

IMPACTS OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND
SOCIAL MEDIA ON
INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN BANGKOK

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ผลกระทบของเทคโนโลยีการสื่อสารและสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างรุ่นใน
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มารี เอเลนน์ โทมัส : ผลกระทบของเทคโนโลยีการสื่อสารและสื่อสังคมออนไลน์
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วัตถุประสงค์สำคัญของวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้คือการวิจัยผลกระทบของเทคโนโลยีการสื่อสารและสื่อสังคมต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้สูงอายุและบุตรในกรุงเทพมหานคร วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีความ ประสงค์ที่จะค้นหาผลกระทบจากเทคโนโลยีการสื่อสาร ตัวอย่างเช่น โทรศัพท์มือถือ ซึ่งประกอบ ด้วย ไลน์ และเฟสบุ๊ก ซึ่งมีต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้สูงอายุ 30 คน และบุตร โดยการใช้วิธีการ วัดค่าความสัมพันธ์ของ Bengston และ Schrader

ผู้วิจัยได้เลือกผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์โดยการใช้ purposive sampling จากสมาคมผู้สูงอายุในท้องที่ 3 แห่งใน กรุงเทพมหานคร ผู้วิจัยได้ใช้ semi-structured interviews ในการรวบรวมข้อมูล และได้ใช้ thematic analysis ในการวิจัยข้อมูลที่รวบรวมมา

บทสรุปจากการวิจัย พบว่า ถึงแม้การใช้งานของเทคโนโลยีเหล่านี้ อาจนำพาผลกระทบในด้านลบ แต่ถ้าหากใช้งานอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพเทคโนโลยีเหล่านี้สามารถเชื่อมความสัมพันธ์ หากผู้สูงอายุ สามารถก้าวผ่านอุปสรรคและยินยอมต่อการเรียนรู้การใช้งานของเทคโนโลยี จากการวิจัยพบ ว่าผลที่ได้คือความสัมพันธ์ที่ดีขึ้นและช่องว่างระหว่างวัยที่ลดลง ระหว่างผู้สูงอายุและบุตร

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The objective of this research is to explore how communication technology and social media affects the intergenerational relationships between older persons and their adult children in Bangkok. Using Bengtson and Schrader's (Bengtson and McChesney 1998) measurement framework for intergenerational relationships, this study examines how communication technology, namely the smart phone and its accompanying applications, Line and Facebook, has impacted the relationship between thirty older persons and their adult children. Purposive sampling was used to select participants from three elderly associations located in different neighbourhoods around Bangkok, data was collected using semi-structured interviews and data was analysed via thematic analysis.

The results of this study indicate that while the use of such technological tools may bring about certain negative impacts, when utilised efficiently and to its full potential, these innovations could enrich and foster relationships. Given that older persons are able to overcome the barriers that prohibit their willingness to adopt these tools, data results illustrate that rather than dividing the generations, access to these communicative technological tools have been shown to decrease the generation gap between older persons and their children.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, without whom I would never have embarked on this endeavor. Her unparalleled love and support has made me believe that no feat is beyond my capability. Despite having raised my brother and me single-handedly, my mother has never failed to provide us with all the opportunities life has to offer. Noticing her evolving relationship with us, her children, as she entered retirement inspired me to conduct research into this area. The rapid introduction and adoption of the smartphone, namely instant messaging and social media applications, have transformed the way my mother communicates and relates to my brother and me in several ways. Witnessing the use (and abuse) and these technological devices in the different dimensions of our family life has often left me pondering whether these innovations are a blessing or a curse.

In addition, this work is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, who passed away before its' completion. Having moved to France to help raise me during my toddler years, my grandmother and I have always shared a special bond. In the years leading up to her passing, I witnessed her slow and steady journey into old age. Her frailty and fragility were more apparent with each passing year and the distance drawn between herself and her family members of much younger generations became increasingly apparent. Through my grandmother's demeanour, I came to realise that physical care and attention is not sufficient in providing an enriching and fulfilling life for older persons. A sense of value and belonging is necessary, especially in this fast-paced and ever-changing world of innovative technological tools.

To both women, I am forever indebted.



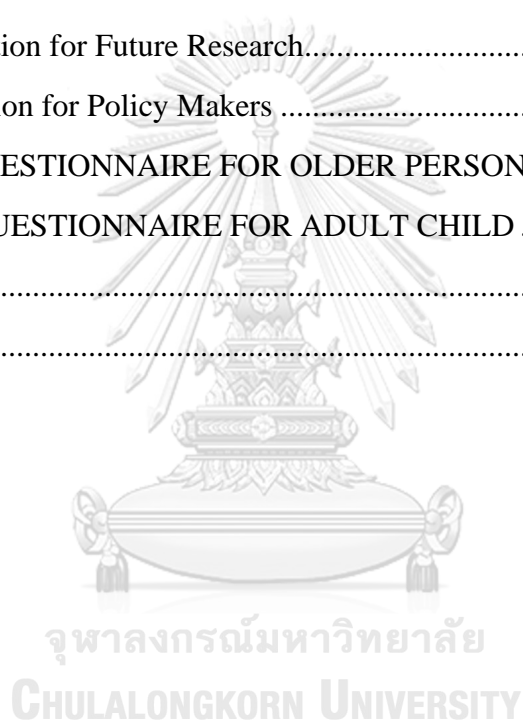
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The topic of ageing should be of interest to everyone since it is one of the rare subjects relevant to every single human being. Part of the study on ageing is to understand how it feels and what it means to continue to be the same person, with the same identity, while playing different roles in the family and in society.

Once a society is affected by the ageing phenomenon, attention is immediately paid to finding solutions in the area of social welfare. The shrinking labour force means a decrease in the ratio of taxpayers to retirees, which is naturally a burden on the state finances. Of course, this is a crucial concern and programmes and policies must be introduced in order to cope with these shifts and provide the older population with a sufficient pension and health care plan. Another aspect of this reality, which is equally important but not as widely discussed is the living condition of the older population on a social and psychological level. As people live longer, not only do they require more financial assistance but there is also the challenge of living and ageing successfully in an ever-changing world. Not only are these individuals faced with the widening age gap between them and their family members, they may be exposed to discriminatory attitudes such as ageism, and not to mention coping with the impacts of modernisation, which despite all its benefits may be creating a divide between the generations.

Thailand is currently an ageing society, and it is transitioning into an aged society at the fastest pace the world has ever witnessed. The sharp decline in fertility rate and

the increase in life expectancy have made it so that the number of people aged more than 60 will account for one-fourth of the population in 2030 and rising to one-third in 2040. Recently, the ageing phenomenon has been a popular topic of discussion among academics and existing research has shown that significant changes have occurred, namely the shift in living arrangements of older persons and the emerging welfare solutions for the aged. The majority of studies place emphasis on the financial and economic implications that are a result of this phenomenon, such as the decrease in the ratio of the working age to those who are retired, which is causing a major challenge to government policies, such as tax and pension schemes. While necessary, these studies do not explore the well-being of the older persons on an anthropological and psychological level.

1.1. Rationale

The purpose of this research is to explore how the use of technological innovations impacts the relationship between older persons and their adult children. Human beings are social animals and by nature require connectedness and interactions with those around us. For this reason, the relationship that older persons have to their children is an important determinant of their state of well-being. Having an anthropological background, the researcher is interested in exploring the livelihood of older persons in Bangkok on an emotional and psychological level. This study is extremely necessary, as it will shed light on how the use of communication technology and social media fosters healthy relationships or divides the two generations. The result of this study may be used to create programmes and policies that encourage older persons to age

more successfully by ensuring their connectedness to younger counterparts.

Not only is this study relevant to older persons but it will also provide updated information on how family members are using mobile phones and applications such as Line and Facebook to interact with one another. The use of smart phones is more prevalent in Thai society than ever before where it is no longer surprising to witness an entire family each on their individual phones during meal times. There has been a dramatic shift from face-to-face communication to conveying meaning via text messages. This new method of socialisation is affecting societies as a whole and through this research valuable information on its impacts within the family unit will be uncovered.

1.2. Main Question of the Research

The main research question for this study is how communication technology and social media affects the intergenerational relationships between older persons and their adult children in Bangkok.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this research is to understand the transformations in communication, interaction and overall connectedness between family members and what elements have shifted due to the introduction and use of communication technologies such as the mobile phone, instant messaging and social media applications, namely Line and

Facebook.

The reason this study will be conducted in Bangkok is because it is the regional hub of modernisation and has seen the highest level of global innovations and technological advances. There are limited existing studies that have explored the relationship between technological advances and the relationship between older persons and their adult children. This research will provide an in-depth evidenced-based understanding on the group of older persons to shed light on how they are coping with the transformations around them. This kind of study is extremely important because not only do we want to be able to provide older persons with sustainable pensions and healthcare systems, the ultimate goal is for older persons to enjoy a fulfilling life where they continue to experience a strong sense of belonging to their families and community.

1.4. Definitions

1.4.1. Communication Technology and Social Media

In order to understand communication technology one must first understand communication. While the degree and complexity may differ, communication is used by every species on earth and is fundamental to life. Language was created roughly 200,000 years ago and is essential to the continuation of species because it enables the expression of needs, fear, concerns and most importantly without communication

human beings would not be able to relate to one another and undergo the proper process of socialisation which is essential to humankind as we are social beings.

'Communication is a reciprocal process between at least two humans, in which symbols are exchanged and all interaction partners give meaning to these symbols' (Fuches 2014, p. 5).

Communication is a part of our everyday life, whether we do it through language, gestures or facial expressions. Most of the time we are communicating even without knowing that we are doing so. For this reason, the study of communication technology and its effects on human relationships is extremely important because communication technology essentially transforms this process, which is fundamental to our co-existence in society.

Sanders argues that for a communication tool to fully function there must exist three key players: the sender, the message and the receiver. Therefore, communication technology is any technological tool that comprises of these elements and is used to relay a certain message (Sanders 1997). Since this paper is an anthropological research and not a scientific one, focus will not be on the specifications and internal mechanical models of these tools but rather on its use and purpose at replacing face-to-face communication through a technological channel, mainly telecommunication, which is to communicate over distance and not necessary bound to real time, such as emails or instant messages.

The device for communication technology this research paper explores is specifically the mobile phone, namely smart phones, as they provide a platform for the use of social media and instant messaging applications such as Line and Facebook. Social media include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, or online blogs, and comprise of but not limited to the instant-messaging applications known as Line, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Viber. Their purpose is to allow users to upload pictures, share comments or post anything they wish to share.

It should be noted that with the passage of time the definition and understanding of communication technology and social media transforms alongside it. This is due to the fact that technology never ceases to develop and continue to grow introducing new functions and eliminating existing ones. Furthermore, there exist a variety of definitions for these tools depending on the angle in which it is being defined. The result of this research paper will also add to the existing definitions of the meaning and use of these innovative tools namely on its ability to foster connectivity or divide relationships within the family.

1.4.2. Intergenerational Relationships

Intergenerational relationship is the relationship between individuals of different generations or age groups. Social scientists are interested in studying these types of relationships because they span across individuals from different generations who were brought up under different circumstances including social norms and core values (Brubaker and Brubaker 1999).

For this study, the relationship between two generations will be studied. The first, being the main focus of the study, are individuals who were born between 1944 and 1953, who are aged 60 – 69 at the time of the study. These individuals, classified as the ‘baby-boomers’, were not introduced to communication technology until about the age of 55. The second group, their children counterparts, is the generation born between 1974 and 1983, aged 30 – 39 at the time of the study. These individuals consist of those in ‘Generation X’ (1965-1979) and those in ‘Generation Y’ (1980-1997) known as ‘Generation Y’ and were most likely introduced to the use of communicative technological tools in their teenage or young adult years. The cohorts of these two generations, have a unique relationship with technology because they grew up in a time when technology was also growing, at its fastest rate (Prensky 2001). Therefore, in a way, this generation experienced the best of both worlds, one where face-to-face communication prevailed and one where virtual communication dominates.

There are multiple ways to measure intergenerational relationships but the method that gained popularity back in 1982 and have since been used as the main cornerstone for most research was put forth by Bengtson and Schrader (Bengtson and McChesney 1998) and focuses on the solidarity dimension and criteria. This method evaluates the intergenerational relationship in question using the following components: associational, affectual, consensual, functional and normative integration and intergenerational family structure.

1.5. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into eight chapters. The purpose of chapter 1 is to introduce the thesis by outlining the rationale, main question for research and the objectives of the study. It also includes a brief clarification of the definitions for terms relevant to this research.

Chapter 2 is a review of existing literature. It starts out by outlining the Modernisation Theory as put forth by Cowgill and Holmes which argues that the value of older persons in a society diminishes as a result of changes brought about by modernisation. This in turn brings about ageism and exclusion. The next section discusses communication technology and social media and how these technological tools impact the different intergenerational relationships. The two groups that are discussed include the relationship between children and their parents and grandchildren and their grandparents.

Chapter 3 begins by discussing the transformations in the lives of older people as countries in Southeast Asia undergo modernisation, namely elderly care. The next section delves deeper into the discussion of modernity in Thailand and the shifts in intergenerational support and retirement and the adoption of communication technology and social media. The final section in this chapter outlines the theoretical framework this study is based on and the main hypotheses predicted.

Chapter 4 outlines the research methodology of this study, which uses semi-structured qualitative interview as the method for data collection. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the selection criteria and sampling method used for obtaining the subjects. The next section lays out the characteristics of the interview participants and the method used for data analysis. The final section briefly examines the strengths and limitations of this study.

Chapter 5 explores the current status of the relationship between older persons and their adult children, drawing directly from the data collected. Before one can attempt to analyse the impacts that communication technology and social media play on the relationships between older persons and their adult children, one must first measure the relationship between the two family members. Only by doing this, we can then inspect what aspects of the relationship are affected by the use of technological innovations.

Chapter 6 begins by outlining which technological tools are currently being used by the older persons interviewed. It moves on to discuss how the active-users are benefiting from such technology in their daily life, comparing and contrasting between older male and female participants. The next section highlights the advantages and disadvantages that occur as a result of these tools. This chapter then moves on to outline how these tools impact the different dimensions of intergenerational relationship between the older persons and their adult children.

Chapter 7 is a discussion of the overall research by comparing the results collected to the initial hypothesis drawn out by the researcher. While some of the results match the hypotheses exactly, there were several surprising findings, which are elaborated in this chapter.

Chapter 8 begins by outlining the conclusions of this study drawing upon the analysis of the data collected. It then moves on to making recommendations for further research. Due to the specifications of this study additional data is required in order to obtain an even wider picture and in-depth understanding of the impacts that technological innovations have on the quality of life and relationships of older individuals. The final section of this chapter proposes certain recommendations for policy makers, which would serve to enhance the quality of life and overall well-being of older persons.

CHAPTER 2: MODERNISATION THEORY AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

This chapter introduces the modernisation theory and its argument that technology, one of the four transformations brought about by modernity, impacts the value and contribution of older people through ageism and the digital divide. It goes on to discuss how communication technology alters the relationships between individuals, namely those of different generations such as parents and children or grandparents and grandchildren. Existing research have shown that older people have greater difficulty mastering such communicative tools in comparison to their younger cohorts, which in turns impacts the intergenerational relationships within the family.

2.1. The Modernisation Theory

Many believe the pioneer in studying the ageing population and how they are valued in society was Leo Simmons, in his article *The Role of the Aged in Primitive Society* (Simmons 1945). In his study, he explores the status and treatment of the aged within numerous primitive societies across the globe exploring the adjustments, both physical and social, and uniformities and general trends observed in a broad cross-cultural analysis. Simmons found 1,146 correlations of culture traits between 71 cultures (16 North America, 10 Central and South America, 14 Africa, 3 Europe, 16 Asia, 12 Oceania and Australia).

'Everywhere the human cycle begins with dependency of the young on those who are older; and it ends, if late in life, with dependency of the old on those who are younger – and with both dependencies deeply rooted in kith and kin' (Simmons 1945, p. 36).

Some of the similarities he discovered to exist within the different primitive tribes are customs and rule obligating younger family members to obey, assist and respect the elders. He remarks on the importance of adjusting to the ageing process, which is a two-way relationship, between the environment, who must permit successful ageing and the culture, who must assist in sustaining it. Most importantly, the ageing individual must continue to fulfill their functions within their familial and social settings to achieve successful ageing. Simmons remarks that a situation which is increasing unfolding in modern times is that youth are learning to manage well without the contributions of the aged and this results in older people finding themselves unnecessary and cut off from the interests of younger family members (Simmons 1945).

After World War II, Ernest Burgess conducted a study on five countries: United Kingdom, United States of America, France, Italy and the Netherlands. The result of his study shows the demise of the family unit and the increasing neglect of older people:

'The older person can no longer count as a matter of right and of moral and legal obligation on economic support by his children. He is

less and less likely, if needed, to be offered a home by a son or a daughter. If ill, particularly with a chronic ailment his children are more and more likely to shift his care to a hospital rather than provide a bed in their home. If lonely, he must more and more look elsewhere than to his descendants to provide companionship and sociability. In short he must seek elsewhere for the satisfaction of his needs – financial, health and social’ (Burgess and Harvey 1945, p. 480).

In 1982, the United Nations Organisation (UNO) introduced the *International Plan of Action on Ageing* at the World Assembly on Ageing (WAA) in Vienna. The purpose of this action was to implement formal support structures in developing nations for fear that without them there would eventually be a crisis in the livelihood of the ageing population:

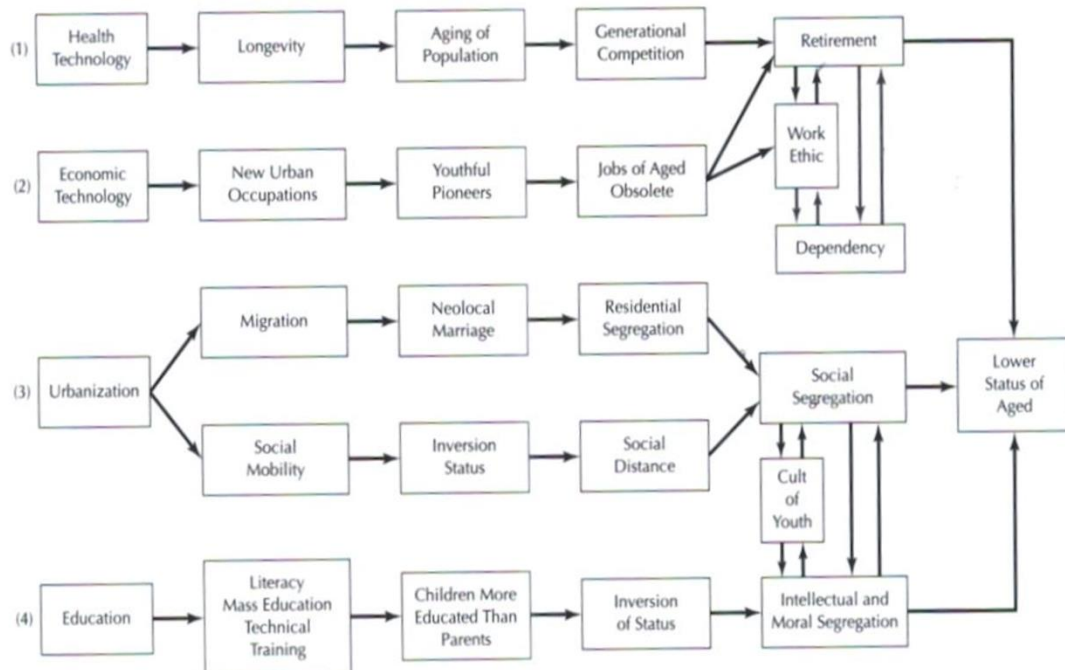
‘Worldwide, the overall responsibility of the family to provide the traditional care and support needs of the ageing is diminishing... In traditional societies, old people have always enjoyed a privileged position based on respect, consideration, status and authority. But this is starting to be upset under the influence of modern trends and that privileged position is now being questioned. It is therefore time to become aware of these changes and on the basis to define national ageing policies’ (UNO 1983, p. 33).

In 1985, Elaine Brody wrote on filial behavior and responsibilities and argues that the

abandonment idea is very much relevant in developing societies and that adult children cannot and do not provide the same attention and care to their ageing parents as they received from them when they were younger. She argues that even though there is a level of guilt associated with this, it does not change the fact that most adult children do not feel the same devotion or love towards their parents as their parents felt for them (Brody 1985).

Cowgill and Holmes later defined the modernisation theory by arguing that older persons in modern times are not as respected and valued as they were in the past. Below is a flow chart that outlines the aspects of modernisation as argued by Cowgill and Holmes (Holmes and Holmes 1995).

Figure 1: Modernisation Theory Flow Chart



Source: (Cowgill 1974)

Two events that significantly shifted attitudes towards older persons was the invention of the printing press and the industrial revolution. In the past, older persons were valued as being the village historians because they had knowledge of and held the key to the past, which they then passed onto younger generations. However, the printing press allowed the culture, history and tradition of a society to be recounted through the form of books, which in turn decreases the contribution, status and value of the older individuals. The industrial revolution created job opportunities that require mobility of family units, and since older people are not as mobile, their contribution became increasingly obsolete. Additionally, many jobs required manual labour that were more suited for the young and strong workers. In the industrial revolution, experience made way to adaptability with the changing technology, 'out with the old and in with the new' (Nelson 2005). Cowgill and Holmes conducted research on 15 societies undergoing 'development' and argue that the concept and definition of old age is relative to the degree of modernisation that a particular society has undergone. Modernised societies have a higher proportion of older people due to the reduction of birth rates and the increase in lifespan due to technological advances. On average, 3% of the total population in pre-industrial societies was over the age of 65 while in modern societies, 13% are. Sanitation, medical diagnostic skills and preventive medicine change the vital statistics of a population (Holmes and Holmes 1995). However, life-extending medical advances may be a mixed-blessing for older persons because in the past they reached old age due to their own strength whereas in modern societies they are often kept alive by modern medicine. Mead argues that in modern societies,

'we are now developing a generation which is over-burdened with the care of old people who no longer have any relationship to the rest of the world, who are using up family funds, hospital beds and social resources' (Holmes and Holmes 1995, p. 270).

The modernisation theory suggests that societies that are modernising favour the young. In the Renaissance times, old age was respected and seen as the most desirable period of life filled with wisdom and experience (Bond, Coleman et al. 1993). In societies rich in ceremonialism and religious rituals, older persons held positions of responsibility and authority. Since they have lived a long life, they act as the mediator between this world and the supernatural world. While the aged had a greater advantage in more stable pre-industrial societies, in complex consumer societies, the information and knowledge held by older persons become obsolete causing their social participation to decline thus losing their family and social status (Holmes and Holmes 1995). While youth and innovation are celebrated, the skills and knowledge of older generations are made redundant (Bond, Briggs et al. 1993). In nuclear families, the elders lose their decision-making functions and authority. Therefore, older persons are less likely to maintain leadership roles in modern societies. Often times older persons are the subjects of prejudice and pressure to relinquish leadership roles to those who are younger (Holmes and Holmes 1995).

It is argued that modernisation fosters age consciousness, especially through mass media. The media, which includes books, newspaper, magazines and advertisements is seen as an important source of socio-cultural influence on the public perceptions of

older people and ageing in general. This is mainly because the media plays an important role in reflecting what exists in society. Especially since there is a lack of contact and understanding between the old and the young in the real world, it is important that the media portrays intergenerational harmony (NCPOP 2009). The images that people have of old age have changed since the 1790s due to social changes that have reshaped the perceptions younger people have about older people. Two examples of these changes are the elaborate programmes that define various stages of the ageing process and the categorising of older men and women on an administrative basis. The result of this is that people become more aware of the stigma attached to ageing (Bond, Coleman et al. 1993). Furthermore, research done in 1988 showed a lack of older persons present in television. In the United States, old men appeared every twenty-two minutes while old women appeared every four to five hours. This is similar in advertising where even though the role requires an older person to play the part, the agency often refuses to use those over fifty. On the other hand, whenever they did appear it was usually with the purpose of complementing the main characters (Vernon, Williams et al. 1990). Even though in 2013, 12% of the population in the United States are old, only 2% of that age group are represented in the media. Furthermore, of the represented characters, very few play leading roles. This sends out the subtle message that the important people in our world are men and women in the prime age of life (Bruce 2013). Moreover, they are usually portrayed as ill, miserable, lonely, forgetful and enfeebled. In the instance that an older person appeared able and youthful, the audience tends to interpret this as a comical exception to the rule (Biggs 1993). Many negative images arise from the media, which portrays older people as victims of poverty, neglect and crime. This leads to them being

viewed as weak and vulnerable as opposed to resilient and resourceful (Donnellan 1992). Negative stereotypes of older people that are displayed in the media create a form of symbolic stigmatisation, which gives the experience of growing old a negative meaning (Featherstone and Hepworth 1993). Although the media cannot be fully blamed for the ageist attitudes that occur in society, it is certainly a significant contributing factor.

Another factor the modernisation theory argues as being a significant contributor to the shifting values of older people in developing societies is the education system. This is seen in Asian countries that have adopted an education curriculum from the West, which values individualistic thinking. This results in the students adopting a lifestyle that is more centered to oneself and one's beliefs. Furthermore, the education system does not comprise of subjects that teaches how to treat older people in society, or the value of the aged. Positive ageing education programmes are recommended and should contradict existing negative stereotypes such as health, body image, sexuality and mental ability of the older population. Educational authorities should take into consideration the importance of correcting the existing misconceptions of older persons to the general public through proper curriculum and accurate information (Bruce 2013). Even though some educational institutions offer a subject on health, the contents covered revolve around the teen years and adulthood, and rarely touches upon old age.

The final argument the modernisation theory puts forward as a cause of increased ageism in modern life is the retirement policy, which is a recent invention (Holmes

and Holmes 1995). The retirement policy emerged in modern industrial societies in the beginning of the 20th century and it has been argued that this system was put in place to move older worker out of the labour force in a systematic manner without causing any upset. For this reason, retirement is sometimes viewed as the clearest definition of old age (McDonald, Donahue et al. 2000). In pre-industrial Britain people stopped working when they were no longer able to, but in modern societies people stop working when they reach a specific retirement age. This is a shift from a functioning view of ageing to a chronological view (Bond, Coleman et al. 1993). In addition, pre-industrial societies witnessed a shift from one societal role to another once a person reached old age, and the prestige in the role usually increased (i.e. from a hunter to a counselor). However, in modern societies there is no role or position available for the older people once they retire (Hocky and James 1993).

Early theories of retirement exist at the macro and micro level. At the macro level, retirement allows companies to remove employees at the higher levels so that newcomers could be recruited at a lesser pay. While theories at the micro level all put the responsibility in the hands of the retiree, which means that if life did not turn out as expected after retirement, it was viewed as being the fault of the individual. Additionally, even though the transition into retirement is usually marked with a rite of passage such as a party, it is an awkward moment for the retiree because no one really knows what life should be like after retirement (McDonald, Donahue et al. 2000).

The trend of early retirement continues which further decreases the importance of older people in society. Employment rates are low for people aged 55 or above. The societal structure in today's world is that there are less than 10% of people older than 60 who are still working. This supports the notion of a mutual withdrawal between society and older people whereby the latter should merely withdraw themselves from participating in society and live the remainder of their lives without actively contributing. Lieshout argues that rules such as the retirement policy poses a problem because it conveys a generalisation of people based on their age when in fact people of the same age can be extremely different in health and capabilities (Van Lieshout 1998).

In conclusion, according to the modernisation theory it is the changes brought about by modernity, which include the introduction of technological innovations, the transformation in the education system towards individualism, the decreasing representation of older persons in media and the retirement policy, that result in the increasing divide between older individuals and younger generations in society.

2.1.1. Ageism and Exclusion

In 1963, Robert Butler coined the term ageism as,

'a process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this with skin colour and gender' (Biggs 1993, p. 85).

