

Technology Attitudes and Health: Insights from Older U.S. Military Veterans

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Introduction

- Older U.S. military veterans experience more chronic health conditions than other aging adults¹
- Technology allows older veterans to manage their physical and mental health², yet many are reluctant to do so³
- TechPH (6 items) is a newer measure of technology attitudes among older adults⁴ but has not been examined alongside health
- We used linear regression to explore how "technophilia" (technology affinity measured by TechPH) relates to the number of reported chronic illnesses among older U.S. military veterans

We hypothesized that veterans with greater technophilia would have fewer chronic health conditions.

Participants

Eligibility: U.S. military veterans in AZ, aged 50+, living with 1+ chronic health condition (physical/mental) or fair health with Zoom access

Demographics	Gender		Race/Ethnicity		Marital Status			
	Female	Male	Minority	White	Divorced	Married	Single	Widow(er)
N	5	15	3	17	2	13	4	2
Percentage (%)	25%	75%	15%	85%	10%	65%	20%	10%



Method

Prescreening

- Recruitment**
- Flyers, brochures
 - Word-of-mouth
 - Tabling at events

Prescreening

- Phone screening on
 - Physical/mental health
 - Cognition
 - Tech attitudes
 - ADLs

Consent

Electronic consent form

Focus Group

Analysis

Quantitative analysis of screening data, qualitative analysis of FG transcripts

Transcript Coding

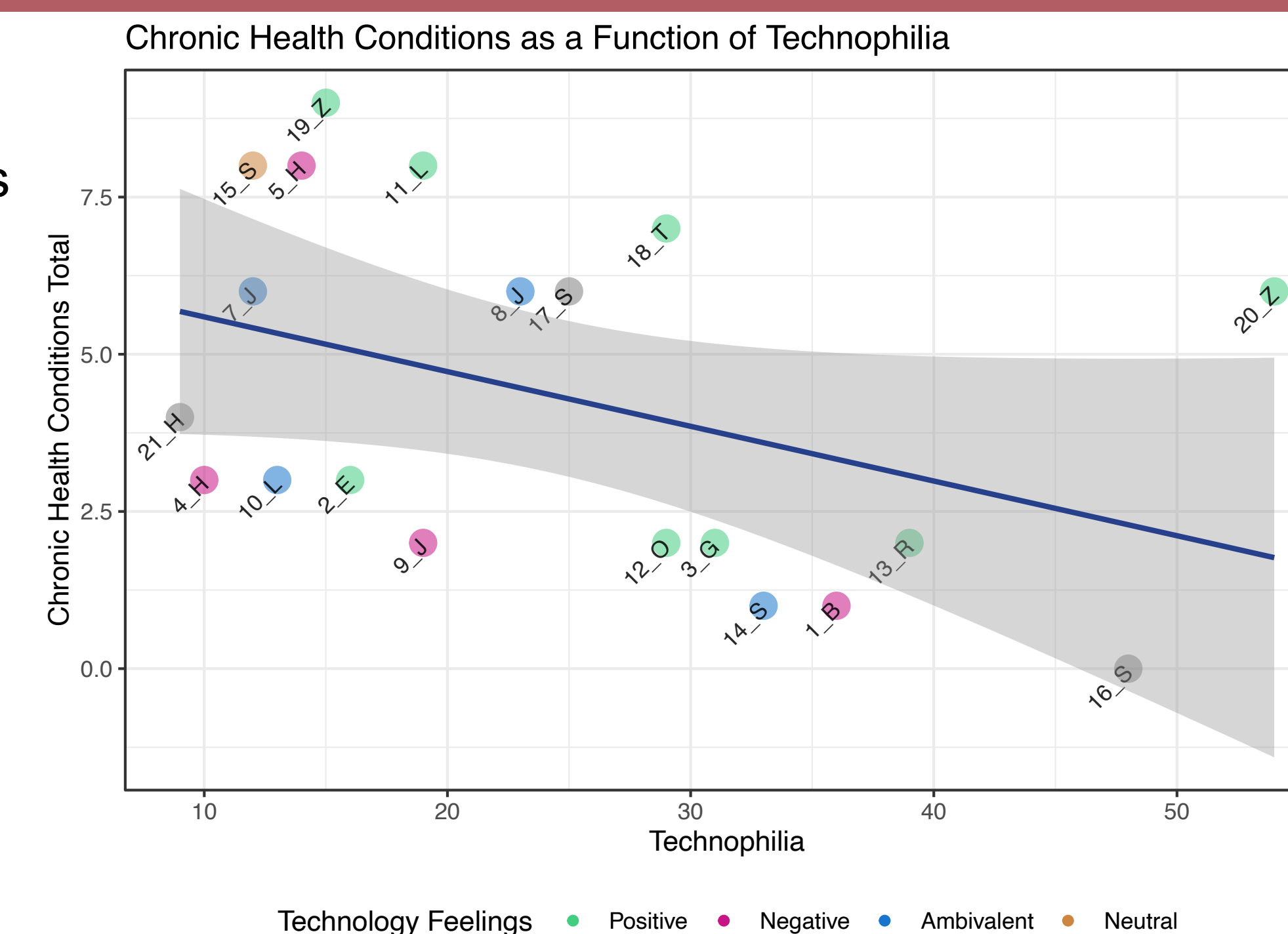
Transcript corrections and qualitative coding (technology feelings)

Focus Groups

5 Veteran FGs (Zoom)
2 Care Partner FGs (Zoom)
1 Provider FG (in person)

Results

- Chronic health condition range: 0-9 of 20 possible ($mean=4.35$, $med=3.5$); TechPH had a Cronbach's α of 0.66
- Using linear regression in R controlling for age, veterans with greater technophilia reported significantly fewer chronic health conditions, $b=-0.10$, $SE=0.05$, $t(17)=-2.18$, $p=.044$



- Technology feelings were quantified dichotomously by mean
- Most veterans were **positive** about technology

Technology Attitudes from Focus Group Discussions

Positive

Veterans with positive tech feelings noted that it facilitates multitasking, planning, connecting with family, providers, and allows them to be more attentive to their physical and social wellbeing.

