

**Media, Sociality, and Aging Process**  
***A Study of Aging Process through New Media in Select Areas of***  
***Kolkata***<sup>1</sup>

**Debarati Dhar**<sup>2</sup>

**Vivekananda School of Journalism and Mass Communication**  
**VIPS, GGS IP University, New Delhi, India**

**Abstract**

This paper seeks to interrogate the very assumption of “sociality” in social media at a conceptual level and substantiate it with the help of information collected on aged people’s use of conventional media vis-à-vis so called “social media” from the field work. Although global literature has written the obituary of mass media and promoted the “sociality” of social media, one needs to critically engage with such statement. Such statements have been an outcome of the established status of the “post broadcast” model of media where conventional media is in existence for some time and accessible to everyone in society. Further, this paper seeks to explore the interplay of new media in the life of the aged population in select areas of Kolkata city in the state of West Bengal, India. There are few studies on the ageing population’s use of new media in the Indian context. While many of the studies reveal the new media literacy among the youth, this is unimportant as both the new media and the youth are relatively young as a field of research in media studies in India. What is missed in the earlier studies is, how new media plays an important function in the life of the aged population. How do older adults engage with the skilling and deskilling process of media literacy in their everyday life? And finally, do new media provide an extension to their on-going social relations? With the help of substantive details, the present study addresses the aforementioned queries.

**Keywords:** new media, ageing population, sociality, digital literacy

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<sup>2</sup> All correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Debarati Dhar at Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, AU- Block (Outer Ring Road), Pitampura, Delhi - 110034, India or by e-mail at [dhardebarati@gmail.com](mailto:dhardebarati@gmail.com)

## **Background**

My paper intends to intervene in the on-going debate between mainstream media and new media with the help of interviewing aged people, who are witnessing both and at the same time struggling between conventional media and so called social media. Although society may consider them as 'aged', one cannot deny their access to the larger world of interaction, specially, among those who can afford it. However, people who cannot afford it have been labeled as 'asocial'. Besides, conventional media also provided an interesting place for socialization, collective viewing and interpersonal interaction. These are replaced with terms such as the "interactivity" of social media. New media poses a fundamental shift from interpersonal interaction to mediated interaction. Thus, my paper with the help of field-work material engages with the idea of 'sociality' through interpersonal interaction and mediated interaction. The idea of the 'post broadcast' model refers to broadcasting structure and regulation. The idea of 'new media' transcends this rigidity and lacks any regulation. Hence, scholars have been extensively promoting the idea of sociality of social media and 'social' face of new media. Although it has some purchase, it lacks generalization especially, in a society like India where equal access to media has not been achieved. Besides, the idea of conventional media is not an old one. It has hardly a history of three decades (especially, the growth of television broadcasting). Before the potential of television is realized, we have been forced to call it dated and champion the success of social media. In this context, this present paper seeks to explore the interplay of new media in the life of the aged population in select areas of Kolkata.

Media usage patterns have considerably changed in Indian society. Today we live in a society of media abundance and media saturation. Our everyday life is governed by television and television viewing has almost become like oxygen for the viewers. There can be certain explanations for age related trends for media use. For instance, with retirement comes a lot of leisure time that accounts for higher rates of media consumption. Another reason for the maximum use of media by the aged is partially due to the relative ease of using electronic media. Certain frailties such as poor eyesight, decrease in memory, etc. that are associated with aging process are some of the possible hindrances that make reading or using the new media difficult. An interesting perspective towards the use of media by the older adults suggests that newspaper and television become substitutes for declining interpersonal communication (Graney & Graney, 1974). However, various contradictions can also be observed to this statement as well, and this statement does not always imply a negative picture of the aging people. For example, aged people are unable to visit friends or go out frequently thus resulting in more use of mass media. In other words, media use by the elderly can be seen as a means of remaining connected with society and

not as a sign of social disengagement or withdrawal. A number of social psychological variables, that is, degree of interpersonal communication, social activity, and life satisfaction, influence the use of mass media by older adults.

