

# TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED RELIGIOSITY OF ELDERLY IN COVID-19 SOCIAL ISOLATION

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to use subjective and narrative descriptions to characterize the perception of the elderly in a single congregation of a church in California during the state's COVID-19 Stay-at-home order. The study involved:

- Age-related interaction with technology prior to and during the state order;
- Participants' perception of the parish's attempt to continue church services online;
- Elderly interaction with online service(s);
- Technology used to overcome physical distance;
- Respondents' sense of connectedness/belongingness with friends, family, and the church; and
- Participants' self-reported sense of well-being
- During forced social isolation

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do elderly in a small parish of a church in the south-Central Valley of California experience technology prior to and as a result of California's COVID-19 Stay-at-home order as it relates to the church's use of technology and the respondents' sense of well-being and connectedness?
- Was the ability to attend the online services a factor in the reported connectedness or well-being?

References available through this link:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342788754\\_AbstractAndReferencesQualitative](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342788754_AbstractAndReferencesQualitative)

## VARIABLES

- **CONNECTEDNESS/BELONGINGNESS (DV)**  
The need to belong includes a need for frequent, direct contact to maintain the satisfactoriness of the respective relationship (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).
- **WELL-BEING (DV)**  
"How we define well-being influences our practices of government, teaching, therapy, parenting, and preaching, as all such endeavors aim to change humans for the better, and thus require some vision of what 'the better' is" (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 142).
- **RELIGIOSITY (IV)**  
For people who do claim a faith-based religion and who are actively practicing the rituals of that religion, religion acted against morbidity and mortality in people over 64 (HR 1.65 [Seeman et al., 1987], p. 719). As a mode of social integration, acted against mortality in people over 64 with cancer (HR 1.0 [Marcus et al., 2017, p. 6]). In a study of people age 66 or older that ruled out gender, race, and ethnicity, support related to church participation was more important to reduce mortality than emotional support without church attendance (Krause, 2006).
- **TECHNOLOGY (IV)**  
Despite the popularity of digital usage, there are ongoing examinations of whether technology use causes an increase the sense of isolation (Kraut et al., 1998). Internet use can also decrease the sense of loneliness and perception of social isolation depending on the activities in which one participates (Nowland, Necka, & Cacioppo, 2018).

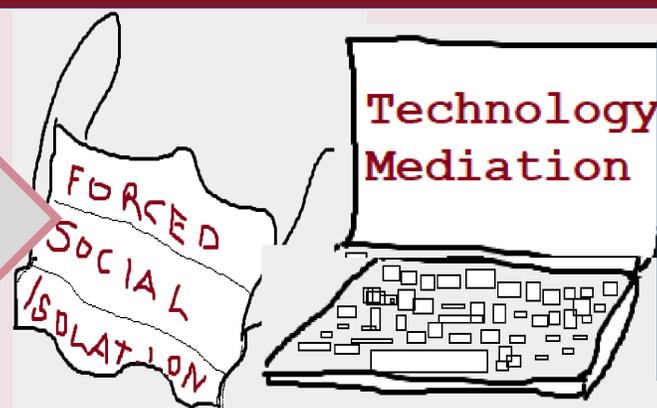
## METHOD

- **Participants**
  - All previously, regularly attended church
  - > 70 years old
  - > 15 years technology use (not the same frequency of use)
- **Process**
  - Structured interview (by phone)
  - Transcription by Zoom and manually
  - Manually coded

## RESULTS

- Global experience: *Forced Social Isolation and Civil Unrest*
- This church parish experience: All miss church
- People comfortable with technology
  - Extroverted
  - Missed both church and church friends
  - Technology mediated sense of connectedness/belongingness
  - Technology mediated sense of well-being
- People least familiar and comfortable with technology
  - Introverted
  - Missed church services
  - Connectedness/belongingness disrupted due to lack of accessibility to church activities (groups, choir, etc.)
  - Technology mediated sense of connectedness/belonging
    - Only in the form of phone
    - Did not mediate sense of well-being

COVID-19  
Stay-at-home Order  
Elderly (>70)  
Regular Church Attendance



**Surprise Mediators**  
Familiarity/ Comfort  
Technology  
**Extroversion**  
Sense of Connectedness

Attended  
Online Church Service

