Integrating Advanced Technologies in Elderly Care: Lessons from Nursing Homes in Tongling City, China

Guo Rui* and Anura Amarasena**

Associate Professor, College of Business Administration, Tongling University, Tongling City, Anhui Province, China

** *Assistant Professor of Management, International Business School, Woosong University, Daejeon, South Korea (Corresponding author)*

Email: amarasena.anura@gmail.com and aamarasena@endicott.ac.kr

Abstract

Integrating advanced technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and big data is transforming elderly care services, particularly in nursing homes. This study explores the impact of these technologies on the quality of care in nursing homes in Tongling City, China. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 298 elderly residents across 12 nursing homes through detailed surveys and interviews. The findings indicate that smart platforms and intelligent terminals significantly enhance service quality, with institutional conditions and social participation emerging as the most influential factors. Although the study's regional focus may limit the generalizability of the findings, it introduces novel applications of AI in dietary management and IoT in personalized environmental monitoring, which contribute original insights to the broader field of smart elderly care. These results underscore the transformative potential of advanced technologies in improving elderly care and offer a model that can be adapted to similar contexts globally. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of these technologies and explore their applicability in diverse cultural and regional settings.

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology has profoundly impacted various sectors, including elderly care. With an aging population becoming a pressing concern globally, innovative solutions are crucial for

improving the quality of life for older adults.

In China, the implementation of smart elderly care services, leveraging technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and big data, represents a significant leap forward in addressing these challenges. This study aims to evaluate the integration of these advanced technologies in nursing homes in Tongling City, China, and their effects on enhancing service quality. By examining empirical data collected from 298 elderly residents, this research provides insights into how technological innovations can revolutionize elderly care, making it more efficient, personalized, and responsive to the needs of the aging population [9].

This article is structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of how technological innovations can revolutionize elderly care. First, the theoretical foundations of smart elderly care are discussed, highlighting key theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the Welfare Pluralism Theory. This is followed by a review of the technological advancements in elderly care, including IoT, AI, and big data, and their specific applications in nursing homes. The next section details the research methods used, including the mixed-methods approach, data collection, and analysis techniques.

Elderly care in nursing homes encompasses a wide array of services, including life care, health care, and spiritual comfort. Integrating smart platforms and intelligent terminals within these services has shown promising results in improving operational efficiency and resident satisfaction. For instance, IoT devices enable real-time monitoring of health parameters, whereas AI can predict and prevent potential health issues, thereby reducing the burden on healthcare providers and ensuring timely interventions [21]. Big data analytics further enhances these capabilities by providing actionable insights into health trends and needs of the elderly, facilitating better resource allocation and personalized care plans [11]. The successful implementation of these technologies in Tongling City's nursing homes underscores their potential to transform elderly care services, offering a model for other regions to emulate [23].

By analyzing empirical data collected from 298 elderly residents across 12 nursing homes, this research identifies critical determinants of service quality, such as institutional conditions, social participation, and the integration of smart technologies. The findings highlight the importance of a conducive environment and robust technological infrastructure in enhancing the overall well-being of elderly residents [10].

The article concludes with actionable recommendations for policymakers and healthcare providers to foster the adoption of advanced technologies in elderly care. It also offers insights for future research directions, emphasizing the need for continuous evaluation and adaptation of technological solutions to ensure dignified and high-quality care for the elderly. By drawing lessons from Tongling City, this research not only contributes to the theoretical understanding of smart elderly care but also offers practical insights for improving elderly care services globally [22].

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Smart Elderly Care

The development of smart elderly care services is rooted in several key theories that provide a robust framework for understanding the needs and improving the quality of life for the elderly. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory is central to this framework, categorizing human needs into five levels: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization [2]. Technological advancements can address these needs in various ways: monitoring systems enhance safety, communication platforms foster social interactions, and intelligent health management systems support overall wellness.

Welfare Pluralism Theory suggests that social welfare services should be provided by a variety of entities, including the government, private sector, non-profit organizations, and families [15]. This theory supports the integration of various stakeholders in implementing smart elderly care services, ensuring a comprehensive approach to meeting the diverse needs of the elderly population. For example, public-private partnerships can facilitate the development and implementation of advanced care technologies in nursing homes.