### **Objective**

Studies on the aging population's use of new media in the Indian context are far and few. While many studies reveal the new media literacy among the youth, this is unimportant as both the new media and the youth are relatively young as a field of research in media studies in India. What is missed in these research studies is how new media play an important role in the life of the aged population. How do they engage with the skilling and deskilling process of media literacy in their everyday life? And finally, do new media provide an extension to their on-going social relations? With the help of substantive details, the present study addresses the aforementioned queries.

This paper tries to study the utilization of mass media, as well as new media, by the aged people and their coping with the gradual technological shift in this age through survey, participatory observation and in-depth interviews. The aged population, unlike the younger population, spends considerable time with mobile phones and computers to connect with their children. With the advancement of technology and constant innovations, the nature of skilling and deskilling of media takes place. In order to be media literate the aged population has to be constantly alert. What motivates them? How do they cope with the changing grammar of new media?

### **Literature Review**

Livingstone and Bovill (2001) discussed that new media necessarily do not mean that has been initiated very recently rather it refers to those that experienced a very rapid diffusion phase. Aging people are becoming a significant population to consider with regard to new media technology, as the aged population makes up a large segment of the population in the city of Kolkata (Sen, 2015). There are long-range benefits of the new media in the lives of the elderly. For instance, a study noted that adapting to new media technology can enable long-distance caregiving (Kinney, Kart, Murdoch, & Ziembra, 2003). Another study pointed out that accessing new media and the Internet can let the older people have access to tele-health care (Czaja & Lee, 2003). Further, new media with its immense scope of connecting and sharing experiences, can lead to the overall well-being of the aged (Mitzner et al., 2010). Reports show the Internet has become a vital way of exercising the minds of seniors (Morris, 2014). The research shows that training older adults to use social media

can help in improving cognitive capacity and in increasing a sense of self-competence, leading to an overall positive impact on mental health and physical well-being of the aged (Morris, 2014). Overcoming the risks of isolation and loneliness among the elderly has become much easier through new media and the Internet (Kamiel, 2016). With increasing age, as more and more elderly people are confined mostly to home because of failing health and mobility issues, new media and the Internet become a support and educational tool. Undoubtedly new media technology has greatly enhanced the potential of the aged, making them feel less isolated and alone in this nuclear family age (Kamiel, 2016).

Currently, there exists a digital divide concerning the older users of new media technology. In this context, one research study has noted that because of this digital gap existing between young and old users, elderly adults are less likely to accept and use new media technology (Olson, O'Brien, Rogers, & Charness, 2011). Further, as stated by Brown (2003), a digital divide is believed to occur when a gap in technology use exists between different sections of the population. It is a fact that there are differences in technology adoption between the young and the old population, though not much has been noted about the specific individual characteristics that influence the adoption of technologies by users. It is significant to consider individual characteristics in order to help narrow down the digital divide among the aged users. As indicated by Rogers (2003), personality could play a role in technology adoption. Madden, (2010) reported that in the past few years the number of older adults have increased and older users have been especially enthusiastic about embracing new networking tools. A previous research study has noted that even though the transition to technology may be difficult for some elderly people, they anticipate adapting to the new media technology in the future as it will benefit them (Selwyn, 2004). Hence, it may be realistic for elderly people to think about the needs they expect to encounter and how new media technology and the Internet might support them in fulfilling such needs. Findings by Bowling Green State University (2015), argue that though new media technology could significantly increase independence for aged people, they are still less likely to adopt it than their younger counterparts for various reasons ranging from uncertainties about its benefits to an overall lack of comfort. This study further states that the relationship between age and outlook towards new media is also chiefly negative, i.e., as age increases, negative attitudes towards technology likely to increase (Bowling Green State University, 2015).

Writing a review on new media and aging has been extremely challenging as less work or research contributions are available in this subfield in media research and it has not gained substantial attention in Indian academia. Hence, this review of existing literature encapsulates that older adults are acknowledging new media networks as a

central part of their lives, and its use depends upon several important variables such as accessibility, affordability, financial status, education, and overcoming digital literacy hindrances.

