

Integrating Physical Media Education into Elderly Care Programs: A Case Study of Enhancing Well-being and Promoting High-Quality Life

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of media education for elderly care programs in China on the well-being and quality of life of elderly population. This study investigated how media education turned older population in techno-savvy and improved the well-being and quality of life of the elderly population. The objectives of the study were to bring forth the role played by media awareness of social media, to examine the challenges associated with it, and to recommend efficient strategies to promote the engagement of older adults in media education of social media and usage of media gadgets that helps them to be techno-savvy and improve their well-being. The qualitative methodology was used and data was collected through semi-structured interviews from a sample of 8 informants comprising caretakers working at Chinese old age homes and senior community centers. Following a thematic analysis, it was revealed that media education in elderly care programs potentially benefits older by improving their self-efficacy, social connectedness, and overall well-being. It was also found that media awareness of older adults significantly assisted them to be techno-savvy and enhanced high-quality life in them. Limited equipment, unwillingness, and inefficient technological knowledge were some significant challenges that hindered the proper integration of media education in elderly care programs. It was recommended that training sessions, workshops, and proper allocation of resources should be enhanced to get the potential benefits of media education for older adults. These outcomes have significant contributions for policy-makers and practitioners of old-age institutions. In addition, this study offers novel contributions to relevant literature within the context of China.

KEYWORDS

Media Awareness of Social Media, Elderly Programs, Benefits, Challenges, Older Adults, China.

RESUMEN

Este estudio examinó el impacto de la educación mediática para los programas de cuidado de ancianos en China sobre el bienestar y la calidad de vida de la población anciana. Este estudio investigó cómo la educación mediática convertía a la población mayor en conocedora de la tecnología y mejoraba su bienestar y calidad de vida. Los objetivos del estudio eran destacar el papel que desempeña el conocimiento de las redes sociales por parte de los medios de comunicación, examinar los retos asociados a él y recomendar estrategias eficaces para promover la participación de los adultos mayores en la educación mediática de las redes sociales y el uso de dispositivos mediáticos que les ayuden a ser conocedores de la tecnología y a mejorar su bienestar. Se utilizó la metodología cualitativa y los datos se recogieron mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas a una muestra de 8 informantes formada por cuidadores que trabajaban en residencias de ancianos chinas y centros comunitarios para mayores. Tras un análisis temático, se reveló que la educación mediática en los programas de atención a mayores beneficia potencialmente a los mayores al mejorar su autoeficacia, su conexión social y su bienestar general. También se descubrió que el conocimiento de los medios de comunicación por parte de los adultos mayores les ayudaba significativamente a ser conocedores de la tecnología y mejoraba su calidad de vida. La escasez de equipos, la falta de voluntad y la ineficacia de los conocimientos tecnológicos fueron algunos de los retos importantes que obstaculizaron la correcta integración de la educación mediática en los programas de atención a las personas mayores. Se recomendó mejorar las sesiones de formación, los talleres y la asignación adecuada de recursos para obtener los beneficios potenciales de la educación mediática para los adultos mayores. Estos resultados son importantes para los responsables políticos y los profesionales de las instituciones de la tercera edad. Además, este estudio ofrece aportaciones novedosas a la literatura pertinente en el contexto de China.

PALABRAS CLAVES

Conciencia Mediática de las Redes Sociales, Programas para Mayores, Beneficios, Retos, Adultos Mayores, China.

1. Introduction

There is a significant increase in the elderly population worldwide. Older adults are the increasingly growing population segment of society comprising approximately 12% of the global population (Rivinen, 2020). With their growing number, there is also a phenomenal growth in media educational services for them, including elderly care programs through various media resources including social media. Social media has played a significant role in developing media awareness and promote media literacy, which has enabled the older adults to understand, access, and use its various services. Though there is a slow adoption of new technology among older adults, as made evident by Ractham et al. (2022), it has been perceived that older adults have a positive attitude towards technology and are willing to incorporate recent technology in their life.

The increasing technology and over-dependence on information and communication in present times have significant benefits for older adults, as it maintains their independence and improves their quality of life. This aging stratum of society can potentially bring forth social and economic consequences; thus, the attention to enhance the resources to promote their health and well-being is the centre of attention in academia and in practice. However, in recent literature, numerous studies indicate a lack of usage of social media gadgets in elderly individuals and emphasize the importance of social media education to improve the lifestyle, health status, and psychological well-being of older adults (Eronen et al., 2019; Guess et al., 2019). It is generally believed that efficient awareness of social media helps the elderly population to learn how to reduce loneliness, enhance their social circles and have high-quality life.

Within the context of China, the population of older adults is estimated to be doubled by 2050, which is a significant cause of fiscal stress for the Chinese government. As China is increasingly developing policies and strategies to ensure the well-being and healthy lifestyle of the elderly population, however, inequalities in socio-economic development have hindered the path of efficient development of elderly care programs in China (Lobanov-Rostovsky et al., 2023). Moreover, media education related to social media, wikis, blogs and mobile learning have become a significant trend for senior citizens in China, and many social media applications are increasingly developed to support this (Zhao et al., 2021).

A significant amount of funds has been allocated by the Chinese government to enhance elder care policies, amounting to 5 billion Yuan (for 2015-2020) to develop elder care programs (Krings et al., 2022). However, a lack of social media awareness and inefficient use of social media gadgets has been perceived in older adults in China. Given the increased elderly population in China and its significance for the respective country, there is a dire need to examine how older adults can embrace social media education, how they can turn techno-savvy, which is essential for well-being and high quality life in older adults (Pan & Jordan-Marsh, 2010). Numerous studies have highlighted the media usage and its impact on younger adults (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020; Rounsefell et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2020); however, there is a scarcity of literature to examine the impact of social media and media education among older adults. Furthermore, no study has linked social media education with elderly care programs or advocated the older adults to be techno-savvy.

