Lifelong learning: the future is intergenerational

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Presentation outline

- Introduction
  - Background and context to my research
  - Research questions and purpose
- Insights
  - Data collected from young adults aged 18-25 years
- Next steps
  - Data collection from older adults aged 55 years and over

All images courtesy of Bitmoji
**Who is Sandra?**

- A third year PhD student on the e-research and technology enhanced learning structured programme at Lancaster University.
- Eternal student and lifelong learner.
- An experienced project and programme manager.
- A long-standing part-time teacher of project management and MSc research supervisor at the University of Limerick, Ireland.

**Research interest area?**

Source: https://www.ageaction.ie/news/2018/03/28/majority-over-65s-have-never-used-internet
So, what’s my research problem?

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the importance was highlighted for information and communications technologies (ICTs) for the over-70-year-olds in Ireland, in order to stay in contact with family and friends while confined to their homes.

Table: Never accessed the Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>65-74 years</th>
<th>55-64 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Eurostat

So, what was my research about?

I was interested in understanding more about the digital communications skills of these older adults during this period...through the eyes of their young family members.

I surveyed 442 young people between the ages of 18 and 25 years at two universities in Ireland where 56% supported one or more older family members with digital communications during the Spring 2020 lockdown period between March and June.
Research questions

Overarching: To what extent and how did young people contribute to the development of digital communication skills among cohort family members during the several weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in Ireland?

RQ1 - How successful were young people in their efforts to support their senior cohort family members with digital communications?

RQ2 - What did young people learn from this intergenerational exchange experience?

What did I find?

- Theme 1 - “Age is just a number, family is everything”
- Theme 2 - “Mum had simply got left behind”
- Theme 3 - “The joy on their faces”
- Theme 4 - “Supporting older people is rewarding for both parties”
Moving along, what’s my PhD research about?

- My PhD research examines the contribution of intergenerational relationships to informal and non-formal lifelong learning practices of older adults in Ireland.
- The overarching research aim considers how and the extent to which intergenerational relationships can support the development of digital literacy skills amongst older adults.
- It offers a proposition that younger adults can support older adults to develop and maintain digital literacy skills and thus contribute to quality of life in later years.

PhD research questions

RQ1 - What has been the contribution of Irish government digital policy to the achievement of the sustainable development goal, SDG4, of promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all?

RQ2 - How do informal and non-formal learning exchanges through usage of digital technologies across the generations contribute to adult lifelong learning across ages?

RQ3 - What are the perceived impacts to personal quality of later life by being connected in a digital world?
What do I expect to find?

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References


Feel free to keep in touch with me on my research journey...

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