Ageism is the notion that it is acceptable to talk about people mainly in terms of a chronological category as opposed to taking into account their needs, desires and capabilities. Ageism is similar to sexism and racism in that it too is a form of oppression. However, there is an important difference, namely that everyone has the potential to eventually grow old which is why challenging ageism should be in everyone's interest. However, despite this fact, ageism is now more common than ever. Jean Coyle sums up three main sources of ageism. Firstly, individual sources such as frustration, aggression, rationalisation and death anxiety. Secondly, social sources including modernisation, competition and segregation. Thirdly, cultural sources such as differing values and orientations, language (words used to describe old people more often than not hold negative connotations), and humour (jokes made about older people marginalise them further) (Claire, Hongbin et al. 2002).

In 2008, a study in the United States was conducted to measure ageism and how to combat it. Out of the 247 older adults recruited for this research, 84% stated they had experienced some sort of ageist attitudes from other members in the community. Many organisations have been established with the purpose of improving intergenerational relationships amongst older and younger people such as Generation Together or Generation United (Chen, Klein et al. 2008). However, despite these efforts the majority of older people are constantly subjected to ageist attitudes and negative stereotyping.

More often than not, older people are viewed as being a problem, due to their societal vitality, which appears to be diminishing, especially due to information and

communication technology, which refers to speed, fast changing and youth. For this reason, many policy makers argue that the information society poses a threat on the older population because they are faced with exclusion.

'It is questioned whether elderly people are able to follow the speed of contemporary socio-technical changes and be able to appropriate the skills and competencies needed to maintain a certain level of social inclusion' (Van Lieshout 1998, p. 4).

Society holds the notion of age-related decline, which views older people as processing information more slowly. This would impact their abilities in the work place. However, studies show that age related decline clearly affects individuals in the age group of 85 or higher, and not so much the newly old age of 60 plus (European Social Survey 2006). In many cases, older people are laid off for no reason other than their age and in other instances, older people are given tasks that their youngest colleagues do not want to do. Furthermore, information and communication technology usually require that the user have a certain set of skills. They often require a learning-by-doing attitude, the willingness to take the time to investigate how such tools operate. Studies show that the use of daily technological innovations are lower in older age groups, such as the electronic cash dispenser or electronic ticket services. Older individuals are usually not familiar with the learning-by-doing notion since they were raised with machines that could fail at the push of a wrong button (Van Lieshout 1998). For instance, the typewriter, which was used more widely by the 'baby-boom' population, is a tool whereby a delete option was not available. If the user made a

mistake, they would have to start over or remove the typo with a liquid whiteout. Just this idea of fixing mistakes is extremely different between a typewriter and a computer, where mistakes can be fixed instantly without leaving a trace. For this reason, technological innovations such as the computer or mobile telephone seems alien to the older people because it requires an understanding that is not ingrained in them.

Since 2002, technology was identified as having an impact on the successful aging of older individuals, and for this reason a declaration that realised the potential of technology on the individual, social and health implications of the ageing population was included in the *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*, which,

'highlights the existence of technologies that can be used to promote independence, to bring people together, to reduce marginalisation, loneliness and segregation between the ages, and to generate positive socioeconomic changes' (UNO 2002, p. 15).

Based on this declaration, through the use of technology the older population can gain connectivity and a sense of belonging to their younger counterparts in society thus decreasing ageist attitudes.

It was mentioned earlier that the portrayal of older people on primetime television contributes to the marginalisation and discrimination of the older population. In

today's world, social media provides an even wider and accessible platform to share pictures and videos. For instance, a youtuber named Ross Smith who has almost 200,000 subscribers, predominantly posts videos of his grandmother. In these videos he can be seen engaging in various activities with his grandmother mostly poking fun at her. These types of media, which is widely shared and highly accessible to the public, can be seen as having both positive and negative impacts on the way older people are perceived. On the one hand, it is clearly visible that Ross adores his grandmother and has great affection for her and the grandmother seems to be enjoying herself in the videos. However, the reason the videos are humorous is mainly attributed to the fact that his grandmother is aged and outdated and reacts to situations in a way an older person would, often times confused.

Data in 2010 suggests that less than 12% of the older people are aging successfully. Older people are constantly grouped with disabled or developmentally retarded people. As outlined above, ageist attitudes often times create an environment that is difficult for older individuals, and studies have shown ageism to exist in all cultures. Once an individual reaches a certain age, society automatically views them as being less able to understand or accomplish certain tasks. However, more importantly, when ageist attitudes occur inside the home, between the older individual and other members of their family, the result may be a conflict in intergenerational relationships, which is an even more serious phenomenon.

2.1.2. Digital Divide

Another phenomenon resulting from the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) is known as a 'digital divide'. This is a form of economic and social inequality, which refers to the availability and access that one has to ICT. Naturally, not every individual is given equal access and exposure to technological tools such as the Internet, mobile phones, computer etc. and this results in the inequality between different socioeconomic and demographic categories. A digital divide can exist on two levels, at the individual / household level which is a result of certain individuals having access as opposed to individuals that do not. However, at a larger scale, digital divide can exist between countries, this is known as a 'global digital divide' which refers to the technological gap between countries that are developed and those that are not (Norris 2001).

Initially this phenomenon was measured based on the accessibility of the ICT tools, but nowadays, with over 95% of the population having access to the mobile phone, the term digital divide has evolved to meaning the inequality in the skills that people or countries have which allows them to use ICT in a more enhanced fashion. Apart from information being accessible, the user must also be able to utilise and receive the information properly and efficiently. Correlating factors that affect obtaining access to ICT and the ability to use them actively are demographic and economic characteristics such as: income, gender, age, geographical location, cultural and psychological attitudes (Mossberger, Tolbert et al. 2008).

A study in 2004 showed that approximately 60 million Americans do not have access to the Internet, and almost half of these individuals are older than 65 years old. Based on interviews conducted with the older subjects, researchers discovered that many of them feel that in this digital age when technology is the centre of human communication, they do not feel relevant or included. Regarding health concerns, older people are also at a disadvantage from the lack of knowledge in using ICT. For instance, in 2012, the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy hitting New York was that the survivors turned to social media for their safety update, but older people were unable to utilise technology this way and could not seek help through this channel. Most of the disaster assistance programs are computer-based, and therefore the majority of older people do not benefit from them because they may not be aware of resources or do not have the skills to apply for proper assistance. However, even for older people who have access to using ICT, they may not have the skills required to utilise it successfully. ICT is essentially a new language for older people whose brains have never had to deal with so much chaotic and confusing flows of information. Many countries are offering courses to teach older people to use ICT but it should be noted that many such individuals cannot leave their homes to attend these classes because of their ailments.

2.2. Communication Technology and Social Media

Communication technology was one of the hallmarks of the industrial revolution and

'are the newest system of contemporary society, transmitting and distributing sensory and control information and interconnecting a myriad of interdependent units' (Grant 2010, p. 1).

August E. Grant argues that communication technology is so vital that any changes in them have the potential to impact every area of society, including interpersonal relationships (Grant 2010). Gary Krung argues that communication technology has undergone a process of anthropomorphism whereby it has become something alive, with autonomy. He believes the notion of the self and identity have changed due to the introduction of communication technology and people now express themselves through their relationship with the eternally renewing technologies and that,

'we find that we coexist between two worlds: that world of lived experience of the real, grounded for the short time longer in the experiences of the body, already proclaimed technologically changed by some and the world of representation, simulation and substitution' (Krung 2005, p. 23).

Technological innovations, which are often times, created in laboratories, more often than not, eventually find their ways into the everyday lives of individuals. Furthermore, a new technology that is introduced to society usually complements or takes over existing technological tools. The telephone and television, technologies which are well-established and widespread are slowly being taken over by mobile telephones and the Internet (Schroeder 2013).

It is believed that mobile phones enhance physical and social freedom, because it allows people to physically travel further and still stay in touch, thereby increasing the choices in one's social life. However, Schroeder argues that the reality may be a double-edged sword because mobile phones may constrain choice since there is no choice to having a mobile, since not having a mobile phone is often times frowned upon in many societies. Therefore, although the use of mobile phones adds freedom it also imposes constraints because the only choice people have is what device to use to engage in communication with someone since mobile ownership has become the universal feature of belonging to a culture of consumption (Schroeder 2013).

In developing and developed societies today, people rely on technology to maintain an efficient and functioning lifestyle. Human beings have become extremely dependent on communication technology such as mobile phones, computers, PDAs and the use of the Internet that life without these tools seem impossible. This is true especially for the younger generations, who grew up in the 90s and have never experienced a world without these technological aids.

In 2006, 61% of households in the United States had Internet access, and in 2008 this number increased to 71.9% (Brown 2010). It is argued by many that the introduction of the Internet was the most significant contribution to the speed in which technological advances gained popularity. The majority of the individuals who bought computers do so for the sole purpose of being able to connect to the Internet. In 2009, 58% of children under 12, 75% of teens and 93% of young adults from 18-29 years

old in the United States had cellphones. A study showed that 35% of teenagers talked on mobile phones every day and 28% sent text messages daily. Social media is the newest form of communication technology that has recently taken over the lives of many individuals living in developed or developing countries. Social media is an addictive platform for many to share their thoughts on anything that is happening in the world or just within the domain of their personal lives. The most popular platforms for social media are Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. By 2009, there were 175 million visitors on Facebook, the most popular social networking site, giving it enough population to become the sixth largest country in the world. Social networking sites are so popular among teenagers that researchers coined the term 'super communicating', which refers to how the young people were communicating and interacting through social media.

The Roman Philosopher Seneca may have put it best 2,000 years ago: *'To be everywhere is to be nowhere'* (Carr 2008). There are over 4.7 trillion searches on Google today and an experiment conducted in 2011 proved that we are less likely to retain information if we know it is accessible elsewhere (Sparrow, Liu et al. 2011). Nicholas Carr, known for his essay on how Google is 'making us stupid', argues that he feels as though he is a passive recipient transformed by someone, or something, an outside force. He argues that the internet, which has only been around for 20 years, is so important to people's lives that it would be difficult to imagine living without it (Carr 2008).

2.2.1. One-way Communication

Technological tools used for communicating can be classified into two categories: one-way communication and two-way communication. As mentioned above, the introduction of both types of these social media tools and instant messaging applications have transformed the ways in which we communicate with those around us. Furthermore, these transformations in communication exist across the different platforms of the tools that are being used. For instance, web blogging was introduced in the 90s and quickly gained popularity amongst individuals who had a passion for sharing knowledge, using their web page as an ‘online diary’ (Economist 2006). These personal bloggers were using not only words to express their thoughts but several other media types such as pictures and videos to get their message across. Web blogs are a one-way form of communication whereby the writer wishes to share their thoughts to the reader without necessarily expecting a response. The benefit of blogging is that one can get their point across to a higher number of people at once, as opposed to face-to-face communication. However, the downside is that it is difficult to determine how many people actually read the content that they post (Starr 2008). Another popular platform for sharing ideas is Youtube, which is a video hosting and watching website. The users of YouTube accounts are required to create content in a form of a video or moving graphic. While this platform is also a one-way communication, it is much more interactive than blogging because viewers can post their comments directly underneath the video content that is being shown. The profile and information of the viewers who posted comments are also easily accessible with just one click. Communicating using YouTube videos is different from blogging

because the author is no longer using written words, but rather spoken ones. Studies indicate that the attention span of individuals is decreasing as a result of a digitalised lifestyle (McSpadden 2015). As a result, the average time length of YouTube videos posted online is 4 minutes, which is the amount of time the video blogger has to get their point across. Therefore, YouTube transforms communication into one that is rapid with the purpose of being captivating to maintain or increase audience view. Other forms of information sharing platforms are Twitter and Instagram, these two are similar in that the content posted is usually concise and to the point. For Twitters, which is usually word-based, each post is limited to 240 characters, and Instagram posts normally consists of one of two images (Larson 2017). Communication is different on these two platforms because the author must be selective of what information they wish to post since they are limited to one paragraph or one photo. These two platforms, especially Twitter, while still a one-way communication, incorporates a lot of the functions of a two-way communication because often times each post would result in a thread of comments by readers who then engage in discussion or argument. It is a public platform for debate and is often times used by celebrities and public figures to lash out at each other. Another platform widely used, making it the world's largest social network, is Facebook. Facebook started as a means for university students at Harvard to stay connected and even though it has moved well beyond university students, the overall purpose of the platform has not significantly changed in that individuals are using this platform mainly to share content and engage with friends or family members. This is different to web blogging, YouTube, Twitter or Instagram which share content to anyone and everyone. In Facebook, users create a profile, sometimes with their personal information and post

updates on their lives usually in forms of images or quotes. Even though it appears Facebook is a one-way form of communication, in reality the user is very much interested in how many likes or comments they receive after each post. In Facebook, affirmations are exceptionally important. So much so, that numerous studies have shown that the more time a person spends on Facebook, the more unhappy they are likely to be because too much importance is given to the acceptance and approval they receive from other users online (Konnikova 2013). Nonetheless, Facebook remains the most popular platform for individuals to communicate their thoughts and feelings in hopes of feedback from their friends and family. Even though the social media tools listed above have varying differences, the main similarity shared by all is that they are all featured on a public platform, meaning information shared or posted is usually intended for a wide audience.

2.2.2. Two-way Communication

A different type of platform, which offers two-way communication, that is widely used in communicating is instant-messaging applications, namely Line, WhatsApp, Viber and also Facebook Messenger, which is an extension of Facebook. The two key differences between instant-messaging applications and the social media platforms aforementioned are that communication is two-way and is done within a private space. Even though the content communicated can be directed at multiple people, for instance, by using the group chat function in Line, the sender still determines exactly who the receiver will be. Furthermore, instant-messaging applications has moved users away from the computer and more towards the mobile phone because real-time communication is required. The content shared within applications such as Line or WhatsApp consist of emoticons and stickers, which transform the way individuals express their thoughts and feelings to one another. Rather than expressing their sentiments, positive or negative, through spoken words or facial expression, one can now communicate using emotions with one click.

'Users express their identities through emoticon stickers in various social context and those stickers serve as a kind of social symbol that connotes social context and emotion' (Lee, Oh et al. 2016, p. 2).

Research conducted on the use of emoticons and stickers have discovered that individuals use different type of stickers for different purposes and not simply to convey a message. Researcher found that the use of stickers and emoticons reduce

perceptions of hostilities, influence the formations of cognitive and affective impressions and also reinforce relationships because they are perceived as emotional support when used correctly (Lee, Oh et al. 2016). Therefore, not only do instant-messaging applications such as Line and Facebook offer a private platform for individuals to communicate with one another, they also provide functions such as emoticons and stickers which transforms the way individuals communicate transitioning from verbal to non-verbal communication. Additionally, the use of stickers and emoticons offers a means for less literate individuals to communicate more easily because words are not needed to convey meaning or emotions.

Studies have been carried out which focuses on the influence of technology on relationships and many have observed that, on the one hand, technology allows people to maintain stable relational goals in new ways such as exchanging birthday greetings virtually, while on the other hand, technology introduces and allows the possibility of new relational goals and norms. David McMahan argues that this allows constant contact and availability at all times such as cellphones and instant messaging which enables ‘perpetual contact’, which is ‘*the ability to make instant contact with another regardless of geographic location*’ (Duck and McMahan 2010, p. 332). This results in the actual content of messages being less important than the contact itself, therefore, everyday talk and contact increases while substance decreases.

‘The globalisation of communication promises an unfolding of the riches of the earth’s cultural, historical and semiotic materials. But in order to make good on such promise and leverage the diversity it is

giving us access to, information transfer and processing is not good enough' (Damiris and Wild 1998. p. 336).

Modernisation brings with it vast potential for development at the macro and micro level and it would be a shame to ignore these opportunities, perhaps even impossible to ignore or resist such a big movement. However, as an individual or a nation adopts these technological innovations it is crucial to do so with caution and to live in control of it rather than the other way around.

2.2.3. Impacts on Intergenerational Relationships

Communicating with one another is easier now more than ever before, whether it be communicating with family or relatives who live half way across the world, or connecting with an old friend from school or even getting to know a complete stranger. On top of the traditional forms of communication such as face-to-face conversation, telephone calls using a landline or postal mail, one now has the choice of email, mobile phone calls, text and instant messaging, web boards and social networking sites. The introduction of these modes of communication is met with both positive and negative views. On the one hand, it allows people to stay connected much more easily, especially for those living far from one another. Not only are people able to communicate more easily with a higher number of people, but the diversity of the communication has also been enlarged. For instance, it is now possible to send pictures or videos to each other on top of the usual audio sound. Nowadays, there are almost no excuses to not keeping in touch when one can do so

with just a single click (such as using the ‘poke’ on Facebook, or a ‘like’ on Instagram).

For many, this ease in communication comes at the expense of the quality of the communication itself. Studies have found that Internet users spend less time with their family and friends and compared to non-internet users, Internet users socialise less frequently with members of their households. One study showed that each minute online takes away 20 seconds with family members, 7 seconds with friends, 11 seconds with colleagues and adds 45 seconds to time spent alone (Baym 2010). Furthermore, nearly half of Americans claim they sometimes feel ignored because their significant other spends too much time online (Cole 2013). Another study found that the level in which communication technology can be damaging to a relationship depends on how it is being interpreted. For instance, for a couple where both individuals played video games, they do not report as much isolation from their partner playing the game (Baym 2010). This suggests that the negative impacts of communication technology are more accepted by individuals who also use the device themselves. This is an extremely interesting finding because individuals of different generations are sometimes faced with the challenges of not understanding or able to engage in the same form of communication technology, such as an older people not knowing how to use Facebook or instant messaging chats and in effect may feel neglected or isolation from younger members of the family.

Children-Parent

The impact of technology on the relationship between children and their parents have recently become a widely popular topic of research and discussion because it is a phenomenon that is prevalent all around us. More often than not, we would see a family dining out together but rather than having a discussion or engaging in active conversation, each member is busy chatting or playing games on their mobile phones. Or in the instances where a child cries out in public and as a response the parent shoves an iPad into the child's hand, which silences the wailing immediately. The relationship between an individual and their parent is arguably the most significant relationship one will ever form because it is the bond that is created from birth and usually lasts over entire lifetime. It is also the bond that will likely have the biggest impact on a person's life and how they choose to live it based the decisions that they make. For this reason, the relationship between these two parties is one that has been studied most extensively.

Jim Tayer argues that popular culture and technology have dramatically shifted the relationship between children and their parents. For instance, through popular television shows in the United States, children are receiving the message that their parents are incompetent, immature and generally clueless. This is enhanced by the fact that children engage less with their parents due to technological devices that keep them occupied. In addition, some parents may have difficulty in learning these tools, which strips away the role of the parents as the teacher and source of guidance because in the technology domain, the children are actually more equipped. And if the

parents do not fully understand the use of these tools it can be extremely difficult for them to regulate their use because they do not fully understand the impact.

'Because of children's sense of superiority and lack of respect for parents' authority in these matters, children may be unwilling to listen to their parents' attempts to guide or limit their use of technology'
(Tayler 2013, p. 1).

Another shift in the role of the parents is that in the past, when children wanted to communicate with one another they would have to go via the parents. For example, when they called their friend's house the parents would answer which meant they could act as the gateway to control the time and the person their children engage with, but due to communication technology such as the mobile phone and instant messaging applications, children can communicate with their friends or anyone else they desire without the knowledge of the parents. Tayler notes that the children are not the only ones to blame for this shift in communication, because although children may be more isolated and spend time engaging in their mobile phones or iPads as opposed to spending quality time with the family, it is not to say that the parents are not doing the same thing. Parents are also often times lost in the ease and convenience of these technological tools such as checking their emails or watching television, rather than spending time fostering a deep connection with their children (Tayler 2013).

A study conducted by Denise Ante-Contreras sought to answer how social media impacts attachment and bonding between parents and their children. She argues that

frequent eye-contact, one-on-one and undivided attention are all necessary when building a secure attachment between parent and child. With the widespread use of technology, research has shown that parents spend a lot of time focused on their mobile phones or computers and often neglect the need of their children. When children are at a young age they will most likely only feel the neglect but if children are older and can form assumptions then this lack of attention may result in them feeling as though the parents do not love them and care more about their technological devices than they do their children. This can have serious repercussions in later life especially since studies show that,

'the quality of interactions between infant and caregiver, beginning at birth, motivated specifically by the child's need for safety and protection, are central to lifespan development' (Ante-Contreras 2016, p. 6).

According to her research, 75% of parents reported they used their mobile phones and social media applications three times a day while caring for their child but only 10% of participants believe their use of social media affects the way they provide supervision and attention to their children. The conclusion of the study is that there is a correlation between the hours that parents spend on social media and communication technology devices and their likelihood of being an authoritarian parent. The more time a parent spends on digital devices, the more likely they are to use physical punishment, threats and other negative consequences as disciplinary technique, rather than discussing behavior with their children (Ante-Contreras 2016).

These results are extremely interesting and one may assume that this is because the authoritarian parenting style requires less time and energy to sit down and talk through the child's mistake and find a compromise, it is a parenting style with very low responsiveness which makes sense if the parents spend a lot of time on their mobile phones or computers.

Some parents, on the other hand, attempt to decrease the space between them and their children, often times they learn to do this by entering into their children's world, following the belief that *'if you can't beat them, then join them'*. This is seen in instances when parents befriend their children on Facebook or other social media accounts. While this may be a noble attempt on the parents' part, but it means that any communication or connection that occurs between the parents and their children will take place on the virtual platform. Tayler argues that this generation gap is causing children to feel less familiarity, comfort, trust, security, and most importantly love from their parents while at the same time the parents know less about what is going on in their children's lives and, as a result, have less ability to exert influence over them (Tayler 2013).

A study conducted by Humara Bibi, looked at the impact of technology in family relationship in Pakistan and concludes that technology negatively affects the parent-child relationship. She argues that although children have access to communicating with countless people in the world via technological devices, if they are unable to form healthy relationships within the home then they will not be successful at forming them with others either. Initially, the majority of parents would claim that the

cellphone was a blessing to their lives because it allowed for them to monitor the whereabouts of their children and to check up on them or make sure they are safe whenever they leave the house, however, as the use of the mobile phone increases the positive view of the mobile phone is decreasing. Teenagers are the age group that sends the most text messages and while this means they are in contact with friends and family, Bibi argues that the form of contact does not equal quality communication. Studies have shown that when teenagers spend a lot of time on the Internet, there is an increase in family conflict and a decrease in family closeness, which results in weakened parent-child relationships. The researcher argues that the form of technology that is the biggest culprit in negatively affecting the relationship between children and their parents is the video game, because until mobile phone or chatting applications, the video game does not allow for the parent and child to communicate with one another. Furthermore, the video game is detrimental to the parent-child relationship because it impacts the performance of the child in various levels, which goes against the expectation of the parents. Research has proven that video games result in children being less attentive on mental and physical activities, which results in dullness and laziness. This decrease in performance often times cause arguments within the home, which further detaches the teenage children from their parents (Bibi 2015).

Another study conducted by Gehan Moawad and Gawhara Ebrahim also explored the relationship between the use of technology and parent-adolescent relationship in Egypt, concluding that there is a highly statistical correlation between adolescents' technology usage and social interaction with their parents. The researcher argues that

teens ages 12-18 grew up with the use of technology therefore they have a harder time distancing themselves from these tools because it is ingrained into their identity and a lack of knowledge of up-to-date use and understanding of these communication tools may result in them being shunned by other members of their age group. Adolescence is already a difficult time for both the adolescent and their parents, therefore the use or misuse of technology can be potentially detrimental in the already fragile relationship.

'Adolescence marks a time of increased responsibility and challenging of previously established freedoms. The strength of the parent-adolescent relationship can impact the quality of the adolescent's decisions regarding education, alcohol and tobacco use, and a wide range of other health related behavior. A strong relationship between parent and adolescent can encourage positive decision making for the adolescent and protects adolescents from emotional distress, suicidal thoughts and violence' (Moawad and Ebrahim 2016, p. 168).

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As outlined above, technology has changed the ways in which humans socialise. In the past, the main process of socialisation occurs at the home setting, it is where children learn how to communicate, how to interact, what norms are required of them etc. but in this day and age, a chunk of socialisation is occurring via communication tools and social media, children are learning what is right and what is wrong based on what they see and read. Therefore the parents must also learn how to adapt to match this shift in the learning process. It is important that parents figure out a way to be involved in their adolescent's life and upbringing, especially since research shows that

children who were close to their parents are less likely to have problems such as maladjustment at school or needing care for emotional and behavioural issues (Moawad and Ebrahim 2016).

However, Suren Ramasubbu disagrees, and argues that technology has in fact improved the relationship between parents and their children, specifically adolescent children. He argues that the relationship between a parent and their adolescent child has always been a bumpy one but the use of communication technology allows for more opportunities to connect.

'Naturally, digital technology has become a predominant mode of communication within families and has undoubtedly extended the opportunities and increased frequency of interaction between the parent and adolescent. The digital age has altered the hierarchical nature of conventional parent-child relationship into a form that is more equal, intimate, and egalitarian than it has been in the past'

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(Ramassubu 2017, p. 1).

It is important that both the children, at whatever age, and the parents actively find the opportunity to spend quality time together because a relationship that is solely based on virtual connection, no matter how often, is not enough. Technology can enhance the relationship between parents and their children provided that both parties attempt to ensure the quality of the interaction and communication. Even though some may view these technological tools as the culprit, there is really nothing that can be done,

children, especially adolescents will continue to use these tools, therefore the correct approach is to work with these changes in the best possible way. Parents must relearn successful parenting in the digital age and to keep in mind that trust and love are crucial in maintaining a healthy mental and emotional relationship therefore they should create opportunities to also interact with their children without the use of technological tools.

Grandchildren-Grandparent

The relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren is a crucial bond especially since grandparenting is an important factor for roughly 70% of the older population (Hunt 2012). Stasova and Krisikova argue that grandparents can be a source of knowledge and inspiration and can provide instructions on life and relationships. More importantly, they could help younger counterparts within their family find the meaning to their lives because life as *'seen from their perspective can be a mirror for many everyday situations of younger generations'* (Stasova and Krisikova 2014, p. 2). The study of the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren can provide very interesting insights since the generation gap is much wider than the parent-child relationship. Grandparents and their grandchildren are normally 40-60 years apart which is an extremely large gap especially with the speed at which society is currently changing. A society may have transformed completely within this period of time, therefore, while the upbringing of a parent and their child may draw some similarities, the way of life of grandparents may be completely different, sometimes the opposite of how their grandchildren are

interacting with the world. A study was conducted in Toledo by Donna Hunt, which explores the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren in relation to the use of technological devices. She wanted to see whether the grandchildren are a source of aid in the learning process of the grandparents. She argues that many grandparents complain to not see their grandchildren enough and even when they are together, their grandchildren spend all their time on their mobile phones or computers. Older adults often find it difficult to learn these new technological tools because they find the language and instruction difficult to comprehend, as it requires skills, which they feel they have never relied on.

‘A new and different competence in decoding pictures and texts is required to navigate the digital environment and that the “digital literacy” is perceived as the “fourth cultural technique” politically, ranking it with math, reading and writing, and thus raises questions regarding those lacking this competence (Hunt 2012, p. 11).

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Donna Hunt found that for grandparents who do not know how to use such technological tools they view ICT as the culprit and express their disappointment at how their family members do not engage during family activities or their concern that such addictive behavior to mobile phones or computer will lead to a long-term inability to interact socially. Another concern is regarding the health of their grandchildren because physical activity declines with more time spent using technological tools. Most importantly, the main frustration expressed is the feeling that they are not able to engage in conversation or connect with their grandchildren.

