Adopting of Smartphone Technologies Amongst Older Adults in Windhoek, Namibia

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ABSTRACT

Recent technological advancements show that mobile phones are becoming an increasingly significant part of our daily lives. Older adults (OAs) [60+] constitute a key demographic for this study. This study aims to determine the features of smartphone technologies used by OAs in Windhoek and to analyse the possible factors that may influence their adoption as well as to assess OAs perceptions of smartphones. A quantitative research method was adopted. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 99 OAs in Windhoek through convenience sampling method. Data were analysed employing SPSS. The study revealed that OAs do not fully adopt smartphones. However, they believe that smartphones provide benefits such as giving entertainment and curbing loneliness. The findings suggest there is a relationship between the smart technology (ST) features and perceptions towards the adoption of STs by OAs in Windhoek. This study can educate smartphone manufacturers and developers about elements that should be considered when designing communication devices and applications for OAs.

KEYWORDS

Adoption, Smartphone Technology, Older Adults, Features

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Smartphones are technological innovations that provide immense benefits and convenience to society today. Despite this, not every member of society adopts and uses the technology (Omotayo, 2000). Zijlstra et al. (2020) state that innovations are often adopted faster by young adults than by older adults. According to Kim et al. (2022), older adults experience the need to engage in smartphone technologies but are not able to access such technologies either to meet their essential daily needs or to overcome restrictions of physical distancing. Ajaegbu et al. (2019) define smartphone technology

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(ST) as a hand-held computer capable of multitasking besides making calls. According to Ma et al. (2020), an older adult (OA) is defined by the United Nations as a person who is over 60 years of age. When new smartphone technologies (STs) are developed, OAs may not be able to keep up. Instead, they may continue using older phones. Makkonen (2021) defines adoption as an active decision to take full advantage of new technologies. Society is becoming increasingly tech-savvy, but there is still a noticeable digital divide between younger and older adults. Using mobile devices is one method to close the digital divide as highlighted by Carmien and Manzanares (2016). Even if the percentage of OAs with technological skills grows every day, a large proportion of this demographic is still technologically illiterate (Smith & Tran, 2017). Some may want to acquire skills, but several barriers prevent them from acquiring them. It is critical to increase smartphone usage and adoption among OAs because it may improve their quality of life, facilitate independent living, and bridge technological gaps between generations (Anderson & Perrin, 2017). Therefore, in this study, the researcher aims to assess the adoption of STs amongst older adults in Windhoek.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is the potential for both positive and adverse effects associated with smartphone usage. Besides being used for social interaction, smartphones can help people alleviate loneliness, acquire education, and reduce cognitive decline. However, Busch et al. (2021) tells us that digital technologies are becoming more important in modern society, where the next generation of older adults will experience more difficulties with their use. Although one of the National Planning Commission of Namibia's (NDP5) desired outcomes is the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve public service delivery, it is not yet known how far Namibia is considering the adoption of smartphones, particularly by OAs. The use of smartphones by older adults is less well understood, hence the study aims to assess the adoption of STs amongst OAs in Windhoek.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to assess the adoption of STs amongst OAs in Windhoek. This objective is divided into three specific objectives which are:

a) To analyse the perceptions of OAs in Windhoek towards the adoption of STs.
b) To establish the features of STs used by OAs in Windhoek.
c) To assess the possible factors that influence the adoption of STs amongst OAs in Windhoek.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

a) What are the perceptions of OAs in Windhoek towards the adoption of STs?
b) What are the features of STs used by OAs in Windhoek?
c) What are the possible factors that influence the adoption of STs amongst OAs in Windhoek?

HYPOTHESES

The study tested the following hypotheses:

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