

Psychosocial aspects on the use of technology

C. DA SILVA SANTANA, G LEESON. **Psychosocial aspects on the use of technology by older people: A comparative study of the United Kingdom and Brazil.** *Gerontechnology* 2014; 13(2):280; doi:10.4017/gt.2014.13.02.188.00 **Purpose** Older people perceive themselves as uncomfortable in using technology and also lack confidence in their abilities both learn and manage these systems effectively¹. The related aspects of difficulty with use include specifics that evolve as older people age and experience bodily changes from the aging process. These specific factors include levels of education, gender, previous contact and experience with technologies, and access. Other factors include things such as lack of confidence in ability and motivation, concerns related to information security, attitudes towards use, changes in cognitive skills involving memory, information processing speed, attention span, decision-making abilities, and crystallized intelligence. These factors are based on models of acceptance and recognition of the usefulness and ease of use of using technology². This study aims to describe the perception of the elderly on the use of technology in everyday life, by focusing on the psychosocial and family related aspects of the use of technology by older adults. **Method** This is an exploratory, cross-sectional, descriptive study involving 100 adults and elderly subjects, 50 Brazilian and 46 British adults and four respondents from abroad who have been living in the UK for more than ten years. For convenience, the sample included 30 males and 70 females (16 males/34 females in The UK and 14 males/36 females in Brazil). These participants were active, educated subjects with about 15 years of formal education and older than 50 (British sample mean age of 66.1, Brazilian sample mean age of 67, overall median of 66.9 years) from different social-economic classes who presented with preserved functional capacity for instrumental daily-living activities (IDLA) and no cognitive impairment. The procedures for data collection included a social-economic questionnaire, an IDLA index, the Lawton & Brody scale³, and a self-reported, structured questionnaire with closed and semi-closed questions on the perception of the use of electronic devices. **Results & Discussion** Various respondents feel task-dependence and the difficulty in using electronic devices causes them to depend on other people. This dependence is reported by 69.2% and 62.9% of the British and Brazilian subjects, respectively. However, the Brazilians report that they feel more embarrassed, pressured and nervous when they need to use certain electronic devices in public compared to the British elderly; these feelings also result in a self-perception of incompetence and inability regarding the use of new technologies. Exposure time to technology had a positive impact during the most advanced phases of use, which was supported by reports of fewer difficulties in the use of such devices, a feeling of greater confidence, and a sense of belonging to the modern world—aspects mainly reported by British subjects. The frequency of use of electronic devices in daily life, the ability to use them, use perception in public, resulting in a stressful experience were shown to be the main differences between the British and Brazilian groups. Brazilians started using computers and mobiles more recently than the English group. 30% of the British sample reported that they have begun to use computers, 30% cell phones, 22% tablets, and 14% e-readers (e.g. Kindle, Kobo). In the Brazilian sample, 48% had begun using computers, 62% cell phones, 6% tablets, and 2% e-readers, within the past 12 months. Both recognized that new technologies facilitate contact, had difficulty using these devices and felt dependent on others. Both were not comfortable in modern society, they complained that such appliances were unsuitable to their tastes and they felt a lack of contact as a result of failing to use these devices in the past.

References

1. Czaja SJ, Charness N, Fisk AD, Hertzog C, Nair SN, Rogers WA, Sharit J. *Psychology and Aging* 2006;21(2):333-352; doi:10.1037/0882-7974.21.2.333
2. Charness N, Schumann CE, Boritz GA. *International Journal of Aging & Technology* 1992;5:79-106
3. Lawton M, Brody E. *Gerontologist* 1969;9(3pt1):179-186

Keywords: communication & governance, aging, gerontechnology, IADL

Address: Ribeirao Preto Medical School, University of Sao Paulo, Ribeirao Preto, Brazil

E: carla.santana@fmrp.usp.br