

Authors: Elenka Brenna*, Lara Gitto

*Elenka Brenna - Department of Economics and Finance - Università Cattolica del S. Cuore, Milan
elenka.brenna@unicatt.it; +39 339-3018198

Lara Gitto, CEIS EEHTA (Economic Evaluation and Health Technology Assessment), Università di Roma "Tor Vergata", Via Columbia 2, 00133 Roma (Italy).

Topic of the paper: Ageing, savings and retirement

Presentation format: Oral session

Title: Adult education, the use of ICTs and the impact on quality of life: a case study

Background: During the past decades the phenomenon of population aging has risen healthcare and economic issues within Western countries. In order to warrant older people an adequate Quality of Life (QoL), the Governments of several industrialized countries have been adopting active aging policies. The challenge consists in identifying strategies that could effectively promote and sustain activity, independence and health during older ages. Among these measures, undertaking educational tasks is seen as a way of staying young, because learning in later life helps in developing rational thinking, it increases social contacts and postpones mental problems associated with ageing (Phillipson and Ogg, 2010).

In this perspective, several Universities of the Third Age (UTAs) have grown during the last 30-40 years in different industrialized countries (Formosa, 2014), among which Italy.

Literature on this topic outlines how these institutions bring about direct health benefits for their members and how continued mental stimulation in later life helps learners to maintain their physical and cognitive health status (Cohen 2006).

Among informal courses, the ones addressing information and communications technologies (ICT) have quite a noticeable success among the elderly (Mayhorn et al, 2004) because, up to now, people over 65 is not very familiar with the use of information technologies. Through the use of ICT, people can surf on the internet, use electronic mail and keep in touch with their relatives, log in institutional websites in order to get access to public services, buy electronic tickets for leisure time. All these activities support the integration of aging people within society and increase their active participation to public life.

The use of ICT also reduces the burden of many administrative tasks: elderly can manage their bank accounts, bill payments, etc., directly from home, without the need of external help. This is crucial for older people with physical activity limitations because it both implies resource saving and improves their self-esteem.

Objectives: the aims of the paper consist in assessing the impact of ICT use on the elderly quality of Life, measured through validated scales included in the WHOQoL-Bref.

Methods and results: The paper focuses on a sample of 341 elderly people assisting UTA's courses in Milazzo, an Italian town situated in Sicily. Through the application of different model specifications (OLS and probit), it is possible to analyze the impact of using ICT tools on the elderly's quality of life.

The dependent variable consists in a selected measure of elderly QoL, chosen among four different scores; with reference to regressors, the variable of interest is given by the frequency of use (less than one hour a month, once a week, more than one hour per week, every day) while controls are given by a set of socioeconomic variables. Results either corroborate the findings of existing literature on the importance of using ICT by aging population in order to maintain a suitable QoL and address valuable policy considerations.

References

- ✓ Cohen, G. D. (2006). *The Mature Mind: The Positive Power of the Aging Brain*. New York: Basic Books
- ✓ Formosa, M. (2014). Four decades of universities of the third age: Past, present, future. *Ageing International*, 34, 42-66.
- ✓ Mayhorn CB, Stronge AJ, Collins McLaughlin A, Rogers WA (2004). Older adults computer training, and the systems approach: a formula for success. *Educational Gerontology*, 30: 185–203, 2004.
- ✓ Phillipson C. and Ogg J. 2010. *Active Ageing and Universities: Engaging Older Learners*. Universities UK, London