DIGITAL BRIDGES: CONNECTING GENERATIONS

THROUGH TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

2024-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000246195

DIGITAL BRIDGES:

SURVEY INSIGHTS ON ELDERLY DIGITAL LITERACY AND LEARNING NEEDS

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CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Digital Bridges: Connecting Generations through Technology Project

This project addresses the challenges faced by elderly individuals in the digital age, including social isolation, difficulties in managing daily life, and reduced participation in society. By fostering intergenerational mentorship, the initiative aims to bridge the digital divide and enhance digital skills among the elderly.

Objectives:

The goal is to improve digital literacy among older adults by pairing them with young volunteers who will provide mentorship, thus supporting their integration into the digital world. This initiative also seeks to promote social inclusion and greater participation in modern society for the elderly.

Implementation:

Key activities include developing a digital literacy curriculum tailored to older learners, creating accessible learning materials, and launching an online learning platform. Young volunteers will be recruited, trained, and deployed to lead digital literacy workshops and provide ongoing support to the elderly participants.

Results:

The expected outcomes are the creation of a digital literacy curriculum, an online learning platform, and a network of trained youth volunteers. Thesis will contribute to improved digital literacy for the elderly, stronger intergenerational connections, and a sustainable framework for continued digital education. The project aims to foster greater social inclusion and enhance participation in the digital world for older adults.

Long-term benefits:

In the long run, the project will help create a more digitally inclusive society, allowing elderly individuals to engage more fully in social, economic, and cultural activities. The intergenerational mentorship model will have lasting impacts on both the elderly and young volunteers, fostering mutual understanding and reducing societal divides.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey was conducted as part of the *Digital Bridges: Connecting Generations through Technology Project* (2024-1-DE02-KA220-ADU-000246195). The primary goal was to assess the digital literacy and learning needs of elderly individuals aged 60 and above. A total of 70 responses were collected via Google Forms from elderly participants in four countries: Austria, Germany, Netherlands, and Türkiye. The survey sample reflected a diverse demographic across different countries, providing valuable insights into the challenges and needs of older generations in the digital age.

Key Demographic Information:

- **Age:** The average age of participants is approximately 66.38 years.
- **Gender distribution:** 33 male participants, 36 female participants, and 1 participant identifying as "Other".
- **Country of Residence:** Austria (31), Germany (16), Netherlands (7) and Türkiye (16)
- **Education:** A diverse range of education levels, with a significant portion of participants holding university degrees.
- **Occupation:** Various professional backgrounds, with a notable number of retired individuals.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

The survey aimed to gather insights into the digital skills and learning needs of elderly individuals and identify the most pressing challenges they face. The results will help guide the development of targeted training programs to bridge the digital divide for older adults.

Specific Objectives:

- To identify the digital devices most commonly used by elderly individuals.
- To explore the most common online activities and digital skills participants wish to improve.
- To assess challenges faced by elderly individuals when using digital technology.
- To explore preferred learning methods and the types of support systems that can assist in improving their digital skills.
- To determine the level of interest in digital literacy programs and workshops for older adults.

By understanding these aspects, the survey will inform the design of training modules to empower elderly individuals to engage confidently with technology in their daily lives.

2. PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Average Age:** 66.38 years
- **Gender distribution:**
  - Male : 33
  - o Female: 36
  - Other : 1
- **Education Level Distribution:**
  - University : 34 respondents
  - High School: 17 respondents
  - o Vocational/Technical Education: 7 respondents
  - o Master's Degree: 4 respondents
  - o Primary/Middle School: 5 respondents
  - Other : 4 respondents
- **Occupation Distribution:**
  - Retired : 24 respondents
  - o Social workers: 4 respondents
  - o Engineer: 5 respondents
  - o Teacher/Educator: 7 respondents
  - o Healthcare Professionals: 6 respondents
  - o Lecturer/Academic: 4 respondents
  - o Self-employed/Freelancer: 3 respondents
  - o Administrative/Managerial: 3 respondents
  - o Other: 9 respondents (eg, Salesperson, Draftsman, Cook, Tailor, etc.)
- **Country of Residence:**
  - o Austria: 31 responses
  - o Germany: 16 responses
  - Netherlands : 7 responses
  - o Türkiye: 16 responses

3. DIGITAL DEVICE USAGE

- **Devices used by participants:**
  - Smartphone : 49 responses
  - Laptop : 31 responses
  - Tablet : 22 responses
  - Desktop : 16 responses
- **Most Frequently Used Devices:**
  - Smartphone : 47 responses
  - Laptop : 30 responses
  - Tablet : 11 responses
  - Desktop : 9 responses
- **Device Combinations:**
  - o Laptop, smartphone, tablet: 16 responses
  - o Laptop, smartphone: 8 responses

