

Countermeasure Analysis of The Status Quo of Digital Communication Among the Elderly under the Background of COVID-19 Epidemic

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Abstract: The aging of the population is an important trend of social development, a manifestation of the progress of human civilization, and a basic national condition of China for a long time to come. In the digital age, with the “silver hair wave” and the impact of the epidemic, the “cloud dilemma” situation appears. To overcome this impasse and develop a “digital” pattern that favors the old, we must go further into the path of wisdom to assist the elderly and create a social environment that prioritizes providing for the elderly, filial piety, and respect for the elderly.

Keywords: Digital age; Aging society; Intelligence

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1. Introduction

Intelligent services have become extensively employed in China as a result of the rapid development of the Internet, big data, artificial intelligence, and other information technologies, and our production and lifestyle have changed dramatically. At the same time, China’s elderly population is quickly increasing. Many elderly people are unable to access the Internet or use smartphones, limiting their ability to fully appreciate the benefits of intelligent services in the digital era. The issue of the “digital gap,” which affects the elderly, is growing more prevalent. “The elderly are safe, and the world is safe,” as the proverb goes. How to solve the problem of “helping the elderly with wisdom in the digital age” and make the elderly feel more acquisitive, happy, and secure in the information development is not only an inherent requirement of implementing the people-centered development thought, but also the proper meaning of building a socialist modernization power in a holistic way ^[1].

2. The “silver hair tide” strikes-the status quo of the aging society

According to the United Nations Population Aging and Its Socio-economic Consequences in 1956 and the classification standards set by the Vienna World Assembly on Ageing in 1982, combined with China’s seventh population census. We can draw a conclusion, whether 60 years old or 65 years old is the criterion, the proportion of the elderly population in China is far greater than the reference value of a lightly aging society, and it is developing towards a moderately aging society.

However, unlike the developed countries that entered the aging society in advance, China’s aging population has obvious Chinese characteristics. First, the scale is large. As shown in **Table 1**, by 2025, China’s population over 65 years old will exceed 200 million, by 2035 it will exceed 300 million, and by

2050 it will reach 400 million. At the same time, the relevant forecast shows that the aging population will reach its peak in 2053, and the number of elderly people over 60 years old will reach 487 million, accounting for a quarter of the total number of elderly people in the world by then. Second, the scale is large. From 2000 to 2050, the proportion of the 65-year-old population in China will increase from 5% to about 30%, which is more than twice the world average speed, which is unique in the history of the development of a populous country except for Japan ^[2]. Third, the task is heavy, and the social support pressure in China continues to increase. By around 2053, 487 million elderly people account for 34.8% of the total population in China. In addition, the health level of the elderly people in China is generally low, which means that 100 working people have to bear the heavy burden of raising 71 elderly people and 32 children.

Table 1. Comparison table of China’s seventh population census and aging society

	Proportion of elderly people over 60 years old in the total population	Proportion of elderly people over 65 years old in the total population
Results of the Seventh National Population Census	18.7% (264018766)	13.5% (190635280)
Slightly aging society	10%	7%
Moderately aging society	20%	14%
Heavily aging society	30%	21%

In a word, the population aging will erupt intensively in China in a short period of time, which will bring continuous challenges to economic and social development and opportunities for innovation. This is a new basic national condition that must always be grasped.

3. The “cloud dilemma” situation-the impact under the epidemic situation

With the outbreak of COVID-19, the health code and travel code are rapidly spread out. Online booking has become the best solution to crowd gathering. Home office and online communication have become the first choice for young people. Nowadays, digital teaching, digital travel, digital payment, digital office, digital medical treatment, etc., the tentacles of digitalization spread to every corner of life, and the trend of digitalization is unstoppable.

Under the epidemic situation, the depth of Internet technology is widely used, exposing and amplifying many discomforts of the elderly in the face of digitalization. China Internet Information Technology Reporting Center shows that from March to June 2020, the total number of elderly Internet users over 60 years old in China increased from 6.7% to 10.3%, which means that 34 million elderly people in China became Internet users in just three months. The epidemic forced the elderly to surf the Internet. Besides “silver-haired netizens,” more people are “digital refugees.” Some elderly people were refused to take the bus without a health code, and some elderly people got up in the early morning and failed to register at the only elderly window in the hospital. They were forced to cut off the connection with society, forming a digital divide. The word “digital divide” first appeared in the early 1990s. It mainly refers to the difference in educational background, living environment, or socio-economic status, which leads to great differences in information reception or technology application among different groups ^[3]. For the elderly group, the speed of digital technology or product update iteration is far faster than their intelligent technology learning ability and speed, that is, what we call “cultural lag,” which makes a huge difference between parents and children in information receiving and digital useability.