This study aimed to fill this literature gap and attempt to examine how to integrate media education platforms like blogs, wikis, etc with elderly care programs. The study also aimed to highlight the importance and significant role of media education and social media awareness in turning older population techno-savvy and enhance their well-being and high-quality life. Accordingly, the objectives of this study were framed, namely:

- i. To explore the role of media education in elderly care programs on social media awareness and well-being of older adults in China
- ii. To investigate the challenges associated with the efficient integration of social media education in elderly care programs that hinders their capability to be techno-savvy.
- iii. To provide effective recommendations to increase the engagement of older adults in social media awareness and enhance their well-being and high-quality life.

This study offers novel contributions. Its findings provide useful insights into contemporary empirical issues related to social media usage and social media education for Chinese elderly people; highlighting how to enhance their quality life and their well-being. This study establishes the importance of social media platforms on the emotional health of older individuals and analyzes the impact of elderly people's engagement and socialization through social media. On practical grounds, this study will allow the

stakeholders, caretakers, social media marketers, and educational actors of elderly people to assess the present status and perception of social media among older people in China. It is hoped the study will be beneficial in combating the social alienation of elderly people that impacts their mental health.

This study follows a structured design to carry out this research. It has five sections: section 1 comprises the introduction that highlights the background, formulates the research objectives and discusses the significance of the study; section 2 comprises a literature review in which a comprehensive discussion of past studies related to the subject has been included; section 3 highlights the methods; while section 4 and 5 discuss the results and findings. In the end, there is a conclusion which provides implications of the study, and highlights limitations and offers recommendations for future research studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Support

Technology advancements have highlighted that implementing social media as a tool for education in educational institutes for learning purposes will create new dimensions of communication, association, and optimistic emotional and cognitive impacts (Greenhow & Lewin, 2019). Additionally, it has been observed that social networking sites such as Facebook have enabled students to learn effectively by communicating with different people and enhancing the learning pedagogies of intercultural languages as different people comment on a particular program, thus belonging to different languages and cultures. However, this study strives to analyze the role of social media education in elderly care programs by promoting the concept of techno-savviness to achieve substantial life standards and ensure the well-being of individuals.

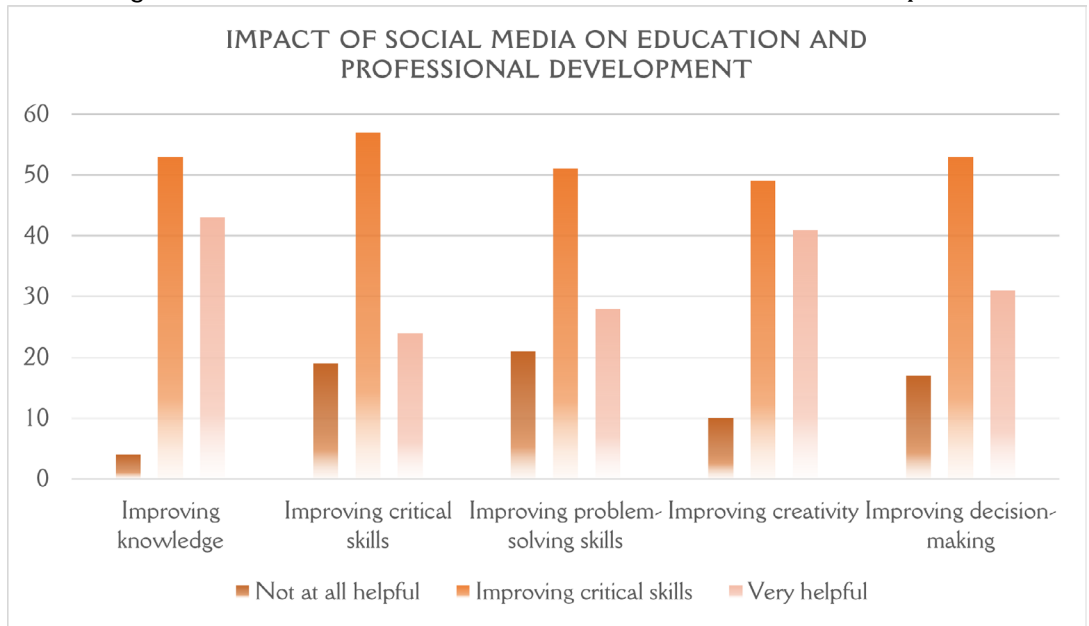
This could be supported by conceptualizing the “*theory of digital inequality*” that the audience, thus addicted to the internet, has inequality in their usage (Van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). Additionally, it has been noticed that individuals belonging to a privileged position in society are more likely to use the Internet for numerous activities, especially those which will go in their favor (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010). This could be applied to older adults because effective use of technology through several technological devices will enhance the well-being of older adults. After all, it enables them to stay connected socially and allows them to work online and learn online through numerous social media networks at home, just at a distance of a single click from them (Hargittai et al., 2019). This highlights the significance of the present investigations, which aims to improve the quality of life and human well-being by promoting social media education.

Kouri et al. (2017) illustrated that social media networking services are thought to have the foundation for a collaborative environment where people find an effective way to share information through mobiles and computers and can maintain stronger connections with others. Some examples of these networking sites include Facebook, Wikipedia, YouTube, SlideShare, Blogs, Twitter, etc. Another theory, thus recognized as the “*uses and gratification theory*,” based on determining the reason behind the active usage of people regarding social media networking sites to fulfill their specific needs (Kim et al., 2019). Additionally, it defines the psychological perspectives behind utilizing any particular media type. According to the uses and gratification theory, the presence of social media sites enhances the gratification of people toward media practices and refers to the continuous usage of social media sites. In addition, people in this modern era try to avail things immediately in no time, and social media is the most appropriate solution to fulfill their immediate needs. Consequently, the present study also highlights the perspective of using social media networking sites and being techno-savvy to get immediate access to the required activities of individuals.

