Using Online Social Networking to Enhance Social Connectedness and Social Support for the Elderly

Social integration is crucial for the overall well-being of the elderly who are more prone to social exclusion because of the natural aging process. We propose online social networking as means to enhance social connectedness and social support – two aspects of social networks that have significant implications for the well-being of the elderly. While prior research investigating the benefits of online social networking has primarily focused on user groups such as teenagers and college students, there is less understanding on how online social networks can be used to support and strengthen social ties among the elderly. This study intends to investigate means of increasing social connectedness and social support among the elderly through participation in online social networks, and the resulting implications on overall satisfaction with life. Our aim is to identify features of online social networks that cater to the specific social connectedness and support related requirements of elderly users.

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