

# OPP: CRISES & PREPAREDNESS

## Older adults technology use during COVID-19: Three-dimensional perspective

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**Purpose** Aging is a defining aspect of human existence. This naturally occurring process may lead to reduced participation in daily activities including leisure, social, and physical, and deteriorated health (World Health Organization, [WHO], 2020). Exceptional circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, pose an increased threat to the aging population (Gonçalves et al., 2022; Yazdani-Darki et al., 2020). During this period, restrictions on daily activities, like visiting friends or attending the gym, encouraged technology use as a way to overcome these limitations (Lipskaya-Velikovsky, 2021). However, the factors driving older adults to adopt technology for conducting daily activities remain unclear. Additionally, older adults face significant challenges in utilizing technology optimally. While family members and health professionals play a crucial role in supporting these technological challenges, little research has examined their perspectives (Fisk et al., 2020). This study aims to explore older adults' experiences of using technology for daily activities during COVID-19 from a three-dimensional perspective, focusing on the mechanisms driving its adoption. In this study, the concept of "technology" is used to describe the existing devices used by adults (e.g., mobile phones, computers, and tablets) in their daily activities. **Method** The data were gathered between February 2021 and July 2022, during which Israel experienced periods of lockdown. Nine virtual focus groups (N=59), comprising six to seven participants each, were conducted with older adults (aged 65+), family members familiar with older adults' routines (children and grandchildren), and health professionals (e.g., doctor, nurse, occupational therapist). The focus groups lasted approximately 60 to 70 minutes each. Data were recoded and verbatim transcribed, then analyzed using constant comparative methods and thematic analysis. **Results and Discussion** Participants of all three focus groups depict technology as an integral part of older adults' daily lives. Yet, in some circumstances, older adults prefer to physically go out and conduct activities in the traditional "face-to-face" way in the community. This sentiment was notably highlighted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, where older adults emphasized their deep yearning for human connections, underscoring the importance of social activities in their lives. When it came to high-meaning activities, older adults found ways to conduct them using technology, despite the challenges. Health professionals acknowledge the various functions of technology in older adults' daily activities, determining their willingness to use it. In accordance they categorize activities into 3 domains: (1) health-related tasks (e.g. utilizing health insurance applications); (2) routine errands (e.g. shopping and financial management); (3) social- leisure activities, also aiming to relief loneliness or (e.g. video conferencing and online games). This differentiation enables a deeper understanding of the mechanisms driving technology use adoption. In conclusion, study findings bring a broad three-perspective view of older adults' motives of using technologies. Older adults choose to use technology especially in meaningful activities and in ways that support their weekly routine. In the design of effective interventions for the aging population it is essential to address the complex interplay between older adults' needs and desires, the technology they use, and their daily routines. These findings may be relevant to other stressful situations, wherein technology plays a crucial role in facilitating daily activities, such as war or various health conditions.

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