### **Problematizing Aging**

The elderly as a social category have been problematized in different ways by scholars, including some who have opined that, with the changing dimension of the Indian societies, smaller nuclear families have no place for older people (Gore, 2000; Gurumurthy, 1998; Dandekar, 1996). All these changes tend to make older people feel dejected and lost. As more and more people migrate to cities, affordability of accommodating all family members is a major concern. Further, the displacement and dislocation of older people from their surroundings, relatives, and peer groups make them out of place in the urban setting. Since survival in urban spaces depends on productive income and contributions for the family and the aged people are no longer employed, they become a liability in the urban environment. Hence, it becomes a pressing concern to study the aging population and the problems faced by them in their daily existence (Gore, 2000). Social interaction is one of the most important needs of people at any age. Loneliness and isolation are often seen as two facets of deprivation of social contact. Problems of aged people are not necessarily only financial but psychological and social also. An elderly person suffers because of several changes like weakening of family ties, lack of care because of children moving out leaving them to fend for themselves or sometimes lack of space when the elderly move into the home of their children or relatives (Gurumurthy, 1998). Changing family structures caused by urbanization, and a dominance of individualistic, as well as materialistic values are some of the reasons for low self-esteem and depression among the aging population (Gore, 2000).

In any society, the status of a person is determined by the roles and authority the person holds, and the process of relative change or decline in that status and authority with time are straining in some cases (Gurumurthy, 1998). Typically, life situation changes in old age and some environmental events, like loss of roles with retirement and relocation can make the elderly feel dislocated. As aging proceeds, less attention is given to the support systems that elderly people may encounter. There could be several reasons for this, such as severe health issues, mobility problems, dementia, or depression. Gradually, in urban areas, continuing social transitions are affecting the family structure, including older people. New ways of spending time and new ideals of behavior provide grounds for conflicts between generations (Dandekar, 1996). According to reports, Kolkata needs many

trained caregivers to meet the basic health requirements of an increasingly large and lonely population of elderly people left to fend for themselves after the break-up of the traditional family support system (Basu, 2014).

In an older adult's life, family and social connectivity are the most influential factors giving shape to the process of aging. Social aloofness can be treated with involvement in the form of communication with friends, family, and neighbors (Prasad, 2000). New media can help in remodeling the social relationship and communication structure for the aged, and it can be used for better and immediate connectivity. The level to which an older person is involved within a social network of families, friends, and neighbors will greatly influence his or her experience of aging (Ra, An, & Rhee, 2013). Minichiello and Coulson (2005) highlight the term *gerontechnology* to indicate a close association of gerontology and technological developments. Through *gerontechnology* it can be understood how the growing technological innovations can have an impact on the study of the aging process, as it studies the relationship between older people and changing new media technology. Existing studies indicate that older people are missing out on the enormous potential new media and the Internet have to benefit their lives (Morris & Brading, 2007). In other literature on older people's use of new media and the Internet, there appears to be a basic assumption that non-use is because of structural and financial constraints (Lloyd & Hellwig, 2000). Today information is provided digitally, and older adults are considered digital immigrants. Availability of digital information to older adults is anything but transient, and it is time to pay attention to this major problem (Loos, 2012).

The aged population has also gained access to various new media tools such as mobile phones and e-mail. The aging population in cities has access to new media technologies, and select population among the aged groups uses new media tools for their day-to-day needs, connecting with their family and friends. It can be said that new media can play a role in enriching lives by providing the purpose and scope for creative productivity. Hence, the challenges of aging, as well as the use of innovations in new media receive the primary concern for research. As older people may suffer from isolation considering the rapid changes in family structure and due to location and dislocation of family settings, many older adults might be relatively slow to adapt to the new media environment compared to younger generations, leading to a so called "grey digital divide," hence, the need to explore how older people are adapting to the changing technological environment and digital literacy.

## **Methodology**

The scope of my study was the city of Kolkata (Kolkata Municipal Corporation), which is the capital city of the eastern state West Bengal in India. Kolkata was formerly known as Calcutta and the colonial city was the capital of India until 1911 during the British Empire. Kolkata grew rapidly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century accompanied by the development of Indian culture inspired by European philosophies. Kolkata has a noteworthy revolutionary history including India's fight for independence from the British rule. It is also known as the educational center of the country and has the oldest operating port and hence attracts people from across the country and world. The city of Kolkata is entirely urban and contains one-third of the population of Kolkata Urban Agglomeration. The entire district is urban with a population of approximately 4.5 million (Forty Four Crore Ninety Seven Lakh)<sup>3</sup>. There are 144 wards in Kolkata Municipal Corporation, which is further divided into 16 boroughs<sup>4</sup>.

