

24 - 26 October 2025

Geneva , Switzerland

Digital Connectivity for Older Adults: Understanding Challenges and Promoting Accessibility

Jinat Ara , Cecilia Sik-Lanyi

University of Pannonia, Hungary

Abstract

In today's world, having skills to access and communicate through social technologies such as social internet, social media, and social apps is considered essential for engaging with others. According to current statistics, older adults are a significant group of internet users who are highly motivated to stay socially connected. As a result, experts in social and technology fields emphasize that social technologies should be both accessible and compatible with the needs of elderly people. This concern is also now receiving considerable attention from government bodies. As social connection is of key importance for the majority of elderly users (particularly through visual communication tools) and our society becomes increasingly digital, addressing the barriers of social internet platforms is essential to ensure that older adults are not left behind in this current era. Also, for fostering social inclusion, enhancing well-being, and providing access to vital services, social internet accessibility for older adults is very crucial. Recent research has shown that many elderly individuals still face significant challenges in navigating the digital world. Thus, this study aims to explore the common challenges and obstacles that older adults generally face when trying to access social platforms and identify the key factors that negatively affect their user experience. Among the various challenges, the most common ones involve barriers related to motivation and skills, including issues with perceived self-efficacy, fear, the culture of online communication, lack of social capital, limited digital literacy, concerns about privacy and security, insufficient user-friendly interfaces on digital platforms, and physical limitations. These barriers cause digital exclusion of elderly people, which must be addressed in efforts to improve online social interaction for older adults.

Keywords: Social Internet; Digital Technology; Social Inclusion; Digital Inclusion; Social Interaction; Older Adults.