
Abstract

Evaluation of a Tailored Digital Literacy Intervention in Affordable Older-Adult Housing: Case Study

Pauline DeLange Martinez¹, MA; Rebeca Espinoza Giacinto², MA, MPH, PhD; Stuart Henderson², PhD; David Lindeman³, PhD

¹Public Health Sciences Department, University of California, Davis, CA, United States

²School of Medicine, Office of Research – Evaluation Unit, University of California Davis Health, Sacramento, CA, United States

³Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society (CITRIS) and the Banatao Institute, University of California, Berkeley, CA, United States

Corresponding Author:

Pauline DeLange Martinez, MA
Public Health Sciences Department
University of California
One Shields Ave, MS1C
Davis, CA, 95616
United States
Phone: 1 530 752 2793
Email: pdmartinez@ucdavis.edu

Abstract

Background: Older age, low socioeconomic status, living alone, and low English proficiency are independent factors associated with low information communication technology (ICT) use. Evidence-based interventions are needed to increase digital access and literacy among underrepresented groups.

Objective: This study aimed to increase the understanding of factors influencing ICT adoption and sustainable resources for training and support in affordable older-adult housing.

Methods: Broadband, tablet computers, training, and support were offered at 1 affordable older-adult housing community. Three 60-minute classes covered device basics, Google Translate, YouTube, and Zoom; in-language user guides were provided. Resident Ambassadors offered weekly in-language tech support. Mixed methods evaluation included surveys at entry, 30 days, and 90 days and key informant interviews.

Results: Overall, 72% (N=76) of residents participated. The average age was 78 (SD 8) years, and the participants were primarily Asian (62%), lived alone (68%), and had low English proficiency (65%). About half (49%) of the participants had less than a high school degree. Reasons to decline initial participation included: already owned another device, visual or cognitive challenges, or unwillingness to complete surveys. Of the participants, 89% attended at least 1 class and 37% attended all 3 classes. Over 90% of participants found the classes helpful, 87% found the user guide helpful, and 49% received help from a neighbor. At 30 and 90 days, 82% of the participants reported using their tablet at least twice per week for various activities. However, over half of participants reported the tablet was difficult to learn, and from 30 to 90 days, confusion and the fear of making mistakes when using the tablet slightly increased.

Conclusions: Overall, participants reported high satisfaction with the devices and tech support, although the decreasing comfort with technology over time indicates a need for additional training and ongoing support. This case study provides a model to increase ICT use among older adults in affordable older-adult housing communities.

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KEYWORDS

technology acceptance; digital literacy; digital divide; low-income; gerontology; gerontechnology; aged; emigrants and immigrants; poverty; computer literacy; evaluation; low English proficiency; information communication technologies; ICT use

Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

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