

Chapter 5

Mitigating the Digital Suffering: Bolstering the Digital Literacy of Older Adults and Contributing to a More Inclusive Society

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ABSTRACT

Digital literacy, a critical factor in enhancing social well-being, is pivotal in every individual's life. Digital literacy competency varies in different age groups, and this difference has been more observable during the COVID-19 pandemic. The older adults who were more vulnerable to the effects of the pandemic, mainly remained isolated from society due to prolonged lockdowns. This isolation made them more dependent on a digital life to be able to continue their life courses. However, particularly the ones from lower income and education groups felt more suffering emerged from the lack of digital skills. Drawing on the technology acceptance model, we explicate the impact of a socially responsible project conducted on a sample of 65+

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older adults on enhancing their digital skills. The learning and emotional effects of the ten-week training were analysed, and several outcomes were reported. While the training notably enhanced the participants' digital literacy competencies, it had minimal effect on their emotional outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Integrating digital technologies into daily life is no longer optional but essential. One critical factor that warrants attention about digital technologies is the frustration, stress and anxiety levels experienced by users (Huang & Gursoy, 2024). Many of the urban population is caught up in a fast-paced lifestyle filled with various stressors and pressures. When talking about older individuals, the requirements of the digital era become even more difficult. Human life is prolonged, and the expectation of a lifespan rises to 80 years or more. (Scott, 2020). According to WHO (2022a), by 2030, one in six people will be over 60, and the current population over 60 will rise to 1.4 billion. Similarly, while the population over 60 will double and reach 2.1 billion, the population over 80 is expected to triple to 426 million by 2050 WHO (2022a). International organisations, experts, academia, media and the private sector jointly develop collaborative and accelerating platforms to promote a happier and healthier life for older adults. For example, The World Health Organization's (WHO) “United Nations Decade of Healthy Aging” programme (WHO, 2022b) aims to bring different stakeholders together to implement new projects that bolster older adults’ life quality. WHO's global strategy and action plan and the UN's Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging support the achievement of the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals as expressed below:

“The UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030) seeks to reduce health inequities and improve the lives of older people, their families and communities through collective action in four areas: changing how we think, feel and act towards age and ageism; developing communities in ways that foster the abilities of elderly people; delivering person-centred integrated care and primary health services responsive to older people; and providing elderly people who need it with access to quality long-term care.” (WHO, 2022a)

Similarly, The Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) reports that in the next 60 years, one out of every four people living in the country is expected to be 65 or older adults. The proportion of the elderly population in the total population exceeds 10%, which indicates the population's ageing (TUIK, 2021). Another important indicator

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