

# The Experience of Rural Elderly People Applying Digital Health Technology: A Qualitative Study

Peiyao Yuan, Yan Zhang<sup>\*</sup>, Xin Wen, Xinjie Zhang, Mengyuan Zhao, Lijun Xing

School of Nursing and Health, Zhengzhou University, Zhengzhou, Henan, China

## Email address:

y17537751612@163.com (Peiyao Yuan), zhangyanmy@126.com (Yan Zhang), wenxin\_zzu@163.com (Xin Wen), zxx101395@163.com (Xinjie Zhang), zmy000704@163.com (Mengyan Zhao), 3158465137@qq.com (Lijun Xing)

<sup>\*</sup>Corresponding author

## Abstract

**Background:** According to the statistics, the total number of elderly people aged 60 and older in China was 267 million, with a higher proportion of elderly people in rural areas than in urban areas. In the context of active aging, the use of digital health technology by rural elderly can adapt to the development of digital society and promote their main health behaviors. Currently, digital health technology has gradually been applied to the health management services of elderly people, but the expectations and difficulties of rural elderly people in the use of digital health technology are not clear, and the experience of using digital health technology should be paid attention to. **Objective:** to deeply understand the experience of using digital health technology among rural elderly in southern Henan, and to provide basis for formulating digital health intervention programs. **Methods:** From July to August, 2023, 12 rural elderly people in southern Henan were selected by objective sampling for semi-structured interviews. Colaizzi7-step analysis method was used to sort out and analyze the data. **Results:** The experience of using digital health technology in rural elderly in southern Henan can be summarized into 4 themes and 10 sub-themes, which are benefit perception (increasing health knowledge and promoting health behavior); Emotional experience (perceived marginalization, worry and anxiety); Application dilemma (physical function decline, negative concept of aging, difficulty in equipment operation); Expected support (information support, technical support, economic support). **Conclusion:** The experience of using digital health technology in rural elderly in southern Henan needs to be improved urgently. Medical staff should formulate intervention strategies, give full play to family functions, provide information and technical support, promote the transformation of digital health technology to adapt to agriculture and aging, and finally make rural elderly benefit from digital health technology, so as to realize active aging.

## Keywords

Rural Elderly, Digital Health, Digital Technology, Experience, Active Aging, Qualitative Research