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ADAPTING TO THE HYBRID MODEL CLUB-HOUSE

Digital inclusion of Finnish Clubhouse members during the COVID-19 pandemic

ABSTRACT

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Adapting to the hybrid model Clubhouse – Digital Inclusion of Finnish Clubhouse members during the COVID-19 pandemic
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The contact restrictions during COVID-pandemic accelerated the digitalization of operations in organizations, increasing the importance of the computer skills of the people involved. Clubhouse communities promoting individual development and social inclusion of Clubhouse members introduced the virtual Clubhouse to maintain daily operations during the pandemic. Clubhouse members actively involved in the Clubhouse program had to suddenly adapt to the online environment that will merge with the in-house program as the hybrid model Clubhouse.

This thesis aimed to investigate how Clubhouse members in three Clubhouse Communities in Finland adapted to the virtual Clubhouse using loan laptops and support provided by Clubhouses for learning digital skills. The thesis explored the experiences of Clubhouse members participating online at the onset of online communities at their Clubhouses. The further aim was to identify how conditions required to achieve digital inclusion manifested based on the members' attitudes, views, opinions, and Internet use. The qualitative study used semi-structured interviews for data collection from four Clubhouse members and used reflexive thematic analysis to analyze the data. The individual interviews were conducted online in June 2021, during a period of limited access to Clubhouses.

The results concurred with earlier findings of the perceived flexibility in participating in the hybrid model Clubhouse. Members managed to use the principal platforms for maintaining contact with the Clubhouses, and the virtual Clubhouse enabled different levels of participation. However, most members had not created content for the online program. The benefits of home access with the laptop might not be as evident for members who need face-to-face support, and the physical Clubhouse remains the center of operations.

The results suggest that loan devices and opportunities to practice skills to use the Internet and receive digital support were vital for removing barriers to Internet access. At the same time, members had the motivation and agency required to achieve digital inclusion. Lack of skills and limitations in independent coping with digital devices might persist as barriers to using the Internet for purposes that yield beneficial outcomes in the offline world. Efforts to promote the digital inclusion of Clubhouse members require organizing opportunities for online participation and sustained and skilled support by the Clubhouses in the upcoming years.

Keywords: Clubhouse model, Digitalization, Digital inclusion, Digital Participation, Online participation, Online communities, Digital support, Covid-19

1 INTRODUCTION

The evidence-based Clubhouse model of psychosocial rehabilitation is a mental health-promoting practice for people recovering from mental health conditions (Törnblom & Hänninen 2016, 6; Wahlbeck, Hietala, Kuosmanen, McDaid, Mikkonen, Parkkonen, Reini, Salovuori & Tourunen 2018, 53, 61; McKay, Nugent, Johnsen, Eaton & Lidz 2018, 41; Päivi Lepistö, personal communication, April 25, 2020). The twenty-three Clubhouse communities in Finland operate under associations in their areas that form the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition. The community-based Clubhouse model supplements statutory mental health services of public health care in Finland. Clubhouse operations follow the International Standards for Clubhouse Programs, applied under Finnish legislation (Mäkisalo 2016, 59; Löija 2016, 222; Hänninen 2016a, 27). Clubhouses support their members by providing opportunities to cope without hospital care while pursuing social, financial, educational, and professional activities according to one's needs and goals. Clubhouses operate around the Work-Ordered Day program, where a local Clubhouse serves as the base for activities, interaction, and peer support. (Rantanen 2016, 51-52). In Clubhouses, the members are equals to staff in making decisions and implementing the Clubhouse program (Hänninen 2016b, 35: Hänninen 2016c; 78; Martin, Nordling, Soronen & Savelius-Koski 2021, 36; McKay, Nugent, Johnsen, Eaton & Lidz 2018, 41).

In 2019, Etelä-Suomen Klubitalot ESKOT ry developed the virtual Clubhouse model to strengthen the virtual dimension of its member Clubhouses. Virtual Clubhouse is the English translation of the Finnish term *eKlubitalotoiminta* by Kostamo and Pekkarinen (2021a, 11, 75). Virtual Clubhouse involves all remote activities that make participating in one's Clubhouse community possible using technological equipment (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a, 11). During the COVID-19 outbreak and consequent contact restrictions in Spring 2020, introducing virtual Clubhouses in all Clubhouse communities secured some of the everyday activities of the Clubhouse program (Lappalainen 2020, 35). In the hybrid model

of Clubhouse operations, the in-house program combines with the online program implemented using online platforms and applications. The hybrid model enables contacting the Clubhouse staff and other members when one does not want or cannot attend the in-house program.

Disparities in having digital equipment among Clubhouse members motivated to participate in the virtual Clubhouse increases digital inequality. Further, the urgency to adapt to the online environment during the COVID-19 outbreak challenged workers and members who lacked sufficient skills for using digital tools. In the summer of 2020, the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition received a grant for the Equal e-Clubhouse project for acquiring laptops for nineteen Clubhouses as loan devices for Clubhouse members, making five laptops per Clubhouse. The project included organizing opportunities for Clubhouse members to learn digital skills for using the laptops by gathering support teams from staff and members (Lepistö 2020).

The Equal e-Clubhouse project aimed to maintain access to the Clubhouse community for those most in need of psychosocial support at risk of exclusion because of lacking digital devices and digital skills. Another aim was to provide more Clubhouse members with opportunities to participate online. (Lepistö 2020, 4, 5). At the beginning of the thesis work, there was no further research on the e-Clubhouse operations besides a member survey conducted by ESKOT ry in the Clubhouses in the Uusimaa region (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a). The hybrid model Clubhouse will become a permanent practice, and to develop the Clubhouse operations, the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition is interested in how the virtual Clubhouse and hybrid model have functioned in different Clubhouse communities. According to staff responsible for the development of Clubhouses, a thesis connected with the Equal e-Clubhouse project would benefit the Coalition and be appropriate in scope. This thesis examines the experiences of Clubhouse members about the virtual Clubhouse and adapting online during the COVID-19 epidemic while reflecting on the determinants of digital inclusion within the Clubhouse context and beyond.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CENTRAL CONCEPTS

Research on the digital divide provides a baseline of knowledge for the thesis. The digital divide has evolved from meaning the gap between those who have and do not have access to computers and the Internet to include the disparities in digital skills, opportunities to use digital technology, and the differences in the benefits of using digital devices and services that might reinforce social inequalities (van Dijk 2006, 221, 224, 229; van Deursen & van Dijk 2019, 369; van Dijk 2005, 17). Digital inclusion and digital exclusion are concepts related to the digital divide. The theoretical framework explains the impact of digital inclusion on social inclusion and the relationship between digital exclusion and social inequalities. The four types of access to ICT (Information and Communication Technology), categorized by van Dijk and other writers (van Dijk & Hacker 2003, 315, 316; van Dijk 2005, 20, 21, 22; van Dijk 2006, 223-230; van Dijk 2012a, 61; van Deursen & van Dijk 2014, 508) as psychological or motivational access, physical and material access, digital skills, and usage access give a framework for making conclusions about digital inclusion of the Clubhouse members.

This chapter introduces the common barriers to Internet access for people with mental health concerns while presenting measures suggested in research for overcoming these barriers. Further, the theoretical framework provides an overview of digitalization in organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications of the transformation online for people with mental health conditions. The concept of digital participation entails the principles of agency and voluntariness that should be considered in organizations promoting the digital inclusion of the people they support, whereas online participation represents a socially purposeful online engagement facilitated by online communities.

Choosing literature for the theoretical framework was based on its relevance to people with mental health conditions. The interview data included information about the experiences of older Clubhouse members regarding the transition online. Therefore, the source material incorporates research on ICT use by older

people. People with disabilities face individual challenges accessing digital technology and participating online, depending on the type of disability or for other reasons. Clubhouse members interviewed for this thesis might not identify as persons with disabilities. However, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (The United Nations 2006), incorporated into the Finnish legislation (A 27/2016), applies to persons with long-term mental impairments, which could hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (The United Nations 2006, Article 1). Therefore, the theoretical framework includes references to the rights of people with mental health conditions to digital inclusion as defined in the UNCRPD and by the United Nations.

2.1 Digital inclusion

Digital divide and digital inclusion are concepts used interchangeably for describing access or lack of access to digital technology (Farooq, Taylor, Gire, Riley, Caton & Husain 2015, 772). At its core, digital inclusion is the ability of individuals and groups to access and use information and communication technologies and consists of the availability of hardware and software, the opportunity to access the Internet and relevant content and services, and training of digital literacy skills (Perlgut, 2011, 1).

Van Dijk (2012b, 196) characterizes the digital divide by four successive kinds of access to ICT. Firstly, one needs to have the motivation to use digital devices and learn digital skills. Material access refers to the income needed for possessing computers and Internet connections. (van Dijk 2012b, 196; 2005, 21). Material access entails physical access, meaning points of access at home or other locations where one has entry to computers and Internet connections and the permission to use digital devices and software (van Dijk 2005, 21, 48, 49). Skills access consists of the different digital skills one needs for operating computers and the Internet, information literacy, and using the computers and the Internet for one's purposes (van Dijk 2005, 21, 73). Usage access refers to the use of computers and the Internet, including the diversity of applications used, types of activities performed online, and online time (van Dijk 2005, 21; 2012b, 201). The quality of access differs in terms of the types of equipment and Internet connection available, whether one has home access or uses computers at work or other access points, the autonomy of use, resources to learn digital skills, and opportunities to use the Internet (van Dijk 2005, 48, 49, 71; Hargittai & Hinnant 2008, 606).

Technology and its use significantly impact the ability to engage in society, where much of the engagement underpinning social inclusion happens online (Jaeger, Bertot, Thompson, Katz & DeCoster 2012, 3; Farooq et al. 2015, 772). Digital inclusion is integral to economic and social inclusion and plays a role in increasing or reducing social and economic justice (Perlgut 2011, 9). Social inclusion actualizes if people can gain resources and skills that improve their opportunities to

participate in different domains of society, such as working life, education, civic and recreational activities, and social networks. Full participation involves connecting to the community, taking part in processes of importance in the community, and decision-making concerning oneself. (Leemann & Hämäläinen 2016, 592).

Helsper (2012, 405, 410) states that digital inclusion is embedded in a person's offline circumstances, and it is determined by whether using technology enhances the person's life in the offline world. Ideally, the outcomes of computer and Internet use should appear as improvements in different realms of life, such as employment, education, and family relations and friendships, and affect existing social inequalities in domains such as economy, politics, social relations, culture, and regional disparities (van Dijk 2017a, 204; van Deursen & Helsper 2015, 45).

Information and related technologies are a necessary human right and a core part of social justice, as they are increasingly essential to education, employment, social interaction, and civic participation (Jaeger 2015, Human rights, social justice, information, and accessibility, para. 2). Irrelevant to their socio-cultural and socioeconomic background, everyone should have equal opportunities to engage with ICT in a way that promotes social inclusion (Helsper 2014, 1). Full and active participation and inclusion in society include opportunities for ICT access, including the Internet, and available assistance and support for ensuring access to information (The United Nations 2006, Article 9).

Autonomy in Internet use is increasingly significant for achieving the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) principle of the right to self-determination and the rights of people with disabilities, such as mental health conditions, to access information through all forms of communication on an equal basis with others (The United Nations 2006, Article 3, Article 21). Further, the UN promotes digital human rights, warranting equal opportunities for physical access, skills development, and accessible digital technologies in supporting the acceleration of pre-pandemic recovery (United Nations 2020, 10).

The EU policy context defines digital inclusion as effective and sustainable engagement with ICT in such ways that implement full participation in society regarding economic, social, cultural, civic, and personal well-being (Helsper 2014, 1). Increasing employment, improving educational levels, and promoting social inclusion are the most important policies for promoting digital inclusion at the EU level (European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion & Helsper 2014, 7).

The aims of the European Union to improve digital competencies and information security of citizens, and develop digital accessibility, are integrated into the Finnish Government Programme (Hänninen, Karhinen, Korpela, Pajula, Pihlajamaa, Merisalo, Kuusisto, Taipale, Kääriäinen & Wilska 2021, 8; Pääministeri Sanna Marinin hallituksen ohjelma 2019, 73, 183). Efforts to implement these aims include increasing the number of accessible public services and making digital user support services available throughout the country (Ministry of Finance Finland n.d.).

Promoting digital inclusion requires tackling issues that limit access to digital technology by reducing barriers to motivation, material access, digital skills, and opportunities to use ICT (van Dijk 2012b, 196, 197). Material access requires economic resources for purchasing equipment or the opportunity to use those of others (van Dijk 2005, 45). Achieving material access might require lowering financial barriers to having a computer and an internet connection (Spanakis, Peckham, Mathers, Shiers & Gilbody 2021b, 530). However, attitudes towards the Internet directly affect access to Internet-enabled devices, gaining digital skills, and the diversity of use (van Deursen & van Dijk 2015, 386). Motivation to use digital technology and overcoming so-called computer anxiety is a prerequisite for physical access, learning digital skills, and frequently using a computer for different purposes (van Dijk 2017a, 202, 203; van Dijk 2006; 227, 228, 229). The acceptability, motivation, and attitudes of people with mental health conditions toward using digital devices are not well-known (Farooq et al. 2015, 773).

Social support networks might reduce inequalities in Internet access (van Dijk 2012b, 196). Social support is a considerable resource for sustained computer

use and for learning digital skills (Asmar, Mariën & Van Audenhove 2022, 306). The availability of social resources providing quality digital support and opportunities to learn digital skills is essential for marginalized groups to use technology in such ways that serve their interest and enable benefitting from Internet use (Warschauer 2003, 152; Helsper & van Deursen 2017, 711). Helsper and van Deursen (2017, 711) emphasize the responsibility of societal actors, such as user support groups in NGOs, in providing high-quality support for those who need it the most. Further, civil society organizations, such as the Clubhouses, are at the frontline to provide support and assistance to those severely affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns (Asmar et al. 2022, 306). In addition to community peer support, informal support provided by family and friends has been important for targeting individuals' technology use and digital literacy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Beaunoyer, Dupéré & Guitton 2020, 6; Asmar et al. 2022, 306).

Digital inclusion can refer to any strategies to provide training, services, or opportunities designed to address the challenges of the digitally disadvantaged (Jaeger et al. 2012, 3, 6). Heponiemi, Jormanainen, Leemann, Manderbacka, Aalto and Hyppönen (2020, 9) suggest promoting equal opportunities and capabilities among the population by targeting training toward vulnerable groups such as senior citizens, people with poor health, or those in social isolation. According to Greer, Robotham, Simblett, Curtis, Griffiths and Wykes (2019, 7), providing people with mental health concerns with digital skills training tailored to their knowledge gaps and preferred learning styles could enhance their digital inclusion. Further, fostering an intrinsic motivation to use the Internet among individuals in this group could be achieved by assessing their interests and demonstrating the benefits of Internet use in areas they already enjoy (Greer et al. 2019, 7; Farooq et al. 2015, 773).

2.2 Digital exclusion

According to Farooq et al. (2015, 772), better access to digital technologies indicates social inclusion and better integration in society, while lack of access widens the digital divide between socially disadvantaged people and the rest of the population. This disparity may appear, for instance, as a higher cost of living, poor access to services, fewer opportunities to obtain information, and more time spent on mundane activities (Farooq et al. 2015, 772; Dobransky & Hargittai 2006, 328). The inability to access the Internet because of high costs, lack of technological support, and social support for learning digital skills increase social inequalities as Internet use is consequential for seeking information, getting jobs, and engaging in civic or entrepreneurial activities (Chen & Wellman 2005, 523, 524). According to Helsper (2012, 404, 405, 416, 417), digital exclusion connects with social inequalities through interrelated economic, cultural, social, and personal resources that affect different realms of life.

People disadvantaged in economic and social areas of life and personal well-being tend to be least likely to engage with the ICTs (Heponiemi, Gluschkoff, Leemann, Manderbacka, Aalto & Hyppönen 2021, 4). Deficits in personal resources, such as deterioration in mental health, expectedly relate to a lack of resources in the economic and social areas of life (Helsper 2012, 409). Poverty, disability, poor health, age, and social isolation are associated with Internet non-use, making them risk factors for not benefitting from Internet use and online services, and thus to digital inequality and digital exclusion (Helsper & Reisdorf 2017, 1254, 1258, 1259, 1261, 1267; Valtiovarainministeriö 2019, 26, 27; Heponiemi et al. 2021, 11). Helsper and Reisdorf (2017, 1262, 1259) found that lack of interest has increased significance as a barrier to engagement with ICT, while age also correlates with disengagement.

An individual's access to ICT, digital skills, and attitudes mediate the influence of exclusion related to financial issues, mental health conditions, or lack of social support on digital exclusion. Likewise, the relevance, usefulness, perceived quality, one's agency, and sustainability of computer use mediate how engagement with digital technology influences exclusion offline. (Helsper 2012, 403, 405, 410, 417, 420). In their study results, Heponiemi et al. (2021, 11, 12) corroborate the significance of negative attitudes, poor access, and low skills as social mediating

factors between low personal, economic, and social resources offline and digital exclusion. However, the authors claim that overcoming digital inequalities in the outcomes of ICT use requires addressing inequalities in offline resources. (Heponiemi et al. 2021, 12, 13).

Interrelations of social and digital inequalities are complex and not always dependent on an individual's socioeconomic position. Life events may positively or negatively affect how an individual engages with ICT. Further, removing barriers to digital inclusion does not necessarily lead to digital inclusion (Asmar et al. 2022, 284, 298, 305). On one end of digital exclusion, people lacking opportunities and social resources to use ICT autonomously and for profitable purposes feel further exclusion as digitalization progresses. On the other end, there are the digitally self-excluded who, regardless of their access to digital media and knowledge and skills to use it, fail to see its benefits. (Asmar et al. 2022, 303, 305). A person with sufficient social level resources, such as income for purchasing digital devices, and social networks available for digital support, might lack the motivation or self-confidence to engage with digital media and learn digital skills. Again, an unemployed person without home access to the Internet might overcome financial barriers to access with support from social networks or by using public computers. One might be motivated to develop skills autonomously and even assist others in computer use despite the absence of formal learning opportunities and support. (Asmar et al. 2022, 304).

The experience of online exclusion among people with disabilities is not uniform, and the type of disability affects ICT accessibility (Dobransky & Hargittai 2016, 20; Dobransky & Hargittai 2006, 316). Studies have shown contrasting results when comparing technology use between people with mental health conditions and the general population. Ennis, Rose, Denis, Pandit and Wykes (2012, 399) found that technology access and use between these groups were similar. According to Robotham, Satkunanathan, Doughty, and Wykes (2016, 5), smartphone use led to increased Internet access among people with mental health conditions in the UK. On the other hand, Tobitt and Percival (2019, 8, 9) found that Internet use with smartphones and particularly computers were remarkably lower among service users, especially those with chronic conditions, in

community mental health rehabilitation settings. Nevertheless, disability groups, including people with mental health conditions, remain key groups experiencing digital exclusion, and the non-use of digital devices and the Internet among older people with chronic mental health conditions has been shown in studies repeatedly (Farooq et al. 2015, 772; Ennis et al. 2012, 399, 400; Tobitt & Percival 2019, 9; Robotham et al. 2016, 4).

