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The Use of Technology and Social Life of Elderly People

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Abstract: *The advancement in technology has transformed every aspect of modern life, covering communication, healthcare, education, entertainment, social interaction etc. It greatly affects our everyday life. As other section of society elder people too is increasingly becoming participants in this technological world. Technology has significantly influenced the social life of older adults by improving communication, reducing loneliness, increasing access to healthcare, enhancing independence, and supporting participation in community life. However, technological advancement has also created challenges such as digital exclusion, cyber insecurity, technological anxiety, and social isolation among elderly populations who lack digital literacy.*

This research article examines the relationship between technology and the social life of elderly people. It analyzes the positive and negative impacts of technology, discusses barriers faced by older adults, and highlights the role of digital inclusion in improving quality of life. This study also examines that can technology become a powerful tool for active ageing and social integration if appropriate support systems, digital education, and inclusive technological designs are implemented. As increasing elderly population worldwide and changing social structure sign an alarming situation where restructuring of society is needed. That's why this research work becomes more relevant.

Key words: Elderly people, technology, digital literacy, social life, social isolation, internet, worldwide.

Introduction- Ageing is a natural and inevitable phenomena experienced by every human being at later stage of life. According to the World Health Organization, the global population aged 60 years and above is increasing rapidly due to improved healthcare systems, declining fertility rates, and increased life expectancy. Technological development has become one of the most important factors influencing the lives of elderly people in the twenty-first century.

Meanwhile population ageing has become a prominent global phenomenon that attract attention from researchers, academicians, policymakers, demographers and national and international organizations. The elder population is growing fast worldwide during last five decades as trends shows. Globally, there are 1.1 billion persons aged 60 years or above in 2022, comprising 13.9 percent of the total population of 7.9 billion. Over the next three decades, the number of older persons worldwide is expected to double to 2.1 billion by 2050, with the share rising to 22 percent of the total population. This increase in the number and share of older persons will be visible across all regions of the world.

India is not an exception to this phenomenon. There are 149 million persons aged 60 years and above in 2022 (as on 1 July), comprising around 10.5 percent of the country's population. By 2050, the share of older persons will double to 20.8 percent, with the absolute number at 347 million.

Ageing brings various physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes. Retirement, declining health, widowhood, and reduced mobility often affect the social participation of elderly individuals. In traditional societies, elderly people hold higher status and enjoyed esteemed and prestigious life. They were highly respected and socially integrated within family and community structures. However, industrialization, urbanization, migration, and nuclear family systems have weakened traditional support networks. Many elderly people experience loneliness, reduced mobility, social exclusion, and emotional stress.

In this context, technology has emerged as an important medium for communication, healthcare access, social participation, and emotional connection. Digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, computers, social media platforms, telemedicine systems, wearable devices, and artificial intelligence-based applications are increasingly being used by older adults. During the COVID-19 pandemic, technology became essential for elderly people to maintain contact with family members, access medical services, and participate in social activities.

At the same time, many elderly individuals face barriers including poor digital literacy, fear of technology, cognitive limitations, physical impairments, economic difficulties, and cyber fraud risks. Therefore, understanding the relationship between technology and the social life of elderly people is essential for policymakers, sociologists, gerontologists, healthcare professionals, and social workers.

This article explores how technology affects the social life of elderly people and evaluates both opportunities and challenges associated with digital ageing.

Objectives of the Study-

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1. To examine the role of technology in the social life of elderly people.
2. To analyze the positive impacts of digital technology on older adults.
3. To study the challenges faced by elderly people in using technology.
4. To evaluate statistical trends related to technology adoption among senior citizens.
5. To suggest measures for improving digital inclusion among elderly populations.

Research Methodology- This article is based on secondary data collected from research journals, government reports, international organizations, academic publications, and recent surveys related to ageing and technology. Data from journals such as BMC Geriatrics, Educational Gerontology, JMIR Aging, and reports from organizations including the WHO and HelpAge India have been utilized.

The study follows an analytical and descriptive approach. Statistical information has been interpreted sociologically to understand the broader social implications of technology use among elderly populations.

