

General Studies – 1; Topic: Salient features of Indian society

Robots for an Ageing World

1) Introduction

- Over the coming decades globally labour forces will age substantially.
- Population ageing will result in a decline in the potential labour force causing a negative labour supply.
- Widening use of robots may be a welcome solution to the consequences of global ageing.

2) Adopting technology

- Technological intervention can improve the lives of elderly who has lesser physical strength to work.
- Increasing adoption of technologies (for instance, robots) perform tasks previously undertaken by labour
- As working population shrinks rapidly, technology can compensate for the loss.
- Technology improves productivity by allowing countries to do the same work using a smaller workforce, thus overcoming the effects of ageing.
- Technology can effectively improve healthcare quality, delivery and results.
- Technology can support the possible mobility for old person.

3) Benefits

- For people living with memory loss, robots can remind them about things they often forget, like prompting them to take medication, eat meals etc.
- Robots can also provide companionship and entertainment
- They help reduce negative behavioural and psychological symptoms.
- They can also support human caregivers by providing watchful eyes and helping hands.
- Robots do not experience stress and burnout and there are other practical benefits, too.
- They assist older people with disabilities to remain independent and to monitor their safety and social connectedness.

4) Robots for dementia care

- Japan is a “super-ageing” society, with the population getting older faster.
- As populations age, there will be fewer health care workers to care for a larger group of patients.
- The country is producing robots for people with dementia - to provide companionship, improve safety in the home, and help with therapy.
- People with daily conversations are able to enjoy a more stable mind and improve cognitive functions.
- Robots can help with physical care giving tasks and monitor behaviour and symptoms.

5) Concerns / Challenges

- As India’s population ages, the nation will face a shrinking pool of working-age people to support the elderly population.
- Once they retire, elderly people often feel loss of status, worthlessness and loneliness.
- Declining family support and severely limited old-age income security

- Replacing human caregiving with technology can deprive people of social interaction and worsen the problems of loneliness and isolation.
- Consent and privacy issues arise if a person is unable to turn off monitoring and data tracking features.
- High cost of robots makes it unaffordable to middle and lower income groups.
- Technology developers are sometimes criticised for a mismatch between their enthusiasm for robots and the preferences of older people.
- They can commit mistakes because of hardware or software faults. If not corrected, these mistakes can lead to grave consequences and massive loss.