The COVID-19 pandemic increased the centrality of online technologies in managing daily affairs and maintaining active social interactions (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 4, 7) as work, learning, and socializing moved online (Amar et al. 2022, 306; Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 7). Consequently, the pandemic exacerbated existing digital inequalities between individuals and social groups (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 1, 2). The contact restrictions exaggerated challenges for those without digital equipment at home (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 2, 3). According to Spanakis et al. (2021b, 530), determining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the digital exclusion of people with severe mental health conditions is complicated. The non-digitally engaged might have felt it necessary to use the Internet for daily errands and stay in touch with friends and family, which might have increased the motivation to learn more digital skills. The pandemic might have also caused financial difficulties affecting the affordability of digital devices and home Internet connections, while access to public spaces offering Internet access was difficult. For others, the sudden need to go online might have felt difficult, reducing motivation. Further, the negative impact of the pandemic on mental health might have intensified specific mental health symptoms related to barriers to access. (Spanakis et al. 2021b, 530).

Whereas many people had access to Internet-enabled devices and using online messaging applications increased among people with mental health concerns during the pandemic, the lack of skills could limit Internet use (Spanakis, Heron, Walker, Crosland, Wadman, Newbronner, Johnston, Gilbody & Peckham 2021a, 6; Virtanen, Kaihlanen, Isola, Laukka & Heponiemi 2021, 270). Before and during the pandemic, older people with chronic conditions were at greater risk of digital exclusion than younger people who are more likely to use digital devices (Robotham et al. 2016, 4, 5, 6; Spanakis et al. 2021a, 6, 10) while digital inequalities

will persist as digital solutions become permanent (Spanakis et al. 2021b, 530). During the COVID-19 contact restrictions, receiving social support for technology use was compromised (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 3; Virtanen et al. 2021, 270; Huhtala, Keiski, Kärkkäinen & Lampinen (2020, 6, 7). Older people and those with memory impairments depended on digital support from family and relatives (Valtioneuvosto 2020).

2.3 Barriers to Internet access for people with mental health conditions

People with mental health concerns face similar barriers to using online services as other vulnerable groups. Lack of digital equipment, and motivation towards using the Internet, limit the use of online services. However, the lack of digital skills and the unavailability of digital support appears to be the most significant barriers to use. (Tynkkynen, Atkins, Koivusalo, Satokangas, Viita-aho, Jormanainen & Karreinen 2022, para. 31; Kaihlanen, Virtanen, Valkonen, Kilpinen, Hietapakka, Buchert, Hörhammer, Isola, Laukka, Kouvonen, Kujala & Heponiemi 2021, 3; Hyppönen, Hyry, Valta & Ahlgren 2014, 68; Valtiovarainministeriö & Digi- ja väestötietovirasto 2020, 7, 16; Hyppönen, Pentala-Nikulainen & Aalto 2018, 43). Factors for digital exclusion among mental health service users are associated with a perceived lack of knowledge and understanding about computers and the Internet, lack of skills, confusion about how to use web-based services and the Internet, and where to receive digital support (Greer et al. 2019, 4; Tobitt & Percival 2019, 7).

Financial barriers are a common reason for not owning digital devices, whereas difficulties relating to memory may result in impaired ability to use digital equipment (Greer et al. 2019, 4, 6). Personal barriers, such as difficulties in concentrating and remembering, and consequent deficiency of cognitive performance, might cause additional challenges in the accessibility of online services and online participation for people with mental health conditions. (Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 4; Dobransky & Hargittai 2016, 21). Moreover, difficulties in decision-making, and impaired capacity for doing errands independently, might be barriers to participation offline and online (Dobransky & Hargittai 2016, 21). The absence of

non-verbal and social context cues such as gestures and facial expressions might challenge remote interaction, and building trust with peers and staff online might be more difficult (Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 4, 5, 6; Granholm 2016, 165; Bernard, Sabariego & Cieza (2016, 2). Further, the presence of family members might make people feel uncomfortable talking about sensitive issues online at home (Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 5, 6).

Cognitive challenges might impact the ability to use digital technologies (Macdonald & Clayton 2013, 15). However, Tsatsou (2019, 1005, 1006) stated that individual agency and choices of engagement with digital technologies are defined more by personal preferences, attitudes, and beliefs than the nature of the impairment. Ennis et al. (2012, 401) concluded that for older people with chronic mental health conditions, costs and lack of skills were more significant barriers to access than lack of motivation and that this group was interested in computer use but not engaging with other technologies, such as smartphones. On the other hand, in a study by Tobitt and Percival (2019, 7), service users in mental health rehabilitation settings reported personal decisions related to a lack of desire and experiencing computer and Internet use as unnecessary or too demanding as reasons for non-use.

Bernard et al. (2016, 3, 12, 13) reviewed the barriers to people with mental health conditions using the Internet according to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines; most of the many usage barriers result from distracting and confusing design, complicated content and website functions, an overabundance of information, and high demand for good fine-motor skills and rapid information processing. Cognitive impairments might cause difficulties in searching for information online, task switching, retaining and recalling information, and focusing attention while ignoring distractions such as adverts. Providing services during contact restrictions using social network services such as Facebook, online collaboration platforms, and messaging applications might have lowered barriers to online participation for those already familiar with their use (Virtanen et al. 2021, 270, 277).

2.4 Digitalization

Merisalo (2016, 3) defines digitalization as a social, economic, and cultural process whereby different social groups, organizations, and communities achieve, adapt, and utilize digital technologies. Merisalo (2016, 37) states that benefitting from digitalization depends on individuals', organizations', and societies' possibilities, capabilities, and willingness to implement digital tools. However, these advantages vary because of the unequal possession of different forms of capital in distinct fields of society. Digital technology and services may enable independent coping for people with long-term illnesses and make their daily lives more manageable. Further, the internet provides easy access to information. (Valjakka 2017, 15, 16). Despite its benefits, digitalization can exclude individuals not conforming or capable of using digital technologies that have become a prerequisite for inclusion, which deepens the existing inequalities in society (Schou & Hjelholt 2018, 14, 15; Heponiemi et al. 2021, 2).

Third-sector service providers are encouraged to implement measures for digitalization according to the governmental aims where applicable (Ministry of Finance Finland n.d.). From the perspective of the third sector, digitalization of services entails promoting participation in civil society and changes in organizational operations (Hänninen et al. 2021, 25, 26). Online services should reach the people who need them (Hänninen et al. 2021, 8). According to Heponiemi et al. (2020, 9, 10), service providers might increase the number of service users by making accessible online services and providing proper support for their use.

Access to online services, digital skills, and extent of use of services are associated with the perceived benefits of online services among the adult population in Finland (Heponiemi et al. 2020, 9). On the other hand, poor access, poor digital skills, and negative attitudes toward online services, in association with the risk factors of poverty, unemployment, social isolation, poor health, and low education, are in connection with lower perceived benefits (Heponiemi et al. 2020, 9; Heponiemi et al. 2021, 11). Digital services support self-management and self-

service of health and wellbeing, requiring a more capable and active role among service users. Gaining the motivation, material access, and skills required to benefit from digital services might be challenging for those who need them the most. (Heponiemi et al. 2021, 2, 5).

Transforming services online requires adhering to ethical values, such as respecting the service user and their right to self-determination and confidentiality and considering issues relating to professional integrity (Granholm 2016, 64, 65). Social service providers are responsible for informing clients of the offered services and their potential and ensuring clients can use them (Heponiemi et al. 2021, 14). Planning inclusive services requires considering the digital equipment for participation, the accessibility of services, security and reliability issues, skills and competence, digital support, usability, and the perceived benefits of use (Hänninen et al. 2021, 41, 42).

Those planning and implementing online services should consider knowledge about ICT use among the service users, what ethical consequences unequal participation might have, and how to ensure equal access for the service users (Granholm 2016, 64, 65). Remote services should not supplement face-to-face practices as they are not sufficient for the most socially disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals who lack opportunities for computer use or have challenges in using them (Talentia Union of Professional Social Workers 2019, 48; Kestilä, Härmä & Rissanen 2020, 7; Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 6, 7; Valtiovarainministeriö & Digi- ja väestötietovirasto 2020, 7).

Acceleration of the digital transformation of services during the pandemic increased the need for available and accessible services, affordable Internet access, investments in digital skills education, and raising awareness of the benefits of Internet use among disadvantaged and marginalized groups (Deganis, Zohouri-Haghian, Tagashira & Alberti 2021, 1; Heponiemi et al. 2021, 1, 14). Further, service providers had to implement means to address negative attitudes toward online services (Heponiemi et al. 2021, 1, 13) as lack of interest and challenges in using digital equipment, suspicions of information security, and age-

related doubts about the ability to adapt to the online world have excluded vulnerable groups from using online services. (Kaihlanen et al. 2021 3, 6; Valtiovarainministeriö & Digi- ja väestötietovirasto 2020, 8).
The inability to access care providers and the closing of third-sector rehabilitative day activities and peer support groups during the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the risk of relapse for people with existing mental health conditions who would have needed in-person support. (Kestilä et al. 2020, 4, 5, 20, 56, 93, 104). Where possible, third-sector mental health services moved online, enabling service users to participate in online communities (Virtanen et al. 2021, 267, 268; Kestilä et al. 2020, 5, 21, 61, 93, 104).

During the pandemic, community-based mental health organizations contributed to the need for information and sharing messages online in an understandable way for people with cognitive and psychosocial disabilities. Closure of mental health and psychosocial support services provided trained staff the opportunity to offer these services using less conventional approaches such as video, phone calls, and social media. (IASC Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings 2020, 5, 10). Some online services remain permanent support practices (Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 2; Tynkkynen et al. 2022, para. 6).

In Finland, people with mental health conditions used online community services frequently during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 2), and older people started to use social network services such as Facebook and WhatsApp (Tilastokeskus 2020). Using social and healthcare-related online messaging applications and remote services alleviated mental strain and loneliness and enabled social networking for people with mental health concerns. Increased benefits of remote services were associated with digital skills, challenges experienced in social situations avoidable online, ease of use, and successful implementation of remote services, whereas challenges related to practical implementation, usability, and interaction (Virtanen et al. 2021, 266, 270, 272, 278). Remote services did not eliminate feelings of loneliness (Virtanen et al. 2021, 277), and people with mental health conditions longed for the warmth and genuineness of close contact (Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 5).

Clubhouses represent their unique community-based model in the third sector field but were affected by similar demand for digitalizing operations as other associations and service providers. Clubhouses in Finland and abroad managed to sustain activities of the Work-Ordered Day program and maintain contact networks by utilizing technological equipment, Facebook, and online collaboration platforms (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a, 3; Mutschler, Junaid, McShane & The Canadian Clubhouse Research Group 2021, 434).

Among people with mental health concerns, remote services have been appreciated by those with good digital skills and who identify as people who get easily strained in social situations (Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 3, 5, 6). People using online mental health services have expressed their wishes for remote services to be sustained after the contact restrictions abate (Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 5). However, older people have called for the necessity of maintaining face-to-face services (Valtiovarainministeriö & Digi- ja väestötietovirasto 2020, 7).

2.5 Digital participation and online participation

Participation, in general, is associated with mental well-being, functional capacity, and reduced loneliness. Participation is associated with the sense of belonging and inclusion in communities important to a person. Promoting participation includes support to community members to influence the development of the community and its operations and opportunities for equally enjoying its benefits. Effectively promoting participation requires considering how the support measures could enhance the scope of influence of community members and reduce inequalities in and beyond the community. Those promoting equal participation should encourage people at risk of exclusion, seek individual solutions for their inclusion in activities, and embed inclusive practices as part of permanent operations. (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2022b). However, participation should be voluntary. Efforts to promote participation should facilitate agency while participants might change their roles from active engagement to passive attendance

(Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2022c). These principles of participation lay the framework for digital participation (Hänninen et al. 2021, 41, 42).

Digital participation refers to active involvement in digital society through information and communication technology (ICT), such as the Internet, online services, and content. Access to the Internet and the willingness and skills to use it may induce feelings of social inclusion. (Seifert & Rössel 2019; Hänninen et al. 2021, 12). From the perspective of individuals and social groups, digital participation means voluntary and sufficiently active participation in society by utilizing digital tools, applications, and services in a meaningful way (Hänninen et al. 2021, 41). Digital participation is affected by one's presumptions about digital equipment and experiences about the accessibility and usability of digital technology, safety and reliability issues related to using digital devices, and available digital support (Hänninen et al. 2021, 42). Moreover, one's perceptions of individual agency and skills in using digital technology correlate with ICT use (Hänninen et al. 2021, 8).

An individual's needs and perceptions of the benefits of computer and Internet use might contradict the general efforts promoting digitalization and digital participation (Hänninen et al. 2021, 8). Developing online activities entails the risk of expanding exclusion and digital inequalities if the opportunities and conditions for individuals and distinct groups to access and use digital technologies and the usability of platforms enabling digital participation are not considered (Hänninen et al. 2021, 8, 15, 41). Schou and Hjelholt (2018, 14, 15) have pointed out the new forms of exclusion and marginalization emerging from the deployment of digital technologies and consequent expectations for the personal responsibility of individuals in their uptake. Those not conforming to the novel concept of digital citizenship are transformed through coaching, tutoring, and guidance, while those unable to fit the demands face new kinds of penalties. However, positivity toward using online services increased among people with mental health concerns during the COVID-19 restrictions (Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 3), and especially older people have expressed the wish for low-threshold support on the use of digital equipment and online services (Valtioneuvosto 2020; Kaihlanen et al. 2021, 4).

Service users should be involved in developing activities for facilitating digital participation while also considering the skill levels of everyone involved in the development process. Promoting digital participation requires supporting service users in acquiring equipment and Internet connections. Further, service users should have opportunities to learn skills for beneficial and secure use of the equipment and maintenance support for devices and software. (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2022a; Hänninen et al. 2021, 34). Social support networks of family members, skilled peers, and third-sector organizations might be beneficial for adopting digital technologies and learning new skills (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 3; Hänninen et al. 2021, 15). Further, those with Internet access might spend more time online during COVID-19 restrictions improving their digital skills (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 3).

Whereas the concept of digital participation is concerned with one's experiences of inclusion and engaging people in the domains of society online, online participation implies purposeful, creative, and interactive Internet use, as defined by Lutz, Hoffmann and Meckel (2014, 2. Online participation: The concept, para. 6) as the creation and sharing of content on the Internet addressed at a specific audience and driven by a social purpose. Online communities, where a group of people interacts for social, professional, educational, or other purposes using communication technologies such as social networking sites and emails, provide opportunities for online participation.

Virtual Clubhouse is an online community guided by the norms and policies that guide the Clubhouse operations, and its purpose is to provide meaningful opportunities to participate in the Clubhouse activities online to support the functional capacity of Clubhouse members. (Brandtzæg & Heim 2011, 41). Perceived usefulness and security-related issues associated with platforms and applications might affect participation in online communities, especially for older adults (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 7, referring to Braun 2013 and Beaunoyer & Guitton 2017).

2.6 Summary of the theoretical concepts

Theoretical concepts relevant to this thesis are digitalization, digital inclusion, digital exclusion, digital participation, and online participation. Digitalization of Clubhouse operations is the background to the phenomenon examined in this thesis. The virtual Clubhouse should provide Clubhouse members equal opportunities for digital participation, including opportunities to influence the development of the online community. Further, limited opportunities for online participation, referring to active and purposeful content creation for the Clubhouse program, might be an inequality concern. The adaptation of Clubhouse members to the virtual Clubhouse is examined by how the interviewed members managed to participate in the online community.

Outside of the Clubhouse context, access to Internet-enabled devices and digital skills have a broader meaning for Clubhouse members concerning their digital inclusion and social inclusion. Digitalization of services, requirements of digital expertise in working life, and the transition of social networks online increase the demand for Internet access, including digital skills. Further, the lack of equipment and digital skills impede autonomy in managing daily activities and fully participating in society. During the COVID-19 contact restrictions, access to the Internet and the ability to use online services became even more significant for engaging in essential activities. The purpose of Clubhouse operations is to enhance the social inclusion of Clubhouse members by supporting them in their social, financial, educational, and professional goals.

Examining digital inclusion includes assessing the impact of loan devices and opportunities to learn digital skills on different types of Internet access associated with motivation, material and skills access, and usage. Motivational issues include the attitudes of Clubhouse members toward moving online, learning digital skills, and using loan laptops for different purposes. Material access is related to the impact of loan devices and home access to Internet access. Skills access refers to how social support from Clubhouses affected learning digital skills and using the Internet for chosen purposes. The risks for digital exclusion include the barriers to Internet access that the interviewed members had before obtaining the

laptops and the challenges that Clubhouse members might still exist for Internet access for Clubhouse members.

As the opportunities to gain physical and material access to computers with Internet connections have increased, the focus of digital inclusion has shifted from access, skills, and attitudes to the actual benefits and social outcomes of Internet use (van Dijk 2017a, 202, 203, 204; Van Deursen & Van Dijk 2014, 520; Helsper 2012, 410; European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion & Helsper 2015, 7). Digital skills training is part of the measures for providing Clubhouse members opportunities for learning skills needed in modern society (Huttunen 2016, 220). Internet access and digital skills might make life easier for Clubhouse members, enable online participation for purposes outside the Clubhouse activities, and improve opportunities to work and study. Further, meeting people online relieves loneliness during contact restrictions. (Lepistö 2020, 7). However, making conclusions about the social outcomes of Internet use for Clubhouse members is outside the scope of this thesis. Thereby, the focus is on material and physical access, digital skills, motivational factors, and types of Internet use.

Disadvantages such as mental health issues affecting one's economic situation and learning abilities are risk factors for digital exclusion and social exclusion. Older age might reduce the ability to independently cope in everyday life associated with cognitive impairments and mental health concerns and limit the autonomy of Internet use (Johansson, Gulliksen & Gustavsson 2021, 108; Scanlan 2021, 729). Mental health concerns that include difficulties concentrating, remembering, making decisions, or doing errands alone might expose one to a less diverse use of online applications (Johansson et al. 2021, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116; Scanlan 2021, 730).

The lack of access may derive from insufficient social resources or an unsupportive social environment for learning digital skills, inadequate digital devices, not having the financial means to purchase equipment, or lack of motivation to adopt and use technology (Gorski & Clark 2002 29, 31; Scanlan 2021, 730; Sachdeva, Tuikka, Kimppa & Suomi 2015, 287, 288, 289, 290). Promoting Internet use

among people with conditions affecting learning and independent coping requires appropriate approaches that encourage learning and continuous computer use (Gorski & Clark 2002, 31) and the availability of adequate digital equipment (Sachdeva et al. 2015, 284). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the difficulties in Internet access for people without digital equipment and those needing face-to-face support (Scanlan 2021, 735).

Recent research on the digital disability divide includes mental health conditions (e.g., Scanlan 2021; Johansson et al. 2021). However, research on the digital disability divide often disregards how diverse disabilities might affect ICT use and is often associated with physical conditions that might pose a more significant barrier to accessing technology than mental health conditions (Ennis et al. 2012, 399; Chadwick, Fullwood & Wesson 2013a, 232). Therefore, the theoretical framework excludes the concept digital disability divide.

3 THE OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES OF THE THESIS

At the outset of the thesis process, the virtual Clubhouse did not have an established and consistent operating model. The COVID-19 pandemic demanded operational changes, not leaving much time to plan the measures for moving activities online with the Clubhouse members. The purpose of examining how the Clubhouse members adapted to the virtual Clubhouse was to provide material for the Finnish Clubhouse for developing the hybrid model with a member-based approach toward equal and inclusive practices. The Clubhouse members had to learn sufficient digital skills for the online platforms used for the virtual Clubhouse. Therefore, the thesis considered the impact of digital skills training and digital support on adapting online.