For the purpose of this study, a sample survey of people aged 60 years and older from the North, South, East and West zones of Kolkata Municipal Corporation were selected. For sampling purposes, the electoral lists, which are available for each ward, were used. Two wards from each zone and a sample of 20 respondents from each zone (i.e. 10 people from each ward was selected) mentioned above were surveyed. The idea behind this stratified sampling was to make the sample representative. An attempt has been made to provide equal representations from each zone.

This study is based on primary data collected through personal interviews and questionnaires administered through the survey. The questionnaire was a combination of open-ended and close-ended questions, as the objective of the study is to understand the usage of new media by the aging population. Before finalizing the questionnaire for survey, it was pre-tested among a group of aging participants who were selected randomly. In addition, the study also included participatory observation to gain further insight that contributed and added to the quantitative information regarding media related activities in the daily lives of older adults. Information on demographic variables including age, income, and educational level were collected to look for correlations with the use of new media.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://censusindia.gov.in/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/jsp/KMCPortalHome1.jsp>

## Results

### Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Out of the 80 respondents, 29 were male and 51 were female (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Gender**

	Frequency	Per-cent	Valid Per-cent	Cumulative Per-cent
Valid	Male	29	36.3	36.3
	Female	51	63.8	100.0
Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Cross tabulation data shows all the respondents were found to be using mobile phones and the Internet (some on a daily basis and some on weekly basis) (see Table 2).

**Table 2: Gender \* Zone Cross Tabulation**

		Gender * Zone Cross Tabulation		
		Male	Female	Total
Gender	North	06	14	20
	South	09	11	20
	East	03	17	20
	West	11	09	20
Total		29	51	80

Table 2 above shows a zone wise break-up of gender in terms of new media use. It shows that in the north zone 6 male and 14 female respondents were found to be using new media, in the south zone 9 were male and 11 were female, in the east zone 3 were male and 9 were female and in the west zone 11 were male and 9 were female respondents.

**Table 3: Gender \* Mobile Phone/ Smart phone/ Internet Frequency Cross Tabulation**

		Gender * Mobile Phone/ Smart phone/ Internet Frequency Cross Tabulation		
		Daily	Weekly	Total
Gender	Male	28	1	29
	Female	51	0	51
Total		79	1	80

Table 3 clearly shows that majority of the respondents uses new media on a daily basis, and one respondent was found to be using new media on a weekly basis. This finding reveals that aged people are accessing new media keeping at par with the younger generation. The new media ranges from mobile phones to smart phones to internet.

### Age

The age group of 60-64 years constitutes the major fraction of the participants (38.8%), followed by the age group 65-70 years (37.5%), 71-75 years (15%), 76-80 years (5%), and 81 years and above (3.8%) (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Age Group**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	60-64	31	38.8	38.8	38.8
	65-70	30	37.5	37.5	76.3
	71-75	12	15.0	15.0	91.3
	76-80	4	5.0	5.0	96.3
	81-85	3	3.8	3.8	100.0
Total		80	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5: Age Group \* Mobile Phone/ - Smart phone/ - Internet Frequency Cross Tabulation**

		Age Group * Mobile Phone/ Smart phone/ Internet Frequency Cross Tabulation		
		Daily	Weekly	Total
Age Group	60-64	30	1	31
	65-70	30	0	30
	71-75	12	0	12
	76-80	4	0	4
	81-85	3	0	3
Total		79	1	80

Cross tabulation of age group with the mobile usage shows that most respondents of all age groups use the mobile phones (smart/basic) on a daily basis. During the in-depth interviews, very few respondents above the age of 75 showed any interest in responding to the questions as they were not using new media such as mobile phones and computers. The frequency of using new media decreases with the increase of age. Studies elsewhere also give a significant reflection regarding technology adoption patterns by the older adults (Smith,2014). The study reveals that there is a decline of new media and Internet use among the aged and it decreases notably after the age of 75 (Smith, 2014).**Education**

The frequency table shows that out of the total participants interviewed, the majority of the respondents were graduates (60%), 17.5% studied until the intermediate level, 15% completed their post-graduate degrees, and 7.5% were found to have completed higher studies (doctorate or post doctorate) (see Table 6). All the respondents were educated, but the ease of new media use did not depend on that, as all of them were found to be using new media and the Internet irrespective of their educational background (see Table 7).

