioning and memory skills. Every time an older adult completes a sudoku puzzle online or crossword online, they're keeping their brain sharp. Learning new technological skills whether it be figuring out how to use a health portal or post a video on TikTok also improves mental acumen.

Reduced isolation:

This is a serious concern, as social isolation can **increase the risk of premature death** to the same degree that smoking and obesity can. The internet represents the possibility to combat this loneliness. Senior Citizens can use social media to contact long-lost friends. They can stay in touch with family members who live far away. They can even find message boards and groups for people with common interests, thereby building community from the comfort of their own home.

Health monitoring:

Thanks to new technologies, individuals can use smartphones, fitness watches, and other devices to track their vital signs, including oxygen levels, heart rate, and blood pressure. There are also apps that remind people when it is time to take their medicine. Additionally, the internet allows people to easily access health portals, review test results, and schedule appointments with their doctors.

Entertainment and hobbies: Senior Citizens who have retired may find themselves with more free time than ever before. The internet can open new worlds for them. Is there a rusty guitar in their house that they've never used? They can watch YouTube videos and learn how to play. Maybe they've always wanted to learn another language and never had time? There's an app for that. Perhaps they're interested in yoga or some other form of exercise but are too embarrassed to go to the gym? They can work out from their living room. Of course, there are also countless books, movies, and TV shows online as well. The benefits of technology for seniors are endless.

Increased independence:

For Senior Citizens with mobility or vision issues, it can be frustrating to feel like they always need to rely on someone to drive them places. Technology, however, has revolutionized this. Let's say the person needs groceries. Rather than having to coordinate with a family member or neighbor, the person can simply have the groceries delivered to their home via online shopping. Or, should they want to venture out to the store, they can use a ridesharing app to book a trip. Everything is at the touch of their fingertips. In addition, the internet has made living alone become easier even into old age.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, promoting digital inclusion for Senior Citizens is an important step towards ensuring that everyone can participate in the digital age. The benefits of digital technology for Senior Citizens are numerous, including improved health and

wellness, social connections, and access to information and services. However, there are also risks associated with digital technology, and it is important to address these risks through education, support, and policy. To further promote digital inclusion for Senior Citizens, there are several steps that can be taken. Increasing awareness of the benefits of digital technology for Senior Citizens and promoting the value of digital inclusion. Investing in digital literacy programs and initiatives that are tailored to the needs and interests of Senior Citizens. Providing access to affordable and accessible digital technology, including devices and internet connectivity. Building strong community networks that support digital inclusion and provide opportunities for Senior Citizens to connect with each other online. Advocating for policies and initiatives that support digital inclusion and accessibility for Senior Citizens. By taking these steps, we can work towards a future where digital technology is accessible to all, regardless of Senior Citizens.

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