Clubhouses moving online relates to the phenomena of digitalization which may advance or reduce social inclusion connected with digital inclusion and digital exclusion. The aim of making indications about the digital inclusion of the Clubhouse members relates to those of the Clubhouses to promote digital inclusion and, consequently, social inclusion of the Clubhouse members. Writing the thesis during the Covid-19 pandemic enabled assessing how Clubhouses managed to support digital participation and digital inclusion of Clubhouse members in circumstances where face-to-face meetings are limited.

For developing operations, the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition has evaluated the achievements of the Equal e-Clubhouse project by analyzing data, including the number of participants, quality of contacts, and virtual Clubhouse activities (Lepistö 2020, 7,8). During the thesis work, Etelä-Suomen Klubitalot ESKOT ry published a manual for developing virtual Clubhouse activities and launched a project for developing digital skills and digital inclusion in Clubhouses (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021b; Etelä-Suomen Klubitalot ESKOT ry). This thesis contributed to the prior studies by providing information about virtual Clubhouse participation in Clubhouse communities outside ESKOT ry. The objective of this thesis was to uncover more personal views about the online operations by investigating the

ways and experiences of Clubhouse members from three Clubhouses about participating online during the COVID-19 contact restrictions.

The first research question involves the concepts of digital participation and online participation. Considering that contact restrictions impacted opportunities to participate in the Clubhouse operations, the research question was confined to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1) How did the Clubhouse members adapt to the virtual Clubhouse during the COVID-19 contact restrictions

This thesis examined the impact of the loan devices and opportunities facilitated by Clubhouses for learning digital skills and obtaining digital support on removing barriers to Internet access. The objective was to indicate how conditions for digital inclusion actualized in Clubhouse communities based on the determinants of access to ICT considered through Clubhouse members' motivation, laptop use, and experiences of the digital skills training and support. The second research question relates to the concept of digital inclusion, entailing digital participation.

2) How have Clubhouse communities managed to support the digital inclusion of the Clubhouse members with loan laptops and digital training and support

4 METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

This thesis is a qualitative study. According to Niewenhuis and Smit (2012, 126), qualitative research is concerned with understanding the processes and the social and cultural contexts that shape behavioral patterns and strives to create a coherent story of people's experiences. A qualitative approach is appropriate for gaining an understanding of the nature and form of a phenomenon (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam 2003, 82). Qualitative research seeks to uncover the understanding and meaning that individuals relate to the studied phenomenon (Laher & Botha 2012, 94; Kumar 2014, 133). Qualitative research is justified as the research questions seek to find new insights into a previously unknown topic, understand this topic from the viewpoint of the subjects, and describe their experiences (Niewenhuis & Smit 2012, 125).

A research design outlines the methods and their use for adequately and efficiently reaching the objectives of a study (Kumar 2014, 122, 123). Following the example by Göttfert (2015, 24, 25), the research design included examining by interviewing how four Clubhouse members who had used Clubhouse provided loan laptops and opportunities for digital skills training and support experienced the virtual Clubhouse and managed to achieve Internet access. The sample was determined by asking Clubhouses with laptop users to inform the members about the opportunity to participate in interviews and by introducing the thesis topic at the Clubhouse Spring Webinar.

The research approach resembled a case study examining the behavior and experiences of a group of Clubhouse members with different levels of digital skills and the phenomena of digitalization (Metsämuuronen 2006, 23, 90, 91, 92; Eriksson & Koistinen 2005 4, 5, 6, 7, 9), and the purpose was to connect the results with a theoretical framework (Eriksson & Koistinen 2005, 29,30). The setting was the Clubhouse communities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Eriksson & Koistinen 2005, 7, 8). However, the study did not incorporate various data collection methods typical to case studies (Metsämuuronen 2006, 90, 91; Eriksson & Koistinen 2005, 27; Kumar 2014, 156). Neither was there a possibility to influence

sample representativeness by selecting participants based on qualities ensuring information-rich data or maximizing data quality by spending time with the participants to build rapport before collecting data (Kumar 2014, 155).

The research design included analyzing the interviews with reflexive thematic analysis to detect factors that affected participating in the virtual Clubhouse during the COVID-19 pandemic and requirements for Internet access and digital inclusion of Clubhouse members. The purpose of data collection was to obtain data for answering the planned research questions. On the other hand, the research questions were refined according to the results of the data analysis, as semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions affected the quality of data.

4.1 The research environment and target group

The working life partner for the thesis is The Finnish Clubhouse Coalition representing the Finnish Clubhouses. The coalition coordinates the operations and development of the Finnish Clubhouses, provides them support and assistance, and acts as a communicator between the Clubhouses. (Törnblom & Lepistö 2016, 40, 41). Writing a thesis related to the outcomes of the Equal e-Clubhouse project was decided together with two project managers from The Finnish Clubhouse Coalition. The thesis work was agreed upon by the cooperation agreement with the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition signed in January 2021. The concurrence of the thesis aims with the interests of the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition was ensured by consulting the contact person.

In the summer of 2020, The Finnish Clubhouse Coalition received a project grant from Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) for launching the Equal e-Clubhouse: Supporting Members' Digital Inclusion at Clubhouse project. The project included purchasing laptops with Internet connections to nineteen of the twenty-three Clubhouses in Finland and gathering support teams that compile training material and assist Clubhouse members in using the laptops. A further aim was to organize opportunities with local partners to support the members in learning digital skills. The project implementation plan included

peer learning groups assembled of Clubhouse members who borrow laptops and learn how to use them and having both staff and Clubhouse members in the support teams providing digital assistance to the laptop users. (Lepistö 2020, 6; Päivi Lepistö, personal communication, November 16, 2020). The project lasted until the end of 2020, while related work continued under the project Verkon Vahviste in 2021 (Lepistö 2020, 6, 7; Päivi Lepistö, personal communication, November 16, 2020).

4.2 Data collection method

The purpose of data collection was to gather data disclosing the participants' thoughts, feelings, perceptions, experiences, and behavior related to the research questions (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009, 185) and to gather enough data for recognizing the shared meanings within (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 182). The chosen interview type was a semi-structured theme interview, often used in qualitative research to explore the personal experiences, feelings, perceptions, and opinions of research participants (Niewenhuis & Smit 20012, 134; Barribal & While 1994, 334). As suggested by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, 315) and Polit and Beck (2009, 341), interviews centered around predetermined open-ended questions covering the topics essential to address the research questions while the purpose was to enable dialogue which might lead to new questions. Familiarizing myself with research material about digitalization and the digital divide and the background of the virtual Clubhouse was beneficial for planning the interview questions (Puusa 2020, 112). The frame for the interview with thematic areas (Appendix 1.) represents the planned structure of the interviews translated into English.

The interview questions were formulated under thematic areas by following the example of Hirsjärvi and Hurme (1991, 43). The first set of questions related to laptop use for virtual Clubhouse participation. Questions in the second section were related to digital skills enabling Internet use for purposes outside the Clubhouse operations, and the final questions covered online participation during the COVID-19 contact restrictions. Thematic areas connect with the phenomena of

virtual Clubhouse participation, digital inclusion and digital participation, and the COVID-pandemic, and the main categories related to these. Interviewees were provided with the planned structure for the interviews well in advance before conducting the interviews in Spring 2021.

4.3 The sampling strategy

Gathering data that suits the purposes of answering the research questions requires defining the target population, from which one selects a sampling frame representing the population (Taherdoost 2016, 18-20). According to Johnson and Waterfield (2004, 124), research questions, the scale of the study, and the type of material to be collected are determinants of the sampling strategy. In qualitative research, the sampling strategy reflects the diversity within the study population (Johnson & Waterfield 2004, 124, referring to Popay 1998) and the underlying theoretical framework (Johnson & Waterfield 2014, 124). The aim was to gather data representing subjective views of the Clubhouse members in different Clubhouse communities in Finland about the virtual Clubhouse and using laptops and digital skills training and support. Definitions of digital participation and online participation provided the basis for making conclusions about how members adapted to the virtual Clubhouse. Determinants of Internet access in digital divide research served as a framework for making Indications about the digital inclusion of the members. Thus, the target population was Clubhouse members in Finland who had used Clubhouse-provided loan laptops.

Participants should ideally be individuals who are most likely to offer responses relevant to the research questions (Galletta & Cross 2013, 33). In qualitative research, the interviewees are recruited based on their direct and personal knowledge of the research topic (Gill 2020, 579, referring to Sandelowski 1995, 180) and their ability to provide information to answer the research questions (Gill 2020, 579). A project manager at The Finnish Clubhouse Coalition selected the sampling frame based on the number of laptop users at different Clubhouses and informed these Clubhouse communities about the search for interviewees. The Clubhouse Spring Webinar, livestreamed on May 11, 2021, served as a venue

for presenting the aims and purposes of the thesis and advertising the opportunity to participate in the interviews.

Since it was impossible to select individuals as interviewees, and there was no knowledge about whether the invitations reached all eligible Clubhouse members for an equal chance of being selected, the sampling technique was non-probability sampling (Evans & Rooney 2018, 137). As there is no knowledge about whether those in the sample are representative of the entire population (Salkind 2010, 922), non-probability sampling results in selection bias (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena & Nigam 2013, 332). However, qualitative research does not require statistical generalization as the number of people who experience the same phenomenon does not affect the reliability of results (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 96, 251).

The specific purpose and context of the research dictate the sample size (Johnson & Waterfield 2004, 124). In qualitative research, there is no rule concerning the most appropriate sample size. When gathering data by conducting individual interviews, the sample size can be small if there is enough quality data to answer the research questions. (Laher & Botha 2012, 88, 89; Gill 2020, 579). The number of participants for the thesis based on recommendations by DIAK supervision for the thesis work and the number of volunteering members from those reached through the contact person from the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition and at the Clubhouse Spring Webinar.

4.4 Selecting the sample

Instead of the number of participants, non-probability sampling in qualitative research focuses on selecting a group based on the features and characteristics of its units, representative of the studied phenomena, which is appropriate for conducting small-scale, in-depth studies (Ritchie et al. 2003, 78, 82, 83). Choosing the sample was based on convenience in reaching participants and considering their relevance to the studied topics (Metsämuuronen 2006, 45). The challenge was how to choose participants based on the criteria for the sampling frame. One

potential participant had not used a loan laptop, while another was a staff member with information about the Equal e-Clubhouse project in practice.

Computer use experience was not a criterion for choosing the sample units, but for covering different aspects of the phenomena, it was beneficial that the sample consisted of Clubhouse members who had different levels of digital skills (Ritchie et al. 2003, 87). Further, data on laptop use outside the Clubhouse context enabled covering aspects of digital inclusion. The members who wanted to participate could sign up for the interviews by contacting a staff member in their Clubhouse. Four Clubhouse members who had used loan laptops for virtual participation got recruited from the six persons willing to participate.

The participants were adult members with different levels of digital skills from three Clubhouse communities in Southern Finland. None of the interviewed members were part of the Clubhouse digital support teams. The type of non-probability sampling used can be described as volunteer sampling because the final sample was selected from respondents willing and qualifying to participate in the interviews (Murairwa 2015, 186). Volunteer sampling is a method where potential participants may familiarize themselves with the interview questions beforehand, which gives them time to decide whether they want to participate (Murairwa 2015, 186-187; Alvi 2016, 28). One participant canceled the interview, but with the assistance of Clubhouse staff, it was possible to find another interviewee.

The timeframe and scope of the thesis and the number of volunteers did not allow for reaching more participants based on the data saturation point (Kumar 2014, 229). The sample could have been larger for detecting the point when no new information is emerging. However, within the four interviews, data analysis resulted in detecting patterns of shared meanings. (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 62, 63).

4.5 Implementation of the interviews and initial processing of data

Due to distances and COVID-19 contact restrictions, the interviews were conducted online via Teams video calls. Individual interviews enabled easier data processing and analysis and might lower the risk for non-attending participants (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2010, 63). The participants might also be more encouraged to discuss topics below the surface (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2013, 211). The assumed length for each interview was one hour. However, the time used for the interviews was kept flexible for the interviewees. Before starting the interviews and recording, the participants could hear about the contents of the interview notification. As suggested by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (1991, 41), the interviews were conducted in a flexible manner giving room for free discussion rather than addressing all the predefined questions. However, the interviews advanced within the prepared interview frame, and the intent was to mind the purpose of the thesis and planned research questions when probing for further information (Galletta & Cross, 2013, 45, 72).

Two interviewees participated in the interview from home and two at the Clubhouse. Participating from home might have helped interviewees feel comfortable. However, remote participation and technical difficulties might have affected the ability to focus on the interview. Further, conducting the interviewees online might have impacted the research results, as non-verbal cues were not as evident as in face-to-face situations. One of the interviewees received support from a Clubhouse staff member for responding to the questions. The presence of a staff member might have given the interviewee confidence, but it might have also affected the responses.

All spoken words and non-semantic sounds, such as laughing, were transcribed verbatim from the audio-video recordings on separate Word files on a computer. Interviewees were named after letters A, B, C, and D to anonymize the data. The parts of the interviews used as citations in the results were translated into English. The interview lengths were 40 minutes, 56 minutes, 1 hour, and 1 hour and 30 minutes. The transcriptions from the audio-video recordings produced forty-six

pages of text, using Calibri font size 11 with line spacing 1,15. The interviews consisted of 110 563 characters without spaces.

4.6 Reflexive thematic analysis

The data was analyzed following guidelines by Braun and Clarke (2022, 35, 36) for reflexive thematic analysis. This approach allows for investigating research questions related to people's experiences, views, perceptions, behavior, and practices and understanding factors that influence and shape particular phenomena (Braun & Clarke n.d., f; n.d., e; 2017, 297). Reflexive thematic analysis is a suitable method for smaller datasets of information-rich data (Braun & Clarke n.d., a), such as individual interviews. Coding in this approach is an evolving process that allows insights based on the data. Creating themes from codes progresses in phases by immersing and constantly reflecting on the data, and themes represent the shared meaning found within the data. (Braun & Clarke n.d., d).

The research questions relating to the experiences of Clubhouse members and the practices that impact their digital inclusion justify using reflexive thematic analysis as the analysis method. Braun and Clarke (n.d., c) recommend employing reflexive thematic analysis for works with more than four interviews for recognizing patterns in the data. However, as the interviewees were affected by similar conditions and practices in Clubhouses with resembling settings, the data gathered by interviewing four Clubhouse members included recurring topics. The data analysis process included six phases represented in figure 1.

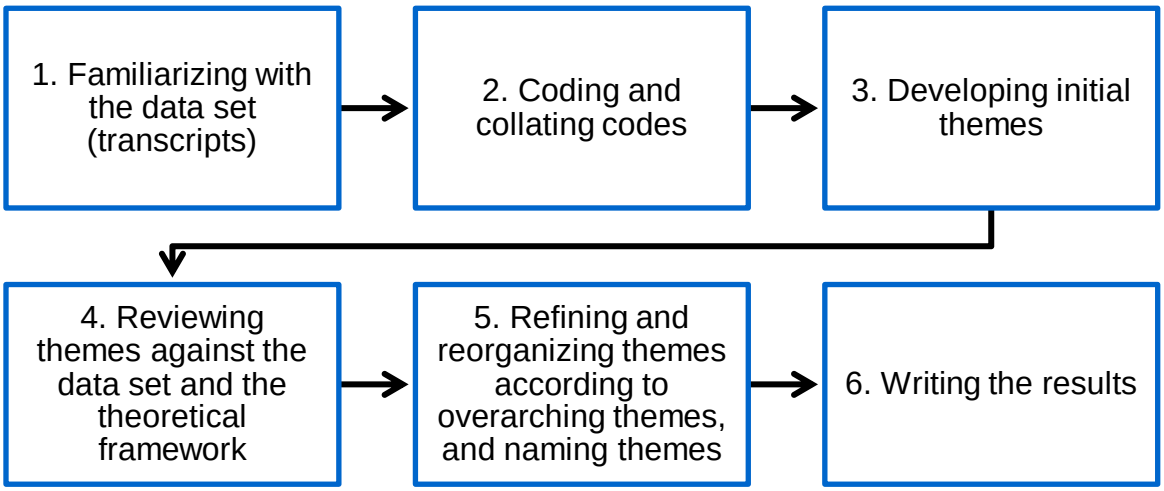

Figure 1. Phases of data analysis process (adapted from the six phases for analysis by Braun and Clarke (n.d., b).

The analysis was implemented by reflecting on which data was relevant to the research questions, excluding unnecessary topics that emerged during the interviews (Coffelt 2017, 228). The first phase of the data analysis involved familiarizing myself with the contents of the data by reading and re-reading transcripts and listening to the audio data for clarifications when needed. Immersing in the data led to remarks and insights about its meaning and recognition of parts relevant to the planned research questions. Reducing the data was done by focusing on pieces of data relating to experiences about Clubhouse participation and issues affecting digital inclusion. Data that contained relevant information was tagged with notes about the meaning of the data.

The second phase of the analysis involved coding the relevant pieces of data in each transcript. Inducing the codes from data enabled building insights based on data contents. Each code captured the meaning, a single concept, or idea in a data fragment in a summative and descriptive manner. Code names represented single words in the data, longer phrases, or the underlying meaning in a piece of data. Codes, such as motivation to learn, and personal barriers, were named according to terms appearing in the theoretical framework. Parts of data with more than one meaning were tagged with as many codes as there were meanings.

After coding all relevant data, pieces of data with the same codes were clustered together. In each transcript, the coded parts were marked with a different color. Coded data were collated across the whole data set on a separate Word file, where data extracts from each interviewee were identifiable by their different colors. Pieces of data with similar meanings were organized under their designated codes, and some codes were renamed from original longer phrases. Codes were revised according to new insights into the concepts within the pieces of data. Table 1. represents the final set of codes.

TABLE 1. Codes used for the data analysis

1. Visiting preferred	23. Creating content	45. Financial barriers
2. Uncertainty	24. Resilience	46. User experience
3. Quick adaptation	25. Doing together	47. Confusion
4. Online community	26. Role in groups	48. Personal barriers
5. Worries and doubts	27. Involvement	49. Daily interactions
6. Overcoming doubts	28. Role of staff	50. Support providers
7. Sense of community	29. Change in attitudes	51. Level of skills
8. Maintaining content	30. Positive experiences	52. Learning the basics
9. Evolving	31. Insecurities	53. Beneficial
10. Permanent Practice	32. Confidence	54. Sufficient support
11. Maintaining contacts	33. Willingness to participate	55. Need for training
12. Challenges	34. Motivation to learn	56. Digital skills course
13. Supported participation	35. Difficult	57. Face-to-face or phone
14. Real-time activities	36. Patience	58. Need for digital support
15. Routine	37. Interest	59. Learning by doing
16. Following content	38. Relevance	60. Independent use
17. Recordings	39. Sufficient skills	61. Purposes of laptop use
18. Messaging applications	40. First computer	62. Online time
19. Member-led groups	41. Outdated equipment	63. Suspicion
20. Comfort	42. Limited access	64. Trust
21. Safe space	43. Home access	65. Sense of safety
22. Versatile use	44. Loan periods	

The third phase of the data analysis involved examining the collated codes and data for identifying shared, patterned meanings for generating initial themes (Braun & Clarke n.d., b; 2022a, 35). The data were clustered around broader, shared meanings based on interrelationships within pieces of data. The clusters were assessed considering their relevance to planned research questions. The initial themes represented shared meanings of the clusters of collated codes.

