

S.K. CHAKRAVARTY, I. CHAKRAVARTY, S. BASU, P.K. DAS. *Task harder than tools. Gerontechnology 2010;9(2):271*; doi:10.4017/gt.2010.09.02.133.00 **Purpose** In the first decade of the 21st century, India emerged as the largest growth engine in respect to the growing number of mobile telephones and rising rate of internet connections¹⁻³. Since 70% of India dwells in rural sectors, provincial governments have taken apt initiatives to extend the Wide Area Computer Networks in rural sectors for various e-applications. The essence of this paper is to find out whether the elderly segments do needs some extra ingredients in the common applications and devices of ICT and once this customization is done, the number of elderly population placed in the middle class segment⁴ would form a potential market for ICT applications and devices. **Method** In this paper, we examined older adults living single in the city life where broadband connections, Net-PC's and 3G – mobile connections at comfortable price and quality are available. The respondents' age varies from 60–80 and are equal in gender distribution. Evaluation is based on the opinions as well as analysis made on the problems they are suffering in the activities of daily life (ADL) and Instrumental Activities for of Daily Life (IADL). Explosive growth of mobile telephones, healthy adoption of e-applications such as, e-banking, credit card, e-commerce and using kitchen aids like a microwave oven remains so far restricted to the domain of the working class below the age group of 60 in the Indian society. In order to break this stagnation, we tried computer literacy, used 3G – mobile phones for making video call and voice SMS through plain old land line telephones. We also selected at random some respondents for educating them with the comforts of kitchen aids. **Results & Discussion** Our analysis indicate that elderly people are too scared with the complexities of the devices as at present. Eighty percent of male respondents and ninety three percent of female respondents feel quite insecure while using debit cards, credit cards, e-banking and e-payment of bills. They also reckon the interfacing equipments too complex to negotiate. In respect of managing the keyboard and mouse clicked computer, our respondents manifested no motivation on the same logic of complexity of devices and applications. However, all respondents are comfortable with the remote operation of their TV sets and all would like to have zero management computers. Our trials with computers under assisted condition by Pair – View through broadband internet connectivity were quite encouraging. All respondents could open their e-mail ID and most of them were able to make contact with their children and friends abroad with the assistance rendered by our social workers through Pair – View. Through our continued effort we expect to reduce this dependency in future time. However, whatever ICT exists today with all its glories, it is still in its infancy for the aged. We must be absolutely sure of how it should grow to help the aged. Even a few openings of ICT tools for the elderly will create a significant large market for the vendors of ICT devices and applications in the populous India⁵.

References

1. ITU Digital Research. Mobile Revolution. Geneva: ITU; 2005; pp 139–140
2. A special report on telecoms in emerging markets, The Economist, September 26th – October 2nd 2009, 3-19
3. Beteille A. Freedom: Sixty Years of Indian Independence. Kolkata: CIMA; 2007; pp 23–52
4. Chakravarty I, Chakravarty SK. In Joshua RS, editor. Ageism: Problems & Prospects. New Delhi: Akansha 2009; pp 119–134
5. Kumar V. Ageing in India: An overview. Indian Journal of Medical Research 1997;106:257-264

Keywords: ICT-devices, elderly, Pair–View, technology adoption, interface complexity

Address: Calcutta, India; E: skchakravarty@gmail.com