Despite the frustration, the majority expressed a sense of awe and wonder over how quickly their grandchildren were able to learn such tools, even at the young age of 2 or 3. It seems that these skills are innate, which amazes but also concerns the grandparents. The researcher of the study discovered that the best solution to solve such gap in the generations is for the grandparents to learn how to use these tools, and moreover, if taught by their grandchildren it would be even better. For instance, her studies show that when grandchildren teach their grandparents to use technology they have a lot of fun together, and the experience is rewarding and productive for both parties. The grandchild is proud to show off their ability to their grandparent and to demonstrate the knowledge that they have, this builds self-confidence and social skills within the grandchild. The researcher concludes that if both parties use these technological tools then their relationship is enhanced. The relationship between grandchildren and their grandparents is interesting, because their closeness is usually dependent on physical location and studies have shown that once grandchildren leave home for university or work, their relationship with their grandparents usually ends or changes dramatically. Research has shown that the use of technology by both parties has aided in maintaining this relationship, through playing games together, such as scrabble or video chatting via Skype.

'Grandparents and grandchildren have a lot in common, free time, disposable income for gadgets and gizmos, and a keen interest in staying in touch with people, while technological innovations have made sharing fun rather than frustrating, it's the perfect storm of demographics and technology' (Baker 2011, p. 1).

When used properly and provided that the technological tool in question does not pose problems but rather facilitates effective communication then technology can aid in strengthening the grandparent-grandchild relationship. Technology allows intergenerational interaction without intrusion, it allows the grandparents to acknowledge the expertise and skills that their grandchild possesses in this arena. It also provides a platform for legacy building and cultural transmission, because *'technology is a contemporary intergenerational communication bridge'* (Hunt 2012, p. 79). According to research done on the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren in regard to technology, it can be concluded that technology increases the generation gap if the grandparents, unlike their grandchildren do not know how to benefit of these tools, as it creates distance between the two generations. However, once the grandparents are willing to learn how to use these tools, it actually provides a space to connect and communicate and allows the two generations to bond. It should be noted that research on this specific intergenerational relationship area is quite limited and therefore we cannot generalise the result to hold true in every case but it provides an interesting light on the issue.

In conclusion, Cowgill and Holmes argue that modernisation impacts the lives of older people in modern societies by decreasing their value and contribution. This happens through four main transformations; technology, education, media portrayal of older people and the retirement policy, all of which have shown to result in ageist attitudes and discrimination towards older people. Communication technology and social media, the main focus of the modernisation theory explored in this research have dramatically shifted the ways in which individuals communicate, specifically

with family members. Communication is one of the strongest pillars of human existence and a necessary tool for all societies. Therefore, when the form of communication is so fundamentally transformed, from face-to-face interactions to virtual messages, it is no surprise that all areas of human life should be affected, especially relationships between individuals. Research has shown that the use mobile phones and their accompanying social media and instant-messaging applications have affected the relationship between children and their parents, and grandchildren and grandparents in both negative and positive ways. The use of such tools has been shown to decrease the parents' control over their children's lives and affects the authority that parents may have over their children because children can find answers to their questions online and do not need to seek it out from a parental-figure. Studies have also shown that the use of mobile phones impacts the bond and attachment that is formed between parents and their children, for instance, parents who spend more time on their phones tend to have a less patient parenting approach to raising their children. However, studies have shown that the negative impact that these communicative tools have on the relationship between two individuals is very much based on the disparity between the parties' knowledge and use of these tools. For example, the relationship between grandparents and their grandchildren, who are of a 40-60-year generational gap may be enhanced through the shared use of these tools as it allows shared experience and also regular long-distance contact. The purpose of this research is to contribute to this area of study by exploring how communication technology and social media positive and / or negatively impacts the relationship between older parents and their adult children.

CHAPTER 3: MODERNITY AND THE LIVES OF OLDER PEOPLE

This chapter explores the notion of filial piety and the transformations in how older individuals are ageing in Eastern and Southeastern regions. Not only has there been a continuous decline in co-residence between older individuals and their children due to modernisation, older people are reporting a decline in respect and connectedness to their younger family members. In Thailand specifically, modernity has brought about changes in intergenerational support between older individuals and their children and the introduction of Industry 4.0 has resulted in earlier retirements and the mass adoption of communicative technological tools in the country.

3.1. Ageing in Eastern and Southeastern Regions

Ageing in Eastern and Southeastern regions of the world was traditionally viewed in honorific terms, where older people gained status and respect as they age. This is mostly due to the concept of ‘filial piety’, believed to have originated from the time of Confucius, whereby older people have enjoyed and been accorded with great respect and expect to be taken care of by their children.

‘Confucius seems to contend that the way to enhance personal dignity and identity is not to alienate ourselves from our families but to cultivate our genuine feelings for our parents’ (Chin and Loh 2008, p. 660).

Not surprisingly, the concept of filial piety has evolved over time since it is adapted to suit different cultures. Additionally, many believe that the intergenerational co-residence is the epitome of filial piety because,

‘intergenerational co-residence facilitates the regular intergenerational contact that contributes to the maintenance of material and emotional exchanges between different generations’ (Chin and Loh 2008, p. 663).

Living arrangements in Asia have changed and the prevailing intergenerational families have declined as a result of social changes brought about by modernity and globalisation. Whether the changes in residential structure reflect a deterioration of the quality of familial relationships remains dubious. In addition, technological advances, namely communication technology has significantly reduced the importance of co-residence as the primary indicator of a strong intergenerational relationship because these innovations allow family members to maintain and reinforce positive aspects of intergenerational relationships that were once not possible due to distance (Chin and Loh 2008).

However, studies have shown that living arrangement patterns are not the only factor that has shifted and that the lives of older women in Eastern and Southeastern cultures have been affected by modernisation and Western influences in various different ways. For example, women in India say that in the past they were respected by their grandchildren but nowadays, exposure to the Western world and formal education have caused young Indians to view their grandparents as old fashioned (Donnellan

1992). Family ties in Japan are growing weaker and weaker with influence of western individualism causing the sense of parent-child and family identity to diminish, making way for an individual-centered world-view. A common problem for many older Japanese women is the conflict between themselves and their daughter-in-laws who are reluctant to let them spend time with their grandchildren because they perceive their mother-in-law as being ancient, conservative and close-minded. For this reason, most Japanese women at the age of 50 whose children have all grown up find life meaningless (Donnellan 1992).

Studies in China show that 58% of disabled older people in Hong Kong claim to not have anyone to share their problems with. Similar findings were found in Guangzhou where the clients of the Home-Based Elderly Service Programme said that although in urgent situations they can seek assistance from their children (usually the eldest son), they do not receive routine attention or care because their children do not live with or even near them. The main issue these older people are faced with is loneliness, something the Home-Based Elderly Service Programme is not equipped to dealing with since its main purpose is to provide meals-on-wheels to older people (Pedro de Magalhaes 2010). Modern technology has made it so that people are now living longer than ever, but many are living with chronic diseases or permanent illnesses, which means they are highly dependent on others. Family members in China are forced with the tough decision of whether to send their aged parents to elderly homes or to take care of them themselves, which can lead to much stress. Studies have shown that 68% of family caregivers have at least once physically or psychologically abused the older dependents due to stressful conditions (Pedro de Magalhaes 2010).

Pedro de Magalhaes argues that it is necessary for both the formal and informal care sector to work synonymously in battling the issue of elderly care. The formal care sector includes the statutory system, voluntary system and commercial system while the informal care sector includes kin, friends and neighbours. Information support networks can provide four crucial and highly necessary types of support: social support which includes emotional and network support enabling the individual to feel they have a defined position in society; instrumental support which provides individuals with the tools needed to better cope and adapt to change in their lives so they can achieve full autonomy; active support involves being attentive to their needs by providing the care they require and material support such as providing financial aid. The major issue in informal care is that social and demographic trends indicate less family support in the future (Pedro de Magalhaes 2010).

In Malaysia, the majority of older people are taken care of by their family members, but this trend is changing due to demographic and social changes resulting from modernisation, rapid development and urbanisation. Rahimah Abdul Aziz argues that the belief in filial piety in a modern industrial society is lessening and that this change in value will have a significant impact on elderly care and welfare in Malaysia. One case study has shown that a 33-year-old woman has constant conflict with her ageing mother regarding how to raise her children. She prefers to be more strict and teach her children important values at an early age while her mother wants to talk to the naughty grandchildren in a loving way or spoiling them (Asian Pacific Centre 2014). It is clearly visible through these numerous researches that intergenerational relationships and the value of the knowledge and contribution of

older individuals have shifted in Asia and Southeast Asian countries.

3.2. Modernity in Thailand

Thailand is the second most advanced ageing population in Southeast Asia, after Singapore. The main reasons are attributed to the substantial increase in life expectancy from 1950s and the dramatic fall in fertility rates since the 1960s. This age-structure shift in the country is foreseen to have three significant implications: there will be fewer adults to each older person; a widening gap in the differences between generations in their educational level, occupational experience and attitudes; and a greater demand for health care and social services from the older population (Arnold 1992). Another phenomenon that is prevalent in Thai society today is that an increasing number of women are getting married past the normal reproductive age or never getting married at all. This is a short-term solution for the ageing phenomenon because single people are more likely to live with their ageing parents, but when they themselves age they will not have any children to care for them (Hayami, Koizumi et al. 2012).

Thailand is a remarkable country when choosing to explore areas related to modernisation. The reason being that it is a country that is highly westernised, and yet holds deep-rooted traditional customs and values. One significant exposure to Western influences was in 1855 under the reign of King Mongkut Rama IV when the Browning Treaty was concluded. At the time King Mongkut adopted western technology, education and economic organisations into the country to replace existing

outdated systems. However, the integration touched merely the social and economic systems of the country, for the Thai traditional culture and values remained unscratched (Hell 2010). It was not until the 1980s that Thailand truly embraced westernisation. Children were being sent abroad for education and Hollywood studios was sending in films to Thai cinemas. It was a period when Thailand underwent an economic boom, which brought an influx of jobs in the industrial and service industry, a lot of which required technological know-how. This change had a major influence on the older population because even though they had more experience in the workforce, their knowledge was marginalised and outdated, which in turn decreased their contribution and productivity.

3.2.1. Intergenerational Support

The junior-senior relationship is a basic structural feature of Thai rural society, which refers to the differences in social status as well as differences in age. Sharp argues that symbolic behaviour which probably carried the most real connotations of respect for seniority is that found in the kinship system. Many kin cannot be thought of except in terms of being older or younger than the speaker or other social referent point. All brothers and sisters are elder brother, elder sister or younger sibling (Potter 1976). Kaufmann describes the old-young relationship as being the most important determinant of social behaviour in the community. While parents hope that children will pay respect for their kindness of having raised them by taking care of them in old-age, the majority understand that they cannot force their children into doing so and therefore retain the formal title of their property for as long as possible.

Nonetheless, Potter observes that young children feel a sense of responsibility to repay their parents for bringing them up and they repay them by helping out with work in the family farm. Sons go into monkhood to earn merit for their mothers and daughters take care of parents in old age and worship them after their deaths. According to Potter's research, it can be argued that parents and the older population earned a great deal of respect in rural Thai communities. The parents, especially the father, had authority and seniority over the daughter and son-in-law after the marriage. Children would work under the guidance and leadership of the parents and respect their knowledge and experience (Potter 1976).

The mass migration of Thais from rural parts of the country to urban areas for employment is also affecting the family structures in the country. The concept of filial piety, whereby the children must provide and care for their parents in old age, a notion extremely deep-rooted in Thai culture, may be weakening. Traditional living arrangements in Thailand for older people consisted of co-residency with the youngest child, who then inherits the house. Based on most ethnographic accounts of traditional families in Thailand, matrilocality was the most common form of post-marital residence. However, some researches have suggested that some families preferred a patrilocal living arrangement. One important concept that defined traditional Thai family relations is the notion of 'bun khun', which equates to 'the favour or benefit that someone has bestowed upon you which you are obligated to return'. This concept teaches children that they are obligated to pay back the debt, which their parents have given them. Buddhism believes that being born a human is the greatest gift one can receive because *'only man can learn of the Buddhist*

teachings and have a chance to reach Nirvana'. Boys usually pay back gratitude to their parents by becoming a monk as this is believed to earn merit for their parents. On the other hand, girls do not have this option so often time it is believed that they must do so by providing care to their parents in old age (Hayami, Koizumi et al. 2012).

'Intergenerational support and transfers – which commonly take the forms of co-residence, time and money – are fundamental aspects of the social fabric in society' (Biddlecom, Chayovan et al. 2002, p. 185).

Research has shown a decline in the number of older persons living with their children from 77% in 1986 to 55% in 2014 (Knodel and Teerawichitchainan 2017). The government has responded to this phenomenon by putting forth policy frameworks that promote 'Active Ageing' as outlined by the World Health Organisation. The purpose of the framework is to enable older people to achieve independence, participation and self-fulfillment; to increase the social value of old people in society; and to recognise older people as not a burden but an asset to society (Thanakwong 2006). A national plan was put forth for 2002 - 2021 which places emphasis on the value of older people by enforcing a tradition of gratitude in younger generation through the praising of older persons who contribute to the community, the transfer of knowledge and wisdom to younger generations and the participation of skillful and qualified older persons in the society. Other programmes include free health care for older people, senior citizen centres, community volunteer caregivers and national older person's day (Buranakongatree 2011). In 1999, a study was

conducted in Thailand, which looked at the behaviours children have towards they ageing parents. One of the questions in the study asked the older individuals whether they felt that children paid them less respect than in the old days. The majority of older individuals, in both urban and rural areas, agreed with this statement. The overall conclusion from the study was that the role of older people in the family and household decreases as their age increases (Wongsith 1999).

As for financial assistance, the main source of income for older people has always been their family members, namely the children. However, this informal form of financial aid is decreasing with time as people are having fewer children, some not having children at all. This has resulted in a call for an increase in formal financial assistance from the government. Financial aid that children provide for their ageing parents has decreased from 85% in 1994 to 77% in 2002. Simultaneously, there has been an increase of income support from the government for older individuals, which rose from 4.6% in 1994 to 7.3% in 2002 (Soonthronhada 2009). These statistics clearly indicate the increase in responsibility of the state to care for the growing older population in the country. For individuals who are employed, they can enjoy the mandatory scheme of financial security known as the Social Security Fund, which is a requirement for private employees or the Government Pension Fund, mandatory for government positions. As for those employed through unofficial channels, or owners of their own businesses, once they reach the age of 60 they can benefit from the Old-Age Allowance System, which is a stipend of 600 baht per month from the government, once they reach 70 this stipend increases to 700 baht and then 80 and 90 to 800 and 900 respectively.

'Given the projected demographic changes, of an increasing dependency ratio and a decreasing support ratio, the burden on family members caring for their elderly relatives will increase significantly in the near future' (Soonthronhdada 2009, p. 51).

As Thailand enters a greying society, the proportion of older people will increase which will result in a decrease in the number of people in the work force whose tax contributes towards the pension scheme. On top of this, the reciprocity value that children in Thai society have towards their parents and the need to care for their older family members in old age is shifting, which has resulted in fewer children providing assistance in the form of financial aid towards their aging parents.

3.2.2. Retirement

In the past, people in developing countries worked mostly in the agricultural sector and life expectancy was moderate. This means that most people would work until they were no longer able to, therefore the idea of a fruitful life after retirement is relatively new for individuals in developing societies. Studies conducted in 1995, indicate there to be a strong positive correlation between the percentage of workers in agriculture and the percentage of older people in the work force. In contrast, those working in the private sector or government positions are forced to retire at a much younger age and as Thailand moves away from industry 1.0 towards industry 4.0, there will be less people working in agriculture meaning that as a whole, older people will retire earlier than the previous generations.

'One of the most striking aspects of working patterns in recent decades has been the strong movement toward retirement at earlier ages in most industrialised countries' (Hermalin 2002, p. 236).

In recent years, the study of life post-retirement for the aging group has become a subject of great interest to researchers. As life expectancy increases coupled with the decrease in fertility rates, more countries are entering an 'ageing society'. Individuals can expect to live up to 20 to 30 years after retirement and researchers are exploring the transition from a life of work to a life of leisure.

'Leisure is an activity – apart from the obligation of work, family and society – to which the individual turns at will, for either relaxation, diversion or broadening his knowledge and his spontaneous participation, the free exercise of his creative capacity' (Hermalin 2002, p. 276).

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Research shows that 59% of Thai retirees are part of and regularly engage in social clubs and community organisations. Over 90% of older people in Thailand claim they spend their free time (post-retirement) in activities relating to religion. In addition, the respondents reported a high participation in various forms of leisure activities during their free time, such as watching television, listening to the radio or engaging in physical activities (Chalermpon 2018).

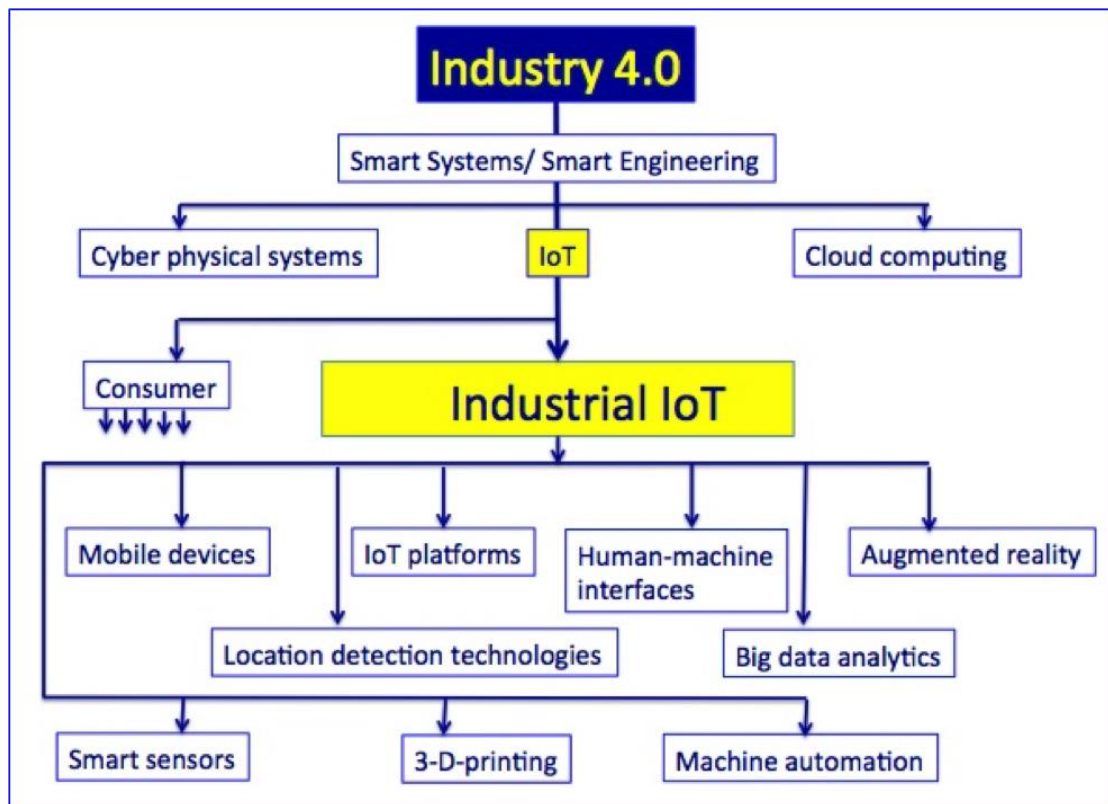
An article in Post Today written in 2018 reveals there to be a group of older individuals who are embracing their lives after retirement. Many of these older people view their retired life as a ‘renewed’ existence. They focus on their health and fill their days engaging in various social and personal activities. The article mentions that one main characteristic identical to all of these older people is that they are financially self-sufficient. Furthermore, these older individuals have adapted themselves to the modern world whereby social media and text-messaging applications play a significant role in their lives (Waraporn 2018). Another article in the Matichon newspaper also highlights the importance of financial freedom post-retirement and teaches both the young and old the importance of ‘retirement planning’ (Chalermpon 2018). As life expectancy continues to increase, it is crucial more than ever to plan one’s financial stability for later life because this appears to be one of the main determining factors of whether an individual will age successfully.

3.2.3. Communication Technology and Social Media

Technology has played a key role in economic development since the first industrial revolution and theorists agree that the evolution of technology has occurred in four phases. In the 1800s, the first industrial revolution occurred, also known as industry 1.0, whereby economies were introduced to water and steam powered machines, which resulted in the increase in production capabilities. This allowed individual businesses to grow from merely supplying to neighbouring households, into organisations with managers and employees. At the time of industry 1.0, Thailand was mainly focused on agriculture, including crops and livestock. At the beginning of

the 20th century, electricity was adopted as the main source of power, transitioning economies into industry 2.0. This enabled businesses to expand into machinery that operated on electricity, which, in Thailand, were notably manufacturers of light industries such as garments, footwear, bags and beverages. During the final decades of the 20th century, industry 3.0 occurred, at which time the world witnessed the invention of electronic devices, namely software systems and electronic hardware. For Thailand, this was the time of heavy industry and export, such as steel, automobile and natural gas, which significantly boosted economic growth. In the 21st century, industry 4.0 was introduced, also known as the fourth industrial revolution, with the main focus being on the ‘internet of things’. This industry brought with it the introduction of cutting-edge technologies such as robotics, artificial intelligence and other cognitive technologies (Crandell 2017). It is estimated that in 2020, around 30 billion ‘things’ worldwide will be connected to the Internet.

Figure 2: Industry 4.0 and the Internet of Things (IoT)



Source: (Leisenberg 2017)

Another term that was introduced alongside the ‘internet of things’ is the ‘internet of people’ which,

‘describes the vision where people, things (physical objects) and services are seamlessly integrated into the networks of networks as active participants that exchange data about themselves and their perceived surrounding environments over a web-based infrastructure (Eloff, Eloff et al. 2009, p. 2)

Today, Thailand is considered to be an extremely tech-savvy nation with industries flourishing in software and CGI development to online gaming to E-learning tech. The most notable sector is the adoption of the mobile phone and increasing popularity in social media use.

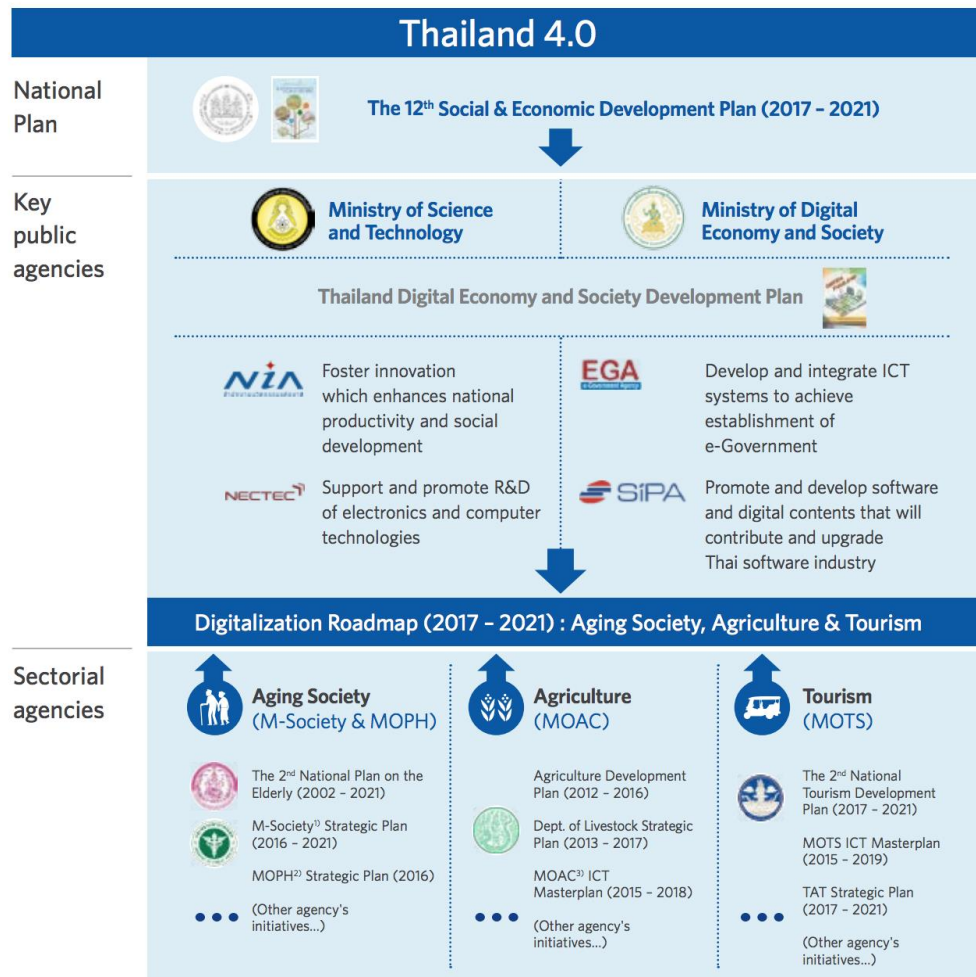
'Whereas some countries prefer to check the news, monitor bank accounts, or even make purchases online, Thailand favours social media when it comes to smart phone usage with 77% of people saying they preferred to engage in social media activities on their phones rather than the above activities (Websell 2016, p. 1).

The cellphone and personal computers gained popularity in Bangkok during the early 2000s and since then the number of users of communication technology and social media has increased annually. According to the Information and Communication Technology Survey in Households, in 2013, out of the 63.3 million people in Thailand ages 6 or above, 22.2 million (35%) were computer users, 18.3 million (28.9%) were Internet users and 46.4 million (73.3%) were mobile phone users. It is not surprising that Bangkok was the city with the highest percentage of use for these technological advances, whereby 53.3% of the city dwellers were computer users, 48.8% Internet users and 85% mobile phone users. The study also revealed to what extent each age group used these innovations. Out of the city's population, the internet was used by 54.1% of children (6 - 14), 58.4% of young adults (15 - 24), 33.5% of adults (25 - 34), 18.7% middle aged adults (35 - 49) and only 6.6% of old adults (50+). Interestingly, over a five-year span (2009 - 2013), the last age group, those of 50 or more had the

lowest increase of user percentage of only 2.6%, while other age groups had a minimum increase of 6% (National Statistical Office 2013). On the other hand however, when focusing on the frequency in which these individuals were using the Internet the result is very interesting. Of the children (6-14) who used the internet, 25% were using it daily, of the young adults (15-24), 44.6% were using it daily, of the adults (25-34), 64.4% were using it daily, of the middle aged adults (35-49) 62.3% were using it daily and of the old adults (50+), 55.5% were using it daily (National Statistical Office 2013). Based on these findings it may be concluded that although a small percentage of old adults use the Internet, over half of them were using it daily. This frequency rate is the highest after the adults and the middle-aged adults.

The survey also showed that 58.6% of those that used the Internet were using it for social networking sites. The most popular social networking site in Thailand is Facebook with 26% of the total population in the country using this site. Furthermore, 87% of social media users are on Facebook. While Line, which has 66% of total users, is voted the most favourable instant-messaging platform. Studies show that on average, Thai internet users spend more than 3 hours a day on their mobile phones, mainly on social networking sites (National Statistical Office 2013). According to these findings, it can be concluded that communication technology and social media play a major role in the social lives of people living in Thailand.

Figure 3: Thailand 4.0



Source: (White Paper 2017)
 จฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
 CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

Under Thailand’s vision for 2021, digital technologies are key components to bring the country forward and as outlined in the figure above, the digitalisation of the ageing society is one of the key roadmaps in the country’s national plan.

‘Digitalisation transforms Thailand towards connected society where everyone has enhanced accessibility to relevant information and services and leverages innovations effectively to drive Thais to become

more self-reliant, reduce socio-economic inequality and boost competitiveness (White Paper 2017, p. 16).

The main focus for the use of advanced technological tools is in order to improve the physical health of the older population. The government has introduced solutions such as the National Health Information System, Telehealth, Smart Home and Robotics and Digital Social Interaction Solutions, all of which are intended to provide older individuals with easier and more efficient access to healthcare. Improving one's physical health would increase the chance of old people obtaining 'active aging' because if cognitive abilities and physical conditions are sound, then older people could stay integrated in society (White Paper 2017).

