

ABSTRACT

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY USAGE AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG OLDER PERSONS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN HONG KONG

by

CHAN Wing Fung, Chad

Master of Philosophy

INTRODUCTION: In this high technology era, rapid developments in information technology (IT) have the potential to transform the lives of older persons. Ageing tends to be associated with reductions in health status and resources, which can be potentially affect the adoption of new technology. However, the role of IT is becoming ever more influential in our daily living though the digital services such as email, e-banking and e-shopping. Therefore, older persons inevitably come across various IT-related products, especially computers and the Internet, in their everyday lives. Moreover, the quality of life of older persons is important and has been identified as an important aspect of successful ageing. This study will explore the relationships between IT usage and the quality of life amongst older persons in order to determine the main reasons why they do or do not use IT and how they learned about IT. The research findings will contribute to the improvement of understanding of older persons' well being and attainment of successful ageing, especially in a rapidly ageing society such as Hong Kong.

METHODS: The study employed a combination of research methods. A sample of twelve older persons was invited to participate in two focus group discussions (FGD). Nine in-depth interviews with key informants were then conducted with respondents from both professional and older persons' groups. A face-to face survey was conducted amongst 96 respondents who were recruited from nine neighbourhood elderly centres (NECs) in four districts of Hong Kong. A questionnaire was designed to investigate IT usage behaviour and quality of life among older persons. The questionnaire had four main parts: 1) IT usage and behaviour, 2) Intentions of using IT, 3) IT and quality of life, and 4) Personal profiles of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: The results showed that major reasons for IT usage among older persons were perceived usefulness, social trends, maintenance of family connections, self-enhancement and leisure activities. Both professionals and older persons held positive attitudes towards IT usage among older persons, as they mentioned that IT usage is likely to be positively related to older persons' quality of

life. The survey results supported the suggestion that IT usage is indeed related positively significantly to quality of life. The results also suggest that public policies and practices related to IT learning and support and free wireless services should be enhanced to enhance the social connectedness and quality of life amongst older persons.