**Table 6: Educational Qualification**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Intermediate (high school)	14	17.5	17.5	17.5
	Graduate (college level)	48	60.0	60.0	77.5
	Post Graduate (university level)	12	15.0	15.0	92.5
	Higher Education (doctorate)	6	7.5	7.5	100.0
Total		80	100.0	100.0	

**Table 7: Educational Qualification \* Mobile Phone/ Smart phone/ Internet Frequency Cross Tabulation**

		Educational Qualification * Mobile Phone/ Smart phone/ Internet Frequency Cross Tabulation		
		Daily	Weekly	Total
Educational Qualification	Intermediate	14	0	14
	Graduate	47	1	48
	Post Graduate	12	0	12
	Higher Education	6	0	6
Total		79	1	80

The hypothesized fact that higher levels of education is linked to greater levels of apparent ease of use of new media by older adults seemed unsubstantiated as education had no direct correlation with the level of interest. The lack of a connection between education level and new media adoption has also been found to be consistent with prior research. For instance, Fox (2004) observed that the number of online older individuals has increased regardless of their educational qualification.

### Economic Profile

Respondents were mostly retired (37.5%) though housewives contributed to the majority (43.8%) (see Table 8). Out of the total participants, 13.8% were found to be still working, most of whom had their own business, and the remaining 5% were retired and still engaged in some vocational or part-time work. According to the findings, most of the respondents mostly represent pensioners. Women were mostly housewives and never had a job.

**Table 8: Economic Profile**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Working	11	13.8	13.8	13.8
	Retired	30	37.5	37.5	51.3
	Retired and Working	4	5.0	5.0	56.3
	Housewife	35	43.8	43.8	100.0
Total		80	100.0	100.0	

**Table 9: Economic Profile \* Mobile Phone/ - Smart Phone/ - Internet Frequency Cross Tabulation**

		Economic Profile * Mobile Phone/ Smart Phone/ Internet Frequency Cross Tabulation		
		Daily	Weekly	Total
Economic Profile	Working	11	0	11
	Retired	29	1	30
	Retired & Working	4	0	4
	Housewife	35	0	35
Total		79	1	80

The respondents were financially affluent and active in online media. In one study in the US, it was noted that prosperous and well-educated elderly adopt new media and the Internet at considerably higher rates compared to those with low income and educational qualifications (Smith, 2014). However, our findings show that all the respondents used new media on a daily basis, mostly for socializing and extracting information, especially the housewives and those who are retired (see Table 9). The senior citizens express opinions during interviews that to keep pace with the growing technological inflation they have to learn to use it and can not afford to remain isolated and devoid of social interactions.

## Discussion

### Being Elderly in the Media City

Along with the use of conventional mass media, elderly people in the city are increasingly becoming part of virtual communities. Our findings reveal that elderly people are more comfortable using conventional mass media as compared to new media. However, some of the elderly people enjoy interaction in new media through a variety of language forms, ranging from emoticons to group chat culture, clearly indicating a tendency to join the new virtual communication culture. The online experiences shared by the elderly respondents during a field survey reveal that though they face some problems in adapting to the new media technology, they feel the advanced computer mediated

communication has re-defined the construction of social support relationships. Both the immediacy and asynchrony of new media communication help them to construct real human relationships in the computer-generated community, including social connectedness to others and supportive and companionship relationships as well. Another perception derived out of their experiences is that the older adults could create a sense of greater proximity by sharing their old stories and memories by reconnecting with people close to them. Goyal and Dixit (2008) pointed out that social networking through new media opens up avenues for recreation in cases where the elderly suffer from a loss of physical health and decreasing physical connections.