2.2. Media Education and Elderly Care Program

The practice of using media is enhanced in students in their working days. Previous research (Rideout et al., 2010) has indicated that nowadays, young adults are using media frequently, thus estimating almost 7.5 hours out of their total working hours in their daily routine (May & Elder, 2018). Media education is considered an effective tool to enhance the absorbing capacity of students during their academics and career development, which is the purpose of the current study because students are now addicted to social media networks which could be used for their benefit. The impact of social media on education and professional development can be understood by Figure 1:

Figure 1: Social Media Influence on Education and Professional Development.



Source: (Alanzi & Al-Habib, 2020)

Moreover, technological consumption has increased, and the environment regarding news consumption has also altered because people have mitigated the use of legacy media (Bergström & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018).

Elderly people fond of news and staying connected with the world now prefer to use social media networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to be updated about what is happening because these platforms are now seen as news sources. Elderly people, as they advance in age, prefer to live in their homes, but at the same time, they also want to interact socially with the people around them to build social relations with people (Haan et al., 2021). Furthermore, it has been elaborated that as older adults remain at home, their financial needs and quality of life should be improved; otherwise, it would be a burden for the system, so there is a need for them to live independently even at their homes and one opportunity is the digital opportunity to remain independent for elderly people, but their ways of adopting technologies are different (Peek et al., 2016). Despite this, these media technologies are useful for developing social interactions, being updated with recent information, and performing various online tasks such as jobs, online shopping, banking, etc. (Martínez-Alcalá et al., 2018).

However, the current study strives to determine the importance of media education for elderly people, and the above-cited literature provides strong evidence for the fact that social media and technology are quite useful for promoting social interactions among elders who are detached from the world and are also responsible for an effective educational and career development in case of students who are far away from their academics.

2.3. Benefits of Media Education for Elderly Care

Previous research (Buckingham, 2003; Rivinen, 2020) defines media education as the method of training and studying media. In this modern era, excessive growth of technology has enhanced the usage of media by individuals worldwide, and these include traditional media as well as social media where social media is characterized as the platforms where individuals are collaborated and connect with each other with the help of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, since 2021, it has been observed that almost 4.26 billion people were utilizing social media, and it is expected that this number will reach up to 6 billion by 2027, which is evident in Figure 2.

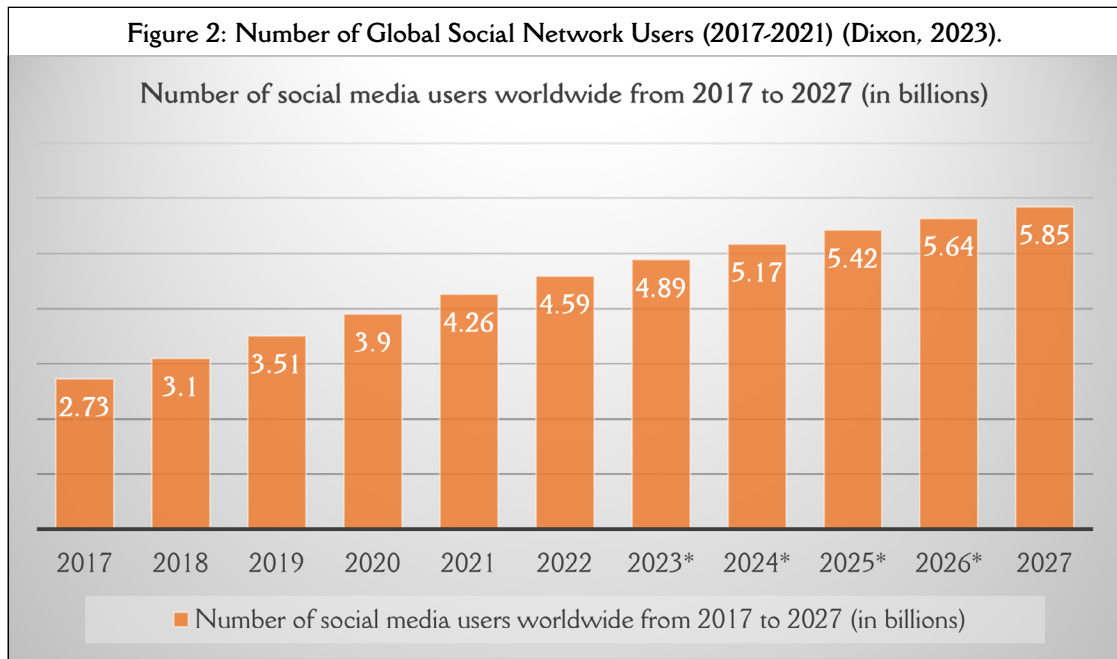


Figure 2 provides evidence of the increased social media usage among individuals worldwide. However, the current investigation has focused on determining the benefits of social media for highlighting its importance regarding older people and their care programs because it is necessary to promote effective media education among elderly people to ensure their effective social interaction. Despite this, for elderly people, some hurdles occur while learning the usage and applications of social media, and at the same time, elderly people are increasingly using social media worldwide. Moreover, in China, almost during 2021, there were almost 119 million internet users of age 60 and above, and the internet penetration rate was 43.2% (Yu et al., 2023). Following are some benefits that have been provided by social media usage to senior adults as they are adopting social media as part of their lives (Aston Gardens, 2021):

- **Keep in touch with the family:** In this modern era, family members prefer to live in a neutral system, and elderly people like to be surrounded by their family, which could be easily possible by using social media apps.
- **Make new friends:** It is obvious that social media is a place of social interaction, and it is the greatest platform for elders to connect with people socially through online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- **Improves Mental Health:** Social media is an active platform to connect with friends and family members, which is beneficial for improving the mental health of senior people, and adults can better process information.
- **Entertain Yourself:** In addition, social media provides tons of entertaining content for elderly people, such as playing games, funny clips, informative articles, research articles, etc.