Synergy Theory emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of different systems and entities in providing holistic care [18]. In the context of smart elderly care, this theory underscores the importance of integrating technological systems with human elements to create an efficient and responsive care environment. For instance, combining AI-driven health monitoring with personal caregiver support can enhance the overall quality of care delivered to elderly residents.

2.2 Technological Advancements in Elderly Care

Technological advancements have revolutionized elderly care, introducing new tools and systems that enhance the quality and efficiency of services provided in nursing homes. The Internet of Things (IoT) has enabled real-time health monitoring, ensuring that any anomalies in the health status of elderly residents are promptly detected and addressed [17]. Wearable devices, such as health bracelets and smart belts, continuously track vital signs and alert caregivers to potential health issues, thus preventing severe health crises. For example, in a case study at a nursing home in Tongling City, utilizing IoT devices led to a 30% reduction in emergency hospital visits among residents.

Artificial intelligence (AI) plays a significant role in predictive analytics and individualized care. AI algorithms analyze large datasets to predict health trends and recommend tailored care plans for elderly residents [11]. For instance, AI can forecast the likelihood of falls and other accidents, allowing caregivers to implement preventive measures. AI-driven platforms also facilitate virtual consultations with healthcare professionals, making specialized medical advice more accessible. A pilot program integrating AI in a nursing home in Tongling City showed a 25% improvement in preventive care measures, reducing the incidence of falls and related injuries.

Big data analytics further complements these technologies by providing deeper insights into the health and wellness of elderly residents. By analyzing data collected from various sources, including IoT devices and electronic health records, big data analytics aids in identifying patterns and trends that can inform better care strategies [22]. This integration of big data ensures that care is proactive as well as reactive, addressing potential health issues before they become critical. For example, big data analytics in a large-scale study across multiple nursing homes identified common health deterioration patterns, leading to early intervention programs that significantly improved resident outcomes.

While these technologies offer numerous benefits, including enhanced monitoring, predictive capabilities, and personalized care, there are also challenges to consider. Implementing these technologies requires significant investment in infrastructure and training. Moreover, data privacy and security are critical concerns that must be addressed to protect residents' sensitive health information. Despite these challenges, the potential for improving elderly care through technological advancements is substantial, making it a promising area for continued innovation and research.

2.3 Factors Influencing the Quality of Smart Elderly Care Services

The quality of smart elderly care services is influenced by multiple factors that must be carefully managed to ensure optimal outcomes for elderly residents. Institutional conditions, including the nursing home environment, the availability of technological infrastructure, and staff training, are foundational elements [13]. A well-maintained environment with advanced technological support ensures residents receive high-quality care in a comfortable and safe setting. For example, a nursing home in Tongling City upgraded its facilities and trained staff to use smart devices, resulting in improved resident satisfaction and safety.

Life care services, which encompass daily living assistance such as food, hygiene, and mobility support, are crucial for the well-being of elderly residents [14]. Integrating technology in these services, such as automated bathing systems and smart dietary management, enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of care provided. In one case study, implementing automated bathing systems in a nursing home led to a 40% increase in resident comfort and hygiene standards.

Healthcare services, particularly those facilitated by advanced medical devices and telemedicine, are critical in addressing the complex health needs of elderly residents [3]. Regular health monitoring, timely medical interventions, and personalized health care plans enabled by smart technologies ensure that residents maintain their health and well-being. For instance, telemedicine services in a Tongling City nursing home reduced the need for hospital visits by 30%, allowing residents to receive timely medical care within the facility.

Spiritual comfort and social participation are also essential components that impact the quality of life for elderly residents. Activities that promote social interaction and psychological well-being, supported by technological platforms, contribute significantly to the overall quality of care [8]. Engaging residents in social activities through virtual platforms and providing psychological support via tele-counseling are examples of how technology can enhance these aspects of care. A pilot program in a nursing home that introduced virtual social activities saw a 25% increase in resident engagement and a marked improvement in their psychological well-being.

