

Routines and Attitudes of Smart Phone and Tablet Use for Social Participation Among Older Adults

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PURPOSE: Loneliness and social isolation are associated with occupational dysfunction and frailty in older adults (Fujii et al., 2021; Ge et al., 2022). ICT use is associated with decreased loneliness and social isolation (Li et al., 2022). This project investigated older adults' routines and attitudes of ICT use for social participation.

DESIGN: This descriptive study was a mixed-method approach that recruited with flyers at two senior centers. Inclusion criteria included age 65 and older, and English communication.

METHOD: A survey was completed through interview or by hand. Questions included demographics, 3-item UCLA Loneliness Scale, Brief Sense of Community Scale, and researcher developed closed and open-ended questions. Quantitative data was analyzed with descriptive statistics and qualitative data was analyzed with an inductive thematic approach.

RESULTS: Participants (N=21, median age of 76-80) report mostly living alone (76%), center attendance of 2-5 days weekly (M=3.4), frequent feelings of loneliness (38%), performance skill difficulty (90%), and median ICT use of 5-10 years. Over half report a daily routine of voice calls (90%), text messages (86%), social media (62%), email (57%), and others report never playing virtual games (71%), video calls (43%), listening to media (43%), or sending a question to a provider (38%). Participants agree smartphones and tablets help them connect with family and friends (95%), peers (90%), and the community (81%). Challenges include negative feelings, knowledge, accessibility, lack of client-centered training. Participants share interest in training (81%) with themes to improve current use, adapt device, and learn ways to connect.

CONCLUSION: Participants value and routinely use ICT for social participation, however, report limited methods, barriers, loneliness, and interest in training. Results demonstrate the need and provide guidance for OT interventions to promote access and social participation.

References

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