2.4. Technological Integration in Elderly Care

Technology is an effective measure to be incorporated within the elderly care programs because it could be feasible for improving the healthcare measures, social interaction, knowledge, and capability of adults to enhance their mental and physical health and fitness. Moreover, technology also aids in developing people-centered care, such as health apps and social robots (Patrício et al., 2020), which should be incorporated by elderly care centers to ensure efficient care and quality of life for them. This could be evidenced by the benefits of the devices related to smart technology for older people to live healthy and enjoyable life (as shown in Table 1).

Table 1: Benefits of Using Technology for Elderly People.

Benefits of using Technology for older citizens	
Help in Daily Life	The most important benefit of technology for adults is that they can easily use it. Moreover, technology can be helpful for seniors to perform their daily tasks easily and efficiently, such as going to work or their home tasks.
Maintain Social Connectivity	Social connection is another benefit of using technology for adults because it will make it easy for them to stay social by maintaining online relationships with people, they will not be forgotten, and their fear about being forgotten will be finished by maintaining their self-esteem and making them feel that they are also a part of society, allowing them to be politically active, and also participate in fundraising if they want.
Health Monitoring	In addition, elderly people who are worried about their health and are accused of any health problem could efficiently have a check on their health issues by using digital technologies such as blood pressure and heart rate checking apps, thus available digitally.
Improve Senior Living Safety	Furthermore, senior citizens prefer to live at home, and these technological innovations will provide them the benefit of being active at their houses by using smart home devices, voice-activated technologies, home touch pads, and monitoring systems.

Source: (Serenity Senior Care, 2022)

An example of technology is a robot which, according to research, could be effectively used for elderly care in elderly care centers (Melkas et al., 2020). In addition, they are highly influencing the clients of elderly care centers and holding implications in bringing technological innovations to their care. However, there is a lot to be researched by researchers regarding the relationship between technology and the well-being of older individuals worldwide, which highlights the innovation of the current investigation.

2.5. Enhancing Well-being through Techno-savviness in Elderly Care

Globally the elderly population over the age of 65 years is increasing, having reached almost 703 million in 2019, which is nearly 9% of the total world population and seems to be increased up to 16% to 1.5 billion by 2050 (Ienca et al., 2021). However, such an increasing parameter of older people worldwide should be provided a quality life, and their well-being should be focused on by the elderly care centers, which could be efficiently accomplished by incorporating technologies and enabling them to be techno-savvy, which should ultimately enhance their well-being, i.e., their healthy aging should be focused which refers to the well-being of older age, which comprises their capability to meet their basic needs independently, learning and making decisions, and building social relations, which could be possible by being techno-savvy.

Moreover, older people like to live independently, functionally, and self-sufficiently (Bakshi & Bhattacharyya, 2021). Technological innovations are an effective, cost-effective, and efficient way of enhancing the well-being of older individuals because technological interventions promise physical and psychological well-being among older individuals who feel isolated. However, techno-savviness (knowledge of using technology effectively) in elderly care will significantly enhance the well-being of elderly people. In addition, digital social networks have been characterized as useful instruments to enhance social interaction among older people regardless of their geographical distances (Cotten et al., 2022). Despite this, aged people worldwide enjoy using social media and digital technologies because they find it the easiest way to connect with their family and friends (Casanova et al., 2021).

Previous research has indicated that using social media apps has predicted increased engagement and social interaction, which overcomes the loneliness of older people (Byrne et al., 2021). To summarize, the elderly care centers in China should incorporate technological innovations and teach the older people living there to be techno-savvy, which will eradicate their loneliness, make them self-sufficient and independent, and they can easily check their health status with smart technological devices. This will eventually make them feel to be socially interacted with and enhance their psychological and physical health, which is an ultimatum for promoting the well-being of elderly people in elderly care centers by ensuring their techno-savviness.

2.6. Challenges and Considerations in Implementing Media Education in Elderly Care

It is obvious from the above-cited literature that social media usage, media education, techno-savviness, and technology integration are crucial factors in enhancing the quality of life and well-being of elderly people and should be incorporated into elderly care programs. But despite this, these technological innovations and

media education implementation within the elderly care programs is also challenging for elderly care centers. Table 2 presents some challenges faced in implementing media education and technology among older people.

Challenges for Seniors Using Technology	
Unfamiliarity	Most adults are unfamiliar with social media apps and technology because they are not grown up with these things, and this unfamiliarity with various social media apps is a big challenge to implementing media education in elderly care.
They think they do not need it.	In addition, not all technologies are useful for promoting well-being and quality of life for elderly people. But at the same time, some of them think that they do not need any technologies to enhance their quality of life and improve their well-being, making it difficult to incorporate social media and technology in elderly care.
Negativity about social media	Most senior citizens globally prefer face-to-face connections and meetings, which develops a negative image of social media on them, a challenge for implementing media education in elderly care.
Fearing that Internet is unsafe.	Above all, adults think the internet is unsafe for them and their privacy and are highly careful about their personal information. This is also a big challenge for elderly care centers to implement media education and technology usage in elderly care programs.

