

Abstract

Topic: Adoption of gerontechnology in hospital/ community settings

The experience of participating remotely-delivered physical exercise classes among community-dwelling older adults in Hong Kong in times of COVID-19: A pilot study

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Background

In the COVID-19 era, research studies showed some community-dwelling older adults maintained their PA level and some did not. Some studies pointed out that a portion of community-dwelling older adults maintained their PA during lockdown by participating remotely-delivered PA class through video conferencing technologies like zoom. A study conducted in Australia showed 17% of the participants used video-conferencing technologies for online exercise during the lockdown. In the literature, only one qualitative study investigated community-dwelling older adults' experiences in participating remotely-delivered PA classes during COVID-19. This study showed that older adults who tried virtual exercise classes during COVID-19 found virtual classes were "easy and convenient", and the participants also expressed that they wanted more time to socialize with other participants and instructors during the virtual exercise class (Sanchez-Villagomez et al., 2021). In Hong Kong, some community centres for older adults offered remotely-delivered exercises classes through video conferencing technologies during the lockdown period of COVID-19. Therefore, it is worthwhile to conduct qualitative research to investigate community-dwelling older adults' experience in participating virtual classes during the lockdown period of COVID-19.

Objective

This study describes community-dwelling older adults' experiences in participating in remotely-delivered exercises class through video conferencing technologies during the lockdown period of COVID-19.

Method

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling. Recruitment poster and message were disseminated through existing research group contact list. Interested participants were invited to fill in an online consent form and a brief demographic and usage experience questionnaire before the individual interview. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted through zoom by the author from late September 2021 to the beginning of October 2021. An interview guide guided the interviews.

Data Analysis

All the interviews were audio-typed and transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In ensuring rigor, the author kept an audit trail with details of the data analysis process.

Results

A total of five community-dwelling older adults aged 55-69 years old participated in the study. All of them are female. Most of them (60%) lived in public or subsidy housing, and has secondary school or above educational level. Regarding their virtual exercise class experiences, six themes emerged from the data. Four were positive, and two were negative. “Freedom”, “enhancement of flexibility and regularity”, “support”, “more space and places” emerged as positive themes; “Technological difficulty”, and “comparatively less satisfying monitoring experience from the coach” emerged as negative themes. In addition, questionnaire data revealed that among these participants, all but one of the participants intended to participate in video-conferencing delivered physical activity class even when social distancing measure is removed in the future.