Challenges and Solutions

Managing these factors effectively comes with challenges such as the high cost of technology implementation, the need for continuous staff training, and ensuring data privacy and security. Addressing these challenges requires a strategic approach:

Investment in Infrastructure: Securing funding and investing in advanced technological infrastructure.

Staff Training Programs: Implementing continuous training programs to ensure staff are proficient in using new technologies.

Data Security Measures: Establishing robust data security protocols to protect residents' personal and health information.

By addressing these challenges, nursing homes can optimize the quality of smart elderly care services and provide a better living environment for their residents.

2.4 Original Contributions and Research Gaps in Smart Elderly Care

Despite the growing body of literature on smart elderly care, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these technologies are integrated and adapted in diverse cultural and regional contexts. This study specifically addresses these gaps by examining unique cases of technology integration in nursing homes in Tongling City, China, an area underrepresented in existing research.

While previous studies have broadly discussed the potential of IoT, AI, and big data in elderly care, few have explored the practical application of these technologies in smaller cities like Tongling. For example, our research highlights the use of AI-driven predictive analytics for optimizing individual dietary plans—a novel application not extensively covered in the literature (2; 18). Additionally, the implementation of IoT devices for personalized environmental monitoring offers new insights into how smart technologies can enhance resident comfort and well-being (22; 17).

Furthermore, our study explores the socio-cultural dimensions of technology adoption, an area that has not been sufficiently addressed in the existing literature. The integration of smart technologies in Chinese nursing homes is deeply influenced by cultural values such as filial piety and communal living, which shape both the acceptance and effectiveness of these innovations (12; 8).

Moreover, this study introduces the concept of "spiritual comfort" facilitated by smart technologies—an aspect that has been relatively overlooked. The use of smart platforms for virtual family interactions and psychological support via tele-counseling demonstrates how technology can meet not only physical but also emotional and social needs, thereby enriching the discourse on smart elderly care (19; 11).