Source: (TYE Medical, 2022)

To overcome these challenges, some considerations should be taken into account while promoting media education among elderly people or elderly patients, as described below (Gesundheit und Vorsorge im Überblick, 2023):

- i. The elderly care centers should effectively assess the learning needs of the older people and try not to be harsh with them but rather teach them new information slower than young people.
- ii. In addition, it is crucial to speak politely with elderly people and give them time to understand the necessity of media education and technology so that they can assimilate the concept and rapidly shift toward technological innovations being techno-savvy.
- iii. Moreover, more time should be taken to implement media education and technology in elderly care programs and teach the older people bit by bit to understand things and eventually get ready to incorporate social media and technology in their lives to achieve a quality life.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Paradigm, Study Design, Informants, and Sampling

Researchers assume a research paradigm that could be utilized to determine various methodological choices for proceeding through a particular research and data collection procedure from the research respondents. This study is based on an interpretive research paradigm as it involves the understanding of human thoughts (caretakers in old age homes and senior citizen communities) regarding the necessity of technological media education in elderly care programs in China. Interpretive research is based on determining human perceptions regarding a particular research framework and achieving in-depth knowledge about their choices (Pham, 2018).

Based on the conceptual framework of the present investigation, the researcher determined the importance and necessity of media education related to technology. This would enable the elderly people of China to become techno-savvy, an ultimatum for enhancing their quality of life, making them independent and self-sufficient. Moreover, to enhance their well-being, the researcher chose the interpretivism philosophy. The reason behind choosing the interpretivism philosophy was that it fulfilled the research objectives and was effective in efficiently analyzing caretakers' perspectives regarding the role of media education and techno-savviness in promoting the well-being and quality of life of older adults in China.

Moreover, the study design was qualitative and based on an inductive research approach. The qualitative study involves collecting detailed knowledge about the chosen constructs within a research framework, determining the thoughts of the human population regarding the conceptual framework (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Based on the interpretivism philosophy, the current research has incorporated a qualitative study design to fulfill the aims and objectives of research. The research objectives of the current research further determined the role of media education related to the technological awareness and well-being of older adults in China, to analyze the challenges of implementing media education in elderly care programs, and to provide recommendations for increasing the

engagement of older adults in media education. The qualitative methodology was chosen because it would provide a detailed knowledge regarding the chosen constructs. Moreover, it could be advantageous for providing recommendations for augmenting the engagement of aged people in media education and techno-savviness.

Additionally, the Informants thus targeted to determine the role of media education and technology in enhancing the well-being and quality of life of older people as caretakers in old age homes and senior citizen communities in China. The research Informants were subjected to semi-structured interviews, thus comprising qualitative questions regarding the necessity of media education and techno-savviness for elderly people in China. For this purpose, the study used a small sample size of 8 employees, 3 males and 5 females, aged around 30 years, working in Chinese old age homes and senior citizen communities as care takers. A small sample size was chosen to meet the needs of the qualitative research methodology, while caretakers were chosen because they could provide authentic and appropriate data regarding research questions.

The purposive sampling technique was used as it was convenient, and suited to retrieve appropriate information on the questions and to build the research constructs without any bias (Campbell et al., 2020). Moreover, the qualitative research design requires a small sample size, which is both appropriate and valid in enhancing the depth of the research concept and its understanding (Campbell et al., 2020; Palinkas et al., 2015).

3.2. Data Collection Method and Data Analysis

All research Informants were sent an invitation email to participate in the present study, which explained the purpose of the research and the data collection procedure. After receiving the consent, a second mail immediately followed, which explained in detail the scope, application, and necessity of the current research regarding the incorporation of media education and technological innovations within the elderly care programs in China. Owing to the study being qualitative in nature, the present investigation prioritized conducting interviews of the chosen research respondents. Semi-structured interviews were therefore designed as data collection instrument. Interviews were conducted on Google Meet platform, and were audio-recorded after taking prior permission, to use for transcriptions and analysis. Each interview lasted for 15 to 20 minutes.

The interviews comprised questions to understand the perceptions of caretakers working at old age homes and in senior citizen communities of China, regarding media education, and challenges being faced by them in implementing media education. They were also asked what strategies could be employed for implementing media education in elderly care programs, and their recommendations for implementing technology. Table 3 presents the interview questions framed for this study. Each respondent was required to respond keeping in view the well-being of the elderly people and how to live a quality life. After gathering the relevant data from the research Informants, the researcher performed thematic analysis by coding process to avoid any repetition in the gathered data and produce generalized results.

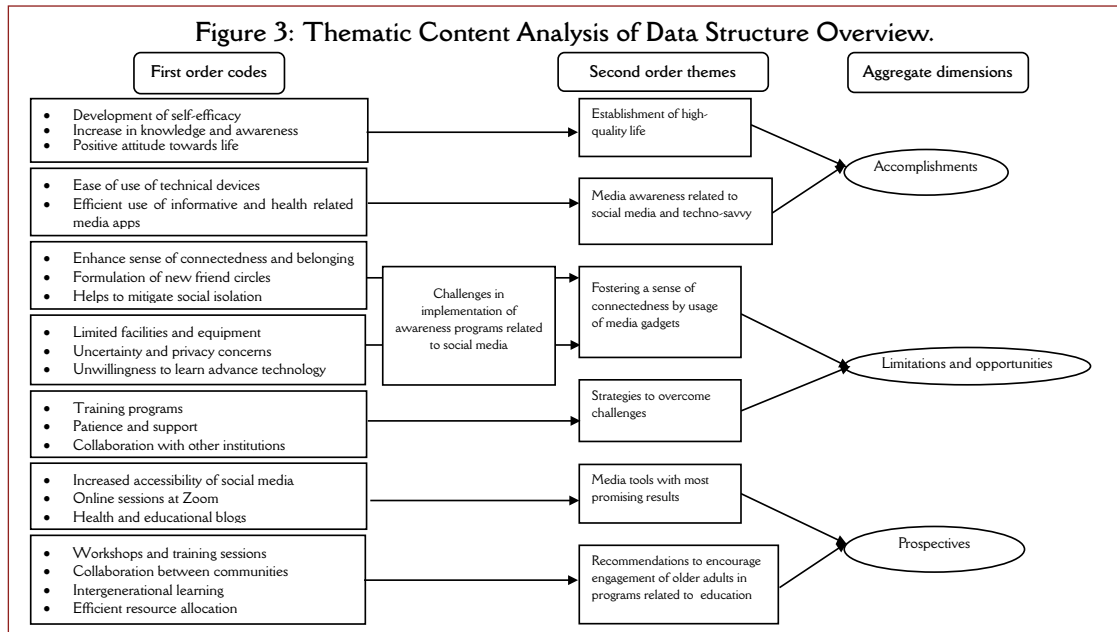
Table 3. Interview Questions of the Study.

