

# ACCESS AND UTILIZATION OF COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET AMONG OLDER MALAYSIANS

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## ABSTRACT

The integration of older persons in our modern societies depends increasingly on their ability to master new technologies, especially computer technologies [10]. Older persons must adapt to the use of computers if they are to receive the benefits of technology. Computer can offer the older persons direct lines of communication with friends or relatives, and provide the tools needed to better equip themselves for daily activities and events. They feel more connected with the computerized and technologically complex world outside their narrow confines [8].

Although older persons are generally willing to use computers [11], they are often considered to have difficulties in adapting to new technology. The factors that have been believed to be the major sources of difficulty are their natural decline in physical abilities (e.g., motor control [1, 12, 13]), cognitive abilities (e.g., memory [1]) and their resistance to new technology. Whereas older persons have the potential ability to acquire computer skills, their resistance to new technology may still reduce their opportunities to become acquainted with computers. Ellis and Allaire [5] showed that computer anxiety is a major factor in older users' intent to use computers. On the other hand, direct [2, 6, 7] or indirect [4, 11] computer experiences, as well as computer knowledge [5] can moderate such resistance and give elderly users more positive attitudes toward computers. Thus, it is expected that once such resistance is successfully eliminated and older persons have more positive attitudes, they are more likely to use computers and take advantage of the information society. This article attempt to discover the use of computer and internet, the level of computer anxiety and attitudes among the older persons including accessing information on formal educational course and collecting of wealth data and information on an endless range of subjects.

Data will be obtained from 1000 respondents aged 55 years and over, currently residing in selected urban and rural areas in Malaysia. The respondents chosen were generally in good health

with no obvious disability. Respondents will be interviewed face to face at their own homes using a structured interview protocol. General questions regarding demographic background, health, computer attitude, knowledge, utilization and ownership of computer, computer anxiety, knowledge and utilization of the internet, attitude towards the internet, life satisfaction, well-being index and Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE). Data will be analyzed using Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). Results of the study will not only benefit the older Malaysians but also provide input to the existing policies related to ICT.

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