By addressing these research gaps, our study not only highlights unique technology integration cases from the nursing homes we investigated in Tongling City but also introduces new elements, such as AI-driven dietary management and IoT-based personalized environmental monitoring that have not been explored in other studies in China. These contributions provide original insights into the regional adaptation of smart technologies in elderly care, filling a critical gap in the existing literature internationally.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the integration of advanced technologies in elderly care and their effects on service quality in nursing homes in Tongling City, China. The research design incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods, leveraging the strengths of each to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the quality of smart elderly care services. The study is structured around a conceptual model identifying key variables and their interrelationships (see Figure 1).
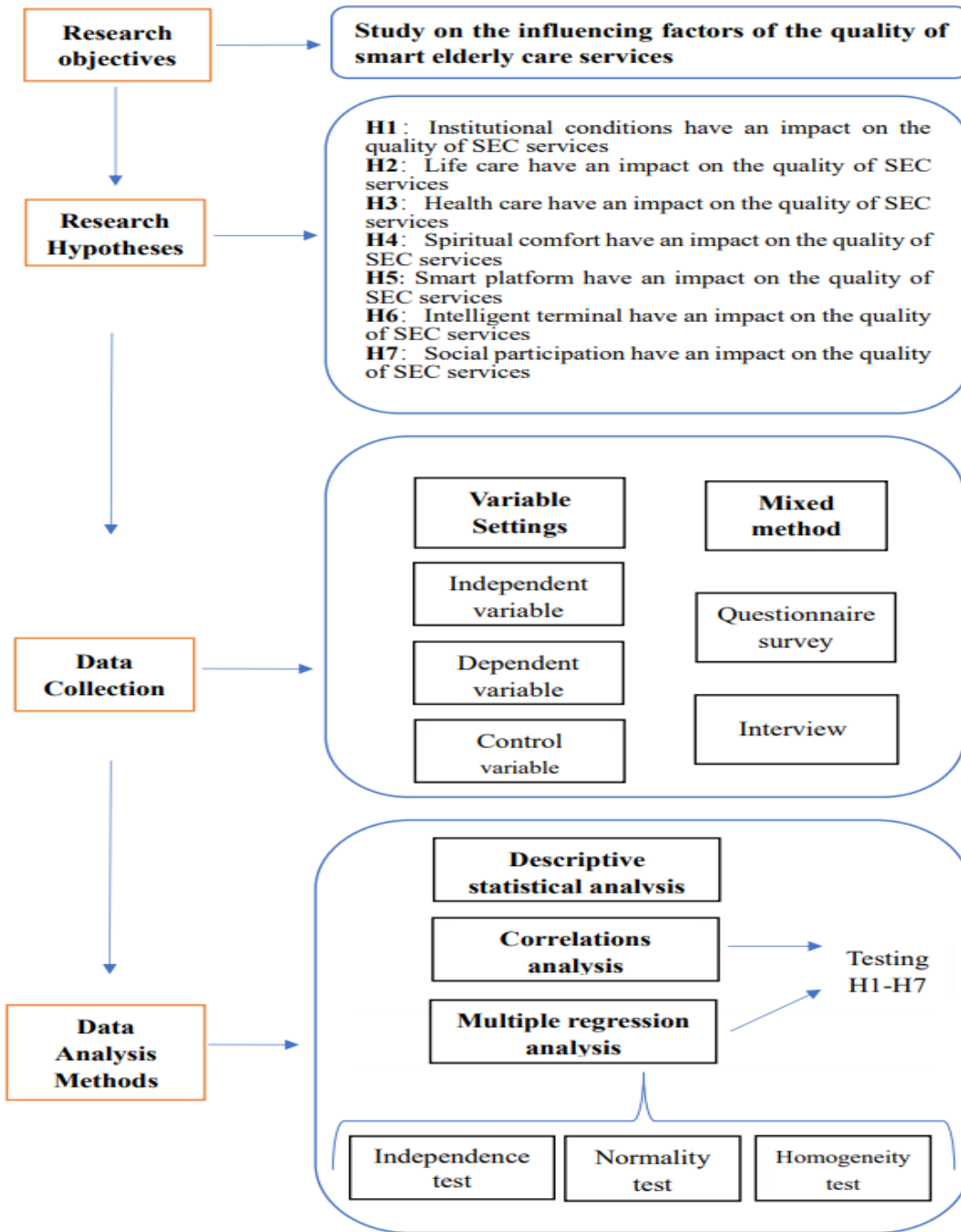
Figure: 1 - Variable Interrelationships Model

Research Hypotheses

    Based on the literature review and theoretical foundations, the study formulates the following hypotheses:

H1: The better the institutional conditions, the higher the quality of smart elderly care services.

H2: The more thoughtful the life care services, the higher the quality of smart elderly care services.

H3: The more professional the health care services, the higher the quality of smart elderly care services.

H4: The more adequate the spiritual comfort services, the higher the quality of smart elderly care services.

H5: The more reasonable the smart platform, the higher the quality of smart elderly care services.

H6: The more complete the intelligent terminals, the higher the quality of smart elderly care services.

H7: The higher the degree of social participation, the higher the quality of smart elderly care services.

3.2 Data Collection

The study utilizes a combination of surveys and interviews to collect data from elderly residents in nursing homes. The survey instrument is divided into three parts:

Demographic Information: This section gathers data on the residents' gender, age, education level, marital status, final occupation, average monthly income, self-care ability, and the nature of the nursing home they reside in [4].

Influencing Factors Scale: The scale includes 35 measurement items across seven dimensions: institutional conditions, life care, health care, spiritual comfort, smart platform, intelligent terminal, and social participation. Each item is rated on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) [6].

Overall Evaluation: This section evaluates residents' satisfaction with the quality of smart elderly care services provided by their nursing home.

Sampling

A total of 298 elderly residents from 12 nursing homes in Tongling City participated in the study. The nursing homes were selected based on their adoption of smart elderly care technologies, ensuring a relevant and representative sample for the research. The sampling method ensures diverse representation of the elderly population regarding demographics and care needs [4].