4. DIGITAL SKILLS AND ONLINE ACTIVITIES

- **Most Common Online Activities:**
  - o Sending/Receiving messages and emails
  - o Sending/Receiving photos/videos
  - o Social media usage (eg, Facebook, Instagram)
  - o Searching for information (eg, Google, Wikipedia)
- **Least Common Activities:**
  - o Online Shopping
  - o E-Government Usage
  - o Following media/news channels

5. LEARNING PREFERENCES & METHODS

- **Preferred learning approaches:**

  o Support from Family Members o Self-Directed Learning o One-on-One Lessons o Community-based Learning (NGOs, Volunteers) o Online Resources (eg, YouTube) o Learning by Doing

- **Preferred Methods for Learning Digital Skills:**

  o Online Lessons

  o Group lessons with practical work

  One -on-One with Volunteers

  o Workshops

  o Learning by Doing

  o Self-Study

6. ASSISTANCE AND CHALLENGES IN DIGITAL SKILLS

- **Challenges Faced:**

  Security Concerns

  o Difficulty understanding technology

  o Physical challenges (eg, small buttons, screens)

  Lack of Technical Support

- **Support for digital skills:**

  o Family: 22 mentions

  Friends : 9 mentions

  Experts : 7 mentions

  o Associations/Volunteers: 3 mentions

- **Interest in Digital Support Programs:**

  Yes : 38 responses

  No : 32 responses

7. SKILLS TO LEARN

- **Most Desired Digital Skills:**
  - o Social Media Usage
  - o Video/Photo Taking & Editing
  - o Online Banking
  - o Video calls (eg, Zoom, Skype)
  - o Online Shopping
  - o Information Searching
  - o Media Consumption
  - o E-Government Systems
  - Artificial Intelligence

8. IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL SKILL IMPROVEMENT

- **Importance Scale (1-5):**
  - o 1 (Strongly Disagree): 13 responses
  - o 2: 12 responses
  - o 3: 10 responses
  - o 4: 8 responses
  - o 5 (Strongly Agree): 7 responses

9. EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS

- **Key Themes from Feedback:**
  - o Desire for Age-Appropriate Digital Courses
  - o Interest in learning new technologies
  - o Security and Safety Concerns
  - o Frustration with Technological Advancements
  - o Need for Digital Citizenship
  - o Technological Adaptation for Daily Life

10. CONCLUSION

The *Digital Bridges* survey provides crucial insights into the digital landscape of elderly individuals, revealing both the opportunities and obstacles they face in adapting to modern technology. From the survey results, it is clear that the elderly population has a genuine interest in improving their digital literacy, with particular emphasis on practical skills that are integral to daily life.

One of the most significant findings is the high level of interest in social media usage, online banking, and video communication tools such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and Skype. These skills are perceived as essential for staying connected with family, managing finances, and maintaining social engagement. Many respondents expressed the desire to enhance their knowledge of these tools, underscoring the growing need for accessible and age-appropriate training programs.

Security concerns emerged as a major challenge, with many respondents highlighting issues like fraud and privacy when navigating the digital world. This is complemented by the difficulty in understanding new technology, which suggests a need for educational support that simplifies technical jargon and provides user-friendly guidance. Furthermore, physical challenges, such as small screens and buttons on digital devices, also posed barriers to ease of use, indicating a need for more inclusive, ergonomic design solutions.

Support from family and friends was the primary source of assistance for many respondents, although there is a clear demand for formalized help from technical experts and community organizations. Interestingly, while many elderly individuals rely on others for support, they are highly interested in self-learning, online courses, and personalized guidance. The desire for community-based learning and volunteer-led programs is particularly evident, reflecting a preference for social, interactive learning environments that foster peer-to-peer engagement.

The survey also highlights an awareness among participants that digital skills are not just a luxury, but a necessity for daily functioning in the modern world. From online shopping to accessing e-government services, the need for practical digital competence is more pressing than ever. Many acknowledged the rapid pace of technological change, and expressed both a desire and a challenge in keeping up with new tools and platforms. They voiced a clear demand for structured, age-specific programs that cater to their unique learning needs and support them in adapting to evolving technologies.

In conclusion, the survey results clearly demonstrate that while there are notable challenges in digital adoption for older adults, there is also an overwhelming desire to learn and improve digital literacy. The findings from this survey will be invaluable in shaping the *Digital Bridges* project, ensuring that the training programs developed are tailored to the specific needs and preferences of elderly learners. Moving forward, it will be essential to focus on enhancing accessibility, fostering peer support, and providing ongoing assistance to ensure that older adults are not left behind in the digital age.

APPENDICES

Detailed Survey Responses

The names or personal information of the survey participants are kept confidential.

Available at:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18VpnkwP7TrxqJYsJX0OkiaNCArBMuzbk/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=115746527220612288451&rtpof=true&sd=true