Although, prior research on the usage of mass media by older adults reveals that television viewing goes up after the age of 50 years (Chaffee & Wilson, 1977), it is generally due to increased physical limitations related to advancing age. Older adults experiencing difficulties with hearing or seeing find television easier to deal with as it offers both oral and visual information together. So, elderly people basically turn to it when sensory loss discourages use of newspapers or radio. The activity theory of aging suggests that older adults tend to disengage from society and media researchers noted that when faced with this social contraction of life space, elderly people attempt to find alternative activities to fill the gap formed by the loss of earlier social roles. For instance, Graney and Graney (1974) noted media as a substitution or compensation for general decline experienced by elderly people. Thus, when activity substitutes are effectively found elderly people achieve a better and more substantial life situation and dealings with mass media provide the major source for activity substitution. A decrease in the ability to socialize and attend gatherings leads to increased TV viewing. Television watching in the old age acts as a substitute for lost contacts, giving the elderly the sense of participation in society to combat feelings of aloneness and isolation. According to a study by Korzenny and Neuendorf (1980), the process of disengagement from the society is not a neutral one as the negative typecasts of aging that portrays old people as burdens on some television programs may actually accelerate the withdrawal tendency of the aged by stimulating lower self-esteem. Such negative characterizations tend to promote self-concepts among the aged, as there is a general decline in self-esteem and confidence that match the portrayals. The visual immediacy of the medium makes them feel right inside the story or program.

The shift in demographic viewing is also caused by a combination of factors ranging from lower television penetration rates of the younger generation who prefer to spend more time in their smart gadgets. Some studies conducted in the west report that even in the age of new media, older adults like the actual print in newspapers better than the animated fonts on a screen (Jenkins, 2013). There are several studies in the UK and the

USA that have investigated the use of the Internet and new media by older adults. A report by Madden (2010) states that with the dramatic increase in the use of new media across all age groups, elderly users are not lagging behind and they have been especially fervent about embracing new networking tools. However, studies on the usage of new media by older users in India are rare. Most likely, because of lack of substantial studies it has not received prominence in Indian society with a view that aged people are no more part of the production process, hence unable to consume.

### **Changing Media Environment and Elderly**

One of the life' changes that is likely to accompany old age is a reduction in household size, which perhaps reaches a point where one is living alone. To be living by oneself while old may result in loneliness. In Indian society, the place for media consumption has traditionally been within the household, and media use has always been considered a group activity. Media use in itself turned out to be an appreciated activity that brought the family together (Dasgupta, 2016). All family members utilized the same television, newspaper, or radio and watching the same television program is a family affair (Morley, 1988). New media technology began a phase of increased individualization in media use. This increased individualization in media consumption is a direct result of two parallel developments; first the declining importance of traditional social family institutions and second the technological advancement of media equipment (McGrath, 2012).

Further, there are other factors, such as age, gender, family circumstances, education and occupational background, that affect an individual's willingness to consume various media. So, more specifically, there has been a change from a collective media use at home to a trend of increased individualization in media consumption. With the exception of desktop computers, it is an existing notion that senior citizens are less likely than other groups to own any digital devices compared to the younger age group. However, field survey also reveals that almost every respondent owned a cell phone and they know little about Internet use and hence could not begin to recognize its benefits.

Coming to conventional mass media use, daily newspaper readership is common among the elderly. It is a long time habit for older people to read print newspapers manually rather than using keypads or keyboards and a screen. Even the advent of new media has not been able to change that long time habit. For them, the charm of a newspaper cannot be replaced by the computers, tablets, or smart phones. Many of the respondents feel a sense of closeness when watching television with their grandchildren because perhaps that is the only time throughout the day when they get to spend time

together. They feel the younger generation is busy in their respective lives and some moments of watching a television program together give them the time to talk and share. These observations are informative in understanding the behavior of older towards the mass media. It is important to consider that a sizable majority of the elderly make regular use of the mass media and have the feeling of remaining in contact with the world around them.

### **New Media and Older Adults**

Much of the new media focus has been on its adoption by the young adults rather than adoption by the older adults. Understanding new media is a big and new question for the older adults. There is a general prevalent fear of using the computers and smart phones with the Internet among the aged. Undoubtedly, websites like Facebook and Twitter are much more popular among younger people compared to the elderly. But, as older people begin to use them for communicating and socializing with each other more and more, they realize that it offers the scope of connectivity with family and relatives living in distant locations. Thus, it became important to understand what the factors and possible reasons that may encourage or discourage the use of new media among the aged population are. Most of our respondents reported using social networking websites at least occasionally. The in-depth interviews revealed that the following factors are associated with older adults' interest in using new media.

