

2009 International Campbell Collaboration (C2) Colloquium

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Abstract Information

Abstract Title:

Ageing and new forms of social life in the Information Society

Format:

Poster

Themes:

ageing and social life

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Abstract:

In Spain, Internet usage is asymmetrically distributed across age. Specifically, only around 20% of people older than 55 years are an Internet user, clearly below the Spanish average (around 50%). Usage of new technologies is a core element of new forms of social life in the Information Society. From this point of view, older population is at risk of social exclusion of these new forms of social life because, according to recent psychosocial theory, access to Information Society allows new ways of maintaining and creating social relationships and allows new forms of active participation in society. In this study we explore Internet usage among a Spanish representative sample of 405 individuals 55 years and older. Mainly, we focused on Internet as a mean to create new social relationships and maintain the old ones. Results show that most participants created new social relationships through Internet. Furthermore, in almost 75% of these cases personal matters were shared, thus becoming close relationships. Also, a similar percentage of participants used Internet to maintain old close social relationships (family, friends, etc). These results are discussed paying attention to the role that access to the Information Society would have for older people in terms of social participation and both active social life and ageing. Implications for public policies promoting access to new information and communication technologies are also considered.