Question 1. How do you perceive the role of media education (blogs, Wikis, etc.) in enhancing the well-being and promoting a high-quality life for elderly individuals in care programs?
Question 2. Can you provide examples of how integrating media education into elderly care programs has positively impacted the technological skills and overall well-being of older adults?
Question 3. What are some potential challenges or barriers you foresee in implementing media education initiatives in elderly care programs, and how do you propose overcoming them?
Question 4. How do you believe media education can contribute to combating social isolation and fostering a sense of connectedness among elderly individuals in care settings?
Question 5. In your experience, what specific types of media education tools (e.g., blogs, Wikis, social media) have shown the most promising results in enhancing the technological competence and mental stimulation of older adults in care?
Question 6. What strategies do you think can be employed to encourage active participation and engagement of elderly individuals in media education programs to ensure the maximum benefits for their well-being and quality of life?

4. Findings and Analysis

The study performed a thematic analysis over the data collected from the semi structured interviews of 8 caretakers in old age homes and care centres. The objective was to identify relevant themes related to media education as reflected in older Chinese old age adults in relation to their interaction with technology. This exercise resulted in significant themes such as establishment of high-quality life, media awareness, role

of social media, being techno-savvy, fostering a sense of connectedness through media gadgets, challenges in implementation of awareness programs related to social media, strategies to overcome those challenges, media tools with most promising results, and recommendations to encourage engagement of older adults in programs related to awareness of social media.



4.1. Accomplishments

Figure 3 depicts the thematic content analysis of the data structure resulted in three major themes: accomplishments, limitations and opportunities, and prospectives. The first theme of accomplishments deals with the benefits and significant role of media education in elderly care programs. This aspect of analysis deals with three sub-themes: establishment of high-quality life, technological awareness & well-being, and fostering a sense of connectedness with media gadgets.

4.1.1. Establishment of High-quality Life

Media education potentially plays a significant positive role within the context of the development of the elderly population in China. Fostering social media awareness like use of blogs and wikis enhances the self-efficacy of older adults and provides marvellous opportunities for social support for them. As a result, a competent learning atmosphere is formulated for them, which enhances the well-being of older adults and promotes high-quality life. With active involvement on social media sites through media education, they seem to be more aware of their healthcare methods, and they actively participate in social activities. One of the informants stated:

"I believe that social media provides more independence to elderly people. I also observed that older people that use more social media (blogs, wikis) are more active and social. They freely share their opinions and express their feelings." (Informant #2; Manager at Star Light Old Age Home)

In Star Light Old Age Home, it was reported that the social and leisure activities of older adults increased with the integration of social media awareness programs for the elderly. Elders were more able to involve in entertaining and informative actions. It was also observed that elderly people felt confident sharing their issues on social media platforms like Facebook, where they efficiently gained emotional support. Moreover, they spent more of their leisure time learning from social media, which significantly enhanced their well-being and quality of life of the Chinese community,

4.1.2. Media Awareness Related to Social Media and Techno-savvy

The role of social media education is specifically important for older adults as it significantly impacts

their skills and efficient usage of media gadgets helps them to be techno-savvy. The integration of education related to use of media tools in care programs for elders increases the ease of use of technical devices for older people. They become familiar with the usage of technology to solve their issues like they learn how to play games and how to watch TV without support from any assistance which turns them into techno-savvy.

The elderly people that have a prior grip on media knowledge of social media and usage of blogs and wikis were keen to teach their fellows about social media that features online programs. With the integration of social media education, it has also been noticed that older adults gather the information about their health-related aspects. It not only enhances ability of being techno-savvy in older adults but also exerts a significant impact on their daily life as by using media gadgets, they are encouraged to maintain their healthy lifestyle. Informant #7 observed:

“As we increase media education in elderly care programs, we observe significant learning capabilities of older people to use social media platforms. The older adults take interest in usage of social media and keen to enhance its usage in their daily life which is turning them into techno-savvy.” (Informant #7) (Warden at China Old Age Health Care Yixueyanjiu Huijigang Health Service Centre)

In addition, with media education related to social media, elderly people learn to participate in educational webinars and online discussion sessions, and learn to use advance gadgets which significantly turns them into techno-savvy.

