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The Role of Digital Literacy in Promoting Well-being of Older Adults

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Abstract

In the era of rapid digitalisation, digital inclusivity remains an idealistic aspiration despite significant recognition and strides in enhancing digital literacy worldwide. When lifelong learning facilitating digital skills acquisition against technological barriers is underscored, personal and social competence are often confined as prospective goals bundled with digital literacy-based programmes, yet discussion in prior studies on the overall state, particularly the multidimensionality of the well-being of individuals, is scarce. Additionally, given the structured support provided to adolescents, who receive lopsided resources and attention, the importance of cultivating older adults' digital literacy becomes particularly apparent when it is voluntary and targeted at ageing populations. To address the research gap, this study investigates the impact of digital literacy on the physical, psychological, and social well-being of older adults, aiming to holistically address how digital literacy translates to various aspects of well-being in this demographic. In this regard, drawing upon social support and self-determination theories, survey data from 300 Hong Kong older adults were collected for analysis via consistent partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLSc-SEM). Established with adequate construct reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, the study reveals the positive and significant influences of digital literacy on the physical, psychological, and social well-being of older adults. Correspondingly, the effect of digital literacy on psychological and social well-being is less pronounced for females. In contrast, physical well-being is generally enhanced across genders. The findings provide essential insights into how digital literacy promotes older adults' well-being, along with guidance on designing age-friendly interventions and technology policies.

Keywords: Digital literacy, physical well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and older adults