Braun and Clarke (2022, 79) suggest not developing a theme around an idea that appears only in one data item, such as an interview. Initial themes represented shared meanings of the clusters of collated codes. For the external reliability or replicability of the study results in similar settings, the data should be based on the collective meaning by respondents of the studied phenomena (Lewis & Ritchie 2003, 271). The theme opportunities for online participation consisted of data found in only one data item. Here, the limited number of interviews affected the finding of shared meanings. However, the theme constructed a meaningful whole and provided evidence about online participation relevant to addressing the research questions. One can expect that, as suggested by Lewis and Ritchie (2003, 272), studies with a similar sample in other Clubhouse communities could replicate the results among members with experiences of online participation. Further, the purpose was to include interviewees' subjective views in the results that justified developing a theme around data from one interview.

The reflexive thematic analysis allows moving back and forth between the data set and distinct phases of data analysis (Braun & Clarke 2022, 36). In the fourth phase, initial themes were reviewed against the whole data set, planned research questions, and theoretical framework. The theme-developing process proceeded naturally from more detailed meanings to broader ones. New insights about the correlations in the data resulted in rearranging some codes and pieces of data, combining themes, and creating new ones. Themes were developed around unique core concepts to prevent overlapping.

The fifth phase involved further refining the themes by ensuring that each represented a unique input for the overall story of the data. Themes were assessed by

checking their viability against the data set and renamed according to their contents. The intent was to capture the central organizing concept of each theme. Finally, the themes were organized as a coherent whole where the data functioned as a frame for presenting the results in a way that enabled answering the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2022, 88) suggest avoiding too many overarching themes and subthemes that might add structural complexity to the detriment of analytic depth. The final set included seven themes subordinate to two overarching themes based on the research questions. Figure 2. represents the themes and overarching themes.

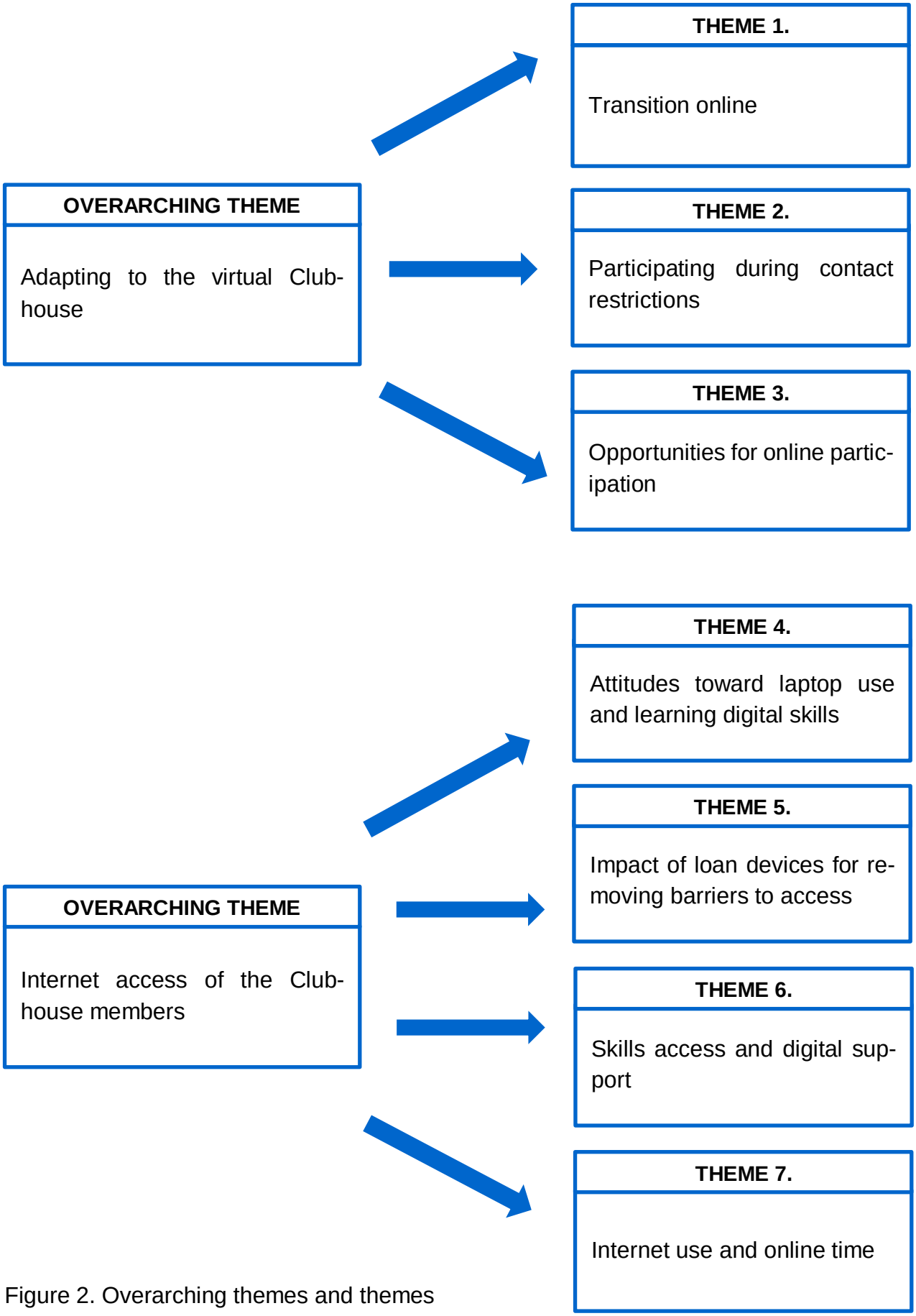

Figure 2. Overarching themes and themes

The last phase of the data analysis consisted of writing the results based on the contents of overarching themes and themes. The purpose was to disclose similarities in the experiences of Clubhouse members while bringing forth some of their unique perceptions and thoughts relevant to the context of the themes and the research questions. Using reflexive thematic analysis enabled refining the research questions along the analysis process and when writing results, as insights about what questions the data could address developed. (Braun & Clarke 2022, 47; 2017, 297). The results were written around chosen extracts from the data used as citations to provide an explanatory narrative representing what was important in the themes. The final research questions were modified based on the results of the analysis (Puusa & Juuti 2020, 78). Figure 3. represents two examples of the relationships between overarching themes, themes, and data extracts.

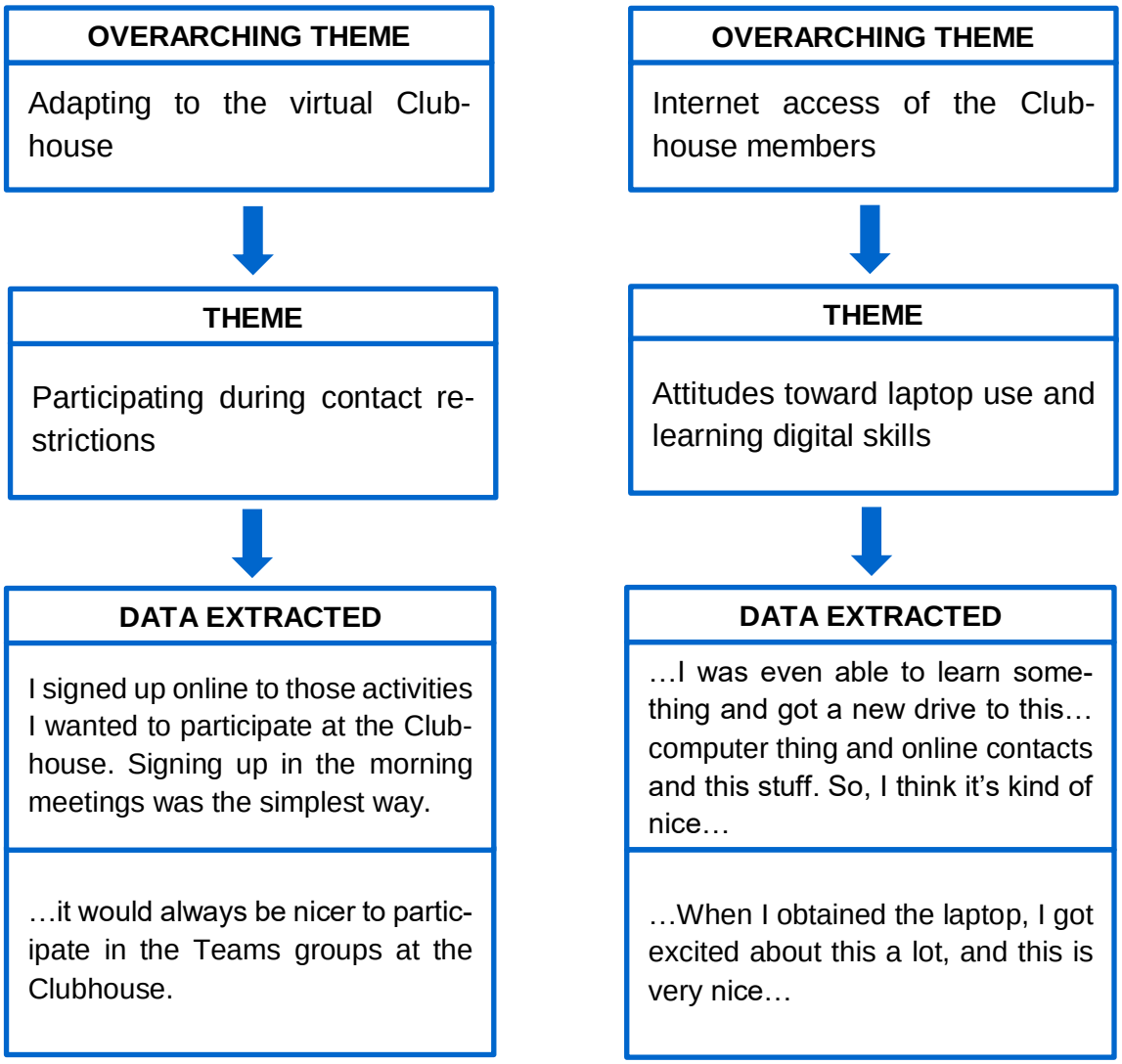

Figure 3. Overarching themes, and examples of themes and extracts

4.7 The process of developing themes from codes

The themes consisted of pieces of data connected by a shared meaning. Theme 1. covering experiences of transition online, included coded data related to feelings and perceptions of the online community and overcoming insecurities about using the laptop at home and for online participation. Codes 1-10 in table 1. represent the data used for developing this theme. Parts of data relating to the routine use of online platforms, attendance in virtual Clubhouse during the pandemic, and experiences and meanings that Clubhouse members associated with participating online formed the contents of theme 2. covering ways of participating in

the virtual Clubhouse program during contact restrictions. Codes 11-20 in table 1. represent the data used for this theme.

Theme 3. named opportunities for online participation included data from one interview related to the role of Clubhouse members in virtual Clubhouse, online platforms used for creating content, and equality of online participation. Codes 21-28 in table 1. represent data used for developing this theme. Attitudes toward using the laptops for Clubhouse participation and other purposes, members' perceptions of their skills, perceived relevance of digital skills, and motivation to learn more skills constituted the contents of theme 4. named attitudes toward laptop use and learning digital skills. Codes 29-39 in table 1. represent data relating to this theme. Theme 5. named impact of loan devices for removing barriers to access, consisted of data relating to the meaning of the laptops for Internet access and Clubhouse participation, and usability issues. Codes 40-49 in table 1. represent data used under this theme.

Theme 6. about skills access and digital support included data related to skill levels, experiences and opinions about digital skills training and support, needs for training and support, and preferences for learning digital skills. Codes 50-59 in table 1. represent the codes used under this theme. Theme 7. named Internet use and online time, included parts of data demonstrating the ability to use the Internet for different purposes, time dedicated to Internet use, and issues of trust that might affect laptop use. Codes 60-65 in table 1. represent the data used for this theme.

5 RESULTS

The themes of the data analysis gave the framework for writing the results. The first part of the results provides an outlook of those themes related to the overarching theme concerned with the process of adapting to the virtual Clubhouse. The chapters in this part represent how members experienced the transition of Clubhouse operations online, how they participated in the virtual Clubhouse, and the opportunities for online participation by creating online content for the virtual Clubhouse program.

The second part of the results outlines the contents of themes related to the overarching theme of Internet access of the Clubhouse members. The following chapters represent aspects related to factors affecting the digital inclusion of the Clubhouse members: attitudes and motivation, the impact of the laptops for removing financial and personal barriers to Internet access, and the meaning of support from Clubhouses for learning digital skills and using the Internet for different purposes.

Information received from personal communication with Clubhouse staff members and the project manager in the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition was used in the results where applicable. In one of the interviews, a staff member supported an interviewee in expressing thoughts and experiences about the virtual Clubhouse and clarified the course of events at the local Clubhouse. Information from the staff member was used for understanding and interpreting data. However, the results only include expressions used by the interviewees as citations.

5.1 Adapting to the virtual Clubhouse

The lockdown caused some Clubhouse communities to transfer their operations online overnight by publishing live stream videos from Clubhouses on the existing closed Facebook groups and organizing remote meetings and groups using online collaboration platforms (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication, August 17, 2021). The transition of operations online Clubhouse members and staff members had to learn how to use online platforms, while members using laptops had to adapt to using them at home (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication August 13, 2021).

Participating online and phone calls were the only means of maintaining contact with the Clubhouse and other members when Clubhouses were closed because rules of social distancing were in effect. Members willing to participate from home could join the Clubhouse program through live streams and online meetings, attend online groups, or work from home as agreed (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication, August 13, 2021). The results discuss those platforms and participation opportunities that Clubhouse members mentioned in the interviews. The interviewees referred to the virtual Clubhouse with the Finnish term eKlubitalo. Therefore, the term e-Clubhouse is used in the citations.

5.1.1 Transition online

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Clubhouse members could visit the Clubhouses under the regionally introduced contact restrictions limiting the number of people allowed to join activities. All interviewees preferred going to the Clubhouse instead of only participating in the Clubhouse activities online. However, an interviewee stated that members managed to adapt to the online environment quickly, followed by the uncertainty of the future of Clubhouse operations after the first restrictions

> …during that weekend, the Clubhouse staff established this e-Clubhouse, that wasn't operating in our Clubhouse community until

> then… and the regular Clubhouse goers found their way there really fast…

The interviewee appreciated the new online community

> They (Clubhouse staff) encouraged and worked a lot so that online content started to emerge, which contributed to the establishment of our own community, where it's nice to be.

The interviewees had used the loan laptops at the Clubhouses a few months before the Clubhouse operations moved online. There were signs that members were hesitant to start using the devices at home (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication, August 13, 2021; Päivi Lepistö, personal communication, April 25, 2022). An experienced computer user was cautious about the loan laptop at home, especially in the early stage

> I worried in the beginning with the new device, especially as it's not my own.

The interviewees adapted to using the laptops at home. After initial hesitance, positive experiences and thoughts replaced insecurities and doubts about computer use for participating online

> I really feel quite good… I didn't know if I would fit in this e-Clubhouse thing… but it was fine, I thought I could try, and so I did… I think it has been quite interesting.

According to this member, the sense of community had declined during the contact restrictions. However, the opportunity to participate online helped maintain some of it

> It's pretty great that you get to see people and conversations from home through this Internet system. Then you don't necessarily need to go to the Clubhouse.

Another member thought the Clubhouses had managed to maintain the contents of the Clubhouse operations during the lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions

> …positive experiences. This is learning… and being together…
>
> Authorities ordered the Clubhouses to close, but the content stayed.

The member was interested to see how the virtual Clubhouse evolves and envisioned how operating in the online environment merges with the traditional Clubhouse activities in the future as the virtual Clubhouse becomes permanent practice

> …because e-Clubhouse operations are new so you can somehow follow how this evolves because it's clear that it changes its form a bit, all the time. And so it should… it would have felt unnatural to come up with what we can do at once…
>
> Thinking about it now, there are also good aspects. When we at some point return to a bit more open society, we will not return to the way it was before, but physical meetups will be combined with the online operations in this so-called hybrid model Clubhouse, and there will be no such drama involved anymore.

5.1.2 Participating during contact restrictions

Despite the differences in implementing the virtual Clubhouse program in Clubhouse communities, in every Clubhouse, the schedule included daily online meetings and activities related to Clubhouse work and chores, or well-being, implemented in groups. Most members maintained a regular frequency of contact with the Clubhouse by participating in the virtual Clubhouse program; One interviewee participated online every weekday, while the others participated three or four times a week.

According to a member, contacts with the Clubhouse remained as frequent as before during the COVID-19 contact restrictions

> I'm not sure if contacts have increased but at least staying in touch has remained the same because of the laptop… so contacts have not reduced at all.

For one member, concentrating on the virtual Clubhouse program from home with the laptop appeared to be more challenging than attending the Clubhouse, which reduced online participation from home at the beginning of the pandemic. Participation in Teams meetings increased over time, whereas participating in groups online was more occasional

> I didn't attend to many groups on Teams when I was at home during the tighter restrictions…

The member wished for more opportunities to participate online at the Clubhouse, where face-to-face support was available

> …it would always be nicer to participate in the Teams groups at the Clubhouse.

The interviewees appreciated opportunities to attend the morning and Clubhouse meetings from home, maintain social contacts online, or watch adverts and other content posted in the closed Clubhouse Facebook group. Attending morning online meetings appeared to be a popular way to active Clubhouse participation and beneficial for planning the daily schedule. A member described them as the most effortless way to sign up for the activities at the Clubhouse during the contact restrictions

> I participated in the morning and Clubhouse meetings in Teams. Those were the most important ways. Then there was some remote exercising and other stuff that was elaborated in addition.
>
> I signed up online to those activities I wanted to participate at the Clubhouse. Signing up in the morning meetings was the simplest way.

Morning meetings had become a pleasant part of the daily routine for another member, who participated online every weekday

> The Teams meeting, where the affairs of the day are handled like, what groups are on that day, is there going to be a coffee serving or food, then catching up with people and handling all common matters like… the Clubhouse emails…that is the most pleasant way for me… there are other online activities as well, but this is the most important.

> I don’t want to go to the Clubhouse at 8:15 in the morning… After morning coffee, you get to attend to the meeting for an hour… In the Teams meeting, I can sign up for the Clubhouse for coffee and ask about the groups that day. After that it’s really nice to go to the Clubhouse for coffee or lunch or… That’s the only way during the Covid-time…

One member enjoyed watching adverts and posts in the Facebook group while occasionally following Teams meetings. For another interviewee, recordings of meetings and other activities appeared beneficial as they enabled keeping up with current issues in the Clubhouse community when attending the activities in real-time was not possible

> Like, if you are so tired or have other duties so that you can’t attend to the activities, or the groups at the Clubhouse are full because of the Covid-19 restrictions, so, in that sense it’s good that you can participate... It’s nice to watch recordings of outdoor events and conversations, and the minutes of Clubhouse meetings are quickly available.

Three members used Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp to contact the Clubhouse. In one Clubhouse community, members used a WhatsApp group monitored by staff for social contact and peer support. According to an interviewee, many regular members of the local community joined the WhatsApp group after the COVID-19 restrictions

> Opportunities to participate in Clubhouse activities are pretty good with the laptop. We have the WhatsApp group… I have uploaded it also to this laptop… so you could say that it’s in use every day, with changing members… It’s like a feel-good group where people change daily experiences of nature and other stuff.
>
> …These WhatsApps and others… its pretty good peer support already when someone describes and tells what they do…

On weekends, member-led online discussions enabled social contact for those who could not leave their homes during the Covid-19 restrictions

> We have used Google Meet on weekends for casual conversations and exercise groups. Seeing one another is important for many people. We keep company to each other… these groups have provided comfort for those who can't leave their house too often.