Not only are policy makers focusing on the physical well-being of the older age group, but many are introducing programmes to enhance the quality of life at the emotional level. One of these initiatives put forth by the government is the Senior Citizens Council of Thailand (SCCT) whose purpose is to provide occupational opportunities for older people since statistics show that older people are at a higher risk of poverty because they are unable to actively earn an income (World Bank 2012).

Another programme that has gained popularity is the promotion of 'lifelong learning' for older persons, which has resulted in many universities offering subjects for older individuals. UNESCO put forth the argument that lifelong learning will enhance human development.

'Education from now on can no longer be defined in relation to a fixed content which has to be assimilated, but must be conceived of as a process in the human being, who thereby learns to express himself, to communicate and to question the world, through his various experiences and increasingly – all the time – to fulfill himself
(UNESCO 1972, p. 143).

Various studies have proven the countless benefits of the continuation of education and learning in old age. Not only does it delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease, older people claim that learning allows them to stay connected to society after retirement (Clancy and Monahan 2011). One area of learning that has been prevalent among older population has been of course the use of communication technology and social media. Many researchers argue there to be numerous benefits to the use of the Internet in fulfilling the lives of older persons and to strengthen the bond between family members of different generations (Loifa 2014). This research intends on adding insight into this specific area and shed light on the role that such technological tools play within the family.

3.3. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

This theoretical framework for this study draws directly from the refined version of the modernisation theory as was put forth by Cowgill and Holmes, which argues that the contribution and value of older people in society is directly linked to the degree in which the nation has undergone modernisation, which can be measured through the

introduction and popular use of technological innovations and advances. This research will focus specifically on communication technology and social media and how these innovations have impacted the intergenerational relationships between older parents and their adult children.

Most of the studies done on intergenerational relationships among family members focused on the solidarity dimension and the criteria, which gained the most popularity and was put forth by and Schrader in 1982 and consists of six main components:

1. Associational Integration – the frequency and pattern of interactions in various types of activities
2. Affectual Integration – types and degree of positive sentiments held about one another
3. Consensual Integration – degree of agreement on values, attitudes and beliefs among family members
4. Functional Integration – degree to which family members exchange services
5. Normative Integration – degree to which members conform to family norms of solidarity
6. Intergenerational Family Structure – number, type and geographic proximity of family members (Bengtson and McChesney 1998)

This research will be using all six components as outlined by Bengtson and Schrader as the framework around which the interview questions will be based. Since it is agreed by most social theorists that measuring intergenerational relationships is

complex, it should be noted that these six components shall merely assist the researcher in directing the questions to be asked in order to cover as many factors of intergenerational relationships as possible. Since this study is a qualitative research, measurements and data collection will not yield results in absolute terms, because the focus is on gaining an in-depth understanding on the current situation and what phenomena exist.

The hypothesis for the main research question is that communication technology and social media has impacted intergenerational relationships in both a positive and a negative way. The positive aspects, which are most likely present is that technological tools such as instant messaging applications (i.e. WhatsApp, Line) have enabled the older parents to stay connected to their adult children and other members of the family, such as their grandchildren or siblings. Even though the quality of the communication may not be as rich but at least there is the opportunity to maintain constant contact with their loved ones. There is a high probability that the older parents are using these technological innovations even more frequently on a daily basis than their adult children and it has also provided a means of them staying up-to-date with news. For parents who do not live with their children or who have family members living abroad, this virtual means of communication allows them to stay in touch from anywhere in the world.

On the contrary, it is also hypothesised that there are negative impacts on the intergenerational relationship between older parents and their adult children due to the use and popularity of communication technology and social media. Namely, it is

likely that adult children do not seek guidance or advice from their older parents because they may feel that their ideas or inputs are outdated and would rather seek solutions from the Internet. Furthermore, it is predicted that for adult children and older parents who co-reside, they do not spend enough quality time together because either one, or both of them, prefer to spend time on their telephones or social networking sites. The internet makes the world move at a very fast pace, which may result in a visible divide between the generation that can fully get on board the moving train and those that cannot.



CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter identifies and justifies the research methodology selected for this research. This study uses qualitative research as the method for data collection. Qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions and sentiments. Since the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between older parents and their adult children, it is extremely crucial that a first-hand qualitative detailed account is collected from each subject. Furthermore, most of the existing research in the area of ageing in Thailand utilises quantitative data collection. While this may be beneficial for providing a general view of the phenomenon, it overlooks detailed observation. This research wishes to obtain in-depth understanding of the relationship status and dynamic between the subjects in the study groups. Its focus is to explore and collect detailed accounts of behaviours and emotions that have resulted from situations and occurrences.

In order to allow for better exchange of conversation, a tape-recorder was used to capture the information, which allows the researcher to better engage with the informant and not be distracted with jotting down notes. The interviewee informed the participants that the data collected would be used solely for the purpose of the study and that their names would remain anonymous. Each participant agreed to the use of a tape recorder during the interview.

This qualitative research was conducted specifically in the form of a semi-structured interview, whereby the interview questions are open-ended with little control over the

informant's response. Both the informant and researcher acknowledged the session as being a formal interview, however the researcher made sure to provide a safe and comfortable interview environment. Building a good rapport with the interviewee was a key priority as this allows the interviewee to better express their thoughts and feelings freely. The reason for a semi-structured interview is due to the importance in allowing room for the informant to take the conversation into unpredicted territory as long as the interview stays within the topic of study.

The researcher had a set of interview questions as a guide, however, the order in which each question is discussed and answered is not identical for every participant, which was expected. The researcher did not wish to pose such strict objectives and wanted to carry out the interviews as casual as possible, as just two people having a conversation. This allowed the participants to feel at-ease and share their thoughts honestly and openly.

4.1. Sampling Method and Selection Criteria for Eligible Respondents

The sampling method used is purposive sampling whereby participants from three elderly associations in different zones around Bangkok were contacted.

'Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when elements selected for the sample are chosen by judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a

representative sample by using a sound judgment, which will result in saving time and money' (Black 2010, p. 232).

The reason being that this will allow data collection to be varied and cover individuals with different backgrounds. Furthermore, since the purpose of this study is to explore the impacts of communication technology on the relationship between older persons and their adult children, the interviewer hoped that by sampling individuals from different economic backgrounds pairs would emerge whereby only one of the participants are using such tools, most probably the adult children. In this day and age, it almost seems impossible to find a person who does not use a smart phone and its accompanying applications but as mentioned in an earlier chapter previous research indicates that conflict is more likely to arise if one cohort in a relationship uses such tools while another does not. For this reason, the interviewee wanted to cast a net that may reel in some individuals who are not using the technology in question.

Ten individuals were selected from the elderly association in Khlongtoey (impoverished neighbourhood), ten individuals from the elderly association in Nonthaburi (urban fringe) and ten individuals from the elderly association at Lumpini Park (inner city). There are two main criteria necessary in the selection of subjects. The first being that the age of the participants had to range from 60 - 69 years and second, the older person must have at least one child who will be available for the interview.

The targeted participants are 30 older individuals ages 60 – 69 years, born between

1944 and 1953. These individuals, classified as ‘baby-boomers’, are an interesting group to study as they are the new old, who have recently entered into the old-age category. Furthermore, they were most likely not introduced to communication technology until about the age of 55. As for their adult children counterpart, the ideal age group is 30 – 39, those born between 1974 and 1983. It should be noted that although the researcher had intentions of interviewing adult children aged between 30 and 39, but in reality the ages of the adult children who participated in this study spanned from early twenties to late forties. This is due to the fact that some older persons in the Nonthaburi and Lumpini group had children at a much later age, well into their forties. On the other hand, older persons in the Khlongtoey group, who are of a lower economic status, had children very early, in their twenties, which means their children are aged between 40 and 49 at the time of the study.

Another interesting factor regarding the interview participants that should be highlighted is that the majority of the participants from the Nonthaburi and Lumpini group are of Chinese descent, often times referred to as Thai Chinese. On the other hand, the majority of the participants from the Klongtoey group, which is an impoverished neighbourhood, are of Thai descent. This was not intentional and highlights the fact Thai Chinese individuals appear to be of higher economic status than those who are pure Thai.

It should also be noted that the family structure of the participants selected for this research is based on a set of norms associated with the ‘traditional family’. The 21st century witnessed the emergence of numerous other family structures such as LGBT

parents, single mothers or fathers and adoptive children and therefore it should be highlighted that the subjects and the findings of this research are based on the traditional family structure, which consists of a father-mother-child relationship.

Another interesting point to highlight is that when asked to access certain aspects of the relationship that the older women have with their children, they would often compare the relationship they currently have with their own daughter to the relationship they had with their mother. This is something that the older men participant never mentioned. Moreover, even though most of the older women who were selected for interview had both sons and daughters, they recommended that the researcher contact their daughter for interview, most often times insisting that their daughter is more helpful and closer to them. These two factors suggest that even though Thailand appears to follow a patrilineal mode, in reality, the relationships of Thai people are more matrilineal and family bonds are stronger between daughter-mother-grandmother.



Another factor worth considering is that in no way do the participants of this study represent the entire older persons population, especially since the individuals interviewed were all selected from elderly associations. The fact that these individuals are part of the elderly associations indicate that they are 'active' older people and are not bound to their homes due to any ailments, which is the case for many older persons in Thailand. Therefore, it is important to remember that the reason these older people were appropriate subjects for this study is because they have freedom and mobility to leave their house and engage in social activities with others.

4.2. Data Collection

Figure 4: Interview Participants

CHARACTERISTICS	KHLONGTOEY		NONTHABURI		LUMPINI		TOTAL	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Age of Older Persons								
60-69	3	7	2	7	3	7	8	21
70+			1				1	
Age of Adult Children								
Less than 20	1						1	
20-29		1	1	1		1	1	3
30-39	1	1	4	3	2	5	7	9
40-49		6				1		7
Both Cohorts Interviewed	10		9		9		28	
Only OP Interviewed			1		1		2	
Gender								
Both Female	6		3		5		14	
Both Male	1		1				2	
Mother and Son	1		4		2		7	
Father and Daughter	2		1		2		5	

A total number of 30 older persons were interviewed, 9 males and 21 females with ages ranging from 60 – 69. As for the adult children, 28 were interviewed, 9 males and 19 females, aged 14 to 48. Furthermore, the majority of the pairs are both females. This gender imbalance was not intentional but the majority of older persons who were accessible through the elderly associations were mostly female. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, for older persons who has both male and female children, often times the daughter was selected to participate in the interview. Two of the children were unavailable for interview, which means that 28 pairs were successfully interviewed, leaving 2 of the older persons pair-less.

Figure 5: Background Characteristics of Older Persons

BACKGROUND	KHLONGTOEY		NONTBABURI		LUMPINI		TOTAL	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Education								
None		2				1		3
Primary	3	5			1	2	4	7
Secondary			1	1	1	3	2	4
Technical School					1		1	
Bachelors			2	4		1	2	5
Masters				1				1
PhD				1				1
Number of Children								
1				1	1	1	1	2
2	1	2	2	3	1	1	4	6
3	1	3		2		2	1	7
4+	1	2	1	1	1	3	3	6
Living Arrangements								
Children	1	5	1			4	2	9
Spouse	1		1	2			2	2
Children and Spouse	1	1	1	5	2	3	4	9
Grandchildren		1						1
Alone					1		1	
Profession								
Self-Employed	2	5	1	1	3	2	6	8
Employee				2				2
Retired	1	2	2	4		5	3	11
Main Source of Income								
Self	2	6	3	7	3	5	8	18
Spouse	1						1	
Children		1				2		3

The figure above portrays the background characteristics of the older persons who were interviewed. The level of education ranges from none to PhD level, with the most concentration around primary education for the Khlongtoey and Lumpini group, while a Bachelors education is most prevalent in the Nonthaburi group. As for living arrangements, over two-thirds of the older persons are living with either their children or with their spouse and children, with only one older person living alone. Regarding profession, the majority of the older persons, in all three groups, are still actively earning income, the majority being self-employed. It is surprising to see that although the interview participants are over 60 years of age, only half of them are retired. All

but four older persons claim they are self-sufficient, with their main source of income deriving from actively working, pension fund or savings accumulated from before retirement.

4.3. Data analysis

The interviews were recorded, after having received permission from the participants, using a smartphone and later transcribed into English from Thai using the word processing programme known as Microsoft Word. Once the transcription was completed, the data was read and re-read multiple times and in the process names of the subjects were removed to create anonymity.

The method used for data analysis is ‘thematic analysis’ whereby themes were highlighted and grouped. The data was transferred from Word document into Microsoft Excel in order to facilitate the coding process. Statements and expressions that were often repeated, surprising to the researcher or emphasised an existing theory were highlighted. The Excel format allowed the possibility to place the answers side-by-side which facilitated coding and comparisons. Since the interviews were done in a semi-structured matter, some questions were not asked in the same order, therefore the transition from Word to Excel was highly useful.

Several quotes are used to present the data in the participant’s own words, this is extremely important as it allows the reader to gain an understanding of not only the content of the response but also the way it is being expressed, including any

underlying emotions. Following each quotation, the author makes sure to provide a summary of the response in order to clarify its relevance to the analysis being made.

4.4. Strengths and limitations of the study

4.4.1. Strengths

One of the strengths of this research is the fact that both the parent and child are interviewed. This method of data collection allows for a much richer and more in-depth understanding of the relationship as both sides are involved. Initially the researcher intended to conduct more extensive interviews on the older individuals since they are the main subject of study, but as the interviews were carried out, the sessions with the adult children were just as long and detailed because they had so much more to add than initially envisioned. Another interesting dimension that emerged from interviewing the adult children is that many of them had children of their own. This led the researcher to also explore aspects of the relationship that the adult children had with their own children as additional data that can be used for interesting comparisons later on.

Another strength of this study is the variety of relationship scenarios that was collected. By interviewing participants from lower income families, such as those individuals from Khlongtoey, the researcher was able to find individuals who has very limited use of such technological innovations, maybe none at all. This was initially the hope, and the data result yielded exactly this. This enables the researcher to

compare and contrast parent-child couples where both individuals had smart phones against couples where only one family member uses it.

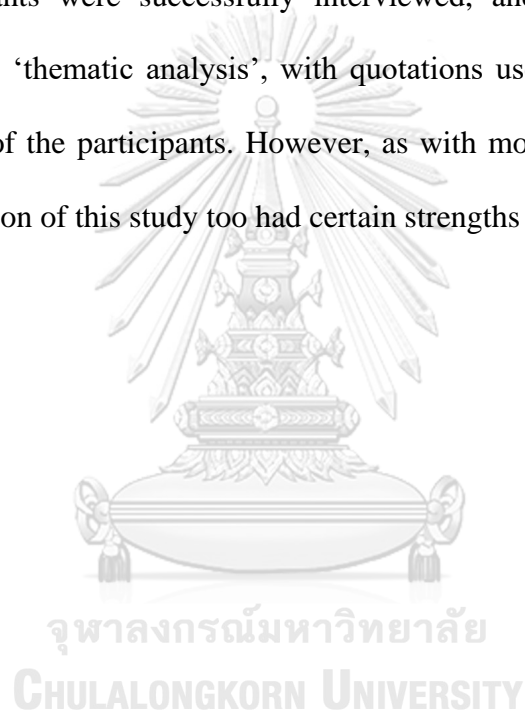
4.4.2. Limitations

The first limitation of this study is the fact that the interviews were conducted individually. While this is beneficial as it allows both the parent and child to express their thoughts and feelings openly, it means that data for the parent was collected before conducted the interview with the children. Before embarking on the interview with the couple, the interviewee made sure to call both the parent and child for an appointment date. However, two of the children were unable to participate after the their older parent counterpart was already interviewed. This left the research with missing interviews and while the data of the parent's alone yields much information for analysis, they are incomplete.

The second limitation of the study is concerning the participants from the Khlongtoey group. These subjects are quite homogenous in terms of their living arrangements, which is very similar to one another. All the older persons grew up in the same neighbourhood where they still live and their children were raised pretty much under the same circumstances. This may or may not be the reason many of them had very similar responses to certain questions. This limitation seems unavoidable if one wishes to collect data from lower income families since, due to their family situation and social background, the majority of these individuals who belong to the same elderly association would be living in walking distance of the centre. Such

impoverished neighbourhood are organised in such a way whereby families live very close to each other, sometimes door-to-door.

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the research methodology used for this study. The sampling method used is that of ‘purposive’ sampling and the interviews conducted followed a semi-structured interview pattern. A total of 58 of the 60 intended participants were successfully interviewed, and the data collected was analysed by using ‘thematic analysis’, with quotations used in order to express the exact sentiments of the participants. However, as with most research conducted, the design and execution of this study too had certain strengths and limitations.



CHAPTER 5: INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OLDER PERSONS AND THEIR ADULT CHILDREN

Human beings are social beings and forming and maintaining healthy and positive relationships with others is an innate necessity. The most extensive longitudinal study ever conducted was by a group of scientists who wanted to determine what factors contribute to human longevity. The study began in 1928 and was done on a group of Harvard students, and would last up to 80 years. The scientists recorded early-life experiences, such as triumphs and failures in their careers, physical and mental illnesses and qualities of their relationship. The result of the study was astonishing, whereby the biggest determinant of whether a person would live to a ripe old age was how content and satisfied they were in their relationships with others. The quality of the relationships that the subjects have with their spouses, family members and peers were the main indicators for their longevity, more so than physical illnesses. As Waldinger stated,

'Loneliness kills. It's as powerful as smoking or alcoholism' (Waldinger 2015).

Several other studies also support this claim that social relationships in later life is directly linked to successful aging.

'Social relationships provide a platform for the exchange of support and opportunities for social interaction, and research demonstrates

their independent influence on mortality, heart attack survival, cognitive decline, depression and anxiety' (Bennett and Soulsby 2015, p. 112).

Based on a meta-analysis conducted in 2010 in America, older people with rich and fulfilling social relationships have a 50% lower mortality risk than those with poor inadequate social relationships. Furthermore, the study concluded that the influence of social relationships on mortality risk could be compared with risk factors such as smoking and alcohol consumption and even surpasses the influence of other risk factors such as obesity and physical exercise (Holt-Lunstad, Smith et al. 2010). One reason may be because social relationships offer a person the opportunity to be needed which can be extremely beneficial to an older person's well-being as it creates a sense of usefulness. Research further indicates that older people who provide support to others are more likely to receive support in return, which lowers depression and increases their sense of self-esteem (Thomas 2010).

Anyone, at any age would benefit from having loving and trusting relationships. Luckily, throughout a person's life, they find themselves in various social settings that allow interactions with others, such as schools, universities or work places. However, once a person reaches the age of retirement, what often happens is they leave their careers behind and end up spending more time alone in their homes, slowly drifting away from those who are still part of society's work force. Research has shown that as a person ages, their levels of engagement and overall social network size decreases. This is particularly true for older men than for older women (Bennett and Soulsby

2015). It would be ideal for retired men and women to maintain adequate relationships with their children since several studies indicate that in old age, the family, namely adult children are the central source of support for older people (Lowenstein 2007).

According to research conducted by the General Family Survey in Thailand, the relationship between older parents and their adult children in Thailand is still strong. The survey included questions such as the frequency in which adult children would look to their aging parents to settle family conflicts, or when seeking advice in general. The result was that over half of the subjects reported they turned to their parents in such times (Prachuabmoh 1995). Pattama Kengkanpanich came to similar conclusions in her research, which was conducted in 1999 on the relationship between the two family members. The relationship was measured by the degree in which the children provided assistance (financial and care) to their parents and by how often the children consulted their problems to their parents. The result of the study was that the majority of the adult children still maintained the role of taking care of their parents and nearly half of the respondents consulted their problems with their parents (Kengkanpanich 1999).

A more recent study, by John Knodel, conducted in 2009, examined the living arrangement, caregiving, material support and social contact of older people and their adult children. The result is that while the majority of older people in Thailand continue to co-reside with their children, this number is declining, being replaced instead by older people living with their spouses. Knodel notes that this reduction in co-residence reflects the trend in the decrease in the number of children that older

people have. As for personal care, the women respondents of the survey claimed that the main person who provided assistance when it was required is a family member, namely their adult children. As for the older men, their primary caregiver is their wife. The researcher notes, however, that this difference may be due to a higher percentage of widowhood in women, which means their spouses are not around to care for them. Regarding material support, the majority of older participants claim their children to be important sources of economic support, providing money, food and goods (Knodel 2009). Knodel updated his findings with surveys conducted in 2015, which demonstrates a decline between 2007 and 2014 in children being the main source of income for their ageing parents. He believes the reason to be because of other sources of income made available to older persons such as the Old Age Allowance programme (Knodel, Teerawichitchainan et al. 2015). The fourth and final area of study is social contact and the data collected in 2009 suggests that the majority of non-co-resident parent see their children at least once a month. Furthermore, the access to telephones has greatly expanded the ability for older people to contact their children, especially over long distances. Almost two-thirds of the respondents claim they speak to their children on a weekly basis (Knodel 2009).

For this research, the purpose is to understand what impacts communication technology and social media have on the relationships between the ageing parents and their adult children and in order to obtain this the researcher must first seek to measure the existing relationship between the two family members. Once the different dimensions of the relationship are measured one can gain a better understanding of the status of the relationship which will lay the foundation to inspecting what aspects

are affected by the use of technological innovations. It should be emphasised once again that there are varying tools by which a researcher measures the quality of the relationship between two individuals. The method that has been selected for this research was put forth by Bengtson and Schrader and composes of six components: associational integration, affectual integration, consensual integration, functional integration, normative integration and intergenerational family structure (Bengtson and McChesney 1998). This framework is the foundation around which the research questions were formed.

5.1. Associational Integration

The first dimension used to measure the quality of the intergenerational relationship is known as ‘associational integration’. This refers to the frequency and pattern in which the two individuals interact in various types of activities. The older subjects were asked how often they see their children and what activities they would engage in during their time together.

As outlined in the previous chapter, the majority of the participants live with at least one of their children. For this reason, almost half of the interview participants claim to see their children every day, mostly during dinnertime when everyone has returned from work and the family gathers for supper. This is mostly due to the fact that the family members live in walking distance of each other, which was especially the case for the participants in the Khlongtoey group.

As for the participants in the Nonthaburi and Lumpini group who do not live with their children, the majority of them say their children would visit at least once a week, usually on the weekend when the family enjoys activities together.

A handful of subjects report that they see their children only once a month, the reason being that they live in different cities. As for those whose children live abroad, the frequency of physical interaction decreases to once or twice a year. Nonetheless, the participants were sure to mention that even though they do not see their children often, they would call each other frequently and engage in video calls.

Only two of the respondents expressed frustration or dissatisfaction at the frequency in which they see their children,

'Well it depends on convenience, of course I want to see him more but it's not always easy because I am busy with social events and he is busy too' (Mother, 67, Nonthaburi).

'No I don't see my children often. Of course as a parent, I love all my children equally and want to spend time with them but it is not my place to have to visit them, they are the ones that should come and see me. Especially on special occasions like Mother's Day or Songkran Day, they should visit. I spent a lot of blood and sweat, they should come see me' (Mother, 66, Khlongtoey).

The remaining subjects, whether they see their children every day, once a week, or less frequently, responded in a neutral tone, many adding that the reason is due to circumstances, which cannot be avoided.

'I would see my children at least once a month, we are all very individualistic and quite busy with our own lives' (Father, 67, Nonthaburi).

'If they come into town they would come visit me but sometimes I commute to see them, we don't see each other that often though because we are all busy, hard to coincide our free time' (Mother, 61, Nonthaburi).

When asked what activities they engage in while together, every single participant mentioned eating as being the main activity. The family members usually spend time cooking together or for one another and then share the meals together. Some older person even mention that their children take this opportunity to teach their parents what they should eat or what they should avoid to improve their health.

For those who see each other every day, dinner is the main meal they share, because that is when the children, and sometimes the parents, finish work. For those who see each other less frequently, having meals on the weekends is the most common, especially on Sundays for lunch. Several participants also mentioned they would get together for special occasions such as Mother's Day or Father's Day, whereby they

would take their parents out for a meal. Several older persons mentioned that their children would buy them gifts on their birthday which makes them very happy.

Another activity that was mentioned quite often is going to the cinema or shopping. Several older persons expressed that apart from sharing meals together, their children would take them out to walk around department stores during the weekend. This was expressed by only the subjects in the Nonthaburi and Lumpini group, which is expected because the participants in the Khlongtoey group are of a lower economic class and have less opportunity to spend their money on things that are not of a necessity.

In summary, the majority of the parents either see their child every day or once a week and all but two expressed an understanding and acceptance in the frequency in which they see their child. The activity most shared by the family members is eating, mostly dinner, within the household. Some of the participants mentioned that on special occasions they would take their parent out for a nice meal, and on rare occasions they would go shopping or watch movies in the cinema.

5.2. Affectual Integration

The second dimension is known as ‘affectual integration’, which consists of the types and degree of positive sentiments that the parent and child have for each other. As this is a rather sensitive topic, the researcher made sure to phrase the questions in a delicate manner in order to gain an understanding of the sentiments that the parent-

child couple shared for one another. When asked to rate their relationship with one another, the common response would be 'it's good'. Further probing was required to get more details and insights. The same questions were asked to both the parent and their respective child-counterpart in order to assess whether similar sentiments are shared between the couple.

The result is, that for roughly half of the participants, both the child and the parent expressed positive sentiments towards the other. About a handful of the subjects expressed negative emotions or expressions and finally, interestingly, for several of the participants, the parent expressed positive sentiments toward the child, but the child does not share in the positivity and instead provided answers that were negative. The common themes that are used to express either positive or negative sentiments toward their family member are presented in the tables below:

Figure 6: Sentiments Expressed Towards One Another

	Older Persons	Adult Children
Positive	My son/daughter is... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>a good person</i> - <i>smart</i> - <i>good at her work</i> - <i>takes good care of her family</i> - <i>responsible, knows right from wrong</i> 	My mother/father is... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>a good person</i> - <i>sweet and loving</i> - <i>modern, not old-fashioned</i>

	<p>My son/daughter...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>never argue / hardly fight</i> - <i>talks to me about everything</i> - <i>buy things for me / gives me money</i> - <i>is reliable and trustworthy</i> 	<p>My mother/father...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>trusts me</i> - <i>never argue / hardly fight</i> - <i>share activities with me</i> - <i>is like a close friend</i> - <i>sacrifices for their children</i>
Negative	<p>My son/daughter is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>selfish</i> - <i>stubborn</i> - <i>bad at raising children</i> <p>My son/daughter...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>thinks differently from me</i> - <i>argue with me often</i> - <i>doesn't help me pay for bills</i> 	<p>My mother/father is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>old-fashioned</i> - <i>stubborn</i> - <i>forgetful</i> - <i>stingy</i> <p>My mother/father is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>thinks differently from me</i> - <i>doesn't agree with how I raise my children</i> - <i>is not very close with me</i>

The majority of the parents who expressed positive sentiments towards their child said they believed their child to be 'a good person'. When probed further it was clear that the parents feel this way due to their child's sense of responsibility towards themselves and their family. Several older persons mentioned that they believe their children to be good because even though they work hard they still find the time to take their parents on holiday or that the adult children take good care of themselves and never make their parents worried about them. Another recurring theme mentioned

several times is the ability to distinguish right from wrong, their ‘moral compass’, which seems very important for many parents as a way of judging their child.

Several parents also mentioned that they believe their child to be ‘smart’ and more intelligent than themselves, often times referring to their child’s ability to better understand the world due to the more advanced education that they received,

‘He is a very loving son, he always thinks about me and takes care of my needs. Yes we are similar, but his thoughts are more progressive, because of education and the times we are living in, they are more advanced than I am in his way of thinking. My thoughts are more closed and narrow, but his is wider’ (Mother, 69, Lumpini).