"...I do have that app on my phone. That tracks my daily exercise that I do. So that's the one thing I do use religiously..." -1_B

"The idea is to actually have someone to go to someone's household, set up a communication system so they could do a live telehealth. And that may be a better way to get a lot more people involved in the healthcare system." -8_J

Ambivalent

Those with tech ambivalence expressed willingness to use tech in daily lives and reluctance due to generational differences, potential scammers, and troubleshooting.

"...my iPhone owns me, and I would love to throw it out the window. But I do banking on it. I do messaging, and on it I text on it. I transfer money on it, and I hate it. But it's easy. I think I have fairly good knowledge of it. I have an Apple laptop. I'm an Apple junkie, so I think I keep up to speed on that." -14_S

Negative

Veterans with negative tech feelings expressed reluctance to embrace new technologies, concern on the use of their health data and potential data breaches, and frustration with needing to use technology (e.g., at work, in healthcare) without training.

"I intensely dislike new technology and avoid it whenever possible. I don't put apps on my computer or my cell phone unless I absolutely have to...I know I'm not really very computer literate... I don't use the portals with the doctors." -4_H

Neutral

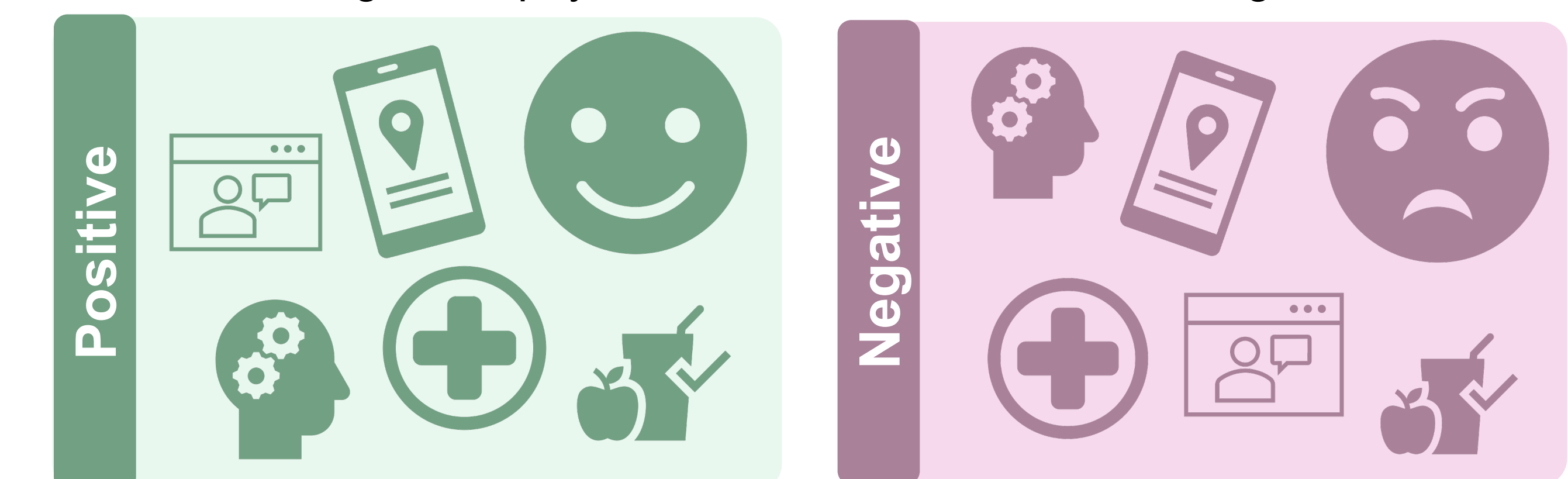
Those with neutral tech feelings expressed no strong opinions relating to its use in their daily lives. They admitted to using it for both social and health reasons.

"My grandchildren use Instagram.. we'll do a Facebook live, or they'll do something like that, and it's good...to see them...So I'm learning a little bit about Instagram...I'm not very much a novice. I designed my avatar, but that's about it." -15_S

Implications

Veterans with greater technophilia had significantly fewer chronic illnesses when controlling for age, but technology feelings reveal a more nuanced relationship between veterans, technology, and health

- Select veterans with more chronic health conditions embraced technology as a tool for independence
- Others in better health rejected technology and used it reluctantly despite its ubiquity^{2,3}
- Their sense of community, service, and identity make veterans broadly more willing to leverage technology to improve wellbeing⁵
- Sample characteristics (N, homogeneity), are limitations of this study
- Work is underway to develop a technology that veterans can use to better manage their physical, mental, and social wellbeing



When controlling for age, veterans with greater technophilia reported significantly fewer chronic physical and mental health conditions.

However, FG discussions reveal select veterans with more chronic conditions embraced technology while veterans with fewer chronic conditions were hesitant to use it to manage their health.

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