



## DIGITAL BRIDGES: CONNECTING GENERATIONS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

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# State of the Art

## Digital Skills and Training for Elderly People in Türkiye: Current Landscape, Challenges, Emotional and Psychological Factors, and Future Directions

### Introduction

The rapid digital transformation of Türkiye brings both opportunities and challenges for the elderly population. The use of digital technologies facilitates communication, access to services, and social inclusion. However, a significant portion of older individuals in Türkiye faces barriers to adopting these technologies due to limited digital literacy. According to TurkStat (2023), only 38% of Turkish citizens aged 65 and above have basic digital skills, a stark contrast to 85% among the younger population. This document explores the state of digital literacy for older adults in Türkiye, the emotional and psychological factors affecting their learning experiences, available training programs, and the challenges they face in digital education.

### Key Concepts and Definitions

- **Digital Literacy:** The ability to navigate, evaluate, and use digital technologies effectively (Van Dijk, 2020).
- **Technophobia:** Fear or anxiety associated with using digital devices, common among elderly users (Nimrod, 2018).
- **Self-Efficacy in Digital Learning:** Confidence in one's ability to successfully use and learn technology (Czaja et al., 2019).
- **Intergenerational Learning:** A collaborative learning approach in which younger individuals assist older adults in acquiring digital skills (Hunsaker et al., 2020).

### Psychological and Emotional Factors in Digital Learning for Elderly People

Several psychological and emotional factors influence elderly individuals' interaction with digital technologies in Türkiye:

#### 1. Fear and Anxiety

Many older adults exhibit technophobia, fearing mistakes, breaking devices, or compromising personal data. The fast pace of digital changes can overwhelm them, fostering avoidance. Moreover, embarrassment or failure in learning environments can discourage participation in group activities.



2. **Confidence and Self-Efficacy**

Older individuals with previous exposure to technology are typically more confident. In contrast, those with little to no prior experience may feel isolated or incapable of learning. Positive training environments, however, can boost self-confidence and the willingness to explore new technologies.

3. **Motivation and Purpose**

Seniors are motivated to learn when they see clear, practical benefits, such as staying connected with family, managing health services online, or enhancing independence in daily tasks. Without perceived relevance, however, motivation can be low.

4. **Patience and Learning Pace**

Older learners often need more time and repetition to grasp digital concepts, valuing slower-paced, hands-on instruction and error-free environments.

5. **Social and Emotional Aspects**

Support from peers or younger generations, such as grandchildren or community workshops, greatly enhances engagement. The frustration from navigating complex interfaces, without immediate support, can hinder progress. However, successful mastery of tasks can increase confidence and self-worth.

### Existing Studies and Research Trends

Research indicates a significant gap in digital skills among Türkiye's elderly population. The TurkStat (2023) data reveals that while over 75% of younger people in Türkiye possess digital competencies, only 38% of people over 65 report being comfortable using the internet. Programs like "**Teknolojik Yaşam**" (**Technological Life**) and "**Dijital Yaşam Akademisi**" (**Digital Life Academy**) are working to bridge this gap by offering tailored digital skills training. However, challenges such as fear of technology, lack of confidence, and motivation remain barriers (Bozkurt et al., 2022).

### Comparative Analysis of Approaches

Several initiatives are working to improve digital literacy among Turkish seniors:

1. **Dijital Yaşam Akademisi (Digital Life Academy):** Offers in-person workshops for elderly citizens, focusing on practical skills such as using smartphones, social media, and internet security (Digital Skills and Jobs Türkiye, 2023).
2. **Teknolojik Yaşam (Technological Life):** A nationwide program that partners with local municipalities to offer digital education through mobile training units, reaching rural and remote areas (Ozel et al., 2023).
3. **Intergenerational Learning Programs:** Encourages collaboration between younger people and older adults to facilitate the transfer of digital skills (Hunsaker et al., 2020).

### Gaps and Challenges

- **Technophobia and Anxiety:** Many elderly individuals experience anxiety related to digital technology and may avoid engaging with it (Nimrod, 2018).
- **Limited Personalized Training:** Available programs often fail to address the diverse needs of elderly learners, such as cognitive differences and varied learning speeds (Czaja et al., 2019).



- **Low Motivation:** Some older individuals do not recognize the personal benefits of acquiring digital skills, contributing to apathy in learning programs (Van Dijk, 2020).
- **Insufficient Practical Skills Focus:** Many training initiatives emphasize theory rather than practical, real-world applications like online banking, video calls, and e-commerce (Bozkurt et al., 2022).

### Future Directions

To enhance digital literacy among elderly individuals in Türkiye, future strategies should include:

- **Adaptive Learning Programs:** Customizing training to meet the cognitive needs and learning speeds of seniors.
- **Psychological Support:** Incorporating confidence-building exercises and addressing anxiety through gradual exposure to technology.
- **Intergenerational Mentorship:** Strengthening peer-learning models, where younger people assist older generations in digital education.
- **Senior-Friendly Digital Infrastructure:** Ensuring technology platforms and devices are tailored to be intuitive for elderly users.
- **Practical Digital Training:** Shifting focus to real-life applications, such as using smartphones for communication, managing online payments, and navigating e-health platforms.

### Conclusion

Digital literacy is crucial for maintaining independence and social inclusion among the elderly in Türkiye. While there are several initiatives aimed at improving digital skills, barriers such as technophobia, low confidence, and limited motivation persist. The low percentage of elderly individuals with digital competencies highlights the urgent need for more tailored, hands-on digital education that focuses on practical applications. Addressing these challenges through personalized training, psychological support, and intergenerational collaboration will be vital in ensuring that all seniors in Türkiye can participate in the digital age.

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## PROJECT LOGO



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