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Living with Care: The Older Person
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Assessment 2

Supporting paper

Student name: Ferline dos Santos Danqua

Student ID: 2030736

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Introduction

This supporting paper will discuss if the use of technology is necessary for the elderly UK population or an older person's life. It will discuss as well what was our standpoint in the debate and what were the other views. The statistics on the ageing UK population will be provided, reflection on the information provided in the main points discussed throughout our group debate, the current government support and services to help the UK elderly population and, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the older person and important services.

Our standpoint in the debate

The use of technology is not necessarily for the elderly UK population or an older person's life since it affects negatively their physical activity, leads to social isolation, memory and cognitive issues, changes in touch and temperature perception, mobility and balance. Also, there are changes in vision and hearing.

Statistics shows that 4 million people in the UK have never used the internet, and 94% of them are older than 55, 84% are older than 65, and 62% are older than 75 as of 2019 (Martineau,2020). Furthermore studies show that 76% of the population lacking even the most basic digital skills are retired people over the age of 65 (Lloyds Bank,2018).

According to Age UK (2016), around three out of five (61%) non-users 65 and older in the UK, indicated they lacked internet access because they did not require it. People over 75 years feel unsafe because they do not have a good enough IT skills (Age UK, 2021). Spending a lot of time on the screen change grey matter and white matter volumes in the brain which can raise mental problems and decrease memory and learning acquisition leading to risk factors for dementia (Manwell et al., 2022). The majority of technology is not designed with older people's unique requirements in mind; touch screens can be challenging to use, passwords and user names can be complex and difficult to remember, and menus and user interfaces can be overwhelming (No Isolation, 2018). The excessive use of the technology for elderly people make them more sedentary and therefore their physical activity is reduced causing health problems such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, obesity, and even early mortality (Johnson, 2020). Due to the fact that gadgets, smartphones, laptops, and computers were not created with the elderly population in mind, using technology can also worsen eyesight, hearing, and motor abilities.

Health aside, the use of technology for elderly people affects as well their social life. Social isolation is another concern. Some older people are rejecting online shopping as they welcome the social benefits of daily face to face contact when shopping in person (No Isolation, 2018). Additionally, people aged 75+are also less likely to be aware of the ways online companies collect information about what they do online (Davidson, 2018) therefore, they are more vulnerable to fraud and scams.

During Covid-19 pandemic, elderly people quickly encountered constraints on in-person interactions, travel, visits to nursing homes and long-term care institutions, leisure activities, and entertainment (Webb and Chen, 2021) thus, rates of loneliness and mortality have increased and, the quality of life have decreased. Accessing the Internet and online

information is leading to feelings of overwhelm, paranoia, suspicion, and 'overload' in the aged population.

Social Breakdown -Reconstruction Theory, Disengagement Theory and Modernization Theory were the theories that our group used for the debate. Without using necessarily the technology, the aged population gradually falls out of society and loses prestige as civilizations become more contemporary.

Other group standpoint in the debate

The other group standpoints were that the use of technology is necessary for elderly people in the UK. Based on their researches, they argued that the technology enhances our quality of life and supports us in our daily activities, making it a crucial component of everyone's life from the moment we awaken until we fall asleep (Alzheimer's Society, 2019).

Nowadays, technology plays an important role in everyone's lives, regardless of their age. Apart from being utilised to improve comfort, technology is now being employed to safeguard the safety of older people. They also argued that using technology for older people keeps them connected with family members via video calls; helps them stay social; and makes access to health care much easier, such as online/phone call GP consultation or /and, online appointment, health tracking which helps them track exercise and nutrition, and medication reminders. Simple access to ordering basic necessities from the shop. The majority of UK supermarkets provide online grocery purchasing. It also helps them with finances, as they may save a trip to the bank by using online banking, and it keeps them physically active by doing workouts - from fitness videos on YouTube to online yoga sessions, the internet can be a portal to additional health choices (Caitlin, 2021).

According to Murphy et al. (2021), in March 2020 UK general practices implemented predominantly remote consulting via telephone, video, or online consultation platforms which rapidly went up 90% by April 2020 during Covid19.

Hospitals and GPs used apps, call centre-interpreters to better communicate with patients since UK is full of diversity and makes the language barrier challenging, especially with elderly people (Public Health England, 2021). Through the healthcare platform, scheduling an appointment, ordering a prescription, or getting mental health support was as easy as clicking a button during Covid-19 pandemic.

They argued that it is important to understand the demands of older people in order to effectively apply Maslow's theory, which is based on a motivational approach. It's all about finding things out, making connections, and having technology meet all requirements. (Backonja, Hall and Thielke, 2014).

Current government support and services to help the UK elderly population

According to Age UK (2023), there are programmes such as Digital Champion that aims to combat digital exclusion by finding and training Digital Champion volunteers to support older people in enhancing their digital abilities and by lending technology to those seniors without access. Wearable technology has the potential to increase senior adults' independence and quality of life. People can wear sensors to measure different aspects of their health, help with rehabilitation and treatment evaluation, spot prospective illnesses, keep an eye on safety issues like falls, and act as emergency warning systems. Fitness-tracking wristbands can also motivate senior citizens to keep track of their sleeping and physical activity patterns (Intelligence, 2022).

Services such as telehealth, telecare, GPS trackers, assistive devices are some current services to help UK elderly population.

Conclusion

The use of technology in the UK old population is not required because there are various barriers in terms of physical, mental, and social health. However, with existing government services and help, these barriers can be overcome.

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