

Acceptance of social robotics and the use of the Paro robot from the point of view of older people from residential care homes in the Czech Republic

Ivana Kowaliková

University of Ostrava, Faculty of Social Studies

Abstract

The Czech Republic today deals with the issue of the lack of options in providing psychological and social support for the older people (not only in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic). Social robotics shows one way to overcome this shortage. Previous research has shown that when people interact with the Paro robot, there are therapeutic effects that can be observed at the physical (reduced blood pressure), mental (reduced loneliness) and social (increased motivation to engage) levels. The involvement of social robots in social services for older people is not yet common in the Czech Republic. The main barriers to their use include high acquisition costs. Our research aimed to find out how older people from the selected residential care homes accept the use of the social robot. We used two standardized questionnaires (1) by Heerink et al. (2009) based on the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology and (2) the UNRAQ – Users Needs, Requirements, and Abilities Questionnaire by Tobis et al. (2021). We examined how older people from residential care homes evaluate its usefulness, ease of use, and other indicators of the acceptance rate of social robots. Subsequently, we conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with older people from a selected residential care homes on the topic of social robotics. The results of our research will bring knowledge to the current level of acceptance of social robotics in social services for older people from their point of view at the same time bring knowledge that can serve for the development of social robotics for older people.

Keywords: level of acceptance, social work, social robots, older people