



## Research article

# Does internet use benefit the mental health of older adults? Empirical evidence from the China health and retirement longitudinal study

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## A B S T R A C T

The mental health (MH) of older adults is a prominent public health concern. However, research regarding the impact of emerging Internet use on MH among older adults remains limited, particularly in transitional economies experiencing a rapidly aging population such as China. Thus, to address this research gap, this study uses data from the 2013–2018 waves of the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study. To investigate the causal relationship between Internet use and MH among older adults and explore the underlying channels through which this relationship operates. The results reveal a notable positive association between Internet use and MH among older adults. Furthermore, the study highlights social interaction, social trust, traveling expenses, and healthy habits as crucial channels through which Internet use can impact MH among older adults. The analysis also reveals how Internet use demonstrates a stronger positive effect on older individuals who have fewer chronic diseases and live with their offspring compared with their counterparts. These findings have significant policy implications, which thus emphasizes the need to enhance Internet use among older adults as a means of improving their MH.