



Press Release – For Immediate Release

To: Assignment Editor/Editor of Education and Local News Sections

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HSUHK study shows digital technology empowers older adults in navigating transnational living

A study by a scholar from The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (HSUHK) reveals that many older adults in Hong Kong whose children and close relatives have relocated overseas are no longer limited by physical distance. Instead, they proactively embrace a wide range of digital tools to maintain family bonds, engage in transnational caregiving, and foster greater autonomy and fulfilment, challenging the persistent stereotype that older people are resistant to new technologies.

Led by Professor Lucille Ngan of the Department of Social Science at HSUHK, the study titled *“The Impact of Digital Technologies on the Transnational Ageing Experience of Older Hong Kongers”* drew on in-depth interviews with 47 Hong Kong residents aged 60 or above. All participants held foreign residency status and had at least one child living overseas. The research examined how older adults use smartphones, instant messaging applications, video calls and smart home devices to manage daily life, maintain social connections and meet care-related needs, thereby enhancing their quality of life and overall well-being.

The findings challenge two long-standing assumptions: that elder care depends primarily on in-person, local support; and that older adults generally lack the interest or ability to adopt digital technologies. The study shows that participants in transnational families actively use digital tools to bridge geographical distances and maintain close relationships with family members abroad. Through smart home systems and online platforms, children living overseas can remotely monitor home safety, book medical appointments, track health metrics, and provide practical daily support. Such forms of long-distance care enhance effectiveness while offering older adults a stronger sense of security.

On the social front, the study found that participants actively join online communities, share daily experiences with friends who have migrated, help one another with online shopping, and organise virtual gatherings. These interactions help sustain friendships, which remain an important pillar of later life. Beyond strengthening family bonds, digital technologies enable older adults to maintain transnational social networks, effectively reducing feelings of loneliness and enhancing psychological well-being and life satisfaction.



The research also reveals a strong enthusiasm among older adults for digital learning, which has become an important source of self-worth and achievement. Through online courses, participants acquire skills such as photo and video editing, online shopping and electronic payment. Many not only share what they have learnt with family and friends but also pass on their knowledge to peers. Rich digital learning experiences not only add enjoyment to later life, but also help older adults recognise their learning abilities and the value of social participation, fostering confidence and a sense of achievement. The study underscores that technology is not merely a communication tool, but a key factor in enhancing older adults' subjective well-being and sense of meaning in later life.

Professor Ngan notes that transnational families are increasingly common, bringing both challenges and opportunities for older adults. Digital technologies have become integral to transnational caregiving and the social lives of seniors. She recommends that the government and community organisations expand digital training for older adults, while offering better technical support to family caregivers to reduce their burden. She also stresses the importance of addressing disparities related to age, income, and digital access to prevent the digital divide from widening.

Looking ahead, future ageing policies and social services should fully integrate digital technology, respond to the diverse needs of different groups of older adults, strengthen support for transnational families, and help sustain robust social networks. Such efforts are essential to enhancing life satisfaction and better equipping society to respond to the combined challenges of population ageing and globalisation.

The study was supported by funding from the University Grants Committee and was published in the international academic journal *Global Networks*.

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Photo:



Photo caption: Professor Ngan believes that future ageing policies and service design should integrate digital technology to strengthen support for transnational family caregiving, stabilise older adults' social networks, and enhance overall life satisfaction.

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About The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (HSUHK) is a non-profit private liberal-arts-oriented university with six Schools (Business, Communication, Decision Sciences, Humanities and Social Science, Translation and Foreign Languages, and Transdisciplinary Studies), and over 7,000 full-time undergraduate and postgraduate students. With its unique “Liberal + Professional” education model, HSUHK nurtures young talent with critical thinking, innovative minds, caring attitudes, moral values and social responsibility.

Aspiring to be a leading private university in the region, HSUHK prioritises stellar undergraduate education, top-quality faculty members, award-winning green campus facilities, innovative degree programmes, a unique residential college system that combines living and learning, interactive small-class teaching, close student-teacher relationships, impactful research, and excellent student development and support services.

HSUHK has earned various international recognitions. In the AppliedHE's ALL ASIA Private University Ranking 2026, it secured 7th place in China. HSUHK ranked 22nd in Social Sciences and Humanities and 23rd in both Business and Management and Economics and Finance among China's top universities in the Research.com Top Universities and Top Scientists Rankings 2026. The MSc in Global Supply Chain Management programme achieved 84th place globally in the QS International Trade Rankings 2025. Additionally, HSUHK's School of Business obtained AACSB International accreditation in 2023, a mark of excellence held by only 6% of the world's leading business schools.



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HSUHK was also ranked among the top 200 worldwide on “Quality Education” and “Decent Work and Economic Growth” in the Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings 2021.