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Rural Women´s Perceived Social Support As Predictor Of Subjective Wellbeing In Virtual Social Networks

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Conference: ECER 2014, The Past, the Present and the Future of Educational Research

Network: 06. Open Learning: Media, Environments and Cultures

Format: Poster

Session Information

06 SES 05.5 PS, General Poster Session

General Poster Session

Time: 2014-09-03
12:30-14:00

Room: Poster Area E (in front of B001-B003)

Contribution

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This study forms part of the priority areas of the European digital agenda (Europe 2020 Initiative) aimed at enhancing digital literacy, skills and inclusion by promoting high participation of women in the information society. Meanwhile, the Spanish Plan for Digital Inclusion and Employability proposes to increase the presence and participation of women in the information society by means of training women who are unemployed, professionals, entrepreneurs, and women from rural areas already using digital technologies to increase their ICT skills.

Public policies for the promotion of the information society has aimed at fostering learning skills of technology and the use of social networks by women as a strategy for their social inclusion. The uses of social networks to improve health, education and leisure generate new relational contexts that influence the way women feel about themselves and their lives (Castaño, Martín & Vázquez, 2008). Therefore, this work is based on the general hypothesis that policies oriented to promote digital inclusion and the use of virtual social networks contribute to the subjective well-being of women.

Virtual social networks form a key context of opportunities for interaction and for the assumption of different social roles (Zhu, Woo, Porter & Brzezinski, 2013). Because they allows people involve themselves in stable relationships and accept social responsibilities . Having social relationships is a necessary condition and in turn, a major source of subjective well-being (Van der Horst & Coffe, 2012). Psychological research has taken a different approach to the study of the relationship between social interactions and well-being, focusing largely on the study of perceived social support (Cohen, 2004).

This research aims to study the relationship between perceived social support and subjective well-being of rural women in virtual social networks. Specifically, social support, as a concept, can be defined as the feeling of being cared for by others and get help from them, and the feeling of being part of a social support network (Liu and Yu, 2013: 675). On the other hand, subjective well-being (SWB) is a broad psychological phenomenon that includes the emotional responses of individuals, satisfaction in specific areas of life and global judgments of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999: 277). Studies show the positive influence of perceived social support on subjective well-being (Gülaçti, 2010, Lavasani, Borhanzadeh, Afzali & Hejazi, 2011, Liu & Yu, 2013, Van der Horst & Coffe, 2012). Our study aims at confirming these relationships from a structural equation model that explains the assumptions made for each dimension of the considered concepts in the study of digital inclusion of rural women in virtual social networks, that is "perceived social support" and "subjective well-being".

Method

We have surveyed 478 women from rural areas of Andalusia (Southern Spain) aged between 18 and 65 years (mean age 36.89). We applied a stratified sampling by quotas, considering the age and educational level. Most women surveyed live in families, have a secondary education or university and have paid employment.

The questionnaire used includes: a) Sociodemographic and studies with questions about age, marital status, number of children, employment status, level of studies; b) a scale for Perceived Social Support which is composed of 12 items measuring emotional support, instrumental and relational perceived women in their social network with a response range from 0 (none) to 4 (completely) and c) to measure subjective well-being we use a scale that consists of 15 items and participants are asked to rate how strongly they agree with each statement. All items in the questionnaire are on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = "strongly disagree" to 4 = "strongly agree". This scale includes three components: "Satisfaction with relationships" (items from 1 to 5), "Satisfaction with the self (projected identity)" (items from 6 to 10) and "vital satisfaction with the virtual social networks" (items from 16 to 20).

We applied descriptive analysis techniques and ANOVAs with the SPSS/PC+ (version 18 for Windows) and we conducted a structural equation model with SIMART.PLS (version 2.0) to test a predictive model between perceived social support and subjective well-being of women in virtual social networks.

Expected Outcomes

As a result of the study, we obtain a structural equation model which confirms that perceived social support positively influences the subjective well-being, showing that the satisfaction with the relationships is the dimension of subjective well-being on which most directly affects. We can advance that "perceived social support" was a significant predictor of satisfaction with relationships ($\beta=0,706$, $p<0,001$, $R^2= 0.498$). "Satisfaction with online relationship" was a significant predictor of "satisfaction with the self (projected identity)" ($\beta=0,956$, $p<0,001$, $R^2= 0.854$) and of "vital satisfaction" in the virtual social networks ($\beta=0,832$, $p<0,001$, $R^2= 0.751$). The results obtained allow us to develop plans and make decisions on how to support women in rural areas to conduct a more profitable use of their interactions in social networks and their subjective well-being.

Rural women's perceived social support in social networks has been shown as a significant factor for their digital inclusion (Rebollo, Buzon, Garcia & Rodriguez, 2013; Rebollo & Vico, 2014 work in progress). This work also demonstrates its influence on subjective well-being of women in rural areas, which may help guide future strategies and lines of action in the context of digital inclusion policies.

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