The difficulties encountered by the elderly in the process of using smartphones are mainly reflected in the following aspects. Firstly, the ability to use them. The text on the phone’s screen is too small to view

the tips and specialized actions, and the operation method is extensive, needing several and repeated authorizations, which makes using the phone difficult for the old. Secondly, the psychological barriers to internet security. The elderly have long been the primary victims of telecom fraud due to their limited network filtering abilities. The elderly have always had a knowledge gap in terms of internet application technology, and the dread of being scammed is another psychological barrier that prevents them from going online. Thirdly, the monotony of content supply, the development of new media content has not truly paid attention to the content demands of the elderly, simply based on public perception, believe that the elderly's tastes are restricted to health, health, discount, and so on. As a result, homogeneity is the substance of push single. Fourthly, network material for the elderly is at a higher level and is more diverse. Digital back-feeding will become an unavoidable trend ^[4] as a means of allowing the elderly to transcend the "digital gap" and experience the conveniences of modern intelligent living.

4. The "digital" pattern-the path of wisdom to help the elderly

4.1. National policies

Aetna, the old man, the country is prosperous. On November 24th, 2020, the General Office of the State Council issued the "Implementation Plan for Effectively Solving the Difficulties of the Elderly in Using Intelligent Technology." The new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, adheres to the people-centered development concept, meets the people's growing needs for a better life, continuously promotes the construction of a smart society that fully takes into account the needs of the elderly, adheres to the parallel of traditional service methods and intelligent service innovation, and involves 7 kinds of high-frequency matters and 20 kinds of daily travel, medical treatment, consumption, work and entertainment of the elderly. Additionally, sets goals and tasks in 2020, 2021 and 2022 respectively, so that the majority of the elderly can better adapt and integrate into the smart society. Subsequently, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Communications, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and other departments have also introduced corresponding measures to enable the elderly groups to better enjoy the digital convenience brought by social development in the digital age.

4.2. Social services

First and foremost, social harmony, filial piety, and kindness. Wuxi Railway Station issued a public notice in November 2020, stating that there are several issues, such as no electricity, no WeChat, no operation, no smartphone, and etc., which result in no health code and no specific channel to remedy them. This note has received a lot of acclaim, and several internet users have observed that a city's temperature is mirrored in how she treats the forgotten few. Wuxi Railway Station, for example, started using this technology on September 20th. If you don't have a smartphone, you can check necessary information on your ID card; volunteers use their smartphones to scan the code on the old man-machine for verification.

The phone's battery is depleted. Therefore, it can only be charged temporarily. Beijing, Guangzhou, Heilongjiang, Qinghai, and other cities have implemented excellent travel policies for the elderly. The public felt the problem of showing outstanding health codes during the epidemic because Wuxi went one step further and found a good solution, which caused warm ripples, and the anti-aging action also extended to many aspects of the elderly's lives: Zhejiang set up a smart phone training class for the elderly, Shanghai launched a one-click taxi service for the elderly, and in Tianjin, the vaccine car directly drove into the community to assist the elderly.

4.3. Enterprise assistance

Science and technology to be good is not just a slogan. Enterprises should shoulder social responsibility and promote the aging of products and services. Policymakers and technology developers will also step

into the ranks of the elderly. Huawei's mobile phone is designed for elderly consumers with big icon mode, which helps the elderly users to make better use of the mobile phone. In today's society, apps commonly used in mobile phones, such as Gaode map, today's headlines, and even Happy Fun, have also launched an old-age model to help elderly users. Enhancing the comfort of using smart phones for the elderly and increasing the frequency of using mobile phones for the elderly are all manifestations of smart pensions.

4.4. Family care

Family is an important channel to improve digital ability, and young people need to be more patient with old people in learning. However, young people help the elderly to use mobile phones basically through face-to-face or voice teaching. However, the elderly often can't remember the operation process because of the decline of their functions and other reasons, which leads to their inability to operate mobile phones skillfully. Some netizens exposed different hand drawings of the WeChat, the old version of WeChat operation guide, and drew the commonly used application (APP) operation processes in mobile phones one by one in the form of comics. In fact, this method is more suitable for the elderly because it is easy to save and consult. It is true that the difficulties encountered by the elderly in an aging society are not just the use of intelligent technology. However, there is no doubt that the improvement of digital ability can really make the elderly better integrate into the smart society and enjoy the smart life.

5. Conclusion

"To see the sun, for all his glory, why are you afraid of near dusk?" The Communist Party of China (CPC) has led the Chinese people to realize the great leap from standing up, getting rich and strengthening. Thus, profound changes have taken place in the nation and people. Wisdom supports the elderly in the digital era, earnestly cares for the elderly's blissful old age, and makes the elderly's desire to have something to do, learn from them, and have fun a reality. This is not only a practical action to implement the goal of studying and educating the party history of "learning from the party history, realizing ideas, doing practical things, and opening up new opportunities," but also a filial piety for the elderly, happiness for themselves, and harmony for society. Taking care of the elderly today means taking care of oneself tomorrow, because we shall all get old one day!

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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