Concept of Elderly People- Elderly people are generally defined as individuals aged 60 years and above. In India, the Government of India recognizes citizens aged 60 years or older as senior citizens. Elderly populations are increasing worldwide due to demographic transition.

People over the age of sixty that is the senior citizens, form a significant part of the Indian population. According to Ministry of Statistics, they constituted 8.6% of the population in the 2011 census of India; while the figure is expected to cross 20% by 2050 and be as high as 36% by the end of the 21st century as published in the 'India Ageing Report 2023' released by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Institute for Population Sciences – IIPS (Livemint, 2023). With old age comes its share of problems. Social, economic and physical (health) issues crop up, leading to a disconnect from the outer world. There is a strong resistance to change amongst the aged.

Today, a large section of the urban Indian population has become accustomed to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use. According to a joint study the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Kantar – 'Internet in India Report 2024' – the country's internet user base reached 886 million in 2024 and is expected to cross the 900 million mark in 2025 (Roy, 2024).

The elderly amongst us have various age-related problems. But that doesn't mean that the technological tools available to them cannot be put to use for their betterment and inclusion in society. It can be a strong tool to counter their disconnect and loneliness. The benefits that one reaps from technological use may vary from individual to individual and may be affected by their abilities, attitudes towards technology, its application and successful adoption.

Technology and Ageing- The recent advances in technology and social media can have large implications for the health and well-being of older adults. Technology makes it easier for older adults to connect with their loved ones and has made life more convenient on the whole. Interestingly, much of the previous research on technology use among older adults has focused on the reasons why older adults do not use technology. Despite this focus, a growing number of studies have revealed some mental health benefits that come along with using technology and the Internet more often. Do the benefits of technology also extend to physical health? If so, why would greater technology use predict better mental and physical health among older adults? The current study examines the association between using technology for social connection and health and well-being.

Technology refers to the practical application of scientific knowledge for solving human problems and improving quality of life. In the context of elderly people, technology includes:

- Smartphones
- Computers and tablets
- Internet services
- Social media platforms
- Telemedicine
- Video calling applications
- Smart home systems
- Wearable health devices
- Artificial intelligence tools
- Online banking and digital payments

Technology has transformed social relationships and communication patterns among older adults.

Statistical Overview of Technology Use Among Elderly People-

Recent studies indicate growing technology adoption among elderly populations worldwide.



A study published in JMIR Aging reported that 43.5% of older adults used smartphones, while 33.3% used computers regularly. (aging.jmir.org)

Research based on U.S. Medicare beneficiaries found a rapid increase in digital health technology use among older adults after the COVID-19 pandemic. (PMC)

A survey highlighted by HelpAge India found that 73% of senior citizens believed digital technology improved their connection with younger generations. (The Times of India)

Another Delhi-based survey revealed that 86% of elderly respondents lacked sufficient digital literacy, which limited access to healthcare and welfare services. (The Times of India)

Studies on digital literacy among Indian older adults indicate that elderly people increasingly use smartphones for communication, entertainment, and online payments, though adoption remains lower than younger populations. (ResearchGate)

Research on technology acceptance among urban Indian elderly populations shows that digital participation is increasing due to affordable smartphones and internet expansion. (Nature)

These statistics demonstrate both the opportunities and inequalities associated with technological ageing.

Positive Impact of Technology on the Social Life of Elderly People-

1. Improved Communication: Technology has significantly improved communication among elderly people. Video calling applications such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google Meet enable older adults to communicate with family members living far away. Many elderly people whose children live abroad or in different cities rely on smartphones and video calls for emotional support and regular interaction. Digital communication reduces feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

Social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube also help elderly individuals remain socially connected and informed. Studies show that elderly people who regularly use digital communication tools report better emotional wellbeing and stronger family relationships. (MDPI)

2. Reduction of Social Isolation and Loneliness: Loneliness is one of the most serious social problems among elderly populations. Retirement, widowhood, migration of children, and reduced mobility often isolate older adults. Technology helps elderly people maintain social relationships through:

- Video calls
- Online communities
- Social networking sites
- Virtual religious activities
- Online support groups

Digital interaction became especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic when physical distancing restricted face-to-face communication. Research indicates that regular digital interaction can reduce depression and improve psychological wellbeing among elderly people. (SpringerLink)

3. Access to Healthcare Services: Technology has revolutionized healthcare services for elderly people.

Telemedicine- Telemedicine enables elderly patients to consult doctors remotely through smartphones or computers. This is especially beneficial for older adults living in rural areas or those with mobility problems.

