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Use of the ICTs and the self-concept, mood and quality of life of older adults

SEDUCE research project

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the impact of ICTs use in self-concept, mood and quality of life of institutionalized elderly in retirement homes and day centers (IPSS – Portuguese institutions). Furthermore, it is also studied whether there is a relationship between these psychosocial and emotional variables and variables that are associated with demographic data, the institutional context and the use of ICTs. The Self-Concept Clinical Inventory (Vaz-Serra, 1986), the Philadelphia Geriatric Center mood scale (Lawton, 1975, adapted by Paúl, 1991) and the Quality of Life Questionnaire of the World Health Organization (Vaz-Serra et al., 2006) were used for the assessment of psychosocial and emotional variables.

The study included the participation of 41 elderly people spread over two experimental conditions: 22 elderly people took part in the experimental group and 19 elderly people formed the passive control group. The experimental group used the ICTs and the passive control group participants did not undergo any intervention besides their regular institutional routines. There were two evaluation periods: before and after 11 months of intervention.

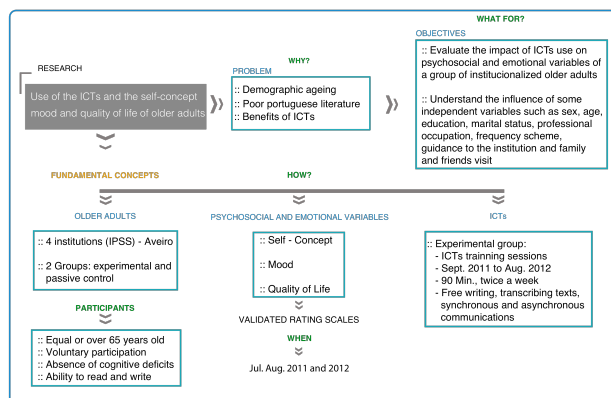


Fig 1. Research environment

Objectives

This research has a double objective: i) study the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) use in the self-concept, mood and quality of life of a group of institutionalized older adults; and ii) understand the influence of some independent variables such as sex, age, education, marital status, professional occupation, guidance to the institution, frequency scheme and family and friends visit. The Fig. 1 represents the research environment.

Participants

The study included 25 female participants and 16 male participants, aged from 66 to 96 years ($M=83$, $SD=7$). Among these, 22 participants belong to the experimental group and 19 to the passive control group. Most of participants are female, widowers, are institutionalized for about 4 years and were guided by a family member to the institution.

Results and discussion

In the experimental group, the acceptance/social rejection factor of self-concept and the quality of the physical life domain have a significant increase. It is suggested that senior citizen involvement with ICTs caused significant positive effects such as

awareness on their physical wellbeing.

For the second objective of this study, the statistical analysis results suggest that, in the experimental group:

- participants who have higher levels of pleasure when attending ICTs sessions have also higher levels of psychological maturity and less loneliness and displeasure. The Fig. 2 presents a session of ICTs use;



Fig 2. Participants using ICTs

- the awareness of the physical domain is better in the elderly who have decided, on their own initiative, to go to a institution;
- the elderly residents at the institution (day and night) or those who receive home care services, have more positive awareness in relation to their self-concept and a greater psychological maturity;
- participants who are for a longer time at the institution have a better social acceptance and a higher level of impulsivity/activity and more positive attitude towards aging;
- single and married elderly have a more positive attitude towards aging.

The death of a spouse is one of the major traumas faced by older people due to the loss of their main partner in daily activities (Silva & Sequeira, 2002; Paúl, 1991).

Regarding the passive control group, data suggests that:

- male participants have higher levels of self-efficacy and psychological maturity;
- when the elderly receive friends' visits, it improves their mood but increases their agitation;
- family visits positively influence the elderly self-efficacy;
- psychological maturity tends to be higher on older elderly and on those who are at the institution only during the day;
- as they grow older, the elderly viewpoint on the milieu tends to worsen; however, it tends to improve for the participants who were guided to the institution by friends or by the social security.

Conclusions

Results demonstrate that the involvement with ICTs produced significant positive effects in the elderly's social behavior and their perception about their physical wellbeing. Moreover, it suggests that there is a relation between psychosocial and emotional variables (including factors and areas that constitute them) and some demographic and institutional variables, differentiated according to the experimental conditions.

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