EVALUATION OF OPINIONS OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE LATE ADULTHOOD PERIOD ON THE DIGITAL WORLD

AVALIAÇÃO DAS OPINIÕES DE INDIVÍDUOS NO FINAL DA FASE ADULTA SOBRE O MUNDO DIGITAL

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Abstract. For successful aging, determining the vital needs and educational needs of individuals in advanced adulthood, and creating training programs to meet these needs is important for the continuity of the socialization process and the socialization of late adult individuals in this process. When the current conditions (pandemic process) are taken into consideration, one of the most important tools of this socialization process is the elements of the digital world. This study aims to reveal the current situation regarding the connections of individuals in late adulthood with the digital world, to determine their needs based on the evaluation of this situation, and to put forward recommendations for meeting these needs. The study was carried out with a qualitative method and is in the case study pattern. The study group consists of 17 late adult individuals over 65. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview form. Descriptive analysis was used in the analysis of the data. As a result of the study, it was revealed that the individuals in the study group used smartphones most frequently, and they followed "Facebook" and "WhatsApp" among the applications. Among the reasons for using social media, following the news and communicating with acquaintances were frequently emphasized. These reasons are also stated as the advantages of the digital world. At the end of the study, recommendations on the usage of technology can be made including information in the form of public service ads and short videos through television channels and sharing application steps visually.

Keywords: Late adulthood, digital world instruments, adult psychology, adult learning

Resumo. Para um envelhecimento bem-sucedido, determinar as necessidades vitais e educacionais de indivíduos na idade adulta avançada e criar programas de treinamento para atender a essas necessidades é importante para a continuidade do processo de socialização e a socialização de indivíduos adultos tardios nesse processo. Quando as condições atuais (processo pandêmico) são levadas em consideração, uma das ferramentas mais importantes desse processo de socialização são os elementos do mundo digital. Este estudo tem como objetivo revelar a situação atual em relação às conexões de indivíduos na idade adulta tardia com o mundo digital, determinar suas necessidades com base na avaliação dessa situação e apresentar recomendações para atender a essas necessidades. O estudo foi realizado com um método qualitativo e segue o padrão de estudo de caso. O grupo de estudo é composto por 17 indivíduos adultos tardios com mais de 65 anos. Os dados foram coletados por meio de um formulário de entrevista semiestruturada. A análise descritiva foi usada na análise dos dados. Como resultado do estudo, foi

revelado que os indivíduos do grupo de estudo usaram smartphones com mais frequência e seguiram "Facebook" e "WhatsApp" entre os aplicativos. Entre os motivos para usar mídias sociais, acompanhar as notícias e se comunicar com conhecidos foram frequentemente enfatizados. Esses motivos também são declarados como as vantagens do mundo digital. No final do estudo, recomendações sobre o uso da tecnologia podem ser feitas, incluindo informações na forma de anúncios de serviço público e vídeos curtos por meio de canais de televisão e compartilhamento de etapas do aplicativo visualmente.

Palavras-chave: Idade adulta tardia, instrumentos do mundo digital, psicologia adulta, aprendizagem de adultos

1. INTRODUCTION

New communication technologies have emerged as a result of the change and transformation of the relationship between the individual and technology. Therefore, they have pervaded every aspect of daily life. The increase in internet usage rates all over the world every year is an indicator of this situation.

Technology and the new generation of communication devices it has added to our lives have gradually become the actors of a parallel world living with humanity (Artut, 2014). In this context, the number of individuals reached by the internet, which surrounds our lives, is increasing daily. Undoubtedly, the age factor comes first among these criteria so much so that age becomes a determining factor in technology (Baran, Kurt, & Tekeli, 2017).

It is stated that the relationship between the individuals in the late adulthood period and the new communication technologies is important and undeniable. Therefore, new communication technologies are seen as indispensable elements in continuing social life today. In addition, it is stated that they have an important role to play in solving social problems (Özkan & Purutçuoğlu, 2010).

It is emphasized that the effective use of the elements in the digital world by individuals in the late adulthood period is important in terms of social cohesion and quality of life. An individual in late adulthood needs to have a healthy mindset, to be physically healthy, and to feel good emotionally and psychologically (Dijk, 2016).