5.1.3 Opportunities for online participation

Staff members initially developed the virtual Clubhouse program. Members with digital devices could add to the program by posting digital content. The interviewee had noticed how people in the local Clubhouse community started experimenting with digital tools after joining the WhatsApp group

> …it's a safe group where people encourage each other and where you can ask about things, so people have had the courage to try digital tools there…

The interviewee had noticed how social events had inspired older Clubhouse members and activated in use of digital tools in more versatile and interactive ways

> Now it happens a lot in the WhatsApp groups, pictures about nature experiences or other daily stuff… But some video clips have started to emerge too... and you could see how those who usually had text updates in Facebook started to post video clips inspired by municipal elections, so it goes to this direction.

In this Clubhouse community, a few members with sufficient digital skills organized online activities related to exercising or hosting casual discussions on an online collaboration platform, leading these online groups regularly. Leading online groups requires resilience and flexibility as the number of participants might vary. The interviewee thought that having a limited number of members organizing online content could prevent disappointment and conflicts

> It is quite hard because… it's clear that it could be that one day you go online and there are no people, so you just need to bear it, and the next time there might be twelve people online… that is why it's

> maybe better to have only a few members hosting groups… someone might get offended by the unequal number of members participating.

At the same time, the current situation was against the Clubhouse principle of equal participation. More Clubhouse members should be involved in creating online content, but how this will actualize is not yet known

> It can't stay so that only a few members are involved in making the content, that is a bit against the Clubhouse principle, but the idea is that you do together… and, however supervised or creative it is… this will evolve…

Online groups should provide a safe space for everyone. Members hosting and participating might sometimes need to redirect the conversations to agreed topics

> ... you have a role, you are the one letting people in the online meeting platform, and you should see that everything that happens there is appropriate…
>
> That's everyone's right…This has been always safe, that's why this has been successful, at least here with us, you don't need to be afraid of so-called hate speech, or negative comments about someone's appearance or condition. Those are the limits.

The interviewee stated that the virtual Clubhouse is constantly evolving, and more members will be involved in developing the content

> I think that the members will be producing more and more content to the e-Clubhouse in the future…
>
> …it will be nice to see, like after a year or two from now, how much, and what kind of content the members produce. That is a bit hard to predict. Everything happens so fast nowadays.

However, the role of staff remained important during contact restrictions in discussing confidential matters and for personal support

> When you need to talk, in-depth conversations and the like, that has only been possible by calling to a staff member, and at times someone calls from the Clubhouse and asks how you are doing and whether you would like to talk. That's very good because of course

> you don’t always want to be talking about what weighs your mind in the groups.

5.2 Internet access of the Clubhouse members

The topics in this chapter relate to motivation, material access, skills access, and usage, which are integral for benefitting from computer use and indicative of digital inclusion. The chapter discloses Clubhouse members’ experiences related to the impact of loan laptops for removing financial barriers to material access and their opportunities to learn digital skills, affecting skills access. Further, the results include motivational factors that Clubhouse members related to using laptops and learning digital skills and their different types of Internet use outside the Clubhouse context. The results include the personal barriers that could affect laptop use and issues related to the usability of laptops mentioned by the interviewees.

The Clubhouses made six-month contracts with the Clubhouse members for laptops with Internet connections (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication, August 13, 2021; Lepistö 2020). By the interviews, all members had used the loan laptops for less than a year. Clubhouse members could receive digital skills training or individual support when introduced to the loan laptops and during the loan periods. Digital support was also available for those who had personal devices. Gathering digital support teams from staff and members helping with laptop use and providing peer support for learning digital skills were the aims of the Equal e-Clubhouse project (Lepistö 2020). Two Clubhouse communities had organized digital skills training in other ways discussed in the results.

5.2.1 Attitudes toward laptop use and learning digital skills

According to an interviewee, Clubhouse members had to change their attitudes toward using digital devices and social media because of the sudden digital transformation of the Clubhouse operations. The interviewee pondered about the rapid

transformation online, considering the age distribution in the local Clubhouse community

> A big impact (Covid-19). Maybe advancing to this digital age had to happen with this kind of a big leap. Reforms tend to progress very slowly otherwise, especially when we have a bit more aged people, not willing to change as much. Now it became compulsory, the need to change with it if you wanted, or understood that there is no other way for the Clubhouse activities.
>
> Our Clubhouse community consists of rather mature members, so we don't have too many people of the younger generation who would be accustomed to using the social media a lot.

All members had positive experiences with laptop use. Participating in the virtual Clubhouse raised new interest in computer use for a member who had occasionally used a computer at the Clubhouse for Internet surfing

> …I was even able to learn something and got a new drive to this… computer thing and online contacts and this stuff. So, I think it's kind of nice…

The laptop inspired a member to participate in the virtual Clubhouse online and use the computer for recreational purposes

> …When I obtained the laptop, I got excited about this a lot, and this is very nice...

Despite insecurities about the independent use of web search engines and email, one member was confident in having learned to cope independently with the loan device and use the online collaboration platform for online meetings

> …I learned to use the computer in a short time and learned all sorts of things…
>
> …fortunately I have learned how I can attend to the Teams groups… it took some time, but I managed to get on Teams.

Although participating in virtual Clubhouse activities during contact restrictions had reduced, the interviewee would have wanted to attend more often in online groups

> …there didn't seem to be too much time for the Teams groups although I would have liked very much to attend.

Three members participated in the digital skills teaching sessions organized by the Clubhouse digital support teams or an external service provider. Two interviewees were eager to learn new digital skills. An interviewee who participated in a digital skills course looked forward to continuing training after the COVID-19 restrictions

> Yes, I want to learn more…a new course will begin in the Autumn, I'm quite sure I will learn quite much there… we will continue from where we left, as we already had ten classes before Christmas… there was new stuff on every class…

The member described how being patient helped overcome problematic computer issues

> This computer use isn't easy at all…There are many different…this is so, this computer is so complicated that, you just need to be calm and think that…you must not panic and when there's some problem, I always have that ''home'' button at the upper-left corner so when I press that I am safe…

A member who needed face-to-face assistance with the laptop was interested in using online banking services. However, the current interest in learning new skills was related to posting pictures on Facebook like other members

> Others have posted pictures on Facebook… I don't know how to do that. I've been interested about how to post pictures on Facebook.

A member who had previously used a computer at the Clubhouse was interested in Internet surfing

> …I have found an awful lot of stuff there (from the Internet) that interests me quite much…

However, motivation to learn new skills appeared to be associated with personal preferences in Internet use and the perceived relevance of skills in one's daily life. Some topics taught in a digital skills course were more interesting than others

> There was all kinds of stuff like how you can buy a train ticket online and all… but I didn't orientate to those too much, but it was among the things we went through anyway.

This member preferred phone calls and face-to-face interaction at the Clubhouse over online instant messaging applications.

From the thoughts of a member from a Clubhouse community with an older member base, one could conclude that there was no immediate need or want to learn more digital skills. According to the interviewee, loan equipment and the virtual Clubhouse served as a means of maintaining social connections and receiving emotional support

> …So, if we get to send and see these pictures and see and listen to each other… that has been enough so far.

5.2.2 Impact of loan devices for removing barriers to access

Before the laptop loan period, three interviewees had never owned a computer, while one had an outdated computer not suitable for the requirements of virtual Clubhouse participation. During contact restrictions, access to a computer at the Clubhouse was limited, which impacted computer use for a member who had occasionally used the Clubhouse computer for surfing the Internet

> During the COVID, I didn't feel like I could come to the Clubhouse to surf the Internet… because of the restrictions it wasn't possible to come and look for stuff… I checked if someone has reserved a time and if it was taken, then there was no way… and there was room only for one at a time, so it wouldn't have worked.

The interviewees used the loan laptops only at home and at the Clubhouse. None of them expressed a need for laptop use in other locations. At the time of the interviews, one member had renewed the loan period and used the loan laptop, while one was waiting for the renewal. One member had a laptop acquired with a grant, whereas another had no computer in use after the expiration of the first loan period.

At least for two interviewees, costs were a significant reason for not owning a personal device. Two members considered buying a laptop or computer in the future. For the other, a cost-free device was an incentive for computer use

> If I hadn't obtained this laptop, I would have never… it would have never crossed my mind to buy a computer or acquire a computer myself.

Two members stated that the laptop provided a better user experience and opportunity for online participation than a smartphone. The laptop was more convenient for writing messages. An experienced computer user stated that familiarizing oneself with programs and creating videos with the laptop was reasonably effortless. Further, the device enabled concentrating on work.

> When you have trouble, I still have quite big problems in concentrating so, somehow with this kind of device it is, easier to concentrate on the doing.

One of the potential outcomes of the virtual Clubhouse project was to reach more members by providing digital equipment that would enable the learning of digital skills (Lepistö 2020, 5, 6). According to an interviewee, the laptop enabled the company of others and the opportunity to learn together. However, the lack of computers and smartphones and the inability to use them appeared to remain a barrier to online participation among older Clubhouse members. According to the interviewee, it is not likely that the loan laptops would increase the participation rate in the local Clubhouse, where the members are older people who might need assistance in their Internet use. Further, the members might use the Internet only for running the most necessary online errands

> It's clear that everyone can't be involved in the WhatsApp group…

> It's because of our age structure. Many of us don't use digital services daily, and the use might be only related to paying bills with the assistance of a relative. Loan laptops have a greater impact on the day-to-day interactions and e-Clubhouse operations than on attracting new memberships or communicating with less active members. …phone calls will be used for reach outs also in the future.

5.2.3 Skills access and digital support

Clubhouses were the primary digital support providers for all the interviewees, whereas only one of them had received occasional support for laptop use from relatives. Based on the interview data and discussions with staff members, two of the Clubhouses involved in this thesis had digital support teams that organized digital skills training in a small group where one or more digitally skilled members led the group alongside staff.

Members received assistance in learning basic computer skills based on their needs and at a pace adjusted to their capacity to absorb new information. The main aim was to teach how to use the platforms for Clubhouse participation. (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication, August 17, 2021). In addition to a digital support team of two people, one Clubhouse organized a digital skills course in collaboration with a local Adult Education Centre (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication, August 13, 2021).

Two of the interviewed Clubhouse members had no digital skills or computer use experience when introduced to the laptops. One member had used a computer at the Clubhouse for Internet surfing, while another had used digital devices and software due to prior occupation and independent learning. Beginners learned basic skills that enabled them to cope independently with the laptops and use the online collaboration platforms and Facebook for virtual Clubhouse participation.

Most members considered that the support they received from Clubhouses was beneficial and sufficient, and they were pleased with the knowledge and skills of the staff members in digital issues. A member experienced in using computers

and software appreciated the opportunity to receive digital support specific to the needs of Clubhouse members from a familiar person

> I don't know whom else to turn to in these matters because… these tools are like streamlined for us, or we use these in a certain way and, in my opinion, it's easy when you get assistance from a familiar ICT support person who is on the same wavelength and gets you right away… very beneficial

Another member considered digital support provided at the Clubhouses beneficial for building on existing knowledge

> Yes, of course it's beneficial, everything like that is like beneficial and, then when you already know something, you can ask some questions like how this is, and what know, I think they are quite beneficial…

One member had learned a lot from staff members, students, and peers but regarded the study coach working in the Clubhouse digital support team as the key person for learning digital skills

> The study coach is the most important support person for me regarding this computer at the Clubhouse… When I got to know I will possibly obtain the loan laptop, the study coach started teaching me. So, I had to start just like ABC, from the beginning, so she taught me the basics in a hands-on way, as I knew nothing…

Instead of a digital support team, one Clubhouse had an ICT support person available for individual support for learning digital skills. According to a member of this Clubhouse, this arrangement was sufficient considering the small size of the Clubhouse community and the similar level of digital skills among the members

> We are a small Clubhouse community… here its… quite like…so that everyone is on the same level so that there has never been a need for these kinds of separate support teams or peer support groups.
>
> Our number of staff is limited, so our organization is quite simple, and still, it has been quite sufficient so…at least for the moment, there is yet no need for digital support teams.

Considering the capability of the members to adapt to using digital equipment, the interviewee considered it unnecessary to organize a digital skills course

> I think that in our case the age distribution is a bit like, this kind of thing could feel quite challenging. It sounds like quite a massive information package…
>
> …this digital leap has been so massive, and it happened so fast… my assumption is that this takes time to digest. There surely would still be a lot to learn but maybe the staff has wanted to… like, be benignant to us, so there isn't too much at once.

Another interviewee stated that because a digital skills course was interrupted during the COVID-19 restrictions, there was not too much time for learning new skills. However, the member received additional information about using the computer in the course

> I knew some basic stuff before… from the digital skills course I got something new…
>
> There was about all these things like how you can refine Internet search and a bit about how to use a photo editor, we went through how to use email… and Facebook…
>
> It wasn't a very long course, so that they (taught topics) were limited to basic stuff… I didn't get to absorb too much. But I learned something.

During the COVID-19 contact restrictions, Clubhouse members could receive digital support at the Clubhouses or remotely. When visiting Clubhouses was not possible because of the lockdown, calling appeared to be the most common way to receive digital support with laptop use. Three members had managed well by having only remote support available. One of them considered the combination of over-the-phone and face-to-face support sufficient

> I have received quite a lot of digital support over the phone when I have been at home with some problem with the computer… then I have called the Clubhouse and explained the problem there. I have always received help… I'm quite satisfied with this face-to-face and over-the-phone support, so these are sufficient for me… so far, I have coped with these.

However, another member perceived interacting face-to-face as better for communication

> I think that face-to-face you can communicate things better at the same time so that's the best and most simple way.

One member utilized over-the-phone support for creating content for the virtual Clubhouse

> Right now, I'm happy with the digital support that I receive by contacting the Clubhouse…
>
> …I think it's easy to call to a person who knows what I mean when I say that we are having an event and I would maybe like to attach some… ancillary material there, so what should I do, so (the ICT support person) gets it right away…

A member with a recurrent need for face-to-face support with the laptop had encountered situations where digital support was not always available when there was a need for it

> You might sometimes think that… if you press somewhere wrong so… there might have been something like that (support not available) sometimes.
>
> There has been sometimes situations where I haven't received help when I wanted… some things that I would have needed help with, but it might have been that I didn't receive help at that moment.

However, the member was content with the available digital support. The support team members provided face-to-face support throughout the contact restriction period whenever restriction orders allowed it.

The member recognized the need for long-lasting digital support

> …it might take a long time before I am able to use everything that I would like…there are lots of things where I would still need help with…

For the member learning the use of online collaboration platforms for organizing groups for virtual Clubhouse and purposes outside the Clubhouse, learning by doing was the best way to gain digital skills

> I can't like, I don't know… a better way to learn it or like, to get help than when you are on the computer yourself… it usually requires that you do by yourself and understand, that is the best way… it gradually becomes a skill then. So, when you do something wrong a few times and ask for instructions, then you suddenly notice that you can do it somehow.

5.2.4 Internet use and online time

All interviewees used the laptop independently for purposes outside the Clubhouse context. Members with little or no previous computer skills had started using laptops for purposes such as reading online newspapers, watching movies and series from a streaming service, listening to music from Youtube, and using online marketplaces. One member had learned to use the laptop for information search and sending emails, whereas another knew how to enter previously known websites. Two beginners used Facebook Messenger to contact friends and family.

A beginner had used the laptop often for various recreational purposes. It was unclear which of these activities the member could conduct without support. However, the member managed to use familiar Internet content independently

> I watched different things almost daily… I watched news on a local online newspaper, you could see sports and all kinds of information, I watched some movies too. And listened to some music from Youtube… I have communicated with people on Facebook… I have written to Facebook friends quite a lot.

Factors affecting online time with the laptops varied between the interviewees depending on their occupational duties, seasonal recreational activities, and whether they had other equipment for Internet use. An experienced computer user had obligations outside the Clubhouse that reduced time spent on virtual

Clubhouse activities in real time. Having the laptop at home did not increase online time, while the member mostly used the loan device for virtual Clubhouse participation, including organizing groups for the virtual Clubhouse program. The member also participated in activities of other associations online and ran errands with public administration and online banking services with the laptop.

Another interviewee was busy with other activities than Internet use during summer. However, online time increased when having a laptop at home

> Of course, it (the frequency of Internet use) was notably more when I had the loan laptop. I hardly ever watched the tv.
>
> I did not need to necessarily open the television for days, as I saw the news and other stuff online.

The interviewee had used the Internet for various recreational purposes and online news and was familiar with an online marketplace

> Of course, when I had the laptop, I searched for some music related and all kinds of other stuff. For example, this, is it Tori.fi, and then all these online magazine sections, I read some of those…

Smartphone use reduced the need for a laptop for recreational purposes for the member experienced with digital devices. An interviewee without other digital devices used the computer many hours throughout the day, both for virtual Clubhouse and recreational purposes. This member did not own a smartphone and used the computer often to contact the Clubhouse, friends, and family.

Most of the interviewees were suspicious of online fraud. Three members did not use banking and administrative services online. One member could manage without online banking in the current life situation and felt no need for it

> …I'm so suspicious… If I think from my point of view so…banking services, for me it's quite hard to think right now, that I would start using them with these devices. To me it's like… pretty much so far... a greyish black area… I don't need to…this doesn't affect me at all.

Similarly, the unattainability of public online services did not appear to be a concern for another member

> For me it's only recreational activities, and I don't want to… I don't trust this computer so much that I could run money involving activities online. I don't even have online bank user identifier codes, so I can't go to KELA pages or anywhere.

The member did not want to run banking errands online for safety reasons

> I have never used the laptop for banking services as I run these errands offline. I don't want to put my bank account number or anything on the laptop so that no one could defraud me… So, I want to handle these errands with the bank and not on the computer…

The member was vigilant in ensuring safety online by not disclosing personal data online and avoiding financial affairs online, which contributed to feeling safe when using the Internet

> At least not running any financial affairs with this computer… in that sense it feels safe so no one could defraud me... I never disclose my bank account number or anything on the laptop. So, losing my money doesn't scare me one bit, that's the most important thing for me.

Further, the member had no desire for online shopping

> I wouldn't even consider involving any money issues online.

A member experienced with computers acknowledged the risk of online fraud but was worried about the future of information security of online services on a more general level. The member trusted the digital support from Clubhouse in information security issues

> …I check from the ICT support person if I feel uncertain whether some updates are safe.

Because of careful laptop use, the member felt safe running errands with public administrations online

My laptop use is quite limited. I don’t need to upload new programs on this all the time, so it’s not that big of a problem.

…but it feels quite safe when you know the risk for anything to happen is quite low when you don’t upload all kinds of things here.

6 ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

The thesis process was implemented following ethical principles of research on people for thesis writing in Universities of Applied Sciences (The Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences Arene 2019, 9, 10). Further, the work complied with the guidelines for the ethical principles of research with human participants (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2019). Ethical thinking should guide the research practices throughout the research process (Braun & Clarke 2022, 28). Merriam and Tisdell (2015, 264, referring to Patton 2015) represent risk assessment as part of the ethical practices for planning qualitative research. A risk analysis, including strengths and risks, and a contingency plan for addressing the risks, was prepared for the thesis before writing the thesis plan.

