Participatory Design: Apps from The Older Adults to The Older Adults

ABSTRACT

The use of technology to address health issues among older adults is becoming popular nowadays, but, in practice, there is very little systematic work on how to design and develop for older adults. This paper investigated participatory design in designing and developing two mobile apps to support community-living older adults to maintain their health. We examine 1) three older adults to individually participate in designing an app to self-monitor their fruit, vegetable and liquid intakes and 2) a group of four older adults participate in designing an app to address loneliness. In this paper, we present methodological insights of conducting participatory design with older adults. We focus more on the mutual learning between the researcher and the older adults as "designers". We found that both methods provide rich data for developing the apps. However, when having a group of older adults together was found to stimulate the discussion among them easily, the participants were more open to critique the design suggestions, the moderator did not have to provoke often to guide the discussion, and in terms of time, although the session was slightly longer, it generates more data per participant. We acknowledge that the topic between the two groups was different, and each topic's privacy was also a concern. We also acknowledge that the number of participants is low, and the participant's technology background can be a concern. Either way, we recommend continuing to involve older adults in the technology design and development phase.