From this point of view, it is stated that the use of media devices will provide composition and writing practice in directing creativity, and can contribute to improving social aspects such as memory and intellect (Maigret, 2013). It is stated that individuals in the late adulthood period use the Internet for information, communication, transfer and management, leisure, and entertainment purposes (Gros, Garcia, & Escofet, 2016). Prensky (2001) states that individuals in late adulthood socialize differently from their children and are currently learning a different language.

The concept of late adulthood is defined by the dictionary as “being old and showing the effects of increased age”. Aging encompasses biological processes, social processes, and cultural processes. Changes in family structure, modernization, and variance in economic and technological terms are important factors for the elderly to engage in different behaviors in their world (Duyar, 2008).

In this context, there are changes in the physical and mental functions and behaviors of the individual with old age, therefore some daily activities are limited which makes it difficult for them to adapt to society (Gamberini et al., 2006).

Individuals who experience the period of late adulthood fulfill an important social function by transferring the events and information of their past lives and the values of their families to the next generation (Fingerman & Pitzer, 2007).

In the changing digital world, elderly individuals withdraw from production, their roles and statuses change with retirement, they can suffer from social loneliness, their dependence on others increases and they can spend a longer time at home (Abbey & Hyde, 2009). Therefore,

during this period, elderly individuals begin to use technological devices for a longer time and more frequently (Akyazı, 2018).

Individuals in the late adulthood period may have a certain level of anxiety about using and adapting to digital technology. As in all age groups, individuals in old age can also use the positive aspects of the digital world, and they can see the benefits of technology in terms of continuing the socialization process, communicating with family and friends, and living an independent life (Uysal, 2020).

In the ever-changing world of information and technology, it is seen that the elderly population is considered a group that cannot follow the developments and keep up with the technology and is underdeveloped in terms of innovations (Görgün, Koçak, & Serdar, 2017). Elderly individuals who were born grew up, and socialized in a non-digital world enter the process of adaptation with the introduction of technology into their lives (Hargittai, 2001).

Although young individuals are the first group to adapt to the internet, it is suggested that the rate of internet use by individuals in the late adulthood period will increase in the next 5-10 years (Pecchioni, 2005). Individuals in the late adulthood period in Turkey and the world have lower rates of technology adoption compared to other population groups.

Today, however, this group is more "connected" digitally than ever before. According to the results of a study conducted in the United States, it is seen that the adoption of the Internet has increased among individuals in the late adulthood period, as in the entire population. In the early 2000s, the rate of internet users among older adults over the age of 65 was 14%, while it is stated that 67% of this population is online today (Abbey & Hyde, 2009).

According to the results of the same research, it is stated that the rate of those who own a smartphone has doubled in the last five years, and the use of smartphones has increased rapidly, especially among individuals in the late adulthood period. It is emphasized that today, half of the individuals in the late adulthood period have a smartphone, while this rate was only 23% in 2013 (Tekedere and Arpacı, 2016).

While the rate of smartphone ownership in the 65-69 age group is 59%, this rate drops to 49% in the 70-74 age group and declines to 17% over the age of 80 (Becerikli, 2013). This means that the adoption and use of smartphones drops significantly in the mid-70s and beyond. There is also a significant increase in the number of individuals in the late adulthood period who have broadband services at home.

It is stated that nearly half (51%) of individuals in the late adulthood period use high-speed internet at home (Öztürk, 2005). As a result, it is stated that the use of social media among individuals in the late adulthood period has increased.

It is reported that 34% of elderly Americans over the age of 65 use social networking sites today such as Facebook and Twitter, and that social media usage is more common in individuals with higher education levels (Chakraborty et al., 2013).

As can be seen from the results of the research, when compared to the digital generation growing up with the internet, individuals in the late adulthood period are always one step behind in their relations with the digital (Cangöz, 2009). Therefore, keeping up with the fluidity that has entered our lives with the internet has become the new requirement of individuals in the late adulthood period, and these people are faced with the situation of integrating internet technologies into their lives significantly (Özsungur, 2018).