Ethically conducting research requires familiarizing with the research community and its practices to avoid causing unnecessary harm to research participants (The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2019, 9). For background information, I visited the websites of Clubhouse International, the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition, and the Facebook pages of Clubhouse communities in Finland. I read about the principles and operations of Clubhouses from publications and previous research on Clubhouses in Finland and abroad. Familiarizing myself with the concept of the virtual Clubhouse included contacting Clubhouse staff for more details about local practices in Clubhouse communities. Information about the Equal e-Clubhouse project received from the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition helped connect the aims and purposes of the thesis with the project aims.

The contact person from the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition assisted in finding interviewees, thus safeguarding the anonymity of potential participants and ensuring appropriate practicalities with research permits. The Clubhouses involved in this thesis granted their separate research permits. The interview questions and notification about the purpose of the interviews, including the consent form for participants, were provided to the project managers at The Finnish Clubhouse Coalition. The interview notification included information to participants about the

thesis topic and purposes, implementation and recording of interviews, thesis publication, and how the data is stored, used, and destroyed. Further, the notification included information on the right to withdraw from the process and how respondent confidentiality is maintained. The notifications with consent forms and interview questions were sent to the designated Clubhouses so that participants could familiarize themselves with the conditions of participation and the questions before the interviews. Clubhouse staff and interviewees received assistance in filling out the research permissions and consent forms online. All interviewees signed the consent forms themselves.

Trust in the investigator is the starting point of research with human participants (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2019, 9). Building trust requires respecting the human dignity and rights of the participants, which are also the ethical guidelines for social work professionals (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2019, 9; Talentia Union of Professional Social Workers 2019, 7). Rapport building with interviewees online was crucial for making the interviewees comfortable disclosing information. Part of rapport building was starting interviews by asking the participants whether they wanted to go through the notification for interviews and treating them as equals and experts of their own experiences.

In the guidelines for reflexive thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2022, 220, 221) suggest considering how the work impacts the participants and social groups represented in the data. The aim was to present the results as truthfully and objectively as possible, which could affect the useability of the thesis report for the working life partner and Clubhouse members. The contact person at the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition confirmed the terms used in the thesis describing the target group and Clubhouse operations, and the work was submitted to the contact person for approval before its publication.

Braun and Clarke (2022, 18) further suggest reflecting on how participants perceive the investigator. Clubhouse members have participated in multiple surveys and thesis interviews, so some interviewees might have been routined if not exhausted with participating in studies and surveys. Disclosing factors related to

motivation and attitudes might require building trust over a long period and a person familiar with the participants.

As suggested by Coffelt (2017, 227, 228) for ethical practices in qualitative research, for protecting the privacy and confidentiality of research participants, names of interviewees and staff members, and other identifying information, including names of Clubhouse communities, were excluded from the data files and thesis report. To further protect the risk of recognition of interviewees, they were not given pseudonyms or codes in the citations, which could make them more recognizable in their Clubhouse communities because of their unique experiences and ways of participating online.

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences is committed to the Finnish research community principles of open science and research (Open Science Coordination in Finland, Federation of Finnish Learned Societies 2020). The thesis is published on the Theseus database and on the website of The Finnish Clubhouse Coalition, which supports transparency and the principle of open access to research.

7 FACTORS OF VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND GENERALIZABILITY

According to Braun and Clarke (2022, 13, 17), the values and experiences of the investigator inevitably shape data analysis and interpretation of data. Clarifying personal biases and assumptions increases the internal validity, or credibility, of the results (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 265). Before starting the thesis process, I did not know much about The Finnish Clubhouse Coalition or the Clubhouse operations. However, as part of my studies, I reflected on the role of social service workers in recognizing risk factors for mental health problems and assessing the overall situation of service users in identifying their needs. In an essay, I wrote about the significance of non-governmental organizations as part of the network providing mental health-promoting practices. My outsider position might have helped reduce bias in interpreting the data. At the beginning of the thesis work, I assumed that the loan laptops and digital support benefit the Clubhouse members.

Promoting internal validity in research requires avoiding preconceived ideas about the interviewees and bias in interpreting the responses (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 265; Brewerton & Millward 2001, 79). Presenting the interviewees with probing questions on emerging topics helped verify the accuracy of interpretations. However, attempting to adapt to the level of the interviewees and identify relevant discussion topics while conducting interviews according to the planned structure was occasionally challenging. The data quality might have suffered from explanations meant to clarify the questions that might have confused the interviewees and unnecessarily leading probing questions, which might not entice interviewees to disclose more in-depth information.

Misinterpretations of data by the interviewee and the tendency of interviewees to provide socially acceptable responses may distort the data (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 35). Using audio video recordings enabled concentrating on the listening of the interviewees and capturing the meaning of the original expressions of the interviewees (Legard, Keegan & Ward 2003, 166). Analyzing data from the interview where a staff member supported the interviewee involved considering the

comparability of information from the two to avoid misinterpretations. As suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2015, 248), variation in data from different interviews was considered not to make straightforward conclusions. Although some interviewees gave lengthier responses than others and brought up varying topics in the semi-structured interviews, all interviewees and their answers were considered equal to the results. The aim was to seek consistency without making interpretations not backed up by the data. Translating the citations might have resulted in the loss of nuances of the original expressions. Writing the transcripts verbatim increased the accuracy of the data, and capturing the essence of the Finnish meaning was considered in translating the citations.

Decisions concerning the number of participants and data collection methods affect the external validity or transferability of the study results to other settings and generalizability (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 246, 253, 257; Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 66). The scope of this thesis work, the purpose of investigating experiences, and the number of volunteering participants determined the sample size and resulted in the decision to conduct interviews. Although the sample size was small, the interviewees were from three different Clubhouse communities that, despite their local practices, were affected by similar issues considering the virtual Clubhouse, which might increase the transferability of the results to other Clubhouse communities. Similarities of the sample regarding Clubhouse membership, experiences of moving online during the COVID-19 epidemic, and presumable interest in the thesis were beneficial for compiling the data (Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 66).

The provided background information about Clubhouse communities, comparisons to earlier studies about the virtual Clubhouse, and detailed discussion and conclusions about the results might contribute to the transferability of the thesis results (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 256, 257, 259, 265). However, the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 epidemic that shaped members' experiences might complicate replicating a study in similar settings.

The quality of interviews, analysis, and interpretation of the results affects the accuracy in capturing the studied phenomena and the generalizability of the results. The sample might not be representative of all Clubhouse members, which

reduces the generalizability of the study results considering the Clubhouse member population. (Lewis & Ritchie 2003, 269, 274). However, the results corroborated some earlier findings on how Clubhouse members in Southern Finland experienced the virtual Clubhouse during the pandemic. Evaluating the generalizability might be possible by comparing the results to those of the member survey and manual for developing the virtual Clubhouse activities by ESKOT ry by Kostamo & Pekkarinen (2021 a, b). (Lewis & Ritchie 2003, 265; Eskola & Suoranta 2008, 66).

The collective experiences related to learning computer use and digital skills might allow inference to a larger population of Clubhouse members (Lewis & Ritchie 2003, 269). However, using the results for developing purposes of the Clubhouse operations would require examining the experiences of Clubhouse members in different Clubhouse communities to capture the diversity with similarities and different perspectives on a larger scale (Lewis & Ritchie 2003, 265). Generalizations to all Clubhouse communities in Finland might be unnecessary from a development point of view, as Clubhouses have distinctive practices.

In qualitative research, reliability means that the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 251). Trustworthiness is ensured by careful study design, applying ethical and scientifically approved practices and methods, and ensuring consistency of study results with the data presented (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 238, 252, 265, 266). Detailed descriptions of the planning and implementation of the study and the process of generating results from data analysis enhance the reliability of the thesis work. Explaining the theoretical framework further affirms the results. (Merriam & Tisdell 2015, 265). The citations from interviewees in the results provide evidence for the discussion and conclusions. Moreover, transparency in reporting research and analysis methods, explaining their use, and presenting the phases of the analysis process in detail might facilitate evaluating and interpreting the results by the Finnish Clubhouse Coalition.

8 DISCUSSION

The results are discussed first by examining the implementation of the virtual Clubhouse in Clubhouse communities, challenges of moving online and the role of members and digital support for overcoming them, different types of participating in the virtual Clubhouse, and the meaning of the online community for Clubhouse members. These topics are explored for later conclusions about how Clubhouse members adapted to the virtual Clubhouse during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Concerning digital inclusion, the results are discussed by focusing on how laptops and Internet connections and opportunities to receive digital skills training and support impacted Internet access while considering the personal barriers that might complicate laptop use. Access to the Internet classified in the digital divide research by van Dijk (2012b, 196; 2005, 48; 2005, 21) as material and physical access, motivation, skills, and types of Internet use serves as the framework for this discussion.

Digital participation is considered through different types of Internet use. This chapter also includes reflecting on the meaning of agency for Internet use and online participation and the impact of home access and digital support on the autonomy of use. The results might indicate how laptops and Internet connections impacted the social resources online and offline for Clubhouse members. The results do not suffice for making inferences about how participating in the virtual Clubhouse or using the Internet affected other offline resources implying digital inclusion or the social inclusion of Clubhouse members.

8.1 Platforms used for participating online

According to the report of the e-Clubhouse project by ESKOT ry, virtual Clubhouse includes the web pages, Facebook and Instagram pages, and closed Facebook groups used in each Clubhouse community. Clubhouses implement the virtual Clubhouse program using online collaboration platforms for Clubhouse and leisure time meetings and Facebook Live for live streams from Clubhouses. Online contacts with Clubhouse and other members are possible via Facebook Chat and Messenger features, Teams video calls, emails, and online instant messaging applications, whereas virtual Clubhouse also includes phone calls and text messages. (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a, 24). The adapted online platforms and applications and their intended use varied in different Clubhouses. Similarly, there was variation in how the Clubhouse staff members used the term e-Clubhouse when referring to the platforms and applications used for online participation.

Opinions Clubhouse members had about participating in the virtual Clubhouse related to their experiences with those platforms and applications used at the local Clubhouses. These included Teams and Google Meet online collaboration platforms, the Clubhouse communities' Facebook groups, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp, while some members also mentioned phone calls and emails. The morning meetings via Teams appeared meaningful for members most frequently involved in the online program. Scheduled online meetings on Teams enabled engaging in conversations about current topics and daily work planning, which helped create a daily routine. During contact restrictions, members could sign up for the in-house program online, which might have accentuated the perceived benefits of online meetings. However, hosting on Google Meet appeared beneficial for members learning interactive online participation.

Social networking sites provide effortless ways to post content and communicate with friends (Blank 2013, 597) but enable low-involvement participation (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 886). A member could maintain contact with the Clubhouse in the Facebook group when concentrating on the real-time program was challenging or when following online content felt more comfortable than participating in

real-time. According to the member survey by ESKOT ry (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a, 32, 33, 34), phone calls are the most used and pleasant way of maintaining contact with Clubhouses, although almost as many members with phones own computers. The results suggested that phone calls are still the most appropriate way of reaching members less active in the daily program. Emails are an effortless way for online contacts (Quan-Haase, Wellman, Witte & Hampton 2002, 300), and members of the ESKOT ry Clubhouses have listed emails as essential means for remote operations (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a, 34). However, the results did not indicate the importance of emails for Clubhouse contacts.

8.2 Overcoming computer anxiety

Doubts about learning abilities and frustration might accompany new computer users (Gatto & Tak 2008, 801). Starting to use the laptop at home might have been a fear that the laptop users had to overcome (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication August 13, 2021). Computer anxiety, or button anxiety, meaning a feeling of discomfort, stress, or fear experienced when confronting computers, might reduce motivation and create an access problem for the elderly and people with disabilities (van Dijk 2005, 41, 42; Asmar et al. 2022, 297). Overcoming computer anxiety is a prerequisite for gaining digital skills and frequently using a computer for different purposes (van Dijk 2017a, 202, 203). A member whose prior experience with computers was limited to Internet surfing at the Clubhouse had doubts about participating in the virtual Clubhouse. Neither of the two members who started as beginners expressed signs of fear or frustration toward computer use despite the occasional confusing situations and difficulties in operating the laptop.

Negative online experiences from others, from own content creation, and usability concerns can influence willingness to use computers (Blank 2013, 595, 596; Dobransky & Hargittai 2006, 317) while they are motivational barriers to developing digital skills (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 207). Personal interests online, intense practice, and positive online experiences can alleviate the perceived difficulty of

Internet use (Rosenberg, Kottorp, Winblad & Nygård 2009, 222). Members reciting their Internet usage related to information, news, social interaction, online marketplaces, organizational activity, and recreational activities such as music and video appeared to have mainly positive online experiences. Even one's personality type and self-image affect computer use and readiness to adopt new technologies (van Dijk 2005, 40, 41). According to the results, perseverance helped a member overcome minor technical problems with the laptop independently despite perceiving Internet use difficult, which was a sign of emotional intelligence required for self-controlled and balanced use of computers (van Dijk 2005, 42).

Developing skills may affect the participation behavior of Internet users, as those with low skills might perceive participation as riskier and more harmful (Lutz & Hoffman 2017, 884). Accepting the challenge of learning new skills and participating in digital skills training may help gain confidence and develop a sense of accomplishment (Gatto & Tak 2008, 801). According to the results, a beginner managed some problematic situations independently, while another needed face-to-face support. Confidence in attending online discussions, making new friends online, downloading music, uploading photos, and learning new technology may influence the willingness to create online content (Correa 2010, 85; Blank 2013, 596). Based on the results, only a member experienced with computers was active in producing online content, but beginners were willing to learn more.

A member who needed face-to-face support was confident for having learned to use the online video platform quickly, while a member with some experience in Internet surfing had surpassed initial doubts about participating in the online community. Reliance on face-to-face assistance appeared to associate with fewer worries about the risks of Internet use. The availability of maintenance support for laptops and assistance for information security issues increased trust in laptop use for a member who ran errands using online services and banking. The results suggest that all members had overcome doubts related to computer anxiety and were willing to continue Internet use.

Trust in Internet use may reinforce the decision to get online (Dutton & Shepherd 2006, 445, 448). Based on the results, most beginners were aware of online threats. Members mentioned a lack of trust in using the laptop and fear of online fraud as reasons for limited Internet use concerning online shopping, banking, and downloading software, whereas some members might have been overly cautious when adjusting to using the laptop at home. Older people might be more skeptical about revealing personal data online (Blank 2013, 601). The decision not to go online can be an informed choice (Dobransky & Hargittai 2006, 317), and choosing not to participate might be beneficial for protecting oneself from online security threats (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 887). However, a lack of understanding of the opportunities Internet use could provide for resources such as maintaining social connections might keep people excluded (Dobransky & Hargittai 2006, 317). Experienced online risks are often less severe than those imagined by non-users, who might not be aware of the benefits of use (Dutton & Shepherd 2006, 447, 448).

According to the results, in addition to digital skills and the availability of digital support, having agency in deciding the types of Internet use one wants to engage in was associated with trust and confidence in Internet use. More experience with Internet use raises the likelihood of negative online experiences related to viruses, misrepresented purchases, identity theft, and requests for bank details, which might increase awareness of online threats (Dutton & Shepherd 2006, 442, 443; Blank 2013, 595, 596). Those with some experience with technology tend to have more trust and confidence in Internet use, whereas trust increases the more one uses the Internet (Dutton & Shepherd 2006, 442), which also came up in the results. The longer people spend time online, the more familiar they will be with the technology, and the potential for their skills to improve and frequent engagement in diverse online activities will increase (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 312).

8.3 Digital support from social network

Exposure to technologies in one's social network raises the likelihood of adopting new technologies such as computers (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 3; Hargittai 2003,

830). However, facilitating Internet access requires adequate and skilled support (Chadwick, Wesson & Fullwood 2013b, 381). According to the corresponding fields model by Helsper (2012, 409), mental health conditions may predispose to a lack of resources in economic and social fields, increasing the risk for digital exclusion. Older age is related to shrinking social networks, which may complicate receiving assistance for technology use (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 199). According to the results, older members in the community might have relied on family members for support. However, Clubhouses were the primary source of digital support for members interviewed for this thesis.

Two members had enhanced their digital skills on a course organized by their Clubhouse and an external training provider. Courses may be useful for learning operational skills and formal information skills. However, people learn digital skills mostly through practice in social user environments. (van Dijk 2005, 71, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82). Appropriate support and encouragement by social support networks considering the learner's unique qualities and individual needs may contribute to understanding and more fluent use of computers (Hänninen et al. 2021, 36; Näslund & Gardelli 2013, 38; Hargittai 2003, 829). Constant help during interaction with technology and training corresponding with individual expectations are appropriate ways to support the engagement of older adults (Lee & Maher 2021, 14).

Clubhouses are a social resource and network that helps Clubhouse members to attain Internet access (van Dijk 2012b, 196). Communities such as the Clubhouses provide informal learning opportunities through entertainment, communicating online, and learning (van Dijk 2005, 91). Cooperating with others during online activities might increase trust in technology and fuel motivation and a sense of agency toward Internet use (Lee & Maher 2021, 12, 15, 18; Näslund & Gardelli 2013, 38). Members in the WhatsApp group had started posting video clips on the Clubhouse Facebook group, indicating that being part of the online community, and using multiple platforms for participating, might boost members to a more diverse use of digital tools. However, not every Clubhouse had a WhatsApp group for members.

According to the results, Clubhouses organized digital skills training and support based on the needs of the member base of each Clubhouse community while trying to accommodate individual solutions. Digital support supplemented learning for those less experienced with computers but was sufficient for learning new skills for someone with existing skills. Every member had received over-the-phone support during the contact restrictions, and this type of remote support was adequate for most members after learning the basic skills. Digital support from a skilled person enabled more carefree and safe laptop use. The availability of a person knowledgeable of the support needs of members facilitated creating content for the virtual Clubhouse and participating online for various purposes.

Hargittai (2002, Refining the Current Approach to the Digital Divide, para. 3; 2003, 830, 831) states that an extensive social support network including people skilled with ICT allows more opportunities to draw on the support and potentially exposes one to a wider arrange of digital tools. The results suggest the contrary concerning the size of the social support network; the availability of a digital support person appeared sufficient in a small Clubhouse community with mostly older members with limited usage patterns. Gathering a digital support team from skilled members and staff, as in the aims of the Equal e-Clubhouse project, was not realistic considering the small number of staff and members and the similar level of skills of the members.

Teaching at the Clubhouse was essential for skills to develop for inexperienced users, and assistance from a study coach or staff member appeared to be a pleasant and beneficial way to familiarize themselves with computer use. Teaching the basic features of laptop use to a beginner by staff and peers included repeating tasks at the learner's own pace, which may be helpful for skill development for people with conditions that affect learning (Seale 2014, 223). Learning skills for independent use might take several years (Näslund & Gardelli 2013, 38); a member believed there is a need for long-lasting assistance in learning the skills one would desire to possess.

Technology might provide means of social inclusion for people with social anxiety concerns. On the other hand, focusing too much on increasing the autonomy of

use might encourage social isolation. (Gorski & Clark 2002, 35). Collaborative learning opportunities, online communities, and opportunities for face-to-face contact with peers might help prevent isolation. However, persons with difficulties in learning often need one-on-one support that includes observation, providing attention, stimulation, motivation, encouragement, and guidance from supporting staff (Näslund & Gardelli 2013, 37). Supportive online and offline learning environments that provide opportunities to try digital tools by trial and error might promote learning for both members and staff (Seale 2014, 229; van Dijk 2005, 92).

