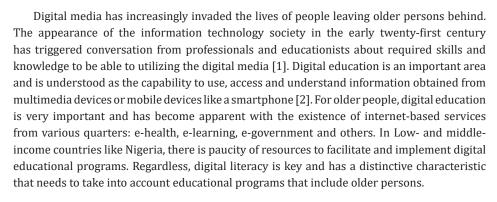# Digital Education During COVID-19 among Older Persons in Nigeria

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Mini Review

Digital media has increasingly invaded the lives of people leaving older persons behind. The appearance of the information technology society in the early twenty-first century has triggered conversation from professionals and educationists about required skills and knowledge to be able to utilizing the digital media [1]. Digital education is an important area and is understood as the capability to use, access and understand information obtained from multimedia devices or mobile devices like a smartphone [2]. For older people, digital education is very important and has become apparent with the existence of internet-based services from various quarters: e-health, e-learning, e-government and others. In Low- and middle-income countries like Nigeria, there is paucity of resources to facilitate and implement digital educational programs. Regardless, digital literacy is key and has a distinctive characteristic that needs to take into account educational programs that include older persons.

The current COVID-19 pandemic around the world has affected all the facets of life. Older persons belong to a group of population who are fragile, health vulnerable, reduced income and often lonely. These groups of people have been excluded from digital services because of internet illiteracy. Therefore, older persons, especially those residing in rural communities and individuals with lower educational qualifications are missing in the digital participation. These participations include the use of online services and contents such as health information, digital social event and social network including online shopping opportunities, payment of utility bills during the lockdown as enforced by the government of countries [3]. Non-participation of older persons in the digital world leads to the potential cause of social exclusion and isolation especially during the times of CODID-19 when physical distancing is enforced [4].

Digital literacy for older persons is very important as the access to the internet has become widespread with a wide digital gap between the young and older population has been extensively observed in empirical studies [5]. One important problem with the lack of digital literacy among older people hovers around the fact that they do not have the adequate knowledge and skills to navigate communication which require advanced technology. While the huge gap in the use of the internet still persists between the advanced countries and the developing countries, there are still some developing countries where a significant number of older persons do not have access and use the digital technology [5].

In a country like Nigeria, access to digital technologies like the internet is limited and skewed to middle income earners, educated and government workers. The older persons in rural communities and those with cognitive impairment are excluded from having access to digital technologies like the internet, smartphones and telemedicine-based care services [6].

They are also awfully restricted in this COVID era in compliance with necessary precautionary measures for the protection of the high-risk population. These precautions include staying at home as much as possible, restriction of visitation except for certain compassionate situations of care like individuals who are at the end-of-life stage and also restriction of all non-essential healthcare workers and volunteers [7]. These outlined preventive measures place older persons at risk of isolation because they have no digital skills to communicate and interact with their family, friends, health care professionals and social group meetings [8,9]. Therefore, if inclusion in the society is defined as active participation in digital technologies, then, older people without digital education, or not online or not active on the internet are at potential risk of social exclusion.

Given the realization that COVID-19 will be with us for some time, it is therefore important to improve digital literacy of older persons. An educational model towards an inclusive digital education for older persons in Nigeria should be based on key important areas. These areas include usefulness of learning: responding to the personal and social needs of the older adults. ii. Fostering social inclusion; this should offer older people the possibility of expanding their communication network using the internet with their relatives and friends that are either close or distant. Lastly, promoting autonomy; older persons desirous of learning digital technology must be a protagonist of what they want to learn. Therefore, content of digital education should consider the use of individualized learning styles, interest and must capture the expectation of the older person.

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