First, one of the most predicting factors associated with aging and new media is perceived usefulness. It is evident from the interview that when older people feel that new media is very useful, the majority of them are interested in using them in the future and for more hours once they overcome their initial inhibitions and fear. Usefulness is measured in terms of how much an older individual thinks the new media can be used to meet some basic goals, such as communicating with family and friends. While discussing the usefulness quotient among the aged, it has been observed that new media have more value for the users when those users can connect with the near and dear ones they care about. Second, just like usefulness perceived comfort of use is another factor predicting the use of new media among elderly. The comfort of use factor significantly correlates with interest in using new media and the subsequent hours of use. More specifically, it is related to both how convenient it is to use the new media and how easy it is to get the applications of new media to do what they want them to do.

Another interesting factor affecting the pattern of new media use by elderly people is social pressure. Social networking websites with their numerous features are not much fun if one does not connect with other people, and in situations when family members use

such websites to share photographs of grandchildren and other updates. The results of this study supported the hypothesis that older respondents who felt more social pressure to join and use new media were more interested comparatively in using the websites and spent more hours using them. The paper also wanted to look at the demographic variables. For example, does gender play any role in interest in using new media? What about age, education, or occupational background? However, in this study, no differences were found between men and women when it comes to adapting to the changing new media environment. Both equally reported using new media in roughly equal percentages. Likewise, there was no correlation found between years of education and interest in using new media. On the other hand, age was negatively correlated with interest i.e. the older the participant, the less interest in using new media. Contradicting the common notion that those with professional background are the ones using new media comfortably even after retirement, there were many who have worked in high profile jobs in education or the finance sector but are uncomfortable using the new media tools and depend on friends and family for any online work that needs to be done. For example, a lady of 63 years of age who worked as a professor doesn't know how to handle a smart phone or laptop. She occasionally uses a desktop at her home with the help of her husband when she has to video chat with her son living abroad. She also admits that she gets help from her friends who are of same age to book a car or purchase movie ticket online. On the other hand there were some female respondents in the age group of 65-70 years who have never had a professional life; they are homemakers but now comfortably uses new media especially smart phones. They chat in groups in 'Whatsapp' and also have Facebook accounts. They use new media mainly for connecting with friends and children, in cases where they live in other places.

Lastly, it has been observed from the answers of the respondents that proper advice on new media is one way to consider the maximum reach and usage among older adults. Constant encouragement by the younger generation indicating the usefulness and convenience of using the new media can emphasize all the above factors for elderly people. Elderly people are in a precarious situation in society and most of them fear cyber-crime and are hesitant in using new media for purposes like online banking and bill payments as they fear they might be cheated. So, most of the elderly people feel that if they are given advice emphasizing the fact that new media and the various social networking sites are meant for connecting with distant family and friends and not for connecting with strangers and if they are made aware of the privacy issues and assisted in enabling proper privacy settings, their inhibitions can be decreased making them enthusiastic users of new media.

Out of the total respondents interviewed, almost half of the respondents remain disconnected from the Internet. Common reasons cited are less interest, no requirement, acute health issues and most importantly, fear of the new technology and lack of learning skills. However, those who are connected to new media go online at least once on an average day. It is also now the case, that once the older adults start using the Internet, they most often have access to high speed connections at home. Among all adults aged 65 and older, around 40 per cent say they have a broadband connection at home. Those who live with the next generation are the ones using new media out of interest and share that their children are the biggest inspiration for the new media use, and they use it with the feeling that they have support if they come across any problem or disruption. Hence, in order to raise the levels of awareness of new media usage (computer and Internet use) among elderly people, it is equally significant to understand the possible reasons leading to the older adults' being interested in or not interested in the new media. The majority of the respondents interviewed believed that new media had made a positive effect on their lives and that they would certainly miss it if they could no longer use it for any reason. These views generated from the study suggest that, although the respondents may use new media less, but they the same importance to their online access as their younger counterparts.