4.1.3. Fostering a Sense of Connectedness by Usage of Media Gadgets

Usage of media gadgets also plays a significant role in enhancing the sense of belongingness and connectedness in elderly people. Their efficient learning and usage of media tools like messaging apps and social media platforms encourage them to stay connected with their families and friends. In addition, usage of media gadgets and platforms like blogs and wikis enable older adults to expand their social circles and develop connections with multiple people to share their thoughts and experiences. The formulation of new friend circles efficiently combats their social isolation and helps them to formulate a state of belongingness. Informant # 4 stated:

“In my institute, I’ve observed that the older people who use more media gadgets often help others to use them, which increases the connectedness between them. Besides this, with the use of media gadgets older people enhance their relationship and bonding with their family members as well.” (Informant #4) (Nursing assistant at Star Light Old Age Home)

4.2. Limitations and Opportunities

This aspect of analysis dealt with challenges associated with the implementation of media awareness of social media in elderly care programs and strategies to overcome these challenges.

4.2.1. Challenges in the Implementation of Awareness Programs Related to Social Media

There are several challenges, especially in public old age homes in China, which hinder the efficient integration of media education related to social media in care programs for older adults. These challenges include the limited facilities and equipment to promote social media education, inefficient technological knowledge, uncertainty, and privacy concerns related to the usage of social media. Most people over the age of 60 lack adequate knowledge and competency about media gadgets. The unwillingness of older adults to learn advanced technology and the usage of media gadgets is also a significant challenge faced by the respective institutions which hinders their ability to be techno-savvy and exert impact on their well-being and high-quality life. Informant # 1 shared his experience:

“As per my experience, a higher level of doubt related to social media content is common among elderly people. Most of them always remain doubtful about trusting the information provided by blogs and wikis. Besides this, older people believe more in traditional things, which impacts their motivation to be techno-savvy.” (Informant# 1) (Caretaker at Ching Chung Care and Attention Home for the Aged.)

The ageist attitude of older adults also hinders their ability to learn about media gadgets. They have lower potential of being techno-savvy as they are less keen to adopt new technology. In many public old age homes in China, it has also been observed that older adults are afraid of use of media gadgets as they cannot understand the technical language and jargon common on social media platforms. It kills their interest and motivation to get media awareness of social media which impacts their well-being and high-quality life.

4.2.2. Strategies to Overcome Challenges

The basic purpose of the integration of media awareness and usage of media gadgets in care programs is to turn older adults into techno-savvy and to promote well-being and high-quality life in them. Accordingly, the formulation and implementation of specific strategies are necessary that can efficiently fulfil the respective purpose. Training programs are key to enhancing media awareness of social media in older adults. These trainings can emphasize developing attitudes of learning in older adults and can teach them basic skills to use media technologies. Informant # 5 affirmed:

"I believe the challenges associated with efficient integration of media knowledge in care programs can be overcome with utmost patience and support. The institutes must focus on a friendly and competent environment for older adults so their motivation can be enhanced. The access to user-friendly media gadgets can also be enhanced for better outcomes." (Informant# 5) (Manager at Kai Yan Institution of Old Age Limited)

Peer support is also significant in achieving the potential benefits of usage of media gadgets for elderly people. They are encouraged to have meaningful interaction on social media platforms like blogs and wikis, which gives them the opportunity to know the potential benefits of media gadgets. The focus remains on increasing relevant knowledge of older adults in smaller chunks so they do not face any difficulty in digesting the new knowledge.

4.3. Prospectives

This aspect of analysis deals with the potential usage of media programs that have the most promising results and recommendations to enhance media education in elderly care programs in China. Under this theme, too, there were two sub-themes

4.3.1. Media Tools with the Most Promising Results

Specialized media programs related to awareness of social media that are particularly designed for older adults, and which can potentially enhance the technological competence and mental capabilities of older adults and turn them into techno-savvy, enhancing their well-being and high-quality life. In addition to it, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have the most promising results as they enhance the interest of older adults. Informant # 8 opined:

"As per my experience, social media platforms are the most promising tool due to their increased accessibility, easy usage, and quality of provided interactions. It is also more beneficial for older adults as they increase the engagement of older adults and boost their interest to use media gadgets." (Informant #8) (Caretaker at Ching Chung Care and Attention Home for the Aged)

Blogs are also significant in enhancing media knowledge in older adults as there are blogs in different categories like health and mental-wellbeing, which contain such information that enhances the knowledge of elders. As blogs are highly researched and educational resources thus, older adults trust the information provided by them, and use that information to make their decisions accordingly. Virtual reality-based media also indicates positive benefits for older adults as it enables them to learn and enjoy visual activities without any fear. In addition, age-friendly websites that provide clear instruction and navigation are also useful for older adults as it helps them to understand technology better which resultantly polishes their skills for being techno-savvy.

4.3.2. Recommendations to Encourage the Engagement of Older Adults in Programs of Social Media Awareness

Media awareness of social media in elderly care programs has remarkable benefits; thus, initiatives should be taken to increase the adoption of social media awareness programs. To encourage the engagement of older adults in programs related to social media awareness, significant training sessions and workshops should be conducted. These workshops are beneficial for older adults as it helps them to learn the benefits of digital knowledge and enhance their capability to be techno-savvy. The collaboration between old age homes, senior communities, and retirement houses can play a key role in developing media education programs and workshops to encourage the participation of older adults in the respective programs. Informant# 6 suggested a few things:

“In my opinion, intergenerational learning should be promoted in which pairing of old people with young and energetic staff should be formulated. The tech-savvy individuals can boost the interest and motivations of older adults by highlighting the benefits of media education for them.” (Informant# 6) (Dietitian at Kai Yan Institution of Old Age Limited)

The Chinese government must increase the budget for elderly care programs, and respective institutions should utilize accessible resources to promote media awareness of social media for older adults. The resources like user-friendly media gadgets should be given to older adults at low cost so their inclination towards learning digital knowledge can be promoted. Moreover, the continuous evaluation of media education programs for older adults and their frequent up-gradation should be considered to enhance the engagement of older adults.