Especially in the late adulthood period, with the slowing down of information processing, these technologies must be included in the related learning process. From this point of view, it can be said that the study aims to reveal the current situation regarding the connections of individuals in the late adulthood period with the digital world, to evaluate these situations, to identify their needs, and to put forward suggestions for meeting these needs.

2. METHOD AND STUDY GROUP

The study was carried out with a qualitative method and is in a case study pattern. The study group consists of 17 late adult individuals over 65 who agreed to participate in the research.

Data were collected through a semi-structured interview form. Adhering to the principle of volunteerism, a semi-structured interview form consisting of 16 questions prepared by the research group was applied to the participants.

Descriptive analysis was used in the analysis of the data, and suggestions were presented in line with the findings.

3. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1. Age distribution

Age interval	***f***	**%**
65-74	**8**	**47,1**
75-84	**8**	**47,1**
85 and above	**1**	**5,9**
Total	**17**	**100**

Eighty-four percent of the participants in the study group are between the ages of 65-84. The rate of participants over the age of 85 is 5.9 percent.

Table 2. Distribution by Gender

Gender	***f***	**%**
F	8	47,1
M	9	52,9
Total	**17**	**100**

The majority of the study group (52.9%) consisted of males.

Table 3. Distribution by Marital Status

Marital Status	***f***	**%**
Married	12	70,6
Widow	5	29,4
Total	**17**	**100**

70.6% of the participants in the study group are married.

Table 4. Distribution by the people they live with

Household	***f***	**%**
Alone	4	23,5
With spouse	6	35,3
Spouse and Children (daughter-in-law/son-in-law/grandchildren)	6	35,3
Children (daughter-in-law/son-in-law/grandchildren)	1	5,9
Total	**17**	**100**

70.6% of the individuals in the study group live with their spouses and/or children. The rate of those living alone was 23.5%.

Table 5. Distribution by digital instrument(s) used

Digital instrument	***f***	**%**
Only smart phone	9	52,9
Only computer	2	11,8
Smartphone and computer	1	5,9

Smartphone and tablet	2	11,8
Smartphones, tablet, and computer	3	17,7
total	**17**	**100**

While 52.9% of the late adult individuals participating in the study stated that they only use smartphones, 17.7% stated that they use tablets and computers together with smartphones.

Table 6. Distribution by social media account used

Social media account	***f***	**%**
Only Facebook	9	52,9
Only WhatsApp	2	11,8
Facebook and WhatsApp	4	23,5
Facebook-WhatsApp-Instagram	1	5,9
Facebook-WhatsApp-Messenger	1	5,9
Total	**17**	**100**

52.3% of the participants only use Facebook as their social media account. The rate of those who use WhatsApp applications together with Facebook was determined as 23.5%.

Table 7. Distribution according to following the daily newspapers

Following newspapers	***f***	**%**
I do not follow them	2	11,8
From the internet	10	58,8
By purchasing	4	23,5
Both from the internet and by purchasing	1	5,9
Total	**17**	**100**

While 11.8% of the participants stated that they do not follow any daily newspaper, the rate of those who follow the daily newspapers online is 66.17%.

Table 8. Distribution according to reasons for being in the digital world

Reasons	***f***	**%**
Communication with acquaintances	11	64,7
Following the news	14	82,4
Playing games	3	17,7
Watching videos related to the field of interest	8	47,1

As the reason for being in the digital world, news follow-up was ranked first with a rate of 82.4%. The rate of communication with acquaintances is 64.7%.

Table 9. Distribution by status of receiving support while creating a social media account

Status of Support	***f***	**%**	**A person who gave support**
Yes, I received support	13	76,5	My daughter, my son, my grandchild, my neighbor
No, I did not receive support	4	23,5	
Total	**17**	**100**	

76.5% of the participants said that they received support in creating a social media account. In addition, they stated their children, grandchildren, and neighbors as the people from whom they received support.