Social distancing rules and isolation requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic challenged providing digital support as a minimum of digital literacy is essential for remote support to be helpful (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 3). Clubhouse staff provided face-to-face support throughout the pandemic under the limits imposed by the restrictions for members who needed it the most. According to the results, limited availability of face-to-face support at Clubhouses affected members with cognitive impairments that might challenge effectively pursuing online activities and operating with digital devices, increasing the need for constant support for solving technical difficulties (Bernard, Sabariego & Cieza 2016, 2, referring to Johnson 2007; Näslund & Gardelli 2013, 38; Lee & Maher 2021, 14). One beginner relied on face-to-face assistance in difficult situations with the laptop.

The manual for developing virtual Clubhouse operations mentions confidentiality issues in providing digital support and the limited ability of digital support providers to assist with every problematic situation (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021b, 23, referring to Digi- ja väestötietovirasto). According to the results, a member with cognitive challenges was interested in the diverse use of online services. Digital support providers might need to balance between encouraging Internet use and respecting the right of service users to inclusive services while minimizing risks of online participation (Seale 2014, 229).

Support workers are in a position of power when safeguarding Internet use and online participation, which could affect the autonomy of use by limiting access and the ability to make personal choices considering what to publish online (Seale 2003, 4; Seale 2014, 231, 232; van Dijk 2005, 19). Person-centered practices

based on respecting the decisions and views of service users while including them in planning and decisions about services are associated with service users frequently using ICT (Parsons, Daniels, Porter & Robertson 2008, 24, 27, 28).

8.4 Types of participation in the virtual Clubhouse

The International Standards for Clubhouse Programs set the frame for the daily operations at Clubhouses (Mäkisalo 2016, 59; Löija 2016, 222; Hänninen 2016a, 27). However, Clubhouse communities implement the program according to local practices and schedules. The weekly program could include groups related to exercising, studying, media and communication, or other topics (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021b, 44, 45, 46, 47). According to a staff member, new activities such as a social media group and exercise groups were introduced to the online program, whereas the morning meetings will become a permanent practice (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication, August 13, 2021).

The study conducted in Canadian Clubhouses brought up initial challenges in engaging members in the Work-Ordered Day program during the COVID-19 contact restrictions. Introducing a communication and collaboration platform helped involve the tech-savvy but maintaining a connection with less digitally skilled members without computers and those not reachable by phone was more difficult. (Mutschler et al. 2021, 429, 430). In Finland, some members occasionally worked remotely on the Clubhouse Salesforce program (Clubhouse staff member, personal communication, June 10, 2021). The results gave little evidence of whether the interviewed Clubhouse members perceived online groups as beneficial, how often they participated in the online program other than meetings and discussions, or if they used laptops for Clubhouse-related work.

As with all Clubhouse activities, the Clubhouse members could attend the virtual Clubhouse program according to their preferences. The level of activity of members online may vary. Naturally, duties outside the Clubhouse might limit participation. Further, individual preferences on participating in the Clubhouse program and personal decisions on organizing one's daily life and leisure time affected the

frequency of online participation and the need for a laptop for Clubhouse activities. Closure of the Clubhouses interrupted the familiar routine for members who frequented their Clubhouse often. According to the results, staying at home reduced participation in the Clubhouse program when a member had more challenges in independent coping with the laptop and the need for face-to-face support available at the Clubhouse. However, every interviewee without other duties participated in virtual Clubhouse activity of their choice almost every weekday.

The manual for developing virtual Clubhouse operations identifies levels of participation in the virtual Clubhouse. A member may have a passive role by participating in meetings at the Clubhouse while the meeting is also active online. A more active role would entail participating at the Clubhouse by using the Clubhouse equipment or the laptop either with another member or alone but having support available when needed. Active members participate from home and speak in the meetings, while members on the agency level are active in meetings and take care of responsibilities for conducting the meetings. (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021b, 10). The results do not indicate how active roles members had in online meetings. Whereas participating in online meetings might be purposeful and interactive, it does not require creating or sharing content which Lutz et al. (2014, 2. Online participation: The concept, para 2, para. 6) associate with online participation.

The results suggest that a minority of the Clubhouse members are on the agency level as defined by ESKOT ry (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021b, 10) in terms of organizing and hosting live streams among Clubhouse members. Organizing and hosting online discussions appeared to be typical ways of participating for one member. However, this type of participation online might be less frequent because of duties outside Clubhouse activities. Discussion online might be mutually active, but the host has more responsibility in planning the online program and inviting people to the meeting. Actively choosing to reach and affect audiences online for a purpose commonly accepted as beneficial might be perceived as the ideal of online participation (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 885). However, the agency with Internet use is associated with active yet voluntary and self-chosen ways of

online participation (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 889). Most Internet users participate in less involving ways that still might be helpful (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 885, 886). Content by active members might benefit others in the online community (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 888), which the member-hosted groups that provided emotional support through social interaction, and interest in following the Facebook group, indicated. The results suggest that content by other members of the Clubhouse Facebook group made a beginner want to learn skills for creating similar content. Those who do not create content may still devote cognitive and emotional effort to their interests pursued online (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 881). According to the results, creating content for the Clubhouse program did not associate with the frequency of participating online. The results indicated that motivation to use the Internet and learn new skills and regular use of the Internet for various purposes are associated with active participation in the virtual Clubhouse.

Members have different styles regarding how active a role they have in the online community. Therefore, online participation that implies creative and interactive Internet use and sharing of content with a social purpose (Lutz et al. 2014, 2. Online participation: The concept, para. 2, para 6) might not signify whether digital skills training and support by Clubhouses yielded successful outcomes for the members or whether members find virtual Clubhouse beneficial. However, online participation might indicate that members motivated to create online content have sufficient digital skills that enable using laptops for meaningful purposes, which is suggestive of digital participation (Hänninen et al. 2021, 41). Creating online content and organizing online groups might provide further opportunities for utilizing digital skills, thus building self-esteem and self-efficacy through online participation.

Creating online content is time and energy-consuming and requires sufficient digital skills (Blank 2013, 591). Content creation related to online participation requires technical skills, the ability to speak or write persuasively, and personal commitment (Blank 2013, 597). The threshold for creating content might feel exhausting for people with mental health conditions which might even result in guilt over not participating (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 888). Older people are less prone to use multiple digital devices and might have lower confidence in their abilities

(Blank 2013, 601, 602). Online participation might not always be intentional or based on motivation but inflicted by other people, purposes, or situations, which might impede the freedom of choice in participation. (Lutz & Hoffman 2017, 885, 886). In addition to the lack of motivation or incentive to participate, some people might be uncomfortable about being exposed online or worried about how others might perceive them (Blank 2013, 596; Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 887). Cognitive and sensory impairments may limit the ability to self-expression online (Chadwick et al. 2013b, 383).

Content creation can also refer to social and recreational online participation, including posting photos and uploading videos on social networking sites (Blank 2013, 597, 598). Based on the results, online participation of this type is attainable and increasingly common among many Clubhouse members. Older members had started to post video clips to Facebook during municipal elections, suggesting that social events within the community might unite people and inspire them to use digital tools in more versatile ways. Social network sites might provide a new sphere of activity, especially for older people already civically involved, while politically involved people might have more social contacts online (Vitak, Zube, Smock, Carr, Ellison & Lampe 2011, 6; Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 879; Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 309, 310, 315). On the other hand, political participation is associated with a greater sense of community (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 311).

8.5 The meaning of online community

The Clubhouse is a source of social capital for Clubhouse members. Social capital, including community activities, social contacts, and a sense of belonging, may support the obtainment of economic assets and knowledge, skills, and experiences that enable one to function in society (van Dijk 2005, 157, 158, referring to Quan-Haase, Wellman, Witte & Hampton 2002, 292, 293). Participating in organizations is associated with a greater sense of community (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 311), and a strong sense of community and close relationships are associated with increased Internet use at home (Chen, Boase & Wellman 2002, 104). However, Internet use does not seem to affect the general sense of community

(Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 310, 311, 316). The results suggested that members associated a sense of community with their experiences of the in-house program and face-to-face contacts rather than online interaction.

Home access and diverse Internet use are associated with a greater sense of online community (Chen et al. 2002, 100, 101, 105, 106; Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 311), suggesting that having a laptop at home and digital skills could increase the sense of community in the virtual Clubhouse. According to the results, the members maintained some feeling of social connectedness and belonging by participating online, and frequent participation in the online program helped develop a positive sense of online community. More experience with computers and an active role in online participation appeared to be associated with a view that virtual Clubhouse had been implemented successfully and was a comfortable place to be.

The results coincide with the findings of the member survey by ESKOT ry in the Uusimaa region (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a, 35, 49) in that the members appreciated the flexibility of the hybrid model Clubhouse with both in-house and online operations. Perceived benefits of the online program coincided with the findings by Kostamo and Pekkarinen (2021a, 36, 49) in that maintaining social contacts with other members was possible online, the online program enabled planning the daily schedule from home, and the opportunity to stay up to date with current Clubhouse issues. As Kostamo and Pekkarinen (2021a, 35, 36, 49) found, members still preferred the in-house program. Especially members who could participate in the Clubhouse program regularly longed for opportunities to visit their Clubhouse during contact restrictions. A minority of members have considered online participation sufficient (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a, 35, 36, 49). None of the interviewed members regarded a mere online program as a viable option.

Online environments can provide safe spaces for social interactions (Asmar et al. 2022, 297). A WhatsApp group monitored by staff was a safe space for people to share their experiences and ask advice, and take part in joint activities, indicating it served individual and group-oriented socio-emotional needs and task-oriented

purposes that might reinforce personal and social identity development and group belongingness (Toder-Alon & Brunel 2007, 379, 381, 382). A member who organized streams on weekends acknowledged potential problems related to conflicts in online groups and the role of the host and members in ensuring everyone followed the norms for discussion and behavior.

Conflicts are a natural part of the interaction processes of an online community, but they can be periods for reconsidering the ground rules for interaction that might strengthen group cohesion (Toder-Alon & Brunel 2007, 391). The negative side of online participation includes inappropriate or offensive speech or conduct (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 880, 885). Members and online community hosts may contribute to overcoming tension in the online community and reaffirming the personal and social identities of the community members by cultivating a group mindset (Toder-Alon & Brunel 2007, 387).

During the pandemic, joining online get-togethers hosted by other members brought comfort to those homebound because of the social isolation requirements. Hence, while laptops might enable active online participation, they serve as means for providing emotional care for the members (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 208). The effect of social contact online on reducing isolation is not straightforward in the absence of offline social contact (Wellman 2000, 9). High Internet use is also associated with lower offline social contacts, higher depression, and loneliness (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 295). Internet use does not reduce the need for offline social contact (Chen et al. 2002, 105). Neither does using social networking sites necessarily reduce loneliness, as an increase in online social contact might coincide with a more sociable personality type (Brandtzæg 2012, 484). Chatting is associated with a strong sense of online community (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 311). Contrary to the findings by Brandtzæg and Heim (2009, 151), the principal motivation for members using Facebook did not appear to be getting in contact with new people but keeping in touch with existing social contacts.

Internet may enable sustaining social connections online irrelevant of physical distance (Wellman, Boase & Chen 2002, 153, 154; Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 296,

297), and social interaction online might supplement face-to-face and phone contacts (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 295, 296). However, involvement with organizations for Internet users might not increase unless there is an interest in such activity (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 297). Face-to-face and phone contact might be more appropriate than online efforts to engage people in organizational activities and maintain participation (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 308). According to Ağlamaz and Rodríguez-Menés (2021, 14), older people might rely more on traditional forms of social communication, which coincided with the results of this thesis. The results suggested that the virtual Clubhouse might be more beneficial for maintaining daily interaction rather than drawing more members to the Clubhouse program.

8.6 Material and physical access

Community centers, which in this context are comparable to Clubhouses, may lower initial barriers to Internet access by introducing the Internet to new computer users (Chen et al. 2002, 104; Lee & Maher 2021, 16). Among Clubhouse members in Southern Finland, the lack of appropriate digital equipment for virtual Clubhouse participation was one of the reasons why some members have not participated online (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a, 35). Contracts for loan laptops allowed Clubhouse members cost-free access to digital devices and the Internet, including device maintenance at the Clubhouse.

The cost of devices might not be a fundamental reason for not using digital technology and online services (Valtiovarainministeriö & Digi- ja väestötietovirasto 2020, 17). However, lack of income might still be a barrier, especially for the elderly and people with disabilities (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 198; Dobransky & Hargittai 2006, 330; Lee & Maher 2021, 16), and the cost of Internet connections can add to the financial barrier (Spanakis et al. 2021b, 530). Regarding the results, loan laptops removed the financial barriers to material access that interviewees related to purchasing a computer or replacing old equipment. The members received cost-free digital support and maintenance for loan devices and equipment they owned (Päivi Lepistö, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

According to the definition of physical access by van Dijk (2005, 48), physical access in the Clubhouse context means that members and staff have entry to digital devices with Internet connections. During contact restrictions, a member considered it difficult to use a computer at the Clubhouse. Most members had access to the Clubhouse Facebook group outside laptop loan periods by a smartphone. However, the results did not indicate whether members participated in real-time group activities except online messaging using smartphones.

Home access increased autonomy of use as members could use loan devices irrelevant to office hours at the Clubhouse and for their chosen purposes (Hargittai & Hinnant 2008, 606; Hargittai 2003, 829). Home access is associated with increased involvement with the Internet (Chen et al. 2002, 100, 101), and it increases the likelihood of creating online content (Schradie 2011, 161). For members without access to other digital devices than the laptop and for a member who rarely used a smartphone for online purposes, online time had increased when having the loan device at home. However, the lack of digital skills could limit the autonomy of use, especially during contact restrictions (Hargittai & Hinnant 2008, 606).

8.7 Motivation

Motivational issues may vary from not feeling a need or interest in using the Internet or spending money for it, having other interests, or worrying about safety issues and online fraud. Motives for non-use might also stem from lack of money, not having usage opportunities, or operating skills (van Dijk 2005, 28, 29, 30, 31). Opportunities for cost-free access in communities may raise initial interest and positive experiences toward technology (Lee & Maher 2021, 16). Greer et al. (2019, 7) and Farooq et al. (2015, 773) recommend considering free or subsidized Internet access to promote Internet uptake for people with mental health conditions. The cost-free laptop inspired a beginner in computer use and resulted in purchasing a laptop with financial aid. Most participants wanted to renew the loans unless there was an opportunity to acquire a personal device. It is unknown

whether not continuing the loan period was due to a personal decision or the circulation of the loan devices between Clubhouse members because of the limited number of loan laptops. However, in many Clubhouses, most loan laptops were left unused (Päivi Lepistö, personal communication, August 3, 2022).

Helping non-users to identify the potential benefits of Internet use might encourage them to adopt technology (Gell, Rosenberg, Demiris, LaCroix & Patel 2015, 419). Technology use relating to personal interests is associated with agency and active and frequent Internet use (Näslund & Gardelli 2013, 35, 38; Lee & Maher 2021, 18), which is why engaging older people should focus on what they want from using technology before considering their supposed needs for technology (Lee & Maher 2021, 17). The COVID-19 pandemic might have created a necessity for non-digitally engaged people with mental health conditions to go online (Spanakis et al. 2021b, 530). During the COVID-19 contact restrictions, virtual Clubhouse was the only option for active Clubhouse participation, which might have been a compelling yet stressful motivator for members to start using digital devices. Although external pressure might increase interest in Internet use for beneficial purposes, a lack of motivation and agency in deciding to participate might result in low-level action (Lutz & Hoffman 2017, 885, 886).

Experience related to the initial engagement with technology can be a determining factor for future use (Lee & Maher 2021, 17) and autonomy of computer use and positive online experiences contribute to the development of online skills (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 203). It appeared that the Clubhouses had succeeded in the initial engagement of members who had positive experiences using the laptops at home. Beginners had been training their digital skills and used the laptops at the Clubhouses before the pandemic, suggesting they had genuine motivation for Internet use of some type. Peers moving online might have increased motivation to participate in the virtual Clubhouse community (Dobransky & Hargittai 2006, 317).

Based on the results, personal preferences and needs, age, and familiarity with computers might affect motivation to learn new skills. Courses might be beneficial

for beginners to find what interests them online and earn course certificates (Lepistö 2020, 6). However, not all course contents were considered relevant for own computer use. The perceived relevance of Internet use in everyday life impacts its adoption (Chen & Wellman 2005, 529). According to Farooq et al. (2015, 773) and Greer et al. (2019, 7), efforts to enhance digital inclusion for people with mental health conditions should focus more on detecting individual interests that might invoke the desire to use digital technology. Merely providing IT training and computer literacy might create computer anxiety, one of the factors preventing motivation for computer use (van Dijk 2017a, 202, 203). The results suggested that older Clubhouse members might consider digital skills training on a course too overwhelming when adjusting to using digital devices.

Older adults outside of working life might lack incentives for learning digital skills (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 198). All members valued learning new skills and opportunities to learn skills. Members new to computers appeared to be most interested in learning various new skills. Lack of bank ID was an acknowledged barrier to online services during the COVID-19 epidemic (Tynkkynen 2022, para. 31). However, the results suggest that members might not need or want to use online services requiring strong authentication. On the other hand, a member with a recurrent need for face-to-face assistance with the laptop was interested in learning how to use online banking and online public services, which raises questions of risks and responsibilities related to the autonomy of use and methods for assisting members in Internet use (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 886).

User motivation or intent might not be observable behavior, meaning that non-participation may base on one's decision to opt-out of certain types of Internet use, which does not equal non-engagement (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 881, 882, 889). Although none of the members mentioned personal experiences of online threats, limited laptop use could rest on a determined opinion justified by the perceived safety of Internet use. Cautious Internet use did not appear to limit using the Internet for desired purposes. The virtual Clubhouse provided a safe platform for online participation, which an experienced computer user could use to influence others and share online content. The results do not indicate the motivation

of other members for such influencing and observable participation. However, a member with a recurring need for support was interested in online participation.

8.8 Skills

Gaining material access can be a problem for vulnerable groups. However, the lack of sufficient skills to use the Internet has become an even more significant barrier to digital inclusion and thus to societal participation (van Deursen & van Dijk 2011, 908; Heponiemi et al. 2020, 9). The virtual Clubhouse is aimed at members to gain experiences of success that promote positive self-esteem through learning digital skills that might also benefit them in working life or studies (Lepistö 2020, 7). According to the report based on the member survey, half of the respondents in Clubhouses under ESKOT ry in Southern Finland had good digital skills, and forty percent described themselves as Digi natives. Clubhouse members have associated needs for training skills with using online video platforms for virtual Clubhouse participation, features of the Salesforce program used for Clubhouse-related work, and information security issues (Kostamo & Pekkarinen 2021a, 49).

The members had learned digital skills at the Clubhouses and courses. The results indicated that members had learned to use the online collaboration platform chosen at their Clubhouse for online meetings and groups, and every respondent had sufficient skills for independent laptop use. Clubhouse staff was of help in learning the basic computer skills. A digital skills course appeared appropriate for training basic operational and informational skills for those who had first familiarized themselves with laptop use assisted by a study coach or had prior experience using the Internet. The course enabled honing existing skills in Internet search.

A member with a history of independent learning of digital skills emphasized the meaning of learning by doing. None of the members appeared to need advanced software skills. One of them utilized digital support for creating content for the virtual Clubhouse program and participating online in associations. A member with a recurrent need for face-to-face support specified wishes for new skills, the

primary of which was to learn how to post photos on Facebook like peers. Limited Internet use might have reduced the need for improving information security skills for beginners, whereas an experienced computer user was knowledgeable of information security issues.

