

CHAPTER - 01

TO STUDY THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION OF OLDER ADULTS TOWARDS DIGITAL HEALTH

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INTRODUCTION

Digital health encompasses the utilisation of information and communication technologies within the medical and health sectors to manage health conditions, mitigate risks, and promote overall wellness. It has become an integral component of healthcare delivery, incorporating various technologies such as mobile health (mHealth), health information technology (IT), wearable devices, telehealth, telemedicine, and personalised medicine. Key subcategories within digital health include telemedicine, remote sensing and wearables, data analytics and artificial intelligence, electronic health records (EHRs), patient-physician-patient portals, diagnostics, and health information systems [2].

Following the global health crisis, the health technology market has experienced a significant surge, particularly in products such as mHealth apps, telemedicine platforms, and

wearable devices. Substantial research and development efforts have been invested in integrating these technologies with pharmaceuticals and traditional healthcare practices. The widespread adoption and expansion of digital health solutions have transformed the delivery of healthcare services worldwide, enhancing accessibility and efficiency while safeguarding individuals' health and well-being [1].

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the global ageing population is projected to double by 2050, with over two billion individuals aged 60 and above. This demographic shift underscores the growing importance of digital health solutions in addressing the healthcare needs of an ageing population and ensuring the delivery of effective and personalised healthcare services [3].

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To gauge the existing understanding and familiarity of older adults with different digital health services and platforms, including teleconsultations, e-pharmacy, health tracking apps, and e-diagnostic services.
2. To examine the perspective towards the utilisation of digital health technology among older adults.
3. To analyse the perception of older adults regarding digital health services such as teleconsultations, e-pharmacy, health tracking apps, and e-diagnostic services.
4. To evaluate the obstacles encountered by older adults in embracing digital health technologies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross-sectional design and was conducted across urban and rural areas of India through an online survey form. The study duration spanned from March 21, 2022, to June 17, 2022. The inclusion criteria comprised individuals aged 60 and above, while those below 60 years and older adults with any mental or physical conditions preventing them from completing the form were excluded. The sample size consisted of 113 participants, and the sampling technique utilised was snowball sampling. Primary data was collected using an online survey form created on Google Forms. A semi-structured questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp to 150 friends and peers, who were then asked to forward it to at least five individuals within the study's criteria. Through consistent follow-ups, the desired sample size was achieved. Data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The study found that despite the significant increase in access to digital health services following the pandemic, a notable portion of older adults still favor traditional methods of healthcare. Although most respondents possessed some knowledge of digital health services, males tended to have a better understanding of online health-related services compared to females. Furthermore, the study noted a lack of awareness among older adults regarding the types of telemedicine services available, which consequently impacted their utilization of these services. Remote laboratory services, particularly receiving online lab reports, emerged as the most commonly accessed e-health service. However, the pandemic appeared to influence the attitudes of older adults toward various digital health services.

The study revealed a significant increase in the use of e-pharmacy services post-pandemic. Despite this, older adults displayed a neutral attitude toward the credibility of these services, indicating a reluctance to embrace them fully. Although they recognised the time-saving benefits of digital health services compared to traditional methods, older adults demonstrated limited interest and reliance on these services.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that older adults demonstrate a high level of knowledge in various aspects. However, there remains a considerable scope for enhancing the accessibility of digital health services among this demographic. While there is generally a positive attitude toward these services, concerns persist regarding cost, privacy, and credibility. Further studies similar to this one are needed in India to provide a broader understanding of these issues. This knowledge is crucial for developing user-friendly initiatives that aim to bridge gaps in healthcare access. Digital health initiatives must be tailored to the needs and preferences of their target audience to ensure that individuals of all ages and genders possess the necessary knowledge and attitude toward their utilisation.

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