Health Monitoring Devices- Wearable technologies such as smartwatches and fitness trackers help monitor: Heart rate, Blood pressure, Sleep patterns, Physical activity, Blood oxygen levels etc. Some another health monitor devices are also available that helps elder people to monitor their health condition on regular basis. These devices are blood pressure monitors, glucometers, pulse oximeters etc.

Online Health Information

Elderly people can access medical information, appointment systems, and medicine reminders through digital applications. Digital health technologies improve independent living and reduce hospital visits. (PMC)

4. Increased Independence: Technology enhances autonomy among elderly individuals. Older adults now use:

- Online banking
- Digital payments
- E-commerce platforms
- Food delivery applications
- Ride-booking services

These services reduce dependence on family members for daily activities.



In India, digital payment systems such as UPI have increasingly become part of everyday life, including among senior citizens, though usage levels vary significantly across regions. (Reddit)

Apparatus and Assistive Devices for Elderly People- Assistive apparatus helps elderly persons maintain independence, mobility, communication, and safety. Some common assistive devices (Mobility Aids) are here:

Walking sticks	Reading glasses
Walkers	Magnifiers
Crutches	Talking watches
Wheelchairs	Large-button mobile phones
Motorized scooters	Grab bars
Hearing aids	Anti-skid mats
Raised toilet seats	Adjustable beds
Commode chairs	Orthopedic mattresses

Assistive technologies also support independent living for people with physical disabilities. (ResearchGate)

5. Lifelong Learning and Cognitive Engagement: Cognitive engagement through technology may help reduce memory decline and improve mental stimulation. Online religious activities, meditation apps, music platforms, and entertainment services contribute positively to emotional wellbeing. Research on smartphone learning among older adults indicates that supportive digital environments can reduce cognitive strain and increase confidence. (arXiv)

6. Intergenerational Relationships: Technology can strengthen relationships between younger and older generations. HelpAge India’s digital literacy programs demonstrated that youth volunteers teaching digital skills to elderly people improved intergenerational understanding and emotional bonding. (The Times of India)

Digital communication allows grandparents to remain actively involved in the lives of grandchildren through photos, messages, and video calls.

Negative Impact of Technology on the Social Life of Elderly People-

1. Digital Divide: One of the most significant challenges is the digital divide. The digital divide refers to unequal access to:

- Internet services
- Digital devices
- Digital literacy
- Technological skills

Older adults are more likely to face digital exclusion than younger populations. Research in BMC Geriatrics identified significant digital access and usage gaps among older adults, especially among those with low education and income levels. (SpringerLink)

2. Technological Anxiety: Many elderly people experience fear and anxiety while using digital devices. Common concerns include:

- Fear of making mistakes
- Forgetting procedures
- Data loss
- Fraud and scams
- Complex interfaces

A Reddit discussion on elderly technology challenges observed that frequent software changes confuse older adults who depend on memorized patterns rather than conceptual understanding. (Reddit) Technological anxiety often discourages elderly people from adopting digital tools.

3. Cybercrime and Online Fraud: Elderly people are highly vulnerable to:

- Phishing scams
- Fake banking calls
- UPI frauds
- Identity theft
- Financial exploitation

Cybercriminals often target older adults because they may lack digital awareness. Indian social organizations have increasingly emphasized cyber safety programs for senior citizens. (Reddit)



4. Physical Health Problems: Excessive technology use may create health problems such as:

- Eye strain
- Sleep disturbances
- Reduced physical activity
- Neck and back pain

Long periods of screen exposure may negatively affect physical wellbeing among elderly populations.