Table 10. Distribution by point of view to the digital world

Point of View	*f*	%	Explanations
Advantages	15	88,2	Receiving news, Video chat with distant relatives, Accessing information, It offers a wide window,
Disadvantages	8	47,1	Hearing bad news, Visiting the wrong sites, Entering other people's pages instead of the person you are looking for, Abuse, Fraud, Misuse, Lack of face-to-face social relationships Conducive to cheating, Sharing images that do not conform to our moral values, It destroys physical movement, Addiction among teenagers and children

While 88.2% of the participants emphasized the advantages of the digital world, 47.1% emphasized the disadvantages. Among the advantages of the digital world, receiving news, accessing information, video chatting with distant relatives, and providing a wide window were mentioned.

Among the disadvantages the following are highlighted: hearing bad news, visiting the wrong sites, visiting the pages of the people you are looking for, abuse, fraud, misuse, cheating, sharing that does not conform to moral values, destroying physical movement, addiction among young people and children.

Table 11. Satisfaction with the digital world compared to the past.

Status of satisfaction	*f*	%	Explanations
Satisfied	8	47,1	
Partially satisfied	3	17,7	Satisfied only in terms of communication Important to keep up with the times
Not satisfied	6	35,3	Just a compelling need In the past, no one was in a race, Divorces have increased because everyone is in everyone's private life,
Total	**17**	**100**	

Considering satisfaction with the digital world, 47.1% of the participants stated that they were satisfied whereas 35.3% of them stated that they were not satisfied with the digital world. Among the reasons for dissatisfaction, it was emphasized that it revealed private lives too much, forced people into races, and caused divorces.

The emphasis of those who were partially satisfied was that the digital world does not have a positive side other than communication and keeping up with the times.

Table 12. The situation of eliminating the sense of loneliness in the digital world

Status of eliminating the sense of loneliness	*f*	%	Explanations
Yes, it is effective	8	47,1	I don't understand how the time passes
No, it is not effective	3	17,7	It's not like meeting face-to-face
Partially effective	5	29,4	It is not a substitute for real sharing
I have no idea	1	5,9	
Total	**17**	**100**	

47.1% of the participants stated that the digital world is effective in eliminating the feeling of loneliness. In the research, 29.4% of participants stated that it is partially effective, and they emphasized that the digital world is not a substitute for real sharing, but is effective in terms of passing time.

Table 13. Distribution according to the most difficult subjects in the digital world

Subjects	***f***	**%**
I do not have trouble with anything	6	35,3
Not being able to fix a mistake	1	5,9
New features/updates	1	5,9
Being complicated	4	23,5
Texting	5	29,4
Total	**17**	**100**

While 35.3% of the participants stated that they did not have any difficulties in the digital world, 52.9% of them stated that the most difficult subject was texting and the complexity of the digital world.

Table 14. Distribution according to opinions on the use of digital media

Ease of use	***f***	**%**	**Explanations**
Contains features that will make it easy to use	7	41,2	
Partially contains features that will make it easy to use	5	29,4	Support is needed until logging in, Some applications are very complex, It may differ from person to person.
Does not contain features that will make it easy to use	4	23,5	
No idea	1	5,9	
Total	**17**	**100**	

41.2% of the participants in the study group think that digital environments contain easy-to-use features. On the other hand, 29.4% of the participants stated that it partially includes easy-to-use features. It has been emphasized that some applications are very complex and may differ from person to person.

Table 15. Desired situations in the digital world

Situations	***f***	**%**	**Explanations**
There's nothing else I want	12	70,5	
There are things I want to be included.	4	23,5	The news should be accurate and unbiased, checked, Applications should include easier steps and sharing must be more sensitive to the world, More vital information should be included
No idea	1	5,9	
Total	**17**	**100**	

While 70.5% of the participants emphasized that they had no other expectations from the digital world, 23.5% stated that they wanted the news to be accurate and impartial, to include easy steps, to disseminate vital information, and to make more sensitive sharing to the world.

