

LETTER TO EDITOR

Social Media Use Among the Elderly: Balancing Benefits and Risks

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CITATION

Srivastava K, Rathod HK. Social Media Use Among the Elderly: Balancing Benefits and Risks. Indian J Comm Health. 2025;37(4):624. <https://doi.org/10.47203/IJCH.2025.v37i04.023>

ARTICLE CYCLE

Received: 09/06/2025; Accepted: 25/07/2025; Published: 31/08/2025

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In India, a senior citizen is any person who is sixty years of age or older(1). Excessive or compulsive obsession, cravings, or behaviors related to computer use and internet access, together with the accompanying distress or impairment, are characteristics of internet addiction. Over the past few years, as computer and internet access has increased, internet addiction has drawn more attention from researchers, physicians, and the media(2).

With more than 900 million internet users and the second-largest e-market in the world after China, India boasts a sizable user base and a growing trend of internet usage. At over 50%(3), the nation's internet penetration rate still falls short of the global average. Elderly people can also benefit from social media in other ways, such as increased social connectivity, which gives them a sense of belonging by enabling them to reconnect with old acquaintances and family members and lessen feelings of loneliness and isolation. It provides cognitive stimulation through activities such as reading articles, seeing films, and participating in online discussion forums, thereby informing individuals about current events and trends, while facilitating lifelong learning and cognitive engagement. Major advantage of social media is that it helps people connecting with known and unknown people distantly which gives them sense of connected to World. This becomes more significant during illness when people are more restricted to go out and meet people so social media comes for their rescue. As more and more social media platforms are also available to people so elderly wants to spend more time on their mobile operating different sites like facebook, Instagram, twitter, linkedin etc. Irony is that

physical activity and warmth in meeting people has subsided due to overuse of this harmful addiction.

Disadvantages of media are many. It hampers both physical and mental health of people. It impairs majorly physical activity which leads to mobility issues which are already their with old age. It makes them more prone for non-communicable diseases which are again risk factors for elderly. Spending hours on mobile leads to arthritic issues as well like neck sprain and body aches. Mental issue also crops once people isolate themselves and restrict to mobiles only. Now with more digital financial solutions available, senior citizens gets confused and may fall prey to cyberattack and financial hacks. So to conclude its important to balance social media use with outdoor activities as well. If elderly really wants to enjoy social media as well,they need to define individual boundaries like a mix of exercise, outdoor meeting with friends and spending time on mobiles should be done. Its important to be socially active on offline as well as online but in a balanced manner. They can define timings to be on social media. In daily routine they can enjoy both outdoor meeting with friends and families and on mobile as well without harming their physical and mental health.

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