As for the children, the theme that was present in almost half of the subjects when explaining why they did not have a good relationship with their parent was the fact that their mother or father are ‘old-fashioned’. Several children expressed that their parents do not really listen to them because they mindset is narrow and lack open-mindedness. This difference in the way of thinking is often the reason the adult children and older persons have arguments and disagreements.

The inability of the parent to see the world in the same light as the child appears to be a great inhibitor of the pair’s inability to form a close relationship. Whenever a subject used this word to describe their parents it seemed as though this one little world is enough to explain all the reasons for why they do not get along. When asked

to elaborate, the main area that the disparity in viewpoints and mentality occur is on raising children. Many of the child subjects argue that their parents do not trust them and believe in the way they raise their children and would often highlight that the main reason for the two generations to argue usually resolves around the children/grandchildren. One daughter mentions,

'Usually we argue about not having the same thoughts and ideas on things. It doesn't end, normally we just each go our separate ways and forget about it. For instance, my mom doesn't agree with how I raise my children, but she doesn't have the right, so she can just suggest but I do what is right in my opinion. I think I have to say she's a good person. I think we are quite different in the way we think, my mother is quite old school and traditional' (Daughter, 44, Lumpini).

Another recurring theme is that the child feels their parent is traditional in their way of thinking which also has a negative impact on the working relationship between the pair. Some children work with their parents and mention that the fact that their mother or father is old-fashioned creates problems for their working relationship because they are unwilling to open up to new ideas and are set in their ways,

While most of the answers were very clearly positive or negative, there were some parents who had more difficulty expressing themselves coherently. Some parents had negative views on their children as a person but were happy with the way they treated them, while some highlighted that their child was good in certain domains of life,

such as being a parent, but did not do well in their job for instance. Another example of a mixed response,

'He is very smart, he seems like he doesn't really care about anything, I have to always complain to him he would play games and I would get stressed when I wake up in the middle of the night, I would have to teach him things and get tired but he gets the highest grades (Mother, 61, Nonthaburi).

'She's good, I can rely on her for everything. Right now she's great, she's got a good husband. But sometimes my daughter is quite selfish. I have to do everything for her, she doesn't really pay, electricity fee I have to help pay, I have to pay for her but she would never pay for me' (Mother, 62, Khlongtoey).

It is clear that these subjects have mixed feelings toward their child, but it is interesting to notice how they shift between blaming them for things and admiring them.

Whether the sentiments were positive or negative, the majority of the subjects stated them as they were, except for one man, who in all vulnerability mentions that he does not feel close to his son and wishes things were different.

'In reality we have to accept how things are, of course every parent wants to be closer to their children and their family, but our children

have reasons and responsibilities, so we cannot always be close
(Father, 67, Nonthaburi).

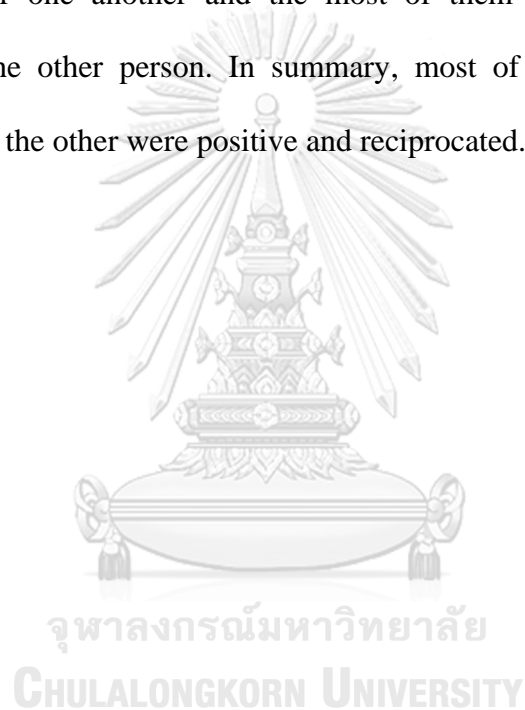
His son affirms this relationship by saying *'we don't really talk much but I know he's okay and that's enough'* (Son, 31, Nonthaburi).

As mentioned earlier, half of the pair of subjects shared similar positive sentiments towards the other, while one-third of them shared similar negative expressions. The remaining few were cases where the parents had good things to say about their child but the child viewed their parents in a very different light. These cases, though rare, are extremely interesting because the sentiments shared by both the family members were completely opposite. For instance, one parent raved about how wonderful her daughter is because she never gets into trouble and does a great job raising her family and how extremely proud she is of her daughter. While on the other hand, her daughter only had complaints about how often the pair would fight and how their relationship had never been ideal because her mother always loved her brother more. Another case is where the mother boasted how the two felt *'very attached to each other'*, but the sentiments of the daughter was the following:

'Sometimes she goes to play cards with friends which creates debt sometimes that I have to go and handle. My mother is quite stubborn but I never made my mother cry, when my mother is angry I just walk away. My mother is quite old fashioned, she complains a lot, when she comes to my house she would complain about the things I am doing

incorrectly, sometimes my daughter fights with my mother so it's difficult' (Daughter, 47, Khlongtoey).

It is interesting to see that the sentiments of the daughter are almost completely opposite from that of the mother. However, these cases of conflicting sentiments are rare. The majority of the parent-child couples had matching tones when expressing their emotions for one another and the most of them had nothing but positive admirations for the other person. In summary, most of the sentiments that were expressed towards the other were positive and reciprocated.



5.3. Consensual Integration

The next dimension used to measure intergenerational relationship is ‘consensual integration’ which is the degree of agreement on values and attitudes shared between the family members. The first question asked is in regard to the frequency at which the children would ask their parents for advice.

Interesting, the majority of the parents in the Khlongtoey group claim their children come to them for advice on a regular basis and that they had quite a big role to play in their child’s decision-making process.

‘I teach them moral values and they listen, I teach them how to be good people and tell my grandchildren how to be good to their mother. I just tell her what is good and bad and it’s up to her if she listens, usually about issues within the family and how to raise grandchildren’ (Mother, 65, Khlongtoey).

‘Yes, he comes often, and I always manage to help him out, I teach him, and he always listens to me’ (Father, 65, Khlongtoey).

‘Yes we spend a lot of time talking about problems, about mortgaging the house usually, or other financial issues’ (Mother, 62, Khlongtoey).

The majority of the parents in the Nonthaburi and Lumpini group claim their children asked for their advice once in a while and only in certain areas. The subjects noted that the knowledge, which they can contribute to their children, revolves around the

insights they accumulated over the years, which enables them to behave and think in ways their children of a different upbringing are unable to do.

'If it's knowledge about going out and fighting with others in the world then there's no way I can compete, but if it's work about sales and how to deal with people, kids these days cannot compete with us, kids these days use just technology but we use skills and know-how, kids these days are not very good at sales, they disregard customers, unlike when I was young, we would put customers first and care for them much better than nowadays' (Mother, 61, Lumpini).

'Not much but sometimes, my son would call me and ask how to cook this or that, especially now that he lives alone in England because when he's back I do and cook everything for him' (Mother, 57, Nonthaburi).

'Yes sometimes, usually it's about how to raise her kids, what decision she should make' (Mother, 66, Nonthaburi).

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The majority of the children who said they went to their parents for guidance also remarked that the knowledge of their parents which they find most valuable and contributes most to their needs were in the area of life experiences, skills and know-how as opposed to common knowledge. Several children value the older parents understanding of human relationships and how to deal with people, which is a skill acquired through the years.

One child admitted that she usually already knew the answers to her problems but she would provide the opportunity for her mother to teach anyway as it is beneficial to their relationship.

'I would ask her for some advice about household stuff, but not so much about work because she doesn't really have anything to contribute. I know it makes my mother happy to give me advice so I would ask her even though I know what to do already, it's a good opportunity for us to communicate' (Daughter, 39, Lumpini).

Interestingly, several of the children's answer did not coincide with those of the parents. Four children, whose parents claim they would often seek out their parents for advice, claim that they never turned to their parents for help in making important life decisions. This disparity makes the researcher question the honesty in the participant's response.

About one-third of the parents claim their child does not often seek advice from them, the answers for the reason behind is usually about the parent not having the same values and beliefs. These older persons claim that their children would turn to their friends or lover whenever they had problems due to similarity in age and viewpoint,

'No she doesn't, she would usually talk to her friends, she feels more comfortable doing that. She doesn't share a lot with us, I have to always go to her and ask if she's okay. I think half the time my thoughts

coincide with her but usually she doesn't agree with what I have to say because we are of different age and times have changed' (Mother, 60, Nonthaburi).

'He is who he is, and he is confident, he listens to me sometimes but most of the time he doesn't, I am not as educated as my son, our thoughts are different, I am old fashioned' (Mother, 69, Lumpini).

However, some children mentioned that the reason she deals with problems on her own and does not involve her mother is because she does not wish to burden her with problems, many stating that their older parents have health issues, such as high blood pressure which means getting them stressed out could be hazardous to their ailments.

Although some adult children claim they never ask for advice from their parents, the majority of the children still value their parent's knowledge and often seek guidance from them. As aforementioned, the knowledge which they usually ask for revolve around life skills such as cooking, or raising children, or insights they have accumulated over the years. The majority of the parents noted their own limitations and did not seem frustrated over this fact, as many of them often added that we are living in different times and their child is of the new generation therefore are more able to handle difficult situations on their own.

The second question was to explore the similarities in the attitudes of the parent and child towards the use of communication technology in the world today. This question provides the researcher with insights into how the subjects feel about communication

technology but also to compare and contrast the similarity and differences between the responses of the parent and the child.

Exactly half of the couples had similar views on the use of the communication technology in society today, with the majority of the subjects having a mixed attitude towards it claiming there are positive and also negative aspects to the tool. Interestingly for both the older parents and adult children group, the majority of the participants in both groups gave mixed responses regarding the use of such tools in society, the next most response most popular to both groups is a negative view on such tools and finally only a few people in both groups had only positive things to say. This is interesting considering that about one-third of the older parents do not know how to use such tools, while all the adult children are currently using it.

The recurring argument for it being beneficial is the fact that it allows easier communication between people and quicker access to the news and current trends around the world, but over use can lead to negative consequences.

'It makes communicating and contacting people easier, but if they use it too much it could make them waste their time. Even my daughter who is old and has a husband spends too much time on the phone instead of helping out with housework. Well in the past, this didn't exist, children now all need to have it and they are so addicted to their mobile phones and the internet' (Father, 66, Khlongtoey).

'I think the positive aspect is that it fulfills voids in communication or gaps in our relationship with people, things we don't dare say out loud for instance can we type using Line because my family members don't really like to express their emotions so Line is helpful for that. And the negative side would be news that are not filtered because for instance my mom would read and believe everything, she would be too stressed out and worried about everything she reads' (Daughter, 31, Nonthaburi).

The concern towards the use of these tools are mainly that it is too addictive, misleading to those who do not know any better and can become victims to those who take advantage of these new forms of communication and that it has the potential to divide families and decrease valuable time spent together.

'I am worried about face to face communication not being the norm anymore, most people spend their time chatting online rather than directly, for instance, before we used to talk to our employees directly or call, but nowadays its via email or Line and we lose a lot of the human component and misunderstanding can occur as a result' (Father, 61, Lumpini).

'I think we are using it too often, sometimes there is no filter, I don't like how people read other people's news and just comment even though we don't even know the true story, it's like the world is being

taught to believe random news that may not reflect the truth' (Mother, 60, Nonthaburi).

Many of the subjects mentioned that the danger is mostly for the children who may not receive the proper guidance from their parents or guardian who should teach them how to use these tools correctly.

The majority of the couples who disagreed with one another regarding the use of these tools in society are between one family member thinking that the tools were either positive or negative, while the other having mixed feelings towards it. This conveys that the disparity between their viewpoints are not that extreme since one of them had both positive and negative things to say, while the other one was simply more one-sided. Only a few couples were on completely opposite ends of the spectrum with one side admiring such technological advances when the other had nothing good to say about it. There were two subjects whose response was marked as non-applicable because the children were not available for interview therefore no comparison could be drawn.

In terms of whether the couples had similar or differing attitudes, the result seems to suggest that the majority of the couples shared somewhat overlapping attitudes and mindsets about this topic. Even for the pairs whose responses did not match up completely, the difference was between one person having mixed responses, which includes both negative and positive views and the counterpart having either positive

or negative. Out of all the subjects, only three couples had completely opposite attitudes towards the use of communication technology in society today.

5.4. Functional Integration

The fourth dimension used to gain a sense of the relationship between two individuals of different generations is known as 'functional integration', which explores the degree to which family members exchange services with one another. The questions posed in order to explore this dimension were how often the participants assisted in taking care of the grandchildren and whether the children provided services such as taking their parents to hospital when needed.

According to data results, more than half of the interview subjects who have grandchildren provide assistance in taking care of their grandchildren on a regular basis. Not surprisingly, this is true for most grandmothers as opposed to grandfathers who have very little role in care for their grandchildren. The frequency at which this service is offered depends mainly on the living arrangement, almost every older woman who reside with their children and grandchildren reported they looked after their grandchildren regularly. For families who do not live together, mostly in the Lumpini and Nonthaburi group, the older persons would offer assistance whenever the family comes together, mostly on weekends, or if their child has important affairs they need doing then they would sometimes leave the grandchildren in the care of the grandparents.

One older woman, whose daughter and grandchildren live in China, reported that her daughter would come visit her only one time per year, but even then, during the time that she was back in Thailand, the woman is very much involved in the rearing of her grandchildren.

'We all help each other when my daughter comes to Thailand. Even though my daughter has a maid, but I am still very much involved in taking care of them' (Mother, 66, Nonthaburi).

As for those who reported they never watch over their grandchildren, a little less than half, the reasons range from not seeing their grandchildren often, to not having time because the older parent are still working to earn a living or as one woman strongly voiced, she never wanted to have grandchildren.

'I told my children I don't want to take care of them. I don't want grandchildren, I told my children to wait first before having kids, it's difficult to raise children, we never know how to do it properly, and the world is more difficult these days, society has changed so I worry about the future but my children said they want to have kids so they went ahead and had it, but they don't bother me much with it, they know I am tired and don't want to raise little children. They know I have been tired all my life' (Mother, 62, Nonthaburi).

Interestingly, all of the subjects in the Lumpini group reported to be helping out in providing care for their grandchildren in some ways. While the majority of the subjects in the Nonthaburi group who have grandchildren claim they do not take part in the rearing of their grandchildren. About one-third of the subjects do not have grandchildren yet, with the majority being from the Lumpini group, mainly because their children are still young or unmarried. It is not surprising that only one out of the Khlongtoey group does not have grandchildren yet since lower-class income families get married at a younger age.

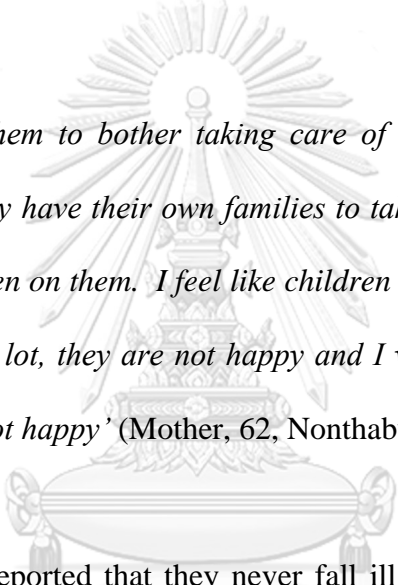
It could be summarised that about half of the women subjects who have grandchildren assists their children in raising their grandchildren on a regular basis, while the other half reported they do not take part in such activities but the main reason being that their grandchildren live far from them.

For the second question, the researcher sought to explore the degree of assistance that older persons received from their children. The older persons were asked which family member takes them to hospital when they are ill. All of the subjects who are residing under the same roof as their children reported that their children are the ones who take them to hospital if they ever got sick, unless their children could not take time off from work, in which case they would go by themselves.

About one-third of the subject reported that the responsibility of taking them to hospital falls under their spouse. Half of these subjects are living with either the husband or wife alone, while the other half are also living with their children but it is

their husband or wife who takes them to the hospital. The reason being that their partner has more free time than their children who are mostly working full time. A handful of participants claimed that they do not require assistance from anyone when they are sick, and usually take themselves to the hospital.

It should be noted that all of these subjects are living either with their children or their husband. One lady expressed that she does not want to burden her family,



'I don't want them to bother taking care of me, my children are in working age they have their own families to take care of, so I wouldn't want to be burden on them. I feel like children who have to take care of parents suffer a lot, they are not happy and I wouldn't be happy if my children were not happy' (Mother, 62, Nonthaburi).

Three of the subjects reported that they never fall ill and were unable to provide a clear answer on who in the family would provide this assistance.

Based on these results, children are still the main source of support for the parents when they need to be taken to hospital, but it is also because the children are living with the parents under the same roof. It is difficult for children to provide such assistance to their parents if they are not living with them because most of the time falling ill is unpredictable. It seems that on a functional level the family members are providing sufficient support to one another, since the majority of the older persons

play a role in raising their grandchildren and a majority of the children take care of their parents when they require hospital care.

5.5. Normative Integration

The next dimension used to measure intergenerational relationship is ‘normative integration’. This explores the degree in which family members conform to family norms. For this dimension the researcher wanted to explore whether family norms are being shared between the two family members. Two questions were asked in order to assess this dimension, the first is whether children are obligated to take care of their ageing parents and the second further explores the participants’ attitude and mentality towards older persons and retirement homes.

For the first question, the result is that the majority of the couples agreed with one another, whereby both argue that it is still very important for a child to take care of their ageing parent. Only a handful of couples did not see eye-to-eye regarding this family norm. It is not surprising for the subjects to deem this action as a necessity, many of the participants even mentioned that this belief was instilled into everyone as it is part of the Thai culture.

‘I think Thai people traditionally taught us that way, in Europe older people are not taken care of the same way, they would go live in retirement homes when they are old but Thai people care for their ageing parents at a different level than in the West. I think that’s the

nice thing about Thai culture, we took care of them when they were young and so now they are taking care of us' (Mother, 61, Nonthaburi).

'That's what Thai society teaches us, that children should take care of their parents in old age, but we as the parent should not hope for them to do so' (Father, 67, Nonthaburi).

'Yes it should be like that, it's how our culture is. I think they should take care of them in things they cannot do themselves, like heavy lifting for instance' (Son, 37, Nonthaburi).

This sense of filial piety is commonly shared amongst almost all of the children, many of whom remarked that when they were younger their parents were willing to provide for them, in everywhere possible, therefore, it is only logical that when it is their turn to be the one with more means, they should not abandon their parents.

'Yes I think so, I think it's important to return the kindness that your parents have given you, parents take care of you and so you need to repay the kindness and I think it's important to be good people because why would anyone want to love you if you don't love your parents, if you can abandon those who took care of you what kind of person are you' (Father, 65, Lumpini).

'Children should devote themselves to taking care of parents when they are too old to take care of themselves, especially since they took care of us when we were young' (Daughter, 36, Lumpini).

Many of the subjects went on to note that taking care of one's parent should not be a burden because at the end of the day parents do not really wish for that much. Several older persons expressed that the notion of 'taking care' of someone does not have to be difficult or done on a regular basis, simply remembering their birthdays and calling to check up on them once in a while would suffice.

The majority of the subjects who believe that children should take care of their ageing parents elaborated further that while children 'should' commit to such actions, many of them do not because the world is changing. Most of the subjects expressed this nonchalantly as if accepting things for the way it is and noting that times have changed and they cannot expect their children to care for them the way they so willingly cared for their own parents. Some of the participants, however, had a disappointing or sad demeanor while expressing such sentiments, such as the following older person,

'Yes, but kids these days don't do that anymore. They are not like me when I was younger. I am not sure but kids these days just don't care about their parents as much. I took care of them all, the mother of my husband was disabled and I took care of her for an entire year, cleaned her and fed her, but kids these days won't ever do this' (Mother, 62, Khlongtoey).

Interestingly, many of the adult children who expressed that it was necessary for children to take care of parents in old age had conflicting views, whereby, they

believed it was important for them to take care of their parents because they were instilled this belief in their upbringing, but when it comes to their own children, they did not believe it was necessary, and they seemed to be prepare for a self-sustaining retirement.

'I will never ask my son to take care of me when I am older because he has his own responsibilities. I have enough money planned so I won't have to bother him (Father, 68, Lumpini).

'I think they should to a certain level, but it depends on us to take care of our health so we are not burden on them, if they give money then we use it carefully so they don't feel like they have to give us too much, I think we can't expect them to care for us unconditionally' (Mother, 61, Lumpini).

'No I don't think it's something we have to do in our generation anymore, in the past I think it's necessary because that's how they were raised, but children these days shouldn't have to uphold this tradition. I think I will still do it, but times are changing. I don't expect my children to take care of me. I would make sure I can take care of myself in old age because I think it's unrealistic to think that we can rely on our children 100%. The world isn't like what it used to be' (Daughter, 44, Lumpini).

For the older subjects who claimed they did not believe it was necessary for children to care for aging parents, the reason behind most of the responses is that children

should take care of themselves and their family, as long as they are able to provide for their own family, then that was enough for many of the parents. Several older persons mention that as long as their children did not cause trouble for the parents or their family members then they are satisfied because at the end of the day it is their life and they should focus on making the best of it.

The majority of the couples had similar views on this family norm that has long been deep-rooted in the Thai culture. The underlying tone of the responses was that, although this action is something that is commendable and should be continued, times are changing and will continue to change therefore expectations cannot remain the same. Most of the parents did not express any frustration towards their children who are unable to take care of them, and ask instead that as long as they can care for themselves and their children then the parent is content. As for the children subjects, many of them insinuated that this requirement is of even less importance when it is time for their own children to care for them when they age. Most have accepted that such norms have changed and are prepared to deal with it. It can be summarised that the notion of filial piety has transformed from intention to realistic. While most of the participants, young and old, agree that one should look after their aging parents, in reality, this is not always the case. Although the older persons claim that this act is important, the majority of them are not expecting their children comply. This is even more apparent for the adult children who do not have any desire for their children to take care of them when it is their turn to age.

The second question used to explore this dimension is in some ways an extension on the first topic, wherein it expands the filial piety notion into discussing whether older persons should live in retirement homes. Over half of the couples had similar views on this topic, of which the majority had a positive attitude towards retirement homes. Many of the older subjects believe that living in such homes could offer the comfort and fulfillment that they require, since it offers benefits such as daily activities, constant contact and communication with other and better medical facilities and care. Several older persons even mention that children these days do not have time to care for their ageing parents and so living in a retirement home might offer them a better comfort and social life since they will be surrounded by caregivers and friends.

One of the participants had actually visited such a home himself.

'I used to visit, a nice one that cost over 10,000 baht a month. It looks good, like a hotel, with good restaurant and a common room for activities. It looks good because I visited, if I have to stay there permanently I don't know how it would be, but happiness and contentment depends on your feelings and your mental state, if you think you can be happy here then you will be happy here. So anywhere is the same depending on where you can make yourself happy. The physical environment is secondary.' (Father, 67, Nonthaburi).

However, almost all of them mentioned that although these homes could be ideal, they would rather stay at home with their children. Almost everyone voiced the fact

that even if the quality of life at these homes were better for them, seeing their children everyday would make them happier. A common theme that was noted is the sense of ‘abandonment’ whereby several older persons expressed that even if they were happier living in retirement homes they would not be able to shake off the feeling that they have been abandoned by their children. Another word that was often mentioned is ‘shame’ and how the older persons would feel ashamed if other people knew that they were ‘sent’ to these homes because it would incur the notion that they were not wanted by their children.

It seems that the decision to ever leave home to live in the retirement housing would only happen if they no longer had children who lived with them or visit them regularly. A few also mentioned that living at home would still be more comfortable for them because under their own roof they have the freedom to do everything, whereas in retirement homes they might be supervised or restricted by certain rules.

The children who have positive views of such living arrangement were sure to mention that although these places may sound appealing, they would never send their parents there unless their mother or father wished for it. Again, the notion of ‘abandonment’ was also expressed frequently by the children who claim that even if their parents appear to be happier in such retirement facilities, they would feel a sense of guilt as though they have abandoned their parents or have left the down somehow. The adult children’s sentiments are that they would be willing to send their parents to these homes under the condition that they or their siblings lacked the ability to care for their parents, such as being ill or financially incapable.

For the couples that disagreed with one another, the majority of them were cases where the parent reported a willingness to go live in such retirement homes, while their child responded that their parent would never be happy there. One mother expressed that,

'I would love to live there if it has all the facilities and all the friends I need then why not, I never thought about having to live with my children or my grandchildren, if friends make me happy then I'll be happy there and my children don't even have to come visit me that often, it's up to them whenever they want they can come' (Mother, 61, Nonthaburi).

While her son believes that,

'I think it could be a nice place to stay if it has all the facilities. But my mom could never be happy there, she would be so miserable missing her children' (Son, 22, Nonthaburi).

Another example for opposing viewpoints was this couple, where the mother reported,

'Well, I think that in some circumstances it could be a good thing, it depends on the individual's situation. If they have no one to take care of them then retirements homes are a good idea, at least they won't be lonely' (Mother, 61, Lumpini).

While her daughter feels,

'I think at the end of the day parents want to live with their children, or in their own home. At least they get to see their children here and there, which is better than going off to live in those homes away from everyone. It's never a good idea' (Daughter, 36, Lumpini).

A common conception voiced from the adult children is that older people who live in retirement homes are doing so not out of choice but because they have nowhere else to live. While the parents have more of an open-minded view and acknowledged the benefits it could bring them. It seems reasonable that the older subjects would be more willing to explore the advantages of this alternative mode of living because the topic concerns them and the decision is theirs. A few of the adult children even argued that no matter how lonely the parents are at home, even if they are alone all day and see their family members only in the evening, they would still prefer to live at home. Many of the parents disagreed, mentioning that if their children are busy everyday then it would be nice to live in an environment where they are surrounded by people who can interact with them. Nonetheless, based on the overall data results, whether it be negative views or positive views, the majority of the couples shared the same outlook regarding retirement home, therefore, it can be summarised that the majority of the couples conform to the same family norm and traditions.

5.6. Intergenerational Family Structure

The final criteria used for measuring intergenerational relationship is the ‘intergenerational family structure’, which explores the living arrangements within the family. The data for this has already been presented in Chapter 4, which shows that the majority of older persons are living with at least one of their children. Approximately a handful of the parents are living with their spouses, while one lives with their grandchildren and another lives alone. The majority of the parents who do not live under the same roof as their children reported that they see their children at least once a week, while a few mentioned the frequency being once a month. Based on these results, it can be assumed that the intergenerational family structure is still strong, since over two-thirds of the aging parents are living under the same roof as at least one of their children. Half of them are living with just their children, while the other half is living with their children and their spouse.