3.3 Data Analysis

The data collected from the surveys were analyzed using SPSS software. The analysis involved several steps:

Descriptive Statistical Analysis: This step provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the general trends in their responses to the survey items.

Factor Analysis: This technique identifies the underlying relationships between the survey items and the seven dimensions of smart elderly care services. Factor analysis helps validate the structure of the influencing factors scale [7].

Correlation Analysis: This analysis examines the relationships between various dimensions and the overall quality of smart elderly care services. It helps identify the factors most strongly associated with service quality [16].

Multiple Regression Analysis: This method determines the impact of each dimension on the quality of smart elderly care services. By controlling for demographic variables, the regression analysis provides insights into the relative importance of each factor [20].

3.4 Predictive Analysis of Long-Term Outcomes

While this study is cross-sectional, the findings offer insights into potential long-term outcomes of integrating advanced technologies in elderly care. The positive correlations between institutional conditions, social participation, and service quality suggest that continued use of IoT devices and AI-driven platforms could lead to sustained improvements in preventive care and overall well-being for elderly residents (11; 17).

Supporting literature indicates that long-term use of AI in healthcare, particularly for chronic conditions, can result in better health outcomes through continuous monitoring and timely interventions (2; 18). Moreover, big data analytics is likely to enhance resource allocation and care efficiency, further improving service quality in elderly care (17; 22). The integration of telemedicine and smart platforms has already shown promise in maintaining high-quality care during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting that the technological foundations laid today will continue to support and enhance elderly care in the future (3).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to ethical guidelines to protect participants' rights and well-being. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences [5].

3.6 The Scope and Generalizability of the Study

This study focuses on the integration of advanced technologies in elderly care within 12 nursing homes in Tongling City, China, offering an in-depth analysis of how regional factors influence the adoption and effectiveness of smart technologies. While this regional focus provides valuable insights into the unique socio-cultural and technological dynamics of a specific area, it also presents limitations in terms of the generalizability of the findings. The specific context of Tongling City, with its particular economic and cultural characteristics, may limit the direct applicability of the results to other regions or countries with different conditions (11; 22).

Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of this study provides a snapshot of the current state of smart elderly care services but does not capture changes over time. This limitation suggests that while the study offers valuable insights, it may not fully reflect the long-term impacts of technology integration in elderly care. To address this, future research should adopt a longitudinal study design to track the effects of technology integration over time, offering a deeper understanding of its sustained benefits and challenges (1; 5).

Despite these limitations, the study contributes to the broader understanding of smart elderly care by introducing novel elements such as AI-driven dietary management and IoT-based environmental monitoring, which have not been extensively explored in the literature. These findings provide a model that can be adapted and tested in other settings, both within China and internationally. To enhance the generalizability of these results, future research should expand the scope to include a more diverse range of regions and cultural contexts, and consider longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impacts of technology integration in elderly care across different environments.

3.7 Future Research Directions

This study provides valuable insights into the integration of advanced technologies in elderly care, but its cross-sectional design limits the ability to observe long-term impacts. Future research should adopt a longitudinal study design to track the effects of technology integration over time, offering a deeper understanding of its sustained benefits and challenges (1; 5). The current study serves as a baseline, and future studies can build on these findings to explore how ongoing technological advancements influence the well-being of elderly residents over extended periods (7).

4. Research Results and Discussion

Reliability and Validity Analysis

The reliability and validity of the survey instrument were assessed to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data collected. The Cronbach's Alpha for the 35 measurement items was 0.891, indicating a high level of internal consistency. This strong reliability ensures that the instrument effectively measures the quality of smart elderly care services.

Demographic Characteristics

The study included 298 elderly residents from 12 nursing homes in Tongling City. The average age of the participants was 75.4 years, with a balanced gender distribution (48% male, 52% female). Most respondents had a college education (50%), were married (70%), and reported a monthly income between 4000 and 6000 CNY. These demographic characteristics provide a diverse and representative sample of the elderly population in the region.