5. Social Alienation Despite Connectivity: Although technology improves communication, excessive dependence on digital interaction may reduce face-to-face relationships. Some studies indicate that digital communication cannot fully replace physical companionship and emotional intimacy. (The Times of India) Technology may create “virtual connectedness” without genuine social support.

6. Information Overload and Misinformation: Older adults may struggle to identify false information online. Misinformation related to health, politics, religion, or finance can create confusion and anxiety. Limited digital literacy increases vulnerability to manipulation.

Technology Use Among Elderly People in India- India is witnessing rapid demographic ageing alongside digital transformation. Government initiatives such as:

- Digital India
- PMGDISHA (Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan)
- Telemedicine programs
- Digital banking expansion

These initiatives have encouraged them digital participation. However, challenges remain severe in rural and economically weaker populations. Studies on Indian older adults indicate:

- Lower digital literacy among women
- Limited access in rural areas
- Dependence on younger family members
- Fear of online fraud

At the same time, smartphone affordability and expanding internet coverage are increasing technology adoption among elderly Indians. (Nature)

Barriers to Technology Adoption Among Elderly People-

1. Economic Barriers: Many elderly people cannot afford smartphones, internet subscriptions, or digital devices.

2. Educational Barriers: Low literacy and limited English proficiency affect technology use.

3. Physical Limitations: Visual impairment, hearing loss, arthritis, and reduced motor skills complicate device usage.

4. Cognitive Barriers: Memory decline and reduced concentration may affect learning ability.

5. Psychological Barriers: Fear, lack of confidence, and resistance to change discourage technology adoption.

6. Inadequate Training: Many elderly individuals do not receive proper guidance or support for learning digital skills.

Strategies for Improving Digital Inclusion-

1. Digital Literacy Programs: Governments, NGOs, and educational institutions should organize digital literacy workshops specifically designed for elderly people. Training should focus on:

- Smartphone use
- Online safety
- Digital payments
- Telemedicine access
- Social media usage

2. Age-Friendly Technology Design: Technology companies should design elderly-friendly interfaces with:

- Large fonts
- Voice commands
- Simple navigation
- Clear instructions
- High-contrast displays

Research emphasizes that usability is more important than mere technological access. (arXiv)

3. Family Support: Younger family members play an important role in helping elderly relatives learn digital skills. Intergenerational learning strengthens emotional bonds.

4. Community-Based Support Systems: Community centers and NGOs can provide:

- Digital help desks
- Cyber safety education
- Technical assistance

5. Affordable Internet Access: Governments should ensure affordable internet connectivity and device availability for senior citizens.

6. Cybersecurity Awareness: Elderly users should receive education regarding:

- Fraud prevention
- Safe passwords
- Fake links
- Online privacy



Discussion- Technology has become deeply integrated into the social lives of elderly people. It provides opportunities for communication, healthcare access, social participation, emotional wellbeing, and independent living. The COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated the importance of digital connectivity for older adults.

However, technological benefits are not equally distributed. Large sections of elderly populations continue to experience digital exclusion due to poverty, illiteracy, disability, and lack of support. The digital divide is not merely technological; it is also social and economic. Elderly people with higher education, better income, urban residence, and family support are more likely to benefit from digital technologies.

The challenge for contemporary societies is to ensure inclusive technological development that addresses the specific needs of ageing populations.

Conclusion- Technology has fundamentally transformed the social life of elderly people. It has created new opportunities for communication, healthcare, emotional support, education, and social participation. Digital technologies help many older adults maintain independence and remain connected with society.

At the same time, significant challenges such as digital illiteracy, cyber insecurity, technological anxiety, and social inequality continue to affect elderly populations worldwide.

The future of ageing societies depends largely on creating inclusive digital environments where elderly people are not marginalized. Governments, families, educational institutions, healthcare organizations, and technology companies must work together to ensure accessible and user-friendly digital systems.

Technology should not replace human relationships but should strengthen social connectedness and dignity in old age. Properly designed and supported technology can contribute greatly to healthy, active, and socially integrated ageing.

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