

https://dspace.org/

Exploring the role of information communication technologies in sustaining and maintaining family relationships with out-migrants in Limpopo: Modimolle village

Maja, Lactricia

2021
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/33776

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract

As economic activities in the urban areas of South Africa increase, more and more individuals from the rural parts of South Africa are drawn to the urban areas in search of better economic opportunities. However, those who are left behind must establish ways to maintain connectedness and preserve relationships with those that have left.

The increase in the availability and use of information communication technologies (ICTs) is progressively allowing more people to maintain relationships with those family members who are geographically distant, allowing those left behind to stay in touch with those who have relocated to other parts of South Africa.

This study forms part of a larger research project focusing on the role of ICTs in maintaining relationships in African families where out-migration by family members has occurred. The focus of this specific study was on South African rural families whose children had migrated to urban areas of South Africa.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as part of a qualitative study with ten elderly people over the age of sixty whose children had out-migrated from the village of Modimolle in the province of Limpopo, South Africa. The aim was to understand their experiences around the use of ICTs in maintaining connectedness with those who had out-migrated. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the data.

The results reveal that technology provides some sense of immediacy in communication with those family members who are geographically distant, as opposed to old methods of communication which were infrequent. However, some challenges are encountered such as lack of familiarity with and/or knowledge of the most recent forms of technology such as WhatsApp, Skype, and Facetime, which may hinder this type of communication. There also

appears to be a preference for face-to-face communication which can be achieved through visits, but this again is impeded by financial restrictions and logistical limitations. Importantly, the costs associated with the use of technology, such as the purchase of mobile data, also appear to be a hindrance in maintaining relationships across distance. This research therefore highlights that continuing economic and consequently digital disparity may be a barrier to maintaining family relationships for rural South African elderly people, despite the presence of more advanced forms of technology.