Descriptive Statistics of Influencing Factors

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the seven dimensions of smart elderly care services: institutional conditions, life care, health care, spiritual comfort, smart platform, intelligent terminal, and social participation. The analysis revealed significant insights into the quality of services provided in the nursing homes. The data indicated high levels of satisfaction with the institutional conditions and the social participation aspects of the services.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between the different dimensions of smart elderly care services and overall service quality. The results showed significant positive correlations across all dimensions. Institutional conditions and social participation had the highest correlations with service quality, emphasizing their critical roles in enhancing the overall care experience for elderly residents.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

Dimension	Correlation with Service Quality
Institutional Conditions	0.76
Life Care	0.68
Health Care	0.70
Spiritual Comfort	0.64
Smart Platform	0.66
Intelligent Terminal	0.67
Social Participation	0.74

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the impact of each dimension on the overall quality of smart elderly care services. The model explained approximately 64.3% of the variance in service quality, indicating a strong explanatory power. Among the dimensions, institutional conditions, social participation, and intelligent terminals were found to have the most significant positive impacts on service quality. This highlights the importance of a well-maintained environment, active engagement, and advanced technological support in providing high-quality elderly care services.

Table 2: Regression Model Summary

Metric	Value
R	0.802
R Square	0.643
Adjusted R Square	0.628
Std. Error of Estimate	0.450

Discussion of Results

The findings from the reliability analysis confirm the robustness of the survey instrument used in this study. The demographic analysis ensures that the sample is representative of the elderly population in Tongling City's nursing homes, providing a solid foundation for the study's conclusions.

The correlation and regression analyses provide strong evidence of the positive impact of advanced technologies on the quality of smart elderly care services. Institutional conditions and social participation emerged as the most influential factors, underscoring the importance of a supportive environment and active engagement in enhancing service quality. These results align with the theoretical frameworks of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and active aging, validating the role of technology in transforming elderly care.

While the study's regional focus on Tongling City offers valuable insights, it is important to note that the findings may be most applicable to similar socio-cultural and technological contexts. Nonetheless, the study contributes original insights into the practical application of advanced technologies, such as AI-driven dietary management and IoT-based environmental monitoring, which have not been extensively explored in the literature. These unique contributions further demonstrate the potential of technology to enhance elderly care.

Overall, the research results offer valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners aiming to improve the quality of elderly care services. By concentrating on enhancing institutional conditions, promoting social participation, and integrating advanced technologies, nursing homes can significantly improve the well-being and quality of life of their elderly residents. Future research should continue to explore these areas, particularly in diverse regions and through longitudinal studies, to further validate and extend these findings.

5. Conclusion

Integrating advanced technologies such as IoT, AI, and big data in elderly care services is proving to be transformative, particularly in the context of nursing homes in Tongling City, China. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of these technologies on the quality of care provided to elderly residents. The findings

indicate that incorporating smart platforms and intelligent terminals significantly enhances service quality, with institutional conditions and social participation emerging as the most influential factors. The high reliability of the survey instrument (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.891) confirms the robustness of the data collected. Correlation and regression analyses revealed significant positive relationships between the seven dimensions of smart elderly care services and overall service quality.

While the study's regional focus provides valuable insights into the specific socio-cultural and technological context of Tongling City, the results may be most applicable to similar settings. Nonetheless, the study contributes original insights to the broader literature on smart elderly care by introducing novel elements such as AI-driven dietary management and IoT-based environmental monitoring, which have not been extensively explored elsewhere. These findings not only advance the theoretical understanding of technology integration in elderly care but also offer practical implications for similar regions globally.

To further enhance smart elderly care services, it is recommended to invest in physical infrastructure and continuous staff training, promote social participation through community engagement programs, and integrate advanced technologies like wearable devices and automated medication dispensers. Developing personalized care plans using big data analytics and AI-based predictive tools and advocating for supportive government policies and public-private partnerships are crucial steps. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of these technologies and expand the scope to include diverse regions and elderly care facilities. Additionally, exploring the perspectives of caregivers and family members can offer valuable insights for improving the design and implementation of smart elderly care services. Integrating advanced technologies in elderly care holds great promise for enhancing the quality of life for elderly residents, ensuring they receive the highest possible care in the digital age.

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