5. Discussion

The study focused on the factors and determinants that are involved in elder media education in China. The themes discussed above portrayed the role of media education, technological awareness, the well-being of older adults through media education, challenges and limitations of media education for elderly people, and the strategies to overcome the pertaining challenges. Besides, media education tools that can prove effective in such causes are also discussed.

Research Objective 1

The first aim of the study was to examine the role of media education in the care programs on social media awareness and well-being of older adults in China. The initial themes of the study covered these perspectives. It occurred that media education programs positively impact the perception and behavior of older people and urge them to take an interest in socialization and communication through social media. By enhancing their technological capabilities, positive outcomes can be observed in terms of managing their lonely and alienated behavior. The findings are supported by previous studies as well. The study by Coto et al. (2017) indicates that social media is positively related to the psychological health of older people. However, the study was a systematic survey and lacked empirical evidence to justify it. Another study by Domènech-Abella et al. (2019) identified the social network issues of elderly people and provided the associated factors in determining their mental health status. Despite covering the social media impact, the role was not studied in multiple dimensions. The gaps are therefore filled by providing an in-depth critique of these issues with empirical evidence.

Research Objective 2

The second aim of the study was to investigate the challenges that are associated with the effective integration of media education in elderly care programs that hinders their capability to be techno-savvy. Through responses, it occurred that the integration of media programs in elder care centers was a challenging task. One of the major issues that emerged in the beginning is the digital aptitude and resistance of older people that make things difficult for educational instructors or caregivers. As social media is also found responsible for health issues, i.e., eyes problem or fatigue, balancing the use of media in elderly people is also one of the major challenges. The findings are in parallel with the previous studies, i.e., Kemperman et al. (2019) indicate that maintaining a living environment with such facilities is a challenging task. However, the study deviated from the findings as it proposed the creation of livable and healthy social neighborhoods instead of interacting and communicating through social media.

Research Objective 3

The third objective of the study was to provide effective recommendations to increase the engagement of older adults in social media awareness and enhance their well-being and high-quality life. The interviewees were asked for recommendations, and multiple solutions came to the surface which were proven effective in managing social media education for older people. Training programs were found essential in managing the perception and behavior of adults toward social media. It was suggested that trainings would help in developing the attitude of learning and willingness to use social media platforms. These results are in alignment with the study by Martins Van Jaarsveld (2020) that emphasized digital literacy programs for older people. The use of specific social media apps designed for older people's communication should be

adopted. Along with these measures, it is necessary to encourage the engagement of older adults in media education. The people should be informed about the differences it could make in their life quality. The awareness and encouragement can be a ray of hope for effective social media education and adoption.

5. Conclusion

The growing social anxiety and alienation among elderly people is one of the biggest issues that need attention. In China, the ratio of elderly people suffering from mental and psychological illness is increasing annually. In the present study, the cause factors and the role of social media education in combating these issues are discussed. By acquiring responses from the interviewee, the researcher thematically analyzed the problems. The codes were generated, and themes were identified on the basis of collected data from the Informants., seven themes were identified and analyzed critically. The insights gathered from the responses of interviewees indicate that media education is significant in terms of social connectedness and belongingness. Managing the behavior and aptitude toward social media platforms raise challenges that need to be taken into consideration. Some of the other challenges which were identified by the researcher include the limited facilities and equipment to support social media. Due to the increasing emotional and attachment issues in older people, social media use awareness and adoption are found effective in managing the alienation and education of elderly people. By overcoming the challenges, i.e., availability of resources, provision of social media facilities, and raising digital awareness and literacy, can prove beneficial in achieving the greater goal.

The findings of the study are significant in both theoretical and practical terms. Theoretically, empirical issues were raised in the study and justified with solid evidence in the relevant context. The focus of the study was to highlight the importance of social media education for Chinese elderly people. The findings of the study contributed to the present literature available on old people's well-being. It occurred that an abundance of literature is present on the emotional, psychological, and physiological well-being of the older generation. Despite the presence of such literature, the scarcity of research regarding the role and importance of social media platforms on the emotional health of older individuals establishes a base for the present study. The researcher identified the gap and covered it by analyzing the impact of elderly people's engagement and socialization through social media on the quality of their life. These findings shall be of much value to contemporary researchers in understanding the empirical issues in the context of China. The finding can also assist the relevant stakeholders, i.e., caretakers, social media marketers, and educational actors of elderly people. Through these findings, the present status and perception of social media among older people in China can be assessed. Moreover, it is also beneficial in combating the social alienation of people that impacts their mental health. By taking such measures and familiarizing them with social media use can enhance their connectedness with the outside world and positively impact their quality of life.

Despite covering numerous issues critically, the study faced certain limitations. First, the methodological choices of the researcher restricted the scope of the findings. The qualitative research method was a limitation that marked a significant impact on the utility and relevance of the findings. Future studies should manage to analyze and investigate the research problem with different methodological choices. The study also observed limitations in terms of geographical context. The focus of this study was on the elderly population of China. As the elder home care infrastructure and services are different in each region, these specifications put a limit on the generalization of the findings. To expand the findings in the broader context, future researchers should opt comparative analysis approach to analyze issues on an international level.

The growing use of social media is impacting every individual, irrespective of age, gender, and social status. Analyzing the role of social media from cognitive and social perspectives in another age group can also provide a better understanding of the issue. Besides the inclusion of behavior and emotional related problem, i.e., addiction and techno anxiety, digital literacy can also prove helpful in providing the broader picture. This study reiterates devising strategies to overcome the limitation and hurdles in social media education of elderly people, but the debate can be extended to the broader level by including the strategic plans, their implementation, and the possible consequences or potential benefits of it.

Acknowledgment

Project of Sanya University USY22XK-06; Project of Sanya University USYRC22-7.

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