5.7. Conclusion

According to Bengston and Schrader, the six dimensions used to measure intergenerational relationships are: associational integration, affectual integration, consensual integration, functional integration, normative integration and intergenerational family structure. Based on the data results that were collected, the relationship between the older persons and their adult children is seen as quite strong in the associational dimension. The majority of the participants reported that they see their children either every day or 1-2 times per week. Furthermore, almost all of the

parents appeared to be satisfied with the frequency in which they see their children because only two responded that they wished they could see their children more often. Not surprisingly, the main activity that is shared between the family members when they spend time together revolves around eating. Another popular activity is to spend time shopping or watching movies together. As for the affectual integration, the majority of the couples expressed mutual positive sentiments for one another. This suggests that the quality of the relationship between the older persons and their children is sound and that emotionally the family members view the other cohort in a positive light. In terms of consensual integration, two-thirds of the adult children would ask their parents for advice either regularly or sometimes. Only a handful reported they never needed any guidance from their parents. Even though it was repeatedly reported by the children that their parent's knowledge regarding current affairs, up-to-date trends, how to deal with businesses in the world today or modern relationships issues is outdated, the children still very much valued the wisdom their parents have to give about their past experiences and skills and know-hows such as cooking or the use of ancient medicine. Some children even claim that while they do not really fully listen to the advice their parents give, they still ask them because it is a way to spend quality time together. This demonstrates that the two family members agree on a shared value at least in some areas where the parent's knowledge is still useful. The other topic discussed and used to measure this dimension of the relationship is the attitudes that each individual had regarding communication technology. The result is split right in the middle, whereby half of the couples shared similar beliefs and the other half shared different beliefs. These data findings suggest that in some areas the parent and child do not see eye-to-eye but that in certain topics

the child still trusts in the knowledge of the parents enough to ask for advice, which suggests a somewhat solid quality of relationship. The next dimension, functional integration, looks at the assistance that is given to one another. Half of the respondents could not answer this question because they do not have grandchildren yet. Within the group that had grandchildren, more than half reported they provided assistance in rearing their grandchildren. Many of the participants in the group that reported they did not help take care of their grandchildren, said this was the case because of convenience, mostly due to the fact that their grandchildren live far from them. On the other hand, data shows that when the parents are ill and need to go to hospital, it is their children who take them. The children are the main source of support, as opposed to the husband, wife or themselves. These findings suggest that the older people and their adult children continue to share a substantial amount of service and assistance to one another. The next dimension explores whether family norms are shared between the two family members. The family norm used to measure this dimension is whether children should take care of their parents in old-age and the result is almost unanimous. Over two-thirds of the couples agree with one another on whether or not children are required to care for their ageing parents. Whether the individuals believed adult children should take care of their parents was not the core purpose of this discussion, although the results do provide some interesting findings, which will be discussed in Chapter 7. The important factor to note here is that almost every couple agreed with the other person's view on this topic, which suggests a strong normative integration. Another question used to measure this dimension is an extension of the first, which discusses the participants' views on older persons living in retirement homes. The result is that over half of the couples had similar viewpoints.

In summary, the quality of the relationship between the older persons and their children is quite solid when referring to this dimension. The final dimension used to measure the quality of the intergenerational relationship is the family structure, which explores the living arrangements of the two cohorts. Data for this study shows that over half of the participants are living with at least one of their children. While the rest are living with either their spouses, grandchildren or alone. This suggests that the quality of the intergenerational relationship based on family structure is also strong.



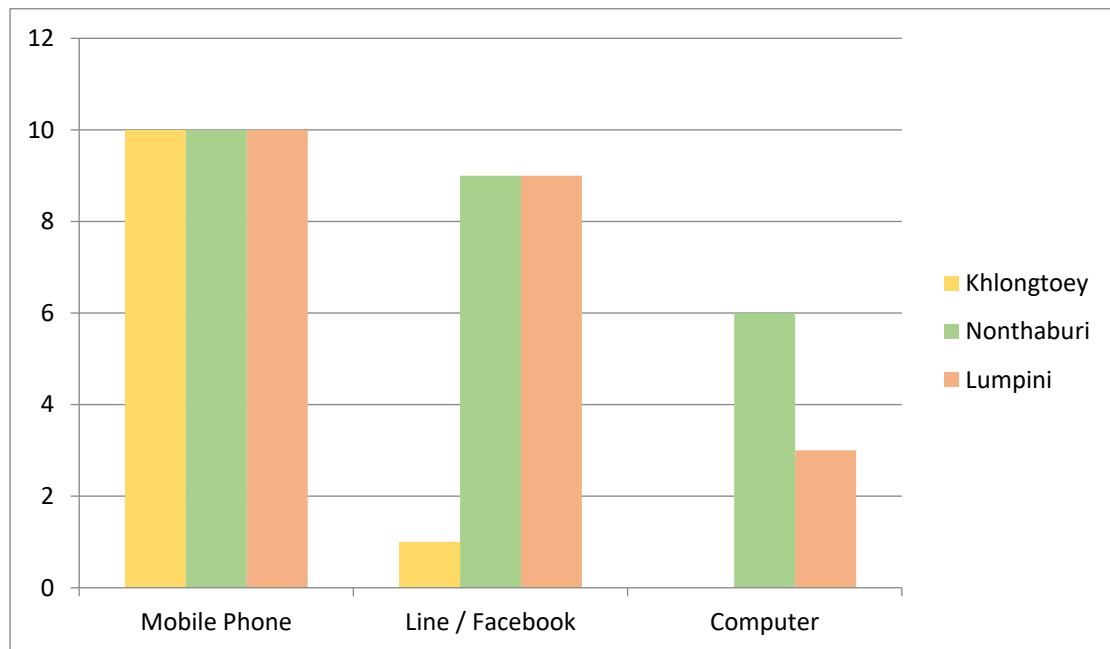
CHAPTER 6: THE USE AND IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON INTERGERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OLDER PERSONS AND THEIR ADULT CHILDREN

The purpose of this study is to explore what impacts the use of communication technology, namely the mobile phone, and social media applications such as Line and Facebook have on the quality of the relationship between older persons and their adult children. The data collected demonstrates various advantages and disadvantages for the use of these tools, both by the older participants and by their younger cohorts. Interestingly, both the different generations appear to share a consensus on the benefits and drawbacks of these innovations. As for the impacts on the relationship itself, countless examples and arguments were expressed by the respondents which suggests that whether or not the individuals are always fully aware of these impacts, the use of these new tools of communication has very real and demonstrable impacts.

6.1. Reasons for Using or Not Using Communication Technology and Social Media

The participants of this study were asked whether they currently use a mobile phone, applications such as Line and Facebook and the computer. The results are displayed in the figure below.

Figure 7: Older Persons Use of Communication Technology and Social Media



All of the thirty participants have mobile phones and know how to use it for receiving calls and making calls, however, only one participant from the Khlongtoey group has a smart phone and knows how to use Line, Facebook or any other instant messaging or social media tools. However, he does not use it regularly because it requires him to have an Internet package with his telephone service provider,

'I don't like to turn it on because it becomes expensive, and in my line of work you don't really need to use the internet to communicate with anyone, so I don't really turn on the internet' (Father, 67, Khlongtoey).

When asked if he would use it were it free-of-charge, he added,

'I use the Internet usually to go on Google because I often visit the website about Buddhist relics, which is my hobby. If it were free I would use it all the time' (Father, 67, Khlongtoey).

Of the remaining nine who are not using any instant messaging or social media tools, most of them have heard of it and know that their children are using it, but they themselves are not using it mainly because they felt it was unnecessary or was just too difficult to learn. Several older persons claim that their children insist on teaching them but they forget easily and so learning these tools become a hassle and they eventually give up. Most of the older persons who are not using Line and Facebook expressed that they are satisfied with using the phone to make and receive calls and do not feel the necessity to learn more functions.

When asked whether they think their lives would be better if they knew how to use it, only a few of the participants claimed they would like to try because they saw how it made life better for their children or grandchildren who were using these tools. For these older persons they do recognise the benefits, of Line mostly, and how contacting people would become easier for them. The other interviewees insisted that they did not have any interest in using it at all because it would be more of a burden on their lives.

While many older persons recognise the benefits of using instant messaging applications and other social media tools, it seems that there is resistance from them in terms of learning how to use it. A frequent response from the participants is that it is

too difficult to learn, because they did not grow up using it unlike the younger generations. Many have even attempted to learn but it became too confusing and instead of facilitating their lives the confusion turned these tools into a burden.

The majority of the participants in the Nonthaburi and Lumpini group are currently using these tools. Several are even using it across platforms on both the mobile phone and the computer. However, a pattern that was noticed is that the older persons who are using the computer are doing so mainly for work, rather than leisure.

‘Yes, (I use the computer) for five years. I use it all the time because I teach, so I would need to use it. Students all use email to communicate, not so much Line, maybe to say hello, but if it’s about work or learning, we would communicate via email’ (Mother, 68, Nonthaburi).

‘Yes I use it a bit here and there. I used it in the company before, I had to record the weight of products that we were selling (Mother, 66, Lumpini).

For both groups, those who know how to use the computer and those who do not, the main platform for using Line and Facebook is the smart phone. Approximately half of them claim that they started using these tools because they saw those around them using it and wanted to get on board. While the other half stated it was their children who insisted that they use it. Whether the initial idea to learn these tools came from the individuals themselves or from their children, almost everyone responded that it was their children who taught them how to use it. This seems to be expected since most of

the older persons live with their children. In most cases, even though the children convinced the parents to start using it, eventually the older persons themselves took the initiative to continue learning.

Several of the participants mentioned that one of the easiest ways to use these tools, which does not require a lot of understanding, is to use it as a source of news. Even though everyone claims to own a television, all the participants prefer using their mobile phones to watch news programmes or get updated on current events.

'Yes I watch the television sometimes, but not usually, mostly I get them (news) from the Internet because it is repetitive. You see them (news) on Facebook first anyway so that's not necessary' (Mother, 66, Nonthaburi).

'My first source of news is my telephone, usually Facebook first. It's so convenient because with just one channel we can check so many different news sources' (Mother, 69, Lumpini).

One older person in particular mentions how he prefers this alternative news source rather than from mainstream channels,

'The truth is my main source of news and information is Facebook. I hardly ever read the newspaper anymore, I don't want to read it because I feel like they take sides and are biased, I don't believe they provide facts anymore, just nonsense, rapes, deaths, road accidents I

don't care about these, I want to know what the government is up to, or how the technology of other countries are evolving. I enjoy these kinds of news more. All of my news now comes from Facebook' (Father, 67, Nonthaburi).

Another older person claims that she relies on her friends and family to provide local and international news,

'My first news channel would be from my friends in the Chula group, they would share news with everyone, send forwards about what's happening in Thailand or around the world. They would also share information about volunteering activities, who is doing what, and asking for donations and I would assist whenever I can' (Mother, 63, Nonthaburi).

In terms of older persons accessibility to such technological tools, it seems the most prevalent barrier is their willingness to learn. One daughter mentions the benefits it would bring her if her mother knew how to use Line,

'I think it would be good for me if she can use it especially so I can check where she is, sometimes I want to buy something for her with Line I could send a picture to check if she would want it, so it would be better' (Daughter, 28, Khlongtoey).

None of the participants claim that they wanted to learn but had no guidance or means of using it. It is usually the other way around where their children insist on buying a smart phone for them and teaching them how to use it.

6.1.1. Factors Influencing the Decision to Adopt Technological Tools

Based on the research, there seems to be several factors that contribute to an older person's willingness and openness to learning new technological tools. The first factor is whether the older person is still working, all of the participants at the Nonthaburi and Lumpini group who continue to work are active-users of a smart-phone, Line and Facebook, several of them claiming specifically that they use it for work.

'I use it to contact customers and offer insurance deals and inform the insurance company of my updates' (Father, 61, Lumpini).

'I use it to book appointments with my clients. Sometimes they send me locations of where I need to go for work. I also use it to send them invoices and my bank account details for the work I completed' (Father, 65, Lumpini).

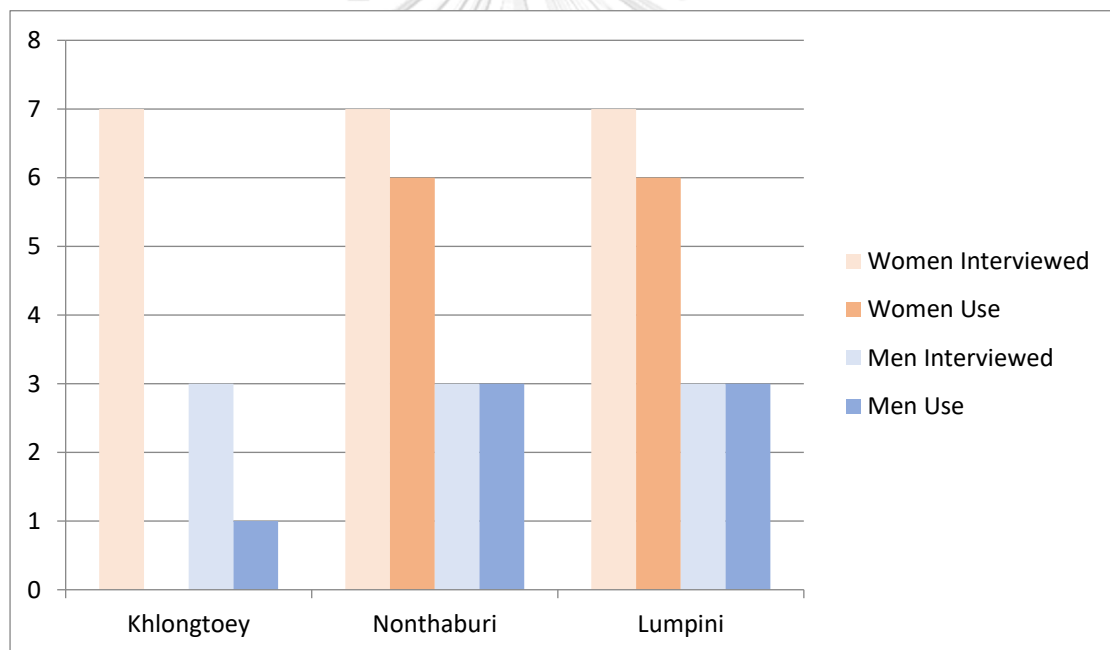
'I use it to order goods for my work' (Mother, 60, Lumpini).

Another factor seems to be the level of education since all the participants who do not know how to use these communicative technological tools are those that did not receive an education beyond primary school (fourth grade). The majority of them pointing out that since they cannot read or write, it is almost impossible to use these

tools. The next factor that was prevalent, which is related to the level of education is economic standing, all participants but one from the Khlongtoey group are non-active users, with many highlighting the fact that using these tools would mean spending more money which is something they cannot afford.

Another factor that the researcher noticed is gender and how there is a difference in the use and attitudes towards these technological tools between male and female older persons.

Figure 8: Older Persons Use of Social Media by Gender



Based on the interview results it may be concluded that older men have an easier time learning how to use these tools. In the Khlongtoey group, even though the majority of participants are female, the only person who knows how to use Line and Facebook is a man. Furthermore, the two participants in the Nonthaburi and Lumpini group who are non-active-users are both women. This assumption is further strengthened by the

statements expressed from the children regarding their parents' attitude towards such tools. As mentioned earlier, most of the older persons learn to use these tools with the help of their children. When asked how they felt about their parents using these social media applications, it was noticed that some children were frustrated with their mother's lack of understanding or willingness to learn. Several adult children expressed that their mother is very narrow-minded when it comes to adopting these tools and would complain while the adult children try to teach them making it very difficult for both parties.

Not only were the children participants complaining about how difficult it was to convince their mothers to use the tools, some also expressed that their mother's constant repetitive questions were a nuisance. According to some adult children, their mother would frequently forget how to use certain functions of the tools that they children had taught them not long ago but have already forgotten. These claims were made mainly about the mother participants, as opposed to the fathers whose children expressed a much more willing attitude and ease in learning.

Not only did the researcher notice that the openness to learn and independence in using these tools is different between older men and women, but there are also differences between how the tools were being used by the two genders. The common pattern that was noticed is that the men are using these tools to watch the news or browse hobbies of their interest. The men are more active users of the internet or watching news on Facebook, using it as a platform to browse current events via news pages or what their friends post. Basically they are using these tools more for

obtaining knowledge about the world. On the other hand, the older women respondents seem to appreciate Line more and use communication technology and social media tools more for social purposes. Almost every women participant mentioned the benefits of joining groups in Line and how this enables them to communicate with multiple people at once. They also frequently remarked on the benefits of allowing them to be reunited with old friends. The word 'lonely' was mentioned several times by the older women and how these tools often kept them company. This was something that the male respondents never expressed. It seems natural that women would use these tools more for social purposes since by nature women are more extroverted than men, and therefore, are geared more innately towards forming and maintaining relationships.

The purpose of this section is to outline the behavior and attitude in the use of communication technology and social media tools among older men and women. The factor that seems to be the main barrier in allowing older people to access such tools is their own willingness and openness to learn. Based on the interviews, the factors that seem to contribute this openness to learn are whether they are currently working, education, social status and gender. Gender differences are noticed, based on the children's responses, in regard to the process that the older people learn to use the tools and also in their behavior and purposes for using these tools. With men using the internet and Facebook more for learning and obtaining news and knowledge, and women benefitting from Line and the social aspects of communicating and staying in touch with friends and family. These different advantages and disadvantages expressed by both genders will be further explored in the next section.

6.2. Advantages & Disadvantages

Both groups of participants, active and non-active users, were asked to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of social media and instant messaging applications such as Line and Facebook. As expected, both positive and negative responses were recorded, often times coming from the same person.

6.2.1. Viewpoints from Older Persons

For the older persons participants, even those in the Khlongtoey group, who do not know how to use these tools, have very strong opinions about them. It seems that since these tools are so prevalent in the society, whether or not individuals are directly using it, they are somehow affected by it via their family members.

'I think it's bad because It's too addictive and sometimes they see things that are rude and improper, they get exposed to bad things through these channels. Sometimes their friends write nasty things to them, that's also bad' (Mother, 63, Khlongtoey).

'It can also be bad because I think these social media channels are dangerous because of addiction, some people use it all day and meet people online, sometimes they get pregnant without a father, extremely dangerous' (Mother, 66, Khlongtoey).

On the other hand, some of them, despite not using them, realise the benefits of such tools, provided they are being used correctly. The disadvantage that was highlighted by the majority of the participants who are not using these tools is that when used incorrectly these tools can be addictive and damaging.

'I think it's good, it provides speedy access to news about the world. Sometimes they show me things they find interesting and I watch it sometimes but I don't really like it. It is dangerous and we see that on the news, kids use it and look at each other pictures and profiles and sometimes they are tricked by bad people, they meet random strangers thinking they are friends but they use fake profile, I worry for them and often tell them to be careful who they are talking to' (Mother, 65, Khlongtoey).

'It makes communicating and contacting people easier, but if they use it too much it could make them waste their time. Even my daughter who is old and has a husband spends too much time on the phone instead of helping out with house work' (Mother, 66, Khlongtoey).

The participants who were all using Line and Facebook claim they mostly use it to connect with their friends and family. Most of them agree that the best feature of Line is the ability to chat in groups, instead of having to contact each individual one at a time and share the same stories, Line allows for group sharing between friends and family.

'I would talk to my friends, usually in groups, better than talking to one person at a time or my family in a group, easier to get messages across' (Mother, 61, Nonthaburi).

'I use it to read messages and information that people send my way, I use it a lot. I also like sending forward messages into the groups I have because I can send it to many friends at once' (Mother, 69, Lumpini).

The majority of older persons are using Facebook more to stay in touch with those who are not very close to them, friends they have not seen in a long time or family members they do not speak with regularly. A common response is that Line is used with family and close friends, while Facebook is used at a wider scope.

'Line everyday but Facebook less, Facebook I would just go in to see what people are doing, listen to updates about the world or some news, but Line I would talk to friends or family, they send me information that's interesting, so I would go into Line very often to read those messages' (Mother, 60, Nonthaburi).

'We would share our thoughts and ideas, Facebook, we would share religion and life style and beliefs, and how we should act and political news, what's happening in the world now' (Father, 67, Nonthaburi).

'I would look at what my friends are doing on Facebook, update on their lifestyle. We also have a group of friends who sing together since we retired, and we would chat in that group, there is a young member

who is good at technology who would share songs with us or plan get-togethers' (Mother, 67, Nonthaburi).

It seems that the difference between the use of Line and Facebook is that Line offers a private space to communicate, while Facebook is a public platform used to express one's thoughts more openly and to a wider audience. According to the data collected, it appears that older persons are more inclined towards using Line because it allows one on one communication, which is more private and intimate.

One of the advantages that was shared by all the respondents is that Line, and sometimes Facebook, allows them to keep in touch with their children. As was discussed earlier, none of participants live with all of their children, and so it is a common view that communication technology aids in them staying connected and in touch with their children. Even for participants from the Khlongtoey group who do not know how to use Line or Facebook, all pointed out to the fact that just having the mobile phone makes their lives easier because their children could call to check up on them and vice versa, which is especially beneficial during emergencies.

As for the participants in the Nonthaburi and Lumpini Group who are active-users, they claim that these tools provide them to stay in touch with their children, and it facilitates communication because even if their children or family members do not answer the phone immediately they could just leave a message and wait for them to call back.

'Yes of course I do, my children would write to ask how I am doing every day and it makes me feel very happy that they ask' (Mother, 63, Nonthaburi).

'When my daughter is in class, if she can't pick up the phone then I use Line to send her message, then when she is free she can call me back, because when she studies she turns off her phone' (Father, 61, Lumpini).

One woman highlighted the advantages of other media tools such as maps or YouTube for entertainment,

'It moves very fast. I think it makes my life easier to use, for instance when I travel, I get lost, or looking for good restaurants I could just quickly search with one click, super easy' (Mother, 61, Lumpini).

Many respondents praise the Internet and the communication tools for allowing them to stay connected to people. One woman, who claims she is really benefiting from these tools, via Facebook which allows her to stay in touch with friends, and Line which saves her money, argues that despite the numerous advantages, she is using it almost as though she was forced to do so because everyone else is using it but if she could she would rather society return to the way it was.

'I think they changed my life in a negative and positive way. I think I prefer society like it was in the past more, I think people spend too

much time on their phones, sometimes I have to ask my friends or family to stop using their phones when we are at the dinner table together. But I do think that it could help with those who are lonely' (Mother, 62, Nonthaburi).

Several participants mentioned that they did not believe their lives would be affected if they stopped using Line or Facebook. These individuals are aware of the benefits that it brings and are active-users, nevertheless their general sentiment is that life would go on pretty much unaffected.

'I don't think it would change much but it does allow faster communication, and saves money, before when my son goes to England I used to top up my phone and it was so expensive to call him every time, which is completely different from the situation now, so easy to call using Line' (Mother, 67, Nonthaburi).

'If you can be alone and not get lonely then you don't need these technologies, you can meditate on your own if that's what you like. But if you are lonely then you could go to elderly groups or join clubs to play checkers or exercise in the morning' (Father, 67, Nonthaburi).

On the other hand, some individuals feel that if we were to revert to a life without such tools then it could be problematic,

'We would go back to using the phone like we used to I guess, but there could be a problem because I don't know whether it would affect our communication, we are so used to sending pictures to each other'
(Mother, 63, Nonthaburi).

Even though most participants claim that these technological tools were beneficial to their lives, they do highlight the fact that should these tools be used excessively then it could pose a problem. Many individuals used the word 'addicted', arguing that as long as we have control over our behavior and not let Line or Facebook dictate our lives then it can be very advantageous. Many individuals also highlighted the fact that Line and Facebook may be excellent tools for communication but they should not replace conventional means such as giving someone a telephone call or face-to-face interaction. Such tools should be used alongside traditional methods of communication.

Another negative reason that was expressed several times is the constant bombardment of messages claiming that having Line and Facebook disrupts their ability to focus when they receive too many messages.

A man, from the Nonthaburi group, was using these tools for a short period of time but then decided he no longer wanted to.

'I felt it was making me stressed out, I started using it because my daughter who lives far says it would help communication, so I tried for

several months then I stopped because my phone kept sounding with notifications and it made me stressed out. I had to keep checking my message' (Father, 68, Nonthaburi).

Similarly, another man, from the Lumpini group, said he stopped using Facebook because,

'I don't want to talk to random people who ask to be my friend, sometimes there are people who lie to us and cheat us so I don't like to engage with them' (Father, 65, Lumpini).

There were two individuals who mentioned how these forms of technology affect their working conditions. One woman recalled that she had a couple of years left until her official retirement when the computer and internet entered the workforce and everyone was obliged to learn,

'I had to learn to use it before I retired, I remember the headmaster would organise training classes for all of us to understand how to use the computer and other technology but it was so hard for me, I felt like I didn't absorb it, this was a reason that I did early retirement, because it felt more difficult and I had to learn too many new things' (Mother, 60, Nonthaburi).

Another woman explained that when new technology entered the work force it divided the organisation between the younger and the older generations, shifting the power from the old to the young which made her feel incompetent and uncomfortable at first, but that finally after she learned how to use it, the tools facilitated her job and she appreciated the change, but only after she embraced it and overcame the initial stress.

'Yes I felt like I couldn't keep up I was very stressed, when these tools came it meant the young colleagues could do work in much less time than us because we don't use these tools as fast as them, but once we learn it then I could do it like them but the learning was hard' (Mother, 62, Nonthaburi).

Based on the data collected, according to the viewpoints of the older persons, the use of these technological tools can bring both positive and negative consequences. Some have decided to stop using Line or Facebook altogether because they are wary of the risks that could follow. Most, however, continue to use these tools despite recognising its dangers, mostly because they appreciate the ease in communication that these tools provide.

6.2.2. Viewpoints from Adult Children

The researcher also explored the attitudes that the children subjects had towards their parents' use of such technological tools and to see whether there was a difference in

gender. The children's responses coincide with the parents' own views on how these tools benefit their lives. Most of the responses about the mothers' use of Line and Facebook usually revolve around how these tools keep her company,

'She meets her friends more because Line reconnected her with friends, she used to spend all her time working and at home but once she started using Line she has been going out to meet friends more and would come back and tell us stories about people she met up with' (Daughter, 31, Nonthaburi)

'It makes her very happy. She likes to send stickers and pictures of friends. My brother is living abroad now so she can use Line to call him for free which makes her very happy' (Son, 34, Nonthaburi).

The responses about the fathers were all mainly how these tools were allowing the older men to assess information and obtain knowledge that would otherwise be unknown to them or how it was facilitating them in their work,

'Yes I feel like he understands our world, what's going on in our society today' (Daughter, 22, Nonthaburi).

'He needs the tool for work and he uses it very efficiently, I think his work would be very difficult without these tools' (Daughter, 21, Lumpini).

Additionally, while all of the responses concerning the fathers' use of these technologically tools were positive, some children had certain reservations concerning their mothers' use of the tools, mainly about how they were becoming too addicted,

'It has changed so much, she is super addicted to Line now. She spends her day on her phone, and take pictures, I ask why and she says it's to show friends, she becomes more showy, when I wanted to take her abroad she doesn't want to go because there's no internet, I have to buy her internet for her to want to travel so she can post pictures'
(Daughter, 36, Lumpini).

Several children also expressed concern that their mothers believe everything that is sent to them on Line or Facebook, which is worrisome because there is so much fake news circulating all the time and their mothers usually have a hard time distinguishing between what is factual and what is not.

In summary, according to all the respondents the main advantages of smartphones and communication technology such as Line and Facebook is how it allows individuals to stay in touch with their children and other members of the family. This enables the children to take care of their older parents more efficiently because they could instantly and regularly check up on them. Furthermore, as a result of globalisation, several of the children do not live in Thailand and because of these tools the parents can stay in touch with their children using free audio calls or even video calls. Another advantage that was reported is the information and knowledge that are

available to them through these channels. The majority of the people who know how to use these communication technology tools claim that the news is that first source of news, followed by the television and then the newspaper. Another advantage that was mentioned several times is how Line and Facebook allows older persons to operate easily in their line of work, for example through contacting customers or looking up information on line. One woman explained that when new technology was first introduced to her workplace she was nervous and anxious about learning them, but after she managed to do so it facilitated the way she worked and she was thankful for them. A couple of respondents reported that the smartphone, including Line and Facebook, helps them save money because calling people are free-of-charge via Facetime or Line Call, even though they require the internet connection but the price is extremely low in comparison to the rate per minute that is charged to call direct. One advantage that almost every older person claim to be true is how Line and Facebook allow them to get in touch with people they know, namely their friends from school. At the time when these older persons graduated from school or university there was no means of keeping contact details of friends who are parting ways except to write down the telephone numbers or addresses, which of course can get lost or become futile when people relocate. So, for these older individuals, it is a great pleasure to suddenly be able to find friends who they have not spoken to for over 30 years. Most agree that Facebook allows them to find people because of the friend suggestion function or because of the mutual friend finder, but it is thanks to Line that they keep in touch, specifically through creating groups based on institutions. Some respondents have argued that this lack of privacy bothers them

sometimes because it is now so easy for people to contact them and it can be annoying at times.

