

Bridging information and communication technology and older adults by social network

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Zhang, Y., Zheng, G., & Yan, H. (2022). Bridging information and communication technology and older adults by social network: An action research in Sichuan, China. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.2470>



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Why this research



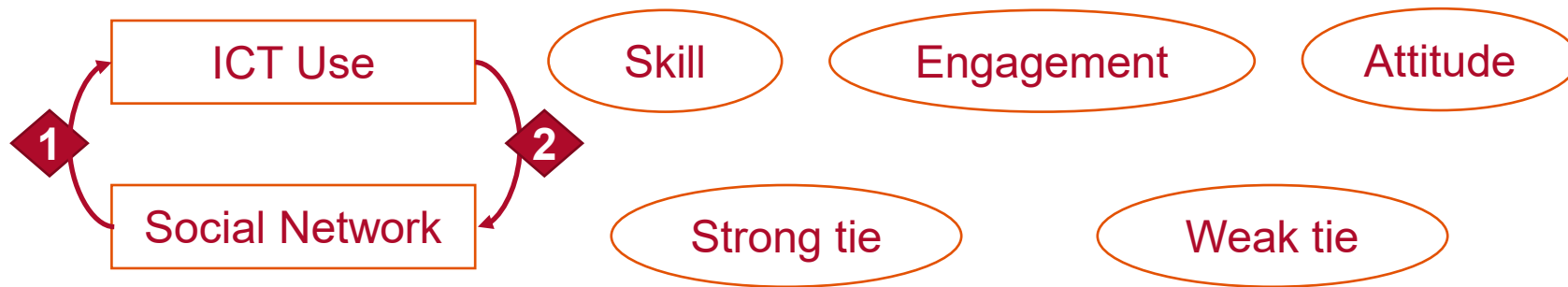
- An aging society
10.46% of the total population in 2000 -> 18.7% in 2021
- A society increasingly dependent on ICTs



Research Question

(1) How do social networks affect ICT use, as measured by skills, engagement, and attitudes?

(2) How does offering technical help (tech help) affect the social networks of older adults?



“strong ties” - the connection between the nodes within a homogeneous community

“weak ties” - the connection between nodes that belong to several heterogeneous social networks



Method

An action-oriented field research

Action research, which “aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and the goals of social science by collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework”

- semi-structured interviews
- participatory observations

- content analysis



Method

Procedure

interviews

(participants' daily ICT use, attitudes, habits, and behaviors)



help-seeking session

(A help session involved instruction on how to use an app, with more than one task often covered in a single session)



A total of 29 help sessions were completed



Field Site



Dujiangyan city (都江堰), Sichuan Province, China

Population in 2020 was about 710,100, of which 24.04% were aged 60 and above



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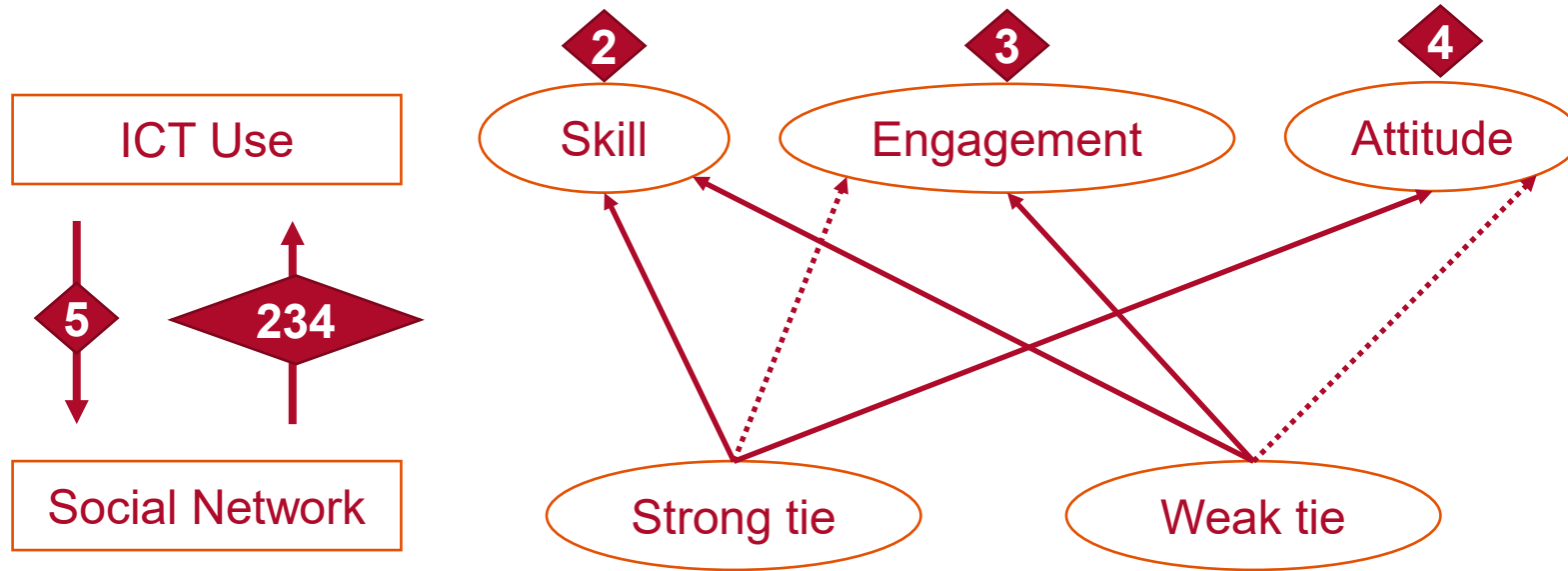
Field Site



Method



Findings



Finding #1: Lack of tech help was prevalent among these participants

Finding #2: Weak- and strong-tie helpers were equally effective in improving the participants' digital skills

Finding #3: Participants asked weak-tie helpers more questions, compared to strong-tie helpers

Finding #4: Strong-tie relationships were associated with higher perseverance among participants

Finding #5: Participants used ICT to increase social connectedness to the family as well as old and new friends



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Findings

Finding #1: Lack of tech help was prevalent among these participants

(There were 20 out of 29 instances when the help-seekers actively chose something they wanted to learn.)

“I'll wait until he has time before asking him questions. However, he sets out early and returns late and sometimes I forget what I'm going to say.”

“I really wanted to learn how to buy things online, but I was afraid he would blame me. He was afraid that I would be fooled. He said he'd buy me what I wanted. It was not convenient.”



Findings

Finding #3: Strong-tie relationships were associated with higher perseverance among participants

“I need to set an alarm clock if I have something to do early, but I don't know how to do it. It's kind of hard to learn because I received little education.”

.....

“I've said that I couldn't do it.”

.....

"Is this how you slide up?"



Findings

Finding #5: Participants used ICT to increase social connectedness to the family as well as old and new friends

“She is the head of the Senior Citizen Association. If she masters it, she can teach us.”

“I've learned so much. If you have any questions, just ask them, and they would like to teach you.”



Thank you

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