### **Conclusion**

In today's society, aging is generally viewed as a process, in which there is an irrepressible decline in both physical and mental abilities. Unfortunately, aging is labeled uselessness and is related to illness and suffering. During the fieldwork, meeting people with such diverse thoughts and backgrounds inspired the realization that "elderly" too general a term and not all people over 60 years old should be labeled as such. Each of the interviewees had their own individual characteristics, desires, and lifestyles. So, in simpler words aging is just a process of growing up, acquiring an abundance of experiences. As anticipated, it is also worth mentioning, that nearly all the elderly respondents watch television for several hours a day to keep in touch with the world. Adjusting to the changing media environment is not an easy task after reaching a certain age. The older people have been using conventional media all their lives and now they realize that they need to adopt a completely new media, which is quite challenging considering the age and general decline. Yet surprisingly, a majority of the older adults are overcoming inhibitions to accept the new media. Many interviewees mentioned that they became more confident after they started using new media. There is another aspect of psychology that works behind the increased confidence, that when the parents are using the same thing as their adult

children, they feel more fashionable and closer to the younger generation. New media technology is not only a communication tool for dealing with their loneliness, but rather a symbol that they are keeping pace with the times.

New media has become an important gateway for reducing isolation, loneliness and other depressive symptoms among older adults. The online domain among older people is considered as an achievement space where an elderly person could show proven abilities in dealing with the technology. If given some prior training they are capable of using it for sharing of information, Internet browsing for information, in addition socialization and reconnection through social networking communities and groups. Elderly people, though they still have difficulties, express happiness with the new media for one reason: that it enables them to communicate effectively and instantaneously and time and distance do not pose problems in their connectivity with their dear ones. Interestingly, educational or professional backgrounds have no direct cor-relation to the responses. A need for remaining connected with the dear ones act as the main motivational factor for older people. The idea that the technological device supported by the Internet can take them closer to their children or family staying miles away makes them adapt to the new media environment though for some overcoming the inhibitions of digital literacy takes a certain amount of time. The spread of new media tools are opening up new avenues in overcoming the emotional and psychological issues like depression, isolation, and low self-esteem, yet the ability to own and operate smart phones is still limited among the aged. Despite these limitations, the acceptance for this new medium of interactive communication is considered to be a boon for millions of older adults, and an increasing number of the elderly are rapidly opting for new media for a variety of personal, financial and social uses overcoming the barriers of digital literacy.

### **Recommendations**

The spread of new media tools are opening up new avenues in overcoming the emotional and psychological issues like depression, isolation, and low self-esteem yet the ability to own and operate smart phones is still limited among the aged. There are lessons to learn from the present study: This study helped in identifying the two inter-connected phenomena of new media – first, how new media can possibly be used by older adults and second, the associated risks and potential dangers of the online world. One possible outcome of the study would be the probable impact that new media can have in overcoming signs of depression and detachment among the older adults post-retirement when they face a sea of changes.

The following recommendations may be made on the basis of findings at hand:

1. With the probable positive impact that new media can have on older adults, old age homes and local communities and clubs can arrange digital literacy courses/campaigns especially meant for older adults.
2. Institutions may be approached to initiate centers especially meant for elderly people where they can avail the courses either free of charge or at a nominal price.
3. The companies, which deal with the products, meant for the older adults, could organize digital literacy campaigns to educate elders along with the promotion of their product or under their CSR activities.
4. The facility to provide the digital literacy in the regional languages of the senior citizens could become a major source of motivation, as many elderly fear that they will have to learn a completely new language to use computers.

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### **Biographical Note**

**Dr. Debarati Dhar** is an Assistant Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication at Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, affiliated to GGSIP University, New Delhi. She has done her doctoral thesis on New Media and Ageing Population of Kolkata, India. She has presented papers in a number of national and international conferences and has several publications under her name. She has also been a part of the UGC Epg-Pathshala Project/ 2017/ under the Ministry of Human Resource and Development, India and has authored 27 modules for Media and Communication Studies. She completed a research orientation programme at the Centre for Innovative Ageing at Swansea University, Wales, UK (2015) under UGC-UKIERI Thematic Partnership Programme.

She can be reached at Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies, AU- Block (Outer Ring Road), Pitampura, Delhi - 110034, India or by e-mail at [dhardebarati@gmail.com](mailto:dhardebarati@gmail.com)

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