Although all participants who are currently using Line, Facebook, Email, or other forms of communication technology claim that it is beneficial and brings various advantages to their lives but if the tools are not used correctly then there can be repercussions. They are all aware of the problems that could arise if the individual loses the power to control how they use these technological tools. One disadvantage that was highlighted is the introduction of new technological tools in the work place and the difficulty this created for the existing older employees. One of the participants said the reason for her early retirement was because unlike her younger compatriots she was not able to learn how to use the computer or the new applications that was introduced and so decided it was best for her to retire. Another disadvantage mentioned is the quality time that is spent between family members, as some older individuals claim that while the mobile phone and instant messaging applications are beneficial when family members are apart, it could cause the family to disengage when they are together because each person spends time on their phones. This phenomenon is one that is extremely prevalent in Thai society, and can be seen around restaurants where family members are sitting together at the same table but each using their electronic devices.

6.3. Impacts on Relationships

The interview participants were asked several questions in order to understand in what aspects of the tools such as the smartphone and Line or Facebook affect the relationship between them and their adult children. The result shows that there are numerous impacts that occur, both positive and negative, from the introduction of these tools into their lives.

Associational Integration

Associational integration measures the frequency in which family members communicate and the activities they engage in when they are together. As discussed earlier, the majority of the participants mentioned that one of the main impacts of mobile phones and applications such as Line and Facebook, is that it allows them to stay in touch in loved ones.

As for the participants who were actively using Line and other social media accounts, the majority of them claim that such technological tools make it easier for them to keep in contact with their family members.

'My children would write to ask how I am doing every day and it makes me feel very happy that they ask (Father, 66, Lumpini).

'We use line to talk when I am outside or just updating like don't lock the door or we have dinner at home. Because when she calls I may not answer since I am working' (Daughter, 33, Nonthaburi).

Several of them mention the fact that rather than having to wait until their parent or child are available to answer their calls or call them back, Line allows them to just leave messages whenever they want to, during the day. This is especially useful for family members who do not live in the same country because the time zones are different.

'Well, my son who lives in England, I would Line to him every other day. If he is home we would video call, but if he is out we would use Line to chat, he would tell me he is going to party or to a fitness' (Mother, 67, Nonthaburi).

'I think without the phone we would feel more distant just because we live so far from each other, if they don't visit then we cannot keep in touch otherwise. I think it's good for family relationships' (Mother, 61, Nonthaburi).

One woman claims that Line has really improved her relationship with her mother because it allows for frequent contact.

'Oh our relationship has really improved, like so much better now than before. Since I live at the condo and don't go home often, she used to

call me when I was in class and we would miss each other on the phone, we used to talk like once or twice per week but Line really makes us communicate more, sometimes there's nothing to say but we just want to send things to show that we are doing well and miss each other' (Daughter, 36, Nonthaburi).

The downside of this, which was highlighted by many participants, is that although keeping in touch is easier, the quality of the relationship may decrease because family call each other less often.

'It helps to keep in touch faster but I would rather speak on the phone or face to face, I think sometimes we use Line just to stay in touch but the connection isn't rich' (Mother, 60, Nonthaburi).

'I think it helps keep in touch but I ask my child if they can contact me at least once a day, I ask before we sleep that we talk once a day, on top of that we use line' (Mother, 65, Lumpini).

'I would call once a week, I think it's more important for our relationship, once a week but we talk for a long time, I think that's much more fruitful, most people talk on Line doesn't have a lot of substance, not a lot of back and forth activity. I would prefer that' (Mother, 65, Lumpini).

'My daughter and I have a culture to call directly so Line doesn't affect us much, but people in society today don't feel that way and I think it's sad, they don't find the time to call directly anymore, they just send

quick messages. I think that's sad. I like to talk directly at least for a few minutes every day' (Mother, 66, Lumpini)

As highlighted by many of the participants, the use of mobile phones or social media applications as a tool for communication comes with drawbacks, namely the richness of the communication. Sending text messages several times a day conveys that your family is thinking of you but the danger is that we may believe these actions are enough. Merely getting in touch to let the other person know they are in our thoughts is a nice gesture but people should not overlook the necessity of speaking over the phone or meeting face-to-face as it can strengthen the relationship in ways that virtual communication cannot.

Another factor of Line and Facebook that is frequently mentioned is the fact that it is free. This allows family members to message each other or call each other as much as they want without having to worry about the cost per minute as with normal calling packages. In summary, communication technology and social media allows for more frequency in communicating with one another.

'I think it makes my relationship with my daughter much better, when it's my birthday she sends messages to me or even if it's not she would send updates to me and when I need to go somewhere I would also ask what she is up to, because Line is basically free' (Mother, 65, Lumpini).

However, Line and Facebook allows for a form of passive communication that may pose problems, known as chain messages. A couple of adult children mention that their parents like to send these forwards to them. Since the majority of the parents are retired, they spend more time using Line and Facebook than their child counterpart. While a few mention that these forwards allow them to know their parents are doing okay, many of the participants complain that these forwards can cause a rift in their relationship.

'Even if we don't speak, we still see him sending us stuff, so we feel connected. But sometimes it does annoy me, especially if my dad sends too many of these chains or forwards, like happy Monday happy Tuesday' (Son, 31, Nonthaburi).

For this adult son, he feels his father sends too many forwards or chain messages, which do not convey any meaningful messages and are a hassle to deal with. This was a common response by many of the adult children because the importance of these forward messages is not shared between the family members of different generations. Most of the older individuals seem to place greater significance on these forward messages, which in turn means they expect some sort of feedback from their children who receives it. On the other hand, the children do not really see the need to even watch the forward message because they are impersonal.

Another annoyance with Line that was mentioned by an older participant is that it is too casual and does not provide immediate responses.

'I think Line impacts our relationship because she reads Line slower than I would like and I would get annoyed, but when we call immediately we get the answer right away so calling is much better for me because its immediate and in real time, Line is sometimes too chill
(Mother, 61, Lumpini).

This point is extremely interesting because new forms of communicative tools such as Line and WhatsApp are known as 'instant messaging'. This means that for some people, they expect the counterpart who receives the message to respond immediately. According to the woman quoted above, her daughter does not read her messages in the timely matter that she expects which creates frustration, therefore, giving her daughter a call to discuss matters is necessary.

Not only does Line play a role in the relationship between family members when they are apart, but these tools also impact how time is spent together. The majority of the parents who were interviewed realise that family time should be spent without the use of technology and therefore make it a rule of the family to not use mobile phones at the table, since most of the shared time is around meals.

Several participants claim that their family members often use their mobile phones when they are together and that it affects their relationship negatively because they do not really listen to pay attention to one another.

'Sometimes it affects my relationship with my family because I am with my parents but I chat on the phone too much sometimes I know that. But if we can find a balance then life can be very good from using it, it depends on people and how they use it' (Daughter, 33, Nonthaburi).

'She works on your mobile telephone so when we are together and I say something she doesn't always listen because she's working off her phone' (Mother, 63, Nonthaburi).

'My children don't really talk to me, they spend so much time on their phones' (Mother, 61, Lumpini).

On the other hand, for some individuals, they express that the use of mobile phones actually facilitates the time spent with one another because it gives them things to do. Such as watching funny videos together or reading interesting news which they can discuss with each other.

'Yes but sometimes we use it to show each other funny videos' (Son, 31, Nonthaburi).

'Yes we use our phones together, in the past we don't know what to talk about but now we look at news or clips on YouTube or on Line and we would find subjects to talk about from that' (Daughter, 33, Nonthaburi).

For some, the use of mobile phones during meal is useful when the family members have nothing to talk about.

'Yes we both use it we play games or chat with people especially if we are waiting for food and having nothing to talk about but I don't mind. We all don't mind when that happens' (Mother, 60, Nonthaburi).

These responses show that while the majority of participants prefer to spend time together without the use of mobile phones as according to them it divides the family, some families have found mobile phones and their applications useful in bringing the family members together because it contains interesting things that can be shared amongst the group.

Another theme that was recurrent in the interview responses is how these technological tools facilitate the growth of the relationship between the older individuals and their adult children because it allows the children to teach their parents how to use these new tools. Almost every older person who are currently using these tools claim that is it their children who suggested they use it. For most of them, it is their children who purchased the smart phones for them and taught them how to use it. This creates an opportunity for the children to pass on knowledge to their parents, which for many is an ongoing thing because parents continuously ask for help on how to use these tools. This exchange in service is an opportunity for the relationship of the two family members to grow and creates a shared platform of interest.

'My children bought it for me and told me its good or smart phone can watch Korean series, they buy for me and teach me how to use it, it's

simple enough for me. At my age that's all I need, but sometimes when I want to learn new function I would ask my children to teach me as I go. Usually it's my daughter because we are closest but since she's moved out of the house I would ask my son now since he lives with me' (Mother, 61, Nonthaburi).

'My daughter taught this to me. Yes, she teaches me over time, whenever I have new questions she would teach me' (Mother, 60, Nonthaburi).

According to these interviewees, communication technology impacts the ways in which the family members associate with one another because it provides an opportunity for the adult children to teach their older parents how to use these tools. The role of teacher, which is usually granted to the parent, has been transferred to the children and this act of exchanging information and learning can be a very enriching to the relationship.



In summary, while most of the participants acknowledge that Line allows them to communicate easily with their family members, the quality of the conversation may be jeopardised. In terms of the impact these tools have on the associational integration between the two cohorts, there is no doubt that the mobile phone and applications such as Line and Facebook increase the frequency in which the family members communicate, especially the ease in which a text message can be sent, with just one click. The downside is that, as several respondents have pointed out, deep and rich conversations such as a long phone call is now often replaced with less meaningful

messages throughout the day. Furthermore, the quality of the time spent together is debatable, because while some respondents claim that these tools allow for quality time to be shared between the family members, such as learning how to use the tool or sharing funny clips online, several mentioned that their family members spend too much time playing on their technological devices instead of spending quality time together.

Affectual Integration

Affectual integration refers to the positive sentiments that the family members have for one another, and according to the data findings, communication technology and social media affects this dimension in several ways. Several participants argue that texting allows them to communicate with each other better because sometimes sending text messages is easier than speaking.

'I think technology has helped a lot, especially stickers. My son doesn't express himself a lot, not like my daughter. Since we started using Line to talk I feel it makes us closer because we don't need to say anything, he sends me stickers just to tell me he misses me, and I do the same. It's really good for our relationship' (Mother, 65, Lumpini).

For this mother, her relationship with her son improved after they started using Line because it allows them to communicate non-verbally. Although face-to-face communication is beneficial in several ways such as avoiding misunderstandings or

allowing for a richer communication experience, some people, who may not be comfortable expressing their emotions verbally, prefer to do so via texting. For these people, the use of social media applications impacts their relationship with their family members in a significant way because it allows them to be more expressive and share positive sentiments more easily. This is especially true with the use of stickers, which is a recurring theme, whereby many participants mentioned it being exceptionally useful in communicating since stickers allow for emotions to be exchanged without having to use words.

'Sometimes I have to leave for work and on the way there I would type to her and send him explanations of how our feel or why I behaved the way I did, and I find it really aids our relationship. Some things are difficult to say face to face, or if I say she doesn't listen, then typing she listens more' (Daughter, 42, Nonthaburi).

These sentiments are shared by a mother who claims that her daughter is more willing to listen to what she has to say when she uses Line as the platform for expression.

'I would use Line to explain things because when I say stuff to her in front of her face she gets bored and doesn't want to listen, but when I type it in Line for some reason she is more willing to read it. I would use to explain ourselves but to clear the air we need to talk on the phone or face to face. Usually she calls me to resolve issued' (Mother, 60, Nonthaburi).

For this woman, however, while she claims Line offers an effective platform to express her sentiments to her daughter, it only assists in the resolution of the conflict. Line cannot be used to completely, resolve the issue and that face-to-face communication or a telephone call is still necessary to completely clear the air.

The use of Line for diffusing tension is a current theme that was expressed by several participants, both the parent and the child interviewees.

'I think Line is great for arguing, because there is no voice and less emotion, after I type something in the message when I am angry before sending it I already feel better after writing it down, sometimes I get mad instead of yelling I would even send stickers to show that I am sulking or angry and that lessens the blow, it's almost like a filter and sometimes it adds humour to it, I think speaking is dangerous because there's no filter, and it creates emotions and sometimes we regret what we say' (Mother, 63, Nonthaburi).

According to this woman, Line allows her to filter her emotions because when she messages her daughter after an argument, her emotions such as the anger in her voice will be shielded. Often times we are upset we may say things that we regret later if the object of our frustration is standing right in front of us. However, when we use tools such as text messaging to express our anger the other party does not receive the full blow or our displeasure.

'It's good for fights, I use it all the time, I would type to explain myself, it makes me more at-ease then talking directly but sometimes there would be miscommunication via Line, but I am not very good at expressing myself directly, it's easier for me to take my time to express myself through text messages so Line helps a lot' (Daughter, 36, Lumpini).

Again, for this woman, Line enables her and her mother to get over fights easier because it provides a platform that isn't as direct as face-to-face. Although as she mentions, the downside is that sometimes there may be miscommunication.

The use of Line to diffuse tension or mend hurt feelings after a fight was mentioned several times. It seems this mode of communication, one that allows a non-confrontational way of expressing one's feelings, is beneficial. Sending messages to each other after a fight allows the other party to read the message at their own pace and let the content sink in without having to immediately reply. This is especially useful for family members who are hot-headed or tend to communicate without filter as texting their thoughts eliminates the anger or discontent which would have been prevalent in their tone of voice. Furthermore, for some, apologies are much more easily expressed using text messages because their family members are more willing to listen. This is especially true for the use of stickers, because it allows for a non-verbal form of communication that gets the point across.

Consensual Integration

Consensual integration refers to whether the family members share similar values and attitudes. This was measured by assessing how frequently the adult children would seek advice from their parents because it convey how relevant the parent's knowledge is according to their children. According to the data collected, a recurring theme that several participants mentioned is how technology allows for these two generations to share more similar viewpoints, because it is a tool for the older people to keep up with current trends. As opposed to being a tool that divides the generations, for some families, the use of technological tools such as Google or Facebook allows older people to keep up-to-date with their children.

'I think that technology has brought me and my daughter closer, we have similar education and understand things more than my mother and me. My mother doesn't even read, she's a good mother but she didn't go to school or get education so her world view and mine were very different but my upbringing was more similar to my daughters so we are more similar in that way' (Mother, 62, Nonthaburi).

'I think that after using Line and Facebook my mom has a lot more interesting things to share. She knows more about what is happening in the world and feels like she can teach us new things because she's always receiving news from friends' (Son, 36, Lumpini).

'I would get information and knowledge and I would share it to her but mostly it's her taking care of me, she would read more contents so she

would share knowledge about health with me (Daughter, 31, Nonthaburi).

This older woman claims that her relationship with her daughter is much better than the relationship she had with her mother when she was younger because technology has allowed her and her daughter to share more similar ways of thinking. As for this man, he believes that if used correctly and with an open-mind then technology can give older people a lot more knowledge.

'I think that technology actually gives more knowledge to older people, if they are willing to get on board and learn how to use it then they end up having even more knowledge than before, it benefits older people too. Like for me, I get so much information about how to grow bananas or other fruits from the Internet' (Father, 70, Nonthaburi).

For another daughter, she claims that her father understands that we live in a different world so in order to maintain a close relationship with his children, he makes an effort to keep evolving and learn.

'He is always learning new things he tries hard to come into our world and share our interests which means we can share similar hobbies' (Daughter, 32, Lumpini).

Another older man claims that technology allows them to better understand the world around him and what his daughter is going through. Since the world today is much different from the one he was raised in, technology allows him to find information and search for current trends so that he could better give advice to his daughter.

'I think I understand 60% of her life. I think it's because I follow the news and stay informed with the world today so I am aware of what's going on, I have lived a long life and understand things' (Father, 61, Lumpini).

Another point that was mentioned several times is that mobile phones and social media applications allows the adult children to ask advice from their parents more easily because they can do so via texting without having to necessarily call.

'Today my daughter and I teased each other about their tax return, she complained about it on Line, so we talked about that' (Father, 67, Nonthaburi).

'Sometimes when I have a question about something not too important, I would message my mom on Line. For instance, last week we were attending a family gathering I asked her what she thinks I should bring as a gift. She is better at these things than I am, family etiquette' (Daughter, 36, Lumpini).

According to data results, the majority of the children who do not live with their parents see them once a week or sometimes even less. This means that the use of mobile phones and Line is extremely useful should they need to discuss issues with their parents. Not only does communication technology allow the children to ask for advice more easily, several participants claim that thanks to the Internet, they have knowledge that is more relevant to their children's lives. Since there is roughly a 30-year gap between the older people and their adult children, this means that the parents grew up in a time that is vastly different from the world today. For this reason, the children do not always seek advice from their parents because they feel they themselves are the experts in the current world we are living in. According to the respondents, the use of communication technology bridges this gap because older parents can use it to gain up-to-date knowledge about today's current trends and affairs in order to better understand the very different world and problems their children may be facing.

Functional Integration

Functional Integration measures the degree in which family members exchange services with one another, and as it is reported by several participants, the use of communication technology allows the family members to stay in touch quicker which also allows convenience and efficiency in reporting up-to-date status. This is especially easy thanks to the function in the Line application which allows for groups to be created as it allows for news to be spread to multiple recipients at once.

'It's easier to know about emergencies, for instance when someone gets sick they could easily call to let me know, and also check up on me'
(Father, 66, Khlongtoey).

'I think it's good, when I am sick and all alone I would send message to my group and everyone would send me food or flowers or come visit, it makes spreading news about our well-being easier and we feel closer'
(Mother, 61, Nonthaburi).

According to these women, the use of mobile phones and Line or Facebook, allows them to share their status with the significant people in their lives. This seems to be especially useful when they are feeling under the weather as their family members could easily provide care and assistance once they are quickly informed via Line.

'Well it makes it easier for us to care for each other, I could ask what she is doing and get news from her more than before. We connect with each other more often than before. At least if we don't have time I could text her to ask if she has eaten or what she's up to, this is emotional care which is important' (Daughter, 36, Lumpini).

Even for day-to-day events such as finding out whether their family members have eaten dinner is facilitated by the use of Line. It provides a quick and easy method to check up on what they needed.

Another aspect of Line and Facebook that several participants referred to is the non-direct forms of communication. Line and Facebook allows for status update and profile changes which, although, not directed at any specific person it allows their family members to know what they are up to.

'It's a good platform to share, in the past when we didn't have Line it was harder to share news and updates, I think it has definitely facilitated the way we share information with each other and aids in how we keep connected throughout the day. I see it as a positive impact on our relationship. I always know what she's doing' (Mother, 63, Nonthaburi).

This way of communication is unique to social media tools because it transformed the traditional two-way communication to a one-way mode. Face-to-face communication and telephone calls have always been a two-way communication, which means that when one person speaks they wish to get a response from the other party. This form of communication requires active engagement and participation. Whereas Line and Facebook allow a platform for individuals to share updates and news without the need to receive a response or feedback. This allows family members to see what their counterparts are up to, where they are, what they are doing, without having to actively engage.

According to the respondents, the use of mobile phones and Line allows the family members to provide assistance to one another more easily because they can share

news and update one another throughout the day. When the parents need something, they can quickly inform their children who can then meet their needs. Data shows that when the older individuals get sick and need to go to hospital, it is their children who normally take them. Through the use of communication technology the parents can better inform their children if they need to be taken to hospital and their children can facilitate immediate assistance.

Normative Integration

Normative integration refers to the degree to which family members share similar norms and values. Based on the data collected for measuring the normative integration between the older persons and their adult children, it can be concluded that the use these technological tools do not have a direct impact on increasing or decreasing the shared norms within the family. It seems that norms and values are integrated from childhood, and since both the older persons and their adult children were not introduced to the use of these tools during their younger years, the norms that were adopted was not impacted by such technological innovations.

However, an interesting point to note regarding the use of communication technology and family norms is that these tools have introduced a new norm to the family. According to the interview participants, both groups expressed that their cohorts, and sometimes they themselves, have become accustomed to using the mobile phone during meal times. Several families claim that this issue is to apparent that there are rules enforced within the family banning to use of mobile phones during family time.

'No, we all don't use it. It's a rule that we enforce, when we eat we talk, we don't play on the phone. This depends on the family and the rules we set, the grandchildren cannot play on their phones either, when it's family time it's really family time, sometimes children are young so they don't know the rules but we would limit to maybe 20 minutes, otherwise family is bad if there are no rules' (Mother, 65, Lumpini).

'No we never do that. When we are together, we are really together. That's our rule' (Father, 67, Nonthaburi).

Interestingly, it was the adult children who were mostly complaining about their older parents being too addictive to their phones,

'There was a period when my mom was really addicted to Korean series on the phone and she would just watch it endlessly all alone. If she's not watching it she would come and talk and play with us' (Daughter, 34, Lumpini).

'My mom is very addicted to Line and Facebook, she would talk to people, friends and family and would play on her phone when we are together' (Daughter, 36, Lumpini).

Based on the data collected, it can be summarised that a new family norm has been introduced within the family unit, which has transformed how family members spend time together.

Intergenerational Family Structure

This dimension refers to the living arrangement of the family and in this case, whether or not the older persons are co-residing with their children. While it is impossible to conclude whether the introduction and use of the mobile phone and its accompanying application directly impacts the decision of whether adult children choose to co-reside with their parents, a connection might be proposed. According to data collected within the associational integration dimension, it is clearly demonstrated that the use of Line has allowed family members to communicate more frequently and stay in touch with ease. Therefore, while it may be too bold to assume that this simplicity and efficiency in keeping in touch has direct impact on living arrangement, it is undeniable that these tools make it easier for family members to live apart.

In conclusion, as outlined in this section, the use of communication technology and social media applications impact the relationship between the older parents and their adult children in several ways. It impacts associational integration by allowing the family members to stay in touch for easily, because cohorts of the family can merely leave a text message to let the other know they are thinking of them without having to call. It also impacts the way older parents and their adult children spend time together by providing an activity for the couple to share together, such as watching videos on YouTube or sharing information or news online, this is especially beneficial for family members who do not usually converse much when together. It should be noted that this point is debatable, because while some participants claim that these tools offer a shared activity, some respondents claim that these tools are the culprit that

come between them and their family members because each individual is so caught up playing on their technological devices. In terms of affectual integration, the main impact is how instant messaging applications such as Line allows for the family members to share positive sentiments towards one another. This is especially useful for individuals who are usually shy or not comfortable with expressing sentiments face-to-face. Line also allows the parents and children to mend more easily from disputes because it is used as a platform to apologise to one another. As for concensual integration, a common response is that thanks to these tools the generation gap between the adult children and their older parents is decreased. This is because the parents use these tools to obtain knowledge about current affairs, which keeps them up-to-date with the world around them. Because of this, the children find that they are able to relate to their parents more easily because it allows them to share more similar viewpoints, which facilitates the desire for children to share stories or ask for advice from the parents. Regarding the functional integration dimension, these communicative tools impact the family members by allowing the two cohorts to assist one another more efficiently. For example, when the older person is ill their children can assist them by sending messages and checking up on them regularly. Sometimes the family members do not even have to ask for help directly because they can update their status on Facebook, which would allow their family members to know they may need assistance. As for normative integration, while it appears that the use of these technological tools does not have a direct impact on narrowing or widening the similarities in norms and values shared between the family members, it seems that these tools have introduced the family unit to a new shared norm, which is the use of the mobile phone during family time. Lastly, the intergenerational family structure

dimension refers to the living arrangement of the family members and while it cannot be concluded that the introduction and use of these tools impact the decision of whether or not family members choose to co-reside with one another, the fact that these tools make living apart more manageable is clearly visible. Based on the results of this research, it is clear that communication technology and social media tools such as Line and Facebook have significant impacts on the relationship between older individuals and their children.



CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

As predicted in the hypothesis, the results of this study demonstrate that the technological innovations in question, namely the mobile phone with its applications such as Line and Facebook, impacts the intergenerational relationship between older persons and their adult children in both positive and negative ways. However, according to the data collected, the ways in which these tools provide such benefits and drawbacks do not entirely match what was hypothesised. According to reports made by the participants, the use of these technological innovations has direct impacts on four of the six dimensions of intergenerational relationships as put forth by Bengtson and Schrader, which are: associational integration, affectual integration, consensual integration and functional integration. As for the remaining two, normative integration and intergenerational family structure, the impacts are not as clearly visible but some connections and assumptions can be drawn.

7.1. Positive Impacts

As outlined in Figure 9 (page 174), there are multiple positive impacts affecting both older persons and their adult children. The first and foremost positive impact, and the only one hypothesised, is that forms of communication technology allows the family members to stay connected and engage in frequent communication. This is true especially for Line and Facebook, which provides a platform for a quick and economic mode of communication, in forms of short messages or stickers. This positive impact on the associational integration between the two cohorts is especially

true for family members who do not live together. According to research findings, even though the majority of older persons still co-reside with at least one of their children, only a handful are living with all of their children. This means that many of the ageing parents do not live with some of their children and therefore the use of these tools is extremely useful in keeping the family members close and connected. As stated in earlier chapters, studies on older persons have concluded that the quality of their relationships with friends and family are the main indicators of successful ageing. The study has proven that the use of mobile phones and its accompanying technological tools allows older people to maintain contact with loved ones, especially those they do not meet regularly. Not only does this elevate the emotional well-being of the older persons, but this constant communication also allows older individuals to experience a continued sense of belonging to their loved ones. This is especially important for older individuals who lack ease in mobility due to physical ailments resulting from old age.

The second positive impact for the use of Line and Facebook in enhancing the quality of the relationship is a functional one, which is that family members can use these tools to better care for one another. Participants mentioned that thanks to these social media tools they are able to keep up-to-date with occurrences within their families, which allows them to provide assistance when needed. Such claims were almost unanimous by both the parents and children. This advantage is extremely important for the livelihood of older persons because it elevates their physical wellbeing. Due to these technological tools, family members and friends of older persons are more equipped to check up on them and provide assistance whenever necessary. Since the

number of older persons residing with their adult children is declining, the ability to quickly get in touch with family members when emergencies occur is extremely beneficial. As several participants mentioned, that even though their children are not living with them, thanks to these technological innovations, their children and other family members can receive constant update regarding the older persons well-being.