Table 16. Metaphors used regarding the digital world

Metaphor	***f***	**%**	**Explanation**
Film / Television /	3	17,7	B1 – Events on the Internet are like movies B3 – Similar to show programs

Sci-Fi			G7 – I see things that I couldn't think of in my youth.
Time	1	5,9	B2 – Flows, renews, changes on the Internet
Robot	1	5,9	B5 – They can accomplish many tasks like living things.
Ball of information	1	5,9	G2 – As long as it is used accurately, it is fun to see as a gift.
Human / Multicultural Human / Organism / Animal	4	23,5	G6 – It is very complex and includes many topics. S1 – It has a wide information network in terms of reaching all kinds of information. S3 – It is constantly evolving and changing. B4 – It changes like animals.
Car	1	5,9	S2 – If you drive carelessly, if you drive fast, you will crash.
Boiler	1	5,9	S4 – Rumors, lies, they all boil together.
Half a glass of water	1	5,9	S5 – Sometimes its harmful side attracts our attention, sometimes its negative side.
No idea	4	23,5	

Among the participants, 23.5% compared the digital world to a living entity. In this category, metaphors of human, animal, and organism were used and it was observed that a connection was established with the change and complexity of living things. Again, the same percentage of participants stated that they had no idea about this issue. The metaphors of "Half a glass of water, boiler, car, ball of information, robot, time, film, science fiction and television" were used by the participants.

G7 – "Science is like fiction because I see things I couldn't think of when I was younger."

Q5 – "It is like half a glass of water, because sometimes its harmful side attracts our attention, sometimes its negative side"

Q4 – "It is like a boiler because rumors, lies, they all boil together all the time."

B5 – "It is like a robot because it can accomplish many tasks like living things."

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As a result of the study, it was revealed that the individuals in the study group mostly use smartphones and follow "Facebook" and "WhatsApp" among the applications. In another study, it is stated that individuals aged 65 and over who use social media prefer social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. However, it was concluded that they are only exposed to new technologies at the end of their lives, and they have to acquire new digital skills to use them. As internet use and smartphone ownership increase among older individuals, social media usage also increases (Wu et al., 2015).

The expressions of following the news and communicating with acquaintances are frequently emphasized among the reasons for using social media. These reasons are also stated as the advantages of the digital world. In a study, it is reported that older women use the Internet for purposes such as entertainment, spending time, and following news and developments closely, while older men use the Internet for purposes such as obtaining information, researching, and following news and developments closely. Likewise, in the same study, it was concluded that Facebook is the application most preferred by elderly individuals in social media use (Koçak & Terkan, 2010).

In another study conducted in 2000, it was concluded that among 12000 people, only 13% of those over the age of 65 had internet access, while 65% of those younger than 30 years old had internet access (Lenhard et al., 2000).

In a study conducted in England, it is stated that only half of people aged 60-69 who adopt digital technology have internet access at home, and this rate drops to 17% among people aged 70 and over (Taşan, 2018). Similarly, in Taşan's study, it is stated that elderly individuals use "Facebook" the most, followed by "Instagram", "Youtube" and "Twitter", in that order (Taşan, 2018).

Another study on the internet and social media usage of middle-aged and elderly individuals was conducted by Tekedere and Arpacı (2016). It has been revealed that 70.5% of those who know how to use the Internet use it for research and information learning, and 15.9% for e-mail communication. 53.8% of the individuals stated that they wanted to use the internet for communication with their friends, 51.9% for education, and 57.5% for contacting their old friends (Tekedere & Arpacı, 2006).

In another study, the answers given by elderly individuals about how they solved the problems they encountered during mobile internet use were examined. Accordingly, while 22.1% of the participants stated that they tried to solve the problem themselves, the majority of the participants stated that they received help from their families to learn how to use mobile internet (Özsungur, 2018).

In a similar study, it was revealed that elderly individuals characterized themselves as inadequate in using technology based on the interviews. However, it has been stated that older individuals learn the internet more difficult due to their age and cannot use digital technologies as well as young people (Birsen, 2018).

In this study, it was found that the digital world is effective in eliminating the feeling of loneliness for individuals in the late adulthood period. In the study conducted by Küçük and Koçak (2019), it was concluded that more than half of the elderly participants use the Internet to relieve their loneliness.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggestions regarding the results of the study can be listed as follows:

- It can be recommended that information about the use of technology in the form of public service announcements, short videos, and visual application steps should be shared through television channels.
- Educational units for late adult individuals over 65 years of age can be established within local governments. If necessary, it can be ensured that this unit can also serve in homes and nursing homes.
- The needs of the wider masses can be determined by increasing the number of studies on late adult individuals in our country.

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