Another benefit in using these tools is that it aids in communication between older persons and their children. First of all, these tools provide a platform for the family members to express positive sentiments to one another, which falls under the category of affectual integration. Participants claim that through the use of social media and instant messaging tools, namely Line, they are able to express emotions to one another more comfortably. For people who find it difficult to verbalise emotions face-to-face, such tools are highly beneficial to convey their thoughts and feelings to their cohorts. Sometimes, merely the use of stickers is sufficient for the receiver to understand what one means to say without having to even form sentences. Secondly, Line and Facebook allows family members to diffuse tension when arguments occur. Several participants claim that their parent or child are more willing to listen to what they have to say via messaging, perhaps because it is void of emotions. Sending messages to one another using this non-confrontational mode of communication is apparently very useful in resolving arguments. However, all of the respondents highlight the importance of a verbal or face-to-face communication to completely clear the air as a follow up to the messages. This finding is extremely interesting and highlights a prevalent way in which communicative tools fosters healthy relationships between older person and their adult children. Being able to share affection via text

messaging is especially useful within Thai families because as several of the respondents claimed, expressing positive sentiments to one another was not part of their upbringing. Thanks to these instant messaging applications, both the older persons and adult children claim they are able to share their sentiments with their family members much more comfortably because it is less direct than doing it face-to-face. This is can be done even more easily with the introduction of stickers, that express sentiments such as 'I miss you' or 'I love you'. This new channel has enabled family members to communicate affection much more frequently and with ease. On the other hand, when family members get into a feud, these tools are also used to diffuse the tension because it is less confrontational than face-to-face communication. Line allows family members to apologise to one another after a fight, which according to the respondents is exceptionally useful because texting is accompanied by less emotion than verbal communication. For instance, if two individuals attempted to clear the air over the telephone, their words would still be communicated with feeling and these emotions if misinterpreted may sometimes worsen the situation. Another benefit of text messages is that the receiver can choose to accept the message when they are ready to hear it. This is extremely helpful in diffusing tension and clearing arguments because the family members are able to choose a suitable timing to read the messages from their cohort. According to the older persons and the adult children participants, Line allows them to express positive sentiments and affection to their loved ones more easily and also aids in diffusing the tension when arguments arise. Not only are these two components extremely important in fostering healthy relationships between the two family members but these finding highlights the fact that the content and form of communication between the family members have shifted

through the use of Line. As mentioned earlier, Line provides a private space of communication for the older persons and their adult children, as opposed to Facebook, which is a public platform, and the way the older persons are using Line to communicate with their children by enhancing their expressions of positive sentiments and diffusing conflict demonstrates that the ways in which family members are communicating with each other has shifted. It should also be noted that before the introduction of mobile phones and ease of Line, it might not have been as easy to communicate on a one-on-one basis because other members of the family may be present in their physical space. With Line, not only is it simple to share news with multiple people at once in group chats, but it is also much more efficient in sharing information between only two people, which may be a factor that is overlooked and taken for granted. Perhaps the reason older persons prefer using Line over Facebook is because of its privacy and one-on-one form of communication.

Additionally, data results also suggest that the introduction of these tools into the lives of older persons have created opportunities for family members to share quality time together. Several of the older participants mention that time with their adult children is often spent looking at contents on the mobile phone. When one person finds something interestingly they often share it with their cohort, which results in a shared experience. When the family members do not have anything to say to one another, then using the mobile phone to watch movies or funny clips together brings the two closer together. This factor is another important impact of these tools on the relationship between older persons and their adult children because it enriches the time spent between the two family members. Several respondents claim that when the

members of the family have nothing to say to one another, these tools are exceptionally useful in adding topics of conversation or a shared activity. Most of the time, either one of the family members would share interesting or thoughtful contents and videos that they have discovered on the Internet. This results in older persons feeling more connected to their younger cohorts due to shared interest.

The fourth positive impact deduced from this study is that the adoption of these technological innovations by older persons has created an opportunity for the two family members to have a teaching and learning experience. Parents become the student and children take on the role of the teacher, who are more equipped and knowledgeable regarding the use of these tools. The majority of older persons claim that it is their children who bought the smart phone for them and suggest that they learn to use it, and it is their children who taught them. Not only does this create an initial opportunity for the parent and child to share a common interest and learn from the other, this process is continuous. Many older individuals mention how they often forget how to use different functions on their phone or application and therefore need to consistently ask for assistance from their children. Of course, depending on the temperament of the child this may cause frustration and annoyance, which was expressed by one father. But the majority of the respondents argued, somewhat with pride, that their children are the ones who teach them. This exchange of information and dependency can be very beneficial in fostering and enriching the relationship between these two family members.

The next finding that occurred from this study is perhaps the most beneficial use of the smart phone and its accompanying applications in enhancing the quality of intergenerational relationships. It was hypothesised, based on the argument put forth by Cowgill and Holmes' modernisation theory, that due to the introduction of the Internet and search engine tools, the knowledge of older people in society becomes outdated thus decreasing their value and contribution in society. The modernisation theory claims that technology renders the skills and knowledge of the older generation obsolete because, since the industrial revolution when printing was introduced, younger generations did not require the wisdom and know-how of the older generations. It was hypothesised that the adult children in this study would turn to Google or other search engines for advice and overlook their parent's insights. While the data findings do support this hypothesis, it mainly contradicts it. While some of the adult children claim they never ask advice from their parents because their views are often not relevant to today's world, the majority of the children still turn to their parents for advice. The subject area that the adult children feel their parents still had valuable contributions is in the skills and know-how their parents have accumulated over the years. For instance, knowledge on the use of traditional medicine, basic child-rearing protocols or skills in up-keeping the household, which were mostly mentioned. When the adult children require advice on other issues such as relationship problems or professional decisions, they would turn to their significant other or peers, who are of a closer generation.

However, several families pointed out a phenomenon, which the researcher found to be extremely interesting. A handful of the participants claim that, in fact, the use of

these technological tools has enabled older persons to better provide advice to their children. Rather than the tools dividing the generations, it has brought them closer. Older individuals who did not grow up in the generation of their children could search for current trends and keep up-to-date with news efficiently and easily via the use of these tools. Several adult children claim that they are closer than ever before to their parents since they started using the Internet because their mother or father is able to understand the world they are living in. This feeling was not unique to the adult children, but the older persons also reported that they feel closer to their children in ways they never were with their own parents because these technological tools allow them to speak the same language as their children. This phenomenon demonstrates that rather than dividing the generations, the introduction of communication technology can bring generations closer than ever before.

7.2. Negative Impacts

As outlined in Figure 9 (page 174), although the positive impacts outweigh the negative, there are still several downsides to using communication technology and social media in regard to intergenerational relationships. The first negative impact that can be drawn from the data collected, and was hypothesized before conducting the interviews, is that while technology allows for more frequent communication, the quality of the communication itself may be jeopardized. This is the drawback on the associational integration. The majority of participants claim that during meal times, which is the main activity shared between the family members, they often find their loved ones on the phone instead of actively engaging with them. This is a

phenomenon that is clearly visible in the Thai society today, whereby one can witness family members having dinner together at a restaurant but each person is engaging with their mobile phone instead of with each other. Several families mention that they have a ground rule, which does not allow for anyone to bring the mobile phone to the table during meal times. Even though this lack of engaging with one another may not seem exceptionally detrimental to the relationship, one must not forget that research has shown that older persons form and maintain less relationships than younger individuals in society. The time that older people spend having meals with their children or other family members may be the only time during the day they are interacting with others. Younger individuals engage with people in school or in work settings but often times older people are at home during the day and therefore, the time that they spend having dinner with their children should not be overlooked. Meal times should be used to share events of the day and for the family members to reconnect, but the phenomenon, which is increasingly visible in Thai society, is a lack of communication between family members during meal times. It is important for families to establish ground rules so that time spent together can be rich and engaging. Based on this study, it is not just the younger family members who are spending excessive time on their smartphones, but the older person themselves are becoming addicted to chatting and texting with friends. Therefore, the ground rule established by several of the families in this interview is that no one is allowed to bring their mobile phones to the table, not just the children.

The second negative impact, which was not hypothesised, that can occur through the use of communication technology is miscommunication. This can lead to the decrease

in affectual integration shared between the family members because miscommunication often leads to frustration. Expressing oneself through the use of messages and stickers are usually not as clear and to the point as phoning or engaging in face-to-face communication. The main miscommunication mentioned by the participants is the contradicting importance of chain messages between the two generations. Older persons tend to send numerous chain messages to their adult children who often times do not reply because of its insignificance and impersonal meaning, which can cause a rift between the two family members. When two individuals engage in face-to-face or verbal communication the attention that is shared between the two individuals is usually reciprocated. However, when two individuals use less direct methods of communicating, such as sending forward messages, the receiver may not always place the same importance as the sender. While this miscommunication is subtle and may not result in such dramatic strains to the relationship, it is necessary to realise this downfall and perhaps avoid it by having discussions about what things are tolerated. These technological tools should be used to enhance the ways individuals experience life and relationships, therefore, if it starts to pose problems and become a burden then as the user, individuals should implement ground rules and restrictions on how to use it.

As several studies have shown, frequent contact with friends and family is a main determinant of whether older people, who are no longer part of the social working group and may find themselves increasingly isolated from friends or families, age successfully. As predicted in the hypothesis, older people are more addicted to these tools than the adult children. Many of the participants claim that the use of these tools

provides them with distractions and keeps them company when they are lonely. While some participants use the mobile phones to watch movies or play games, the majority of them use it to engage with friends and family members via Line and Facebook. Interestingly, how these tools are being used by older people differ according to gender. Older male participants claim they use Line and Facebook to obtain knowledge about their interests and hobbies and to keep updated with current local and international events news. As for the older women, they tend to use these tools mainly for social purposes such as keeping in touch with family and friends. This use of communication technology assists older persons to age successfully because it provides them with opportunities to engage in conversation or communication and helps to maintain their social relationships. While these tools may jeopardise the quality of the communication and result in less interaction among family members when they are together, the benefits clearly outweigh these drawbacks. It seems that when these new forms of non-direct communication are used to replace face-to-face or verbal communication then the result is a decrease in the quality of the relationship between the generations. However, if these tools are used in addition to the existing methods of communication then the advantages are phenomenal in enhancing the quality of the relationship. Not only do the tools allow family members to interact more frequently and engage in shared interest during family time, it also provides knowledge on up-to-date trends to older people bringing them closer to their children of a completely different generation. As this study demonstrates, rather than divide older persons from their younger cohorts, these forms of technology enable them to maintain richer relationships with their adult children.

Figure 9: Positive and Negative Impacts of Communication Technology on Intergenerational Relationships

Components	Positive Impacts		Negative Impacts	
	Older Person	Children	Older Person	Children
Associational Integration	Allows family members to stay in touch more frequently, especially when one is living abroad		Quality of communication decreases because family members prefer to text rather than call	
	Family members are able to update one another regarding day-to-day activities		OP feels upset when children do not read the chain messages that they send	Children feel annoyed because parents send too many chain messages
	Easy to leave a message without requiring the other person to be available immediately		OP are sometimes annoyed that children do not reply right away when sending text	
	Quality of time spent together is improved because family members share contents they find on the internet		During family times, everyone is on their mobile phones and do not give attention to one another	
	Older person and their children spend time together teaching and learning how to use tools, switching teacher-student role			
Affectual Integration	Easier for family members to express positive sentiments to one another			
	Tools assist family members to diffuse tension and resolve conflict			
Consensual Integration	Older persons use internet to understand the current world	Children feel that parents knowledge is more relevant so are more willing to seek advice		
	Decreases overall generation gap between older persons and their adult children			
Functional Integration	Tools provide efficiency to family members when offering service to one another because they are able to be updated of emergencies immediately			
Normative Integration	<i>New norm arises within the family unit as everyone is accustomed to using the mobile phone during meal times</i>			
Family Structure	<i>Communication technology and social media makes living apart more manageable which may or may not affect intergenerational family structure</i>			

As clearly demonstrated in the table above, some of the positive and negative impacts of these tools are similar for the older persons and the adult children, while some impacts affect them differently. All the positive impacts of the associational integration affect the two age groups in the same way. There benefits include allowing the families to stay connected more easily and communicate frequently, family members can efficiently update one another on their daily activities, communication is simplified because family members can leave messages to one another without the other person having to be available in real-time and the fact that adult children are able to take on the role of teacher offering their parents, the students, knowledge and

constant support on how to use the tools. Two of the negative impacts affect them similarly, which are that the quality of communication decreases because family members rely solely on these tools to communicate while neglecting the importance of face-to-face communication or telephone calls and the fact that overusing these tools can distant the family members if each person is too addicted to their devices during family time. The other negative impacts do not affect the two generations similarly. When older persons send forward messages to the adult children they feel frustrated when the adult children do not read it. On the other hand, the adult children feel frustrated because they would rather not receive these chain messages from their parents. Another negative impact that was expressed solely by the older persons is that they feel dissatisfied when their children do not reply immediately when a message is sent. As for affectual integration, two impacts were reported, both positive and by both groups. Both family members are thankful for the existence of these tools because it allows them to share positive sentiments to one another for comfortable and to be able to diffuse tension and resolve conflict for effectively than traditional verbal communication. As for consensual integration, older persons express how they are able to better understand the world through the use of these tools which in turn results in the children feeling as though they can better turn to their parents for advice. The impact for both family members is that the generation gap has been decreased. As for functional integration, one positive impact was recorded, which was reported by both family members, which is that these tools enable them to care for each other more easily and provide assistance more swiftly.

While the dimension of intergenerational relationship most positively impacted by the use these technological tools is the associational integration dimension, it is important to note that this is also the area where all the negative impacts occur. The next three dimensions: affectual, consensual and functional integration, while fewer positive impacts are recorded, there are no negative impacts resulting from the use of these tools at all. As for normative integration, as mentioned earlier, it is not possible to determine whether the impacts are positive or negative, only that the use of these tools has introduced a new norm within the family unit, which is the use of mobile phones during meal times. As for intergenerational family structure, while it is undeniable that these technological innovations allow family members to live apart more easily, one cannot conclude whether it directly impacts the living arrangements of older persons and their children.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study has been to explore the relationship between older people and their adult children and how the use of communication technology, namely the smart phone, with applications such as Line and Facebook have impacted these intergenerational relationships.

8.1. Conclusion

As fertility rates continue to decline and life expectancy increases due to improvements in sanitation and developments in medical care, Thailand, as with other nations of the world, moves towards a greying nation. It is predicted that by 2040, one-third of the population in Thailand will be over the age of 60. This phenomenon creates an importance, now more than ever, for researchers to study the livelihood and well-being of this increasing population segment. Not only should policy makers introduce schemes to better the financial and physical comfort of older persons, but the emotional and psychological necessities should not be overlooked. Over time, new longitudinal studies continue to emerge shedding light on the importance of the relationships that older people have with friends and family members in achieving successful ageing. Frequent communication and a sense of belonging to the family unit is necessary in ensuring that older individuals, especially those that are retired and are no longer part of society's working body, maintain a fruitful and fulfilling life as they enter old-age.

Older individuals may have 20-30 years more to live after the age of retirement, therefore it should be in the interest of everyone to ensure that they continue to live a life of vitality. While physical and financial support is important, emotional and psychological aspects must not be overlooked. The results of this study have shown that the use of communication technology, notably the smartphone, and its accompanying applications has several benefits to the life of older people in general and can narrow the generation gap because them and their children, thus enabling a stronger intergenerational relationship. Data from this research has proven that access to Line and Facebook is an important source of news and knowledge for older people, especially older men, who claim they prefer receiving information through these channels as opposed to mainstream alternatives such as via the television or newspapers. Through the use of these tools they are able to learn about hobbies or other things of interest, which is especially important given the fact that most of them have a lot more free time once retired. Additionally, it is apparent that these tools offer a sense of empowerment to the older persons because it allows them to be independent and able to search for information and share knowledge. This is extremely beneficial to obtaining successfully ageing. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, Line and Facebook acts as a window to the outside world and eases loneliness by connecting older people to their loved ones. Regular interaction with friends and family is exceptionally crucial in maintaining a sense of belonging. Not only do these technological tools elevate the quality of life by offering the aforementioned benefits, it also has numerous positive impacts on the intergenerational relationship that older people have with their children.

The main research question of this research is to explore how the use of communication technology and social media tools impact the intergenerational relationship between older persons and their adult children and the conclusion is as follows: provided that both the family members are active users of these tools, then the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. Line and Facebook, or even the use of a simple mobile phone, has allowed parents to stay better connected to their children, especially since many of them do not together, some do not even live in the same country. This ease of contact was expressed extensively, giving particular gratitude to Line and the flexibility in allowing them to contact loved ones by simply sending a message at any given time. Furthermore, the quality of time spent together is also enhanced due to these innovations as it allows the family members to watch or listen to things together. Another remarkable benefit of Line is that it assists in conflict resolution when family members argue. The participants, both parents and children, claim that it is much easier to express their sentiments via Line especially when they are feeling emotional because Line allows the other person to read their messages without interrupting. Additionally, Line is also used to express positive sentiments to one another, usually through the use of stickers, which many people feel more comfortable doing. Line and Facebook also allows family members to better provide assistance to one another because they can share updates about each other more efficiently, even blast an update to several family members at the same time through Line groups. Another advantage of these technological tools is that access to the Internet has allowed parents to learn about current trends and be updated with what is happening in the world around them. The children participants expressed gratitude towards Google and Facebook because through the use of these tools their ageing

parents have a better understanding of the issues they are faced with and are more equipped with providing advice and solutions to their problems. The result is a bridging of the generation gap between older people and their adult children. It should be noted that this contradicts what was hypothesised since it was predicted that technology further divides the generations. This prediction was based on the assumption that the knowledge and know-how of older people are rendered obsolete since children can obtain information off the Internet. What is actually happening is that the older people are also accessing the information, which is allowing the family members of different generations to share similar knowledge and viewpoints. In fact, results from this study indicates that the parents are much more addicted to the use of their mobile phones and its applications as opposed to the children, with many children complaining that during family time their parents are often times too engaged with their telephones. Furthermore, the majority of the parents learn to use these technological tools through the teaching of their children. This allows for a reversal in roles between the parent and the child, with the child taking on the role of teacher, and the parent becoming the student. This exchange of information and knowledge is extremely beneficial to the relationship between the two as it enables discussion and interaction over a common interest.

In summary, as long as older persons are open-minded, given the opportunity to learn and embrace these new technological developments, then the quality of the relationship between them and their children will most likely improve. This in turn should create a more enriching quality of life for older persons as through the use of communication technology and social media tools they will be able to better maintain

strong relationships with their family members throughout the remainder of their years.

8.2. Recommendation for Future Research

In order to provide thorough accounts and in-depth research findings, this study focused solely on the impacts of communication technology on the relationship between older individuals and their adult children, which sheds light on only a fraction of the whole picture. Future research should be conducted based on some of the interesting findings that resulted from this study, in order to better understand how to obtain successful aging for Thai older people.

The relationship that was studied for this research is between older persons and their adult children, but there are several other relationships that could be studied and may be equally or more important, depending on the family structure. Research could be conducted to explore the relationship that older people have with their grandchildren, their siblings or even their friends to see how communication technology could enhance these relationships. As studies have shown, whether older persons live a long and happy life depends on the social relationships they form and maintain. The relationships in question are not limited to merely their children but also include the relationships they form and maintain with other members of the family, friends and neighbours. As fertility rates continue to decline and people are having less or no children at all, the relationships that an individual has with members outside of their family unit should not be overlooked. Furthermore, as was mentioned earlier, this

research is based on the intergenerational relationship within a traditional household, which consists of father-mother-child, and so additional research should be done on older persons in other types of family units such as LGBT parenting, single mothers and fathers or adoptive children because with time these alternative family structures will become increasingly popular.

Additionally, none of the participants in this research had terminal illness or chronic disease at the time of the study, which would normally require the older persons to be house-bound or bed-bound. Therefore, another area of research that would be extremely beneficial is on older person subjects who have mental or physical ailments and to explore how they are using these communicative tools to assist them and their family members in dealing with these hardships. As societies age with more people becoming centenarians, the change of becoming ill in old age is likely to increase, for this reason, collecting data on this group of older persons would be valuable.

8.3 Recommendation for Policy Makers

It is apparent from the data collected that older people are much more independent than their family members sometime give them credit for. The open-mindedness that older people have in countering traditional norms such as their willingness to move to retirement homes or their lack of financial dependency on their children, demonstrates that individuals deemed 'old' by society and by their age, are extremely capable to live independent lives. Furthermore, as demonstrated in this research, the use of communication technology and social media tools is embraced and used regularly by

the majority of the older people. It is apparent that the smart phone and applications such as Line and Facebook play a major role in the lives older people.

Policy makers should take advantage of this by partnering up with relevant key players in order to create applications that further enhance the lives of the older population. For instance, an application should be created that allows older people to better connect with one another through shared interest. The participants of this study rely on their respective elderly associations as a source of activity and companionship and while these establishments are important, so much more can be done. Furthermore, elderly associations are not popular for the majority of older persons living in Bangkok mainly because they are not able to physically leave the house to visit these associations to engage it events and keep updated with relevant news. Therefore, an application that informs older persons of activities that are happening near them, perhaps one that allows for the creation of meet up groups around different hobbies and interests would greatly enhance the daily lives of older people. This application could even connect the elderly associations together so members from different clubs could get acquainted.

Another application that would be extremely useful is one that allows older people to share and pass on their skills and knowledge to younger generations of the society. As indicated in many studies, a sense of usefulness and being needed is linked to risk of mortality as it increases self-esteem and a sense of wellbeing. Older people have an abundance of skills, know-how and time, which should not go to waste and most importantly, most are willing to pass on this knowledge without receiving monetary

gain. An application should exist to create volunteering opportunities that pair up older persons with individuals who want to learn new skills or need help in various different subjects so that older persons can successfully transfer their knowledge through the use of communication technology. Policy makers should keep in mind the gender differences in how these tools are being used by older men versus older women and so applications could be geared directly towards each gender. Policy makers should keep in mind that as indicated by this research, older women have a more difficult time accessing these tools and so assistance should be provided so that the older women could gain knowledge and benefit from the advantages of these tools, which could provide them to better connect with their children, especially since, as demonstrated, Thai families are more matrilineal than patrilineal.

Additionally, it is clearly visible from the results of this study that the use of stickers is extremely important in how older persons communicate with their family members. Baring this in mind, policy makers should look into offering a greater variety of stickers that may be more age-appropriate and representative of the older persons age group. The majority of stickers that exist and are in use today are very childish and geared for the youngsters, and since studies have shown that the use of stickers is a way of communicating one's identity to the receiver, it would be beneficial if appropriate stickers were made available for older persons. Furthermore, since older persons feel comfortable using stickers to communicate, it would be advantageous if more emotions and sentiments were added to their sticker list. Perhaps policy makers could conduct a poll asking older persons what additional stickers they require which would convey an entire spectrum of thoughts and feelings.

Moreover, policy makers could work alongside applications creators to derive a system which enables older persons to swiftly sound an alarm or send an alert if they are in distress. Following the popularity of stickers, it is clear that older persons appreciate sending message with just one click or tab, as opposed to having to write out their thoughts in words. This is especially beneficial to illiterate individuals who rely solely on stickers to convey meaning. Therefore, a sticker which consists of a unique noise to indicate the need of assistance could be highly beneficial to the livelihood of older persons.

It has been concluded that the openness of older persons is the key determinant on whether they will be successful at learning how to use these tools. However, one factor that contributes to older persons lack of willingness to learn is money. In order to enjoy the benefits of Line or Facebook, one has to be a subscriber of a telephone package that provides access to the Internet. All but one of the participants in the Khlongtoey group are not using these technological innovations and even the one that is using it claim he does not use it often because it is expensive. These participants are of lower economic status and express an almost liberal view of social media, expressing their resistance in adopting these tools. Policy makers should realise that without the adoption of these tools then these individuals will not be able to benefit from the advantages that it offers which in turn could leave them stuck in their lower economic standing as opposed to providing opportunities for them to improve their lives. In 2018, the Thai government launched an initiative, which offers free sim cards and internet connection to low-income earners in hopes of increasing their chance of staying connected to news and updates on the internet. However, these packages have

limited data to prevent the users to watch movies, play games or listen to music. Policy makers should ensure that this assistance by the government continues over time through different regimes, and perhaps to also consider that watching film, playing games or listening to music may not be a complete waste because it has the potential to connect the older persons to their family members of younger generations.

Another recommendation, although not directly linked with the lives of older people, is equally important. The main fear that was expressed by the participants concerning the use of communication technology and social media for Thailand as a whole, is regarding its use by children. While most agree that these tools bring with it a number of advantages, if used incorrectly by those who do not know any better, it can be extremely dangerous. The age that children are starting to use these tools continues to decrease, therefore it is vital that policy makers figure out a way to ensure that these tools are being used correctly by the younger generations of the Thai society. The government cannot depend on the parents of guardians alone to ensure the proper use of these tools. Policy makers should make it their priority to provide rules and guidelines to all segments of the population.

A final recommendation, since communication technology is here to stay and its use will most probably become more prevalent with each generation. Therefore, combatting the negative impacts of these tools on the relationship within the family unit should be of utmost priority. As this study demonstrates, all the negative impacts of these tools exist within the associational integration dimension, namely how family members tend to neglect one another during family time or how the quality of

communication decreases because the use of these tools have replaced traditional modes of contact. One must remember that quantity should not override quality and that 20 text messages a day may not be as fulfilling as a 5-minute telephone call. Individuals must learn to use these tools as an addition to enhance their relationship with each other, as opposed to replacing conventional face-to-face or verbal communication. Similarly, during meal times or family get-togethers, these tools should be used for knowledge exchange and information sharing rather than as an alternate world for individuals to disappear into. Policy makers should attempt to convey this message and implement this norm to everyone in Thailand, through advertisements or celebrity figures. This would teach individuals of all generations to be selective users of communication technology, and allow them to fully reap the benefits of these technological tools, while avoiding the pitfalls.

In conclusion, forming and maintaining healthy social relationships is a key factor that determines whether an individual will age successfully. And as this research has shown, the proper adoption of communication technology and social media tools such as Line and Facebook can greatly enhance the quality of the intergenerational relationship between older people and their adult children. Therefore, policies and programmes should be introduced to allow easier access for older people to become active-users and educate society as a whole on the proper use of this technology. Whether or not available tools exist to facilitate the fruitful and fulfilling life for older people should be in the interest of us all because, provided we live long enough, their fate shall too befall on us.

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR OLDER PERSON

What is your name?

What level of education do you have?

How many children do you have?

Are you currently working? What are you currently doing?

Background Questions

- *Where do you go for information or news?*
- *Do you currently use a smartphone? How often do you use it and for what purpose?*
- *Who taught you how to use your smartphone?*
- *Do you know how to use a computer? How often do you use it and for what purpose?*
- *Do you use any instant messaging or social media tools? Which one? What do you use them for?*

Associated Integration

- *How often do you see your children?*
 - *What kind of activities do you do with your children?*
 - *Do you feel technology has played a role in staying connected with your children?*
- How?*

Affectual Integration

- *Do you think your child is a good person? Why or why not?*

- *How has communication technology impacted your relationship with your child?*

Consensual Integration

- *How often does your child ask you for advice?*

- *Do you think your knowledge is relevant to your children in today's world?*

- *How do you feel about the impacts of communication technology and social media on society as a whole?*

- *How has technology played a role in enabling you to perform your duties as a parent?*

Functional Integration

- *How do you commute to hospital when you get sick?*

- *Are you currently helping to raise your grandchildren? Why or why not?*

- *Are you receiving financial support from your children?*

- *How has communication technology enabled you and your child to care for one another?*



Normative Integration

- *How do you feel about homes for the elderly?*

- *Do you think children are obliged to care for their parents in old age?*

Intergenerational Family Structure

- *Do you currently live with your children? Why or why not?*

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADULT CHILD

What is your name?

What level of education do you have?

Background Questions

- *Where do you go for information or news?*
- *Do you currently use a smartphone? How often do you use it and for what purpose?*
- *Do you know how to use a computer? How often do you use it and for what purpose?*
- *Do you use any instant messaging or social media tools? Which one? What do you use them for?*

Associated Integration

- *How often do you see your parent?*
- *What kind of activities do you do with your parent?*
- *Do you feel technology has played a role in staying connected with your children?*

How?

Affectual Integration

- *Do you think your mother / father is a good person? Why or why not?*
- *How has communication technology impacted your relationship with your parent?*

Consensual Integration

- *How often do you ask your parent for advice?*
- *Do you think your parent's knowledge is relevant to you?*
- *How do you feel about the impacts of communication technology and social media on society as a whole?*

Functional Integration

- *How do your parents commute to hospital when they get sick?*
- *Are your parents currently helping to raise your children? Why or why not?*
- *Are you providing financial support to your parents?*
- *How has communication technology enabled you and your child to care for one another?*

Normative Integration

- *How do you feel about homes for the elderly?*
- *Do you think children are obliged to care for their parents in old age?*

Intergenerational Family Structure

- *Do you currently live with your parent? Why or why not?*

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