Light web searching is the most common type of Internet use, and some users might consider it a sufficient skill (Blank 2013, 591; Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 302). The results suggested that a member might be content with Internet surfing while not having specific needs for more skills. Older members might perceive online interaction with family and friends and posting pictures or video clips on WhatsApp or Facebook as sufficient considering their needs for Internet use. Internet use. However, beginners might benefit from face-to-face training to become more fluent Internet users as the contact restrictions interrupted learning.

8.9 Personal barriers to using digital technology

Inexperienced users might not be able to reap the benefits of Internet use in their daily lives (Chen et al. 2002, 104). However, among all Internet users, inequalities in benefitting from Internet use exist (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 196). Computer and Internet use requires cognitive resources for the basic knowledge of computers and the ability to use them (van Dijk 2005, 37). Conditions related to older age, including cognitive impairments, are associated with less use of technology and lower digital skills (Gell et al. 2015, 418; Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 208). Older age and types of disability might predispose to less use of capital-enhancing and instrumental activities (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 207, 208; Dobransky & Hargittai 2006, 328).

Mild cognitive impairments might not hamper ICT use or learning of digital skills, while usual age-related causes could explain non-use (Rosenberg et al. 2009, 222). Creating skilled content can be challenging for the elderly as acquiring technical skills might be compromised (Blank 2013, 601). Older Clubhouse members might face barriers to using and benefitting from the Internet because of the recent arrival of digital technology in their lives (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 198,

207; Chen et al. 2002, 92). Creating skilled content can be challenging for the elderly as acquiring technical skills might be compromised (Blank 2013, 601). People with cognitive impairments might have difficulties understanding online elements and the interaction between performed action and the computer response (Chadwick et al. (2013b, 383). For an inexperienced computer user, notifications on the computer could be confusing, and the fear of pressing the wrong button sometimes hampered independent Internet use. Memorizing long sequences of commands needed to enter web pages might make navigating the Internet difficult (Chadwick et al. (2013b, 383). According to the results, cognitive challenges affected learning and might have limited Internet use to familiar websites and prevented performing more elaborative tasks needed for diverse use of online services.

Challenges in decision-making and remembering, or other cognitive impairments that might accompany mental health conditions, might reduce the capability of taking responsibility for one's participation, thus possibly increasing the risk for involuntary or even detrimental forms of online participation (Lutz & Hoffmann 2017, 886). The results suggest that challenges in independent coping with the laptop and different applications might affect which features of the virtual Clubhouse a member can use and limit the diversity of Internet use for preferred purposes. Further, organizing a daily schedule around real-time activities online at home appeared to be more challenging which might associate with cognitive impairments affecting concentrating, remembering, and using the laptop independently.

The appropriateness of digital devices for the specific needs of older adults and other groups should be considered (Hänninen et al. 2021, 36, referring to Hong et al. 2016) as difficulties relating to technical useability are common barriers to using digital equipment (Hänninen et al. 2021, 35, referring to Kotilainen & Mäkinen 2006, Sirkkunen & Kotilainen 2004 & Rantanen 2003). Laptops provided better usability than smartphones and enabled concentrating on creating online content for the virtual Clubhouse.

8.10 Internet use and digital participation

In addition to motivation and physical access to computers and the Internet and sufficient skills for using them, a user must have the need, occasion, obligation, time, or effort for actual use (van Dijk 2005, 95). Digital participation is associated with regular and voluntary computer use for meaningful purposes (Chen & Wellman 2005, 528; Hänninen et al. 2021, 41), and this type of computer and Internet use is associated with a stronger sense of efficacy or perceived control over one's life (Chen & Wellman 2005, 529). Home access increased opportunities for digital participation, as members had access to online services and content (Seifert & Rössel 2019). Regular involvement with the virtual Clubhouse indicates digital participation, but some members might benefit from face-to-face assistance in developing a routine in the online program.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, using the Internet several times a day became more common, especially among older adults (Tilastokeskus 2020). Internet use related to seeking information on health and financial issues and educational and job opportunities, getting news online, interacting with government services, online banking, e-commerce, taking online classes, and sharing created content online, is referred to as capital-enhancing activities (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 196, 202, 204; Dobransky & Hargittai 2006, 328). Most members could search for specific information online, but the results did not indicate whether they searched for information on health and financial issues. Job and educational matters did not appear relevant for most members in their stage of life.

Not all members had the means for strong identification, limiting the ability to use the laptop for running errands with public online services and online banking. However, the members were comfortable with this issue, considering using these services as irrelevant in their life stage, indicating that their Internet use was sufficient for their purposes. One member used the laptop for online banking or public services and appeared to be the only one sharing content on the Clubhouse program. Two members were familiar with online shopping.

In 2020, the year of the Covid-19 outbreak in Finland, reading online magazines and following news sites became common among older adults (Tilastokeskus 2020). Active information seeking and interest in news, cultural events, and sports might indicate involvement with organizations rather than passive activities such as watching television for entertainment (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 309). Most members had read or watched online news. A digitally skilled member used the smartphone instead of the laptop for checking news updates.

According to Hargittai and Dobransky (2017, 207, 208), older adults might be more interested in using the Internet for interpersonal communication but have fewer skills for pursuing capital-enhancing activities associated with more socio-economic opportunities (Hargittai & Dobransky 2017, 207, 208). Contacting family and friends is typical online activity among older people new to the Internet (Chen et al. 2002, 104). The pandemic increased the number of older adults aged between 65 and 89 using social networking services in Finland by almost sixty percent. However, less than half of the people aged between 65 and 74 followed social networking services in 2020. (Tilastokeskus 2020). Referring to the experiences of a member, older members had adapted to using online instant messaging by joining a WhatsApp group.

Based on the results, beginners used Facebook Messenger for online contact with nearby people. The availability of digital devices and personal communicating habits affected whether members used online messaging applications. Using Facebook Messenger was more frequent for a member without a smartphone, while a member who preferred phone calls had not adapted to using online messaging applications. More sociable people might use various online messaging tools and the phone for communicating with friends and relatives. However, phone calls might enable better social presence and remain popular (Chen et al. 2002, 96; Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 313). The results do not indicate whether all members knew how to use WhatsApp on the laptop.

Determining which types of Internet use are capital-enhancing or beneficial is not straightforward (van Deursen & van Dijk 2014, 522; Chen et al. 2002, 74); through having agency in Internet use, all engagement with the Internet might lead to

increased self-esteem and self-efficacy for beginners (Näslund & Gardelli 2013, 35). Home access and using the Internet at a community center parallel to using a computer at the Clubhouse are associated with more recreational Internet use (Chen et al. 2002, 99). The shift from using the computer at the Clubhouse to home access with the laptop increased interest in more diverse recreational computer use. Based on the results, using YouTube and television streaming services was popular among the members.

Increased recreational Internet use combined with more experience with the Internet could result in more instrumental use, including using emails and online databases, participating in online courses and groups, engaging in online shopping, and surfing websites (Chen et al. 2002, 97, 98). All members could participate in the groups and chats facilitated by the virtual Clubhouse, but cognitive impairments affecting functional capacity might have challenged active and independent participation. Surfing websites increased with the laptop for a member who had been using a computer at the Clubhouse.

Despite difficulties in navigating the Internet and occasional fear of pressing the wrong button, a member had used the Internet for various recreational purposes and interacting with close people on Facebook. Internet use for recreational and social purposes may lead to socially beneficial outcomes, including emotional satisfaction, social capital, participation, and learning (Warschauer 2003, 214). Further, increased Internet use for social and entertainment purposes might result in new social connections in or outside the Clubhouse, and more diverse social circles could lead members to more information (Wellman 2000, 9, 10; Blank 2013, 608; Chen et al. 2002, 84).

Social interaction through online networks enables one to foster weak ties with acquaintances (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 295, 296). Co-operating with others through online networks might support people in achieving their goals and reinforce relationships that yield beneficial outcomes for the community (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 296; Ağlamaz & Rodríguez-Menés 2021, 14). Those with a lengthy history of using the Internet might be prone to interact with other skilled users, which is associated with more Internet use (Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 301). A

member experienced with computers used the laptop to engage with the Clubhouse and other organizations. Positive social experiences from this type of instrumental use reinforce social connections offline (Chen et al. 2002, 105, 106).

The most common form of communication on the Internet is email (Tilastokeskus 2020 para. 3). Email use can be beneficial for increasing online and offline relationships (Näslund 2009, 93, 94). Whereas most members could use emails, all were not confident in their skills in using an email platform. On the other hand, some members might not need emails for communicating or maintaining social contacts. Email use is commonplace among inexperienced users, but it might increase with more online experience (Blank 2013, 591; Quan-Haase et al. 2002, 302), suggesting that this type of instrumental use might increase among members over time as they engage online. Diverse types of instrumental use might increase among the members as their skills improve (Chen et al. 2002, 97).

9 CONCLUSIONS

During the writing of this thesis, the hybrid model Clubhouse was a new concept, and the online implementation of the virtual Clubhouse is still evolving. The results provided an overview of how the Clubhouse members experienced the initial phases of the online community. Maintaining Clubhouse engagement and contacts by facilitating opportunities to participate online was the principal concern in Clubhouses during contact restrictions. The pandemic did not only force elderly members to adapt to the online environment but challenged their daily coping. Digital skills training facilitated at Clubhouses before the pandemic helped members adapt to the online environment. Regardless of their skill level, the members developed sufficient skills that enabled independent coping with the laptop through the initial and most difficult stages of adjusting online, including instrumental laptop use for participating in the virtual Clubhouse.

Members had the mindset of moving online. They gained confidence in participating in the virtual Clubhouse with the laptop from home. The motivation to move online, utilize opportunities to learn new skills, and take Internet use as part of everyday life impacted the acquisition of digital skills that enabled adapting to the virtual Clubhouse. Members actively involved in the Clubhouse operations managed to maintain the Clubhouse program in their daily routine. Home access appeared beneficial, especially for those who could maintain frequent contact with the Clubhouse online or had sufficient skills to create content for the virtual Clubhouse program. However, personal barriers to Internet access relating to functional capacity appeared to impact the ability to independent participation.

During the COVID-19 contact restrictions, members benefitted from the emotional support of the online community, while they could also use laptops for maintaining social contacts outside the Clubhouse. However, using loan laptops did not appear to increase Clubhouse contacts compared to the pre-pandemic situation, and the appeal of the virtual Clubhouse for reaching new or distant members is not unambiguous. The physical Clubhouse holds a more significant meaning for the sense of community for members who have adjusted to frequenting

their Clubhouse; the in-house program with meals and coffee at the Clubhouse is at the epicenter of the Clubhouse activities, and the active Clubhouse members will continue visiting the Clubhouse. For people with cognitive impairments, the personal support available at the Clubhouse might be necessary for keeping up with the real-time program online.

WhatsApp and Facebook groups were beneficial social networking services for engaging with other members and following online content. Online interaction with others and seeing content posted by other members inspired learning more skills and diverse use of digital tools. Remote digital support provided by Clubhouses was beneficial for creating online content for the virtual Clubhouse program for hosting groups. Creating content might indicate personal preferences for such participation, the ability to build on existing digital skills, and opportunities to create online content on the virtual Clubhouse. Online participation might increase as the hybrid model Clubhouse evolves, the Clubhouses open for participating and learning in groups, and members develop their skills.

Considering the need to adjust online within a short time because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the members adapted well to the hybrid model Clubhouse. Home access and the virtual Clubhouse might make the Clubhouse program more inclusive because members can engage according to their condition and coordinate Clubhouse activities in their schedule. From a member-based view, the hybrid model Clubhouse might provide flexible means to engage with the Clubhouse program for those who experience social anxiety or sudden changes in their condition, affecting the ability to perform around others. Promoting equality in the virtual Clubhouse requires reserving opportunities to participate online at the Clubhouse, supported by skilled staff or peers. Opportunities for supported online participation might increase after the contact restrictions.

Clubhouses are social support networks supporting material and skills access of Clubhouse members. Loan devices lowered the financial threshold considered a barrier to material access to the Internet. Further, free-of-charge digital support and device maintenance contributed to overcoming material access. Laptops with Internet connections and availability of digital support increased autonomy of use

and improved the quality of Internet access. Based on the results, home access increased time online for members without other digital equipment, and laptops provided better useability than smartphones.

Opportunities to borrow laptops and participate in digital skills training might evoke new inspiration and increase Internet use for those without equipment who do not engage in daily Internet use. However, it is uncertain whether loan laptops could be beneficial for increasing the attendance of non-active Clubhouse members in the Clubhouse program. The challenge is engaging older members who have chosen not to participate in online activities, have issues related to computer anxiety, or have conditions that challenge learning digital skills. Promoting digital participation might require considering how to fuel motivation in frequent Internet use.

Cost-free devices lowered the threshold for motivational access. Most members wanted to renew the laptop loan or continue Internet use with another device and learn more skills, suggesting they had confidence in laptop use and enough positive online experiences to maintain motivation for continuing use. However, it appeared that the time between laptop loan periods could be a barrier to access for those motivated to be online. The limited number of laptops and six-month loan periods at Clubhouses might cause interruptions to Internet use if the number of laptop users grows. The number of loan devices might not be sufficient for everyone willing to go online, but using them might evoke interest in purchasing equipment, whereas some members might qualify for financial aid. Based on the results of this thesis, using the loan device at home might increase motivation to buy a computer.

Clubhouses were the principal or sole providers of digital skills training and source of digital support for the members, emphasizing the significance of Clubhouses as a social support network that enables learning for beginners and more experienced computer users. Learning new skills appeared to provoke feelings of self-efficacy that might increase agency in laptop use and promote frequent Internet use. Clubhouses had organized opportunities to learn digital skills based

on the specific needs of the member base in each community. The size of the Clubhouse community and staff determined the coordination of digital support.

The pandemic interrupted digital skills training and challenged organizing digital support. However, the availability of computer maintenance and support at the Clubhouses benefitted Clubhouse members by increasing ease of use and online security during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was not evident to people compelled to start using the Internet during the pandemic (Beaunoyer et al. 2020, 7). Members coping independently with the laptops were content with the combination of face-to-face and over-the-phone support during the limited opportunities to visit their Clubhouse. Personal and encouraging face-to-face assistance organized within limitations helped maintain contact with the Clubhouse and engage in the online program when independent coping was challenging.

As recommended by (Greer et al. 2019, 7), the members could receive assistance with using the laptops according to their individual needs for skills by asking for support. One-on-one teaching served individuals new to computers, with conditions challenging learning, and those creating online content. Focusing on providing Clubhouse members opportunities to learn basic digital skills at their own pace and not trying to introduce them to more elaborate skills, especially during the initial stages of adjusting online, was an appropriate approach to engage members in participating in the virtual Clubhouse and using the Internet. The results suggest that some members might be content with their present digital skills.

Clubhouses have adopted a member-based approach to increasing the digital inclusion of the Clubhouse members considering individual solutions for including members in activities (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2022b). The virtual Clubhouse enhanced equality in the Clubhouses in that members with limited skills could participate online in the principal parts of the online program. Digital support increased opportunities for online participation in the virtual Clubhouse and one's chosen purposes outside the Clubhouse program. Whereas more diverse Internet use increased the need for digital support in information security issues, the availability of digital support at the Clubhouse increased trust in laptop use.

The members actively used the laptops, including online applications and services, for their chosen purposes, which is indicative of digital participation (Hänninen et al. 2021, 41). Availability of face-to-face support, trust in one's capabilities to learn, and frequent Internet use for informational, recreational, and social purposes was associated with versatile laptop use. However, a condition affecting learning and consequent lack of digital skills could limit independent Internet use for desired purposes. Limited use of certain online features might impede learning to use them more easily. On the other hand, the lack of trust in Internet use for money involving errands and no need to run errands with public services reduced the use of related online services.

Following online news was typical capital-enhancing activity for the members. Recreational use of the Internet, also regular among members, might prepare them for more skilled and diverse Internet use (Chen et al. 2002, 97, 98). Social purposes of Internet use included contact with the Clubhouse, interacting with other organizations, and maintaining contact with nearby people. Internet use for social purposes enabled emotional support through voluntary participation in the online community and might have increased social contact. Social interaction online might yield beneficial outcomes in the offline world indicative of digital inclusion (Helsper 2012, 405, 406, 412, 413; van Dijk 2017a, 204; van Deursen & Helsper 2015, 45; Warschauer 2003, 214).

Internet access should reduce digital and social inequalities. The ultimate ideal of digital inclusion is that Internet use contributes to a person's offline resources, appearing as improvements in different realms of life such as employment, education, and social connections, entailing social inclusion (Helsper 2012, 410, 413; van Dijk 2017a, 204; van Deursen & Helsper 2015, 45; Perlgut 2011, 9). Frequent Internet use is needed for skills to improve and for digital inclusion to actualize. The motivation of Clubhouse members to learn skills and continue using the laptops suggests there is potential for them to learn digital skills that allow engaging in more diverse Internet use. Vice versa, members who use the Internet for various purposes are likely to attain new skills over time, resulting in Internet use that potentially yields beneficial outcomes in their lives. Depending on their individual goals, members might connote different things as beneficial outcomes.

Clubhouses have contributed to the digital inclusion of their members by removing barriers to material and physical access and supporting them in gaining digital skills. The motivation of members to benefit from these measures was the principal factor in why they were successful. However, the beneficial effects of Internet use in the offline world might appear after several years of online engagement.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

Näslund (2009, 92) advocates for a sustainable society where one can participate online on one's terms. Voluntary participation is integral to digital inclusion and Clubhouse membership. Based on the results of this thesis, intensive promotion of online participation in terms of frequent engagement in the virtual Clubhouse program and actively creating online content for the program might not be an appropriate approach to engage members online. The use of certain features of the virtual Clubhouse considered as requiring low effort, such as emails, might not be evident for all Clubhouse members, who might have a long-lasting need for support for learning skills that enable them to participate online. Planning Clubhouse work-related online tasks according to the individual abilities of Clubhouse members to participate might raise interest in the virtual Clubhouse.

The involvement of members with different skill levels in the virtual Clubhouse might increase the dissemination of skills among members, which might contribute to the further development of instrumental skills such as using emails and autonomy in laptop use. Peers using computers might lower the computer anxiety of beginners and help them find online interests. Providing more opportunities for participating in the virtual Clubhouse online with peers at the Clubhouse after contact restrictions might advance the development of digital skills and agency for the members through cooperation. Members could learn to host online groups together at the Clubhouse, lowering the threshold of online participation and creating online content. Promoting recreational and social use might increase other types of Internet use by inexperienced members and their learning of new skills. More experienced members might develop new skills by assisting others and by creating and sharing online content, which, in turn, might inspire others to learn more skills and continue laptop use.

A variety of online platforms available increases opportunities to participate in preferred ways and according to one's abilities. Platforms that enable posting content might increase online activity and online participation, whereas content by others might inspire trying digital tools. Although WhatsApp groups are not in

use at all Clubhouses, they could be effortless for maintaining social contacts. Online groups enable discussions about current issues that might increase sharing of content on social media. Streamlining best practices on a national level used on the digital tools and platforms used for implementing the virtual Clubhouse could help develop the hybrid model Clubhouse.

The implementation of digital skills training and support should be appropriate to the local requirements and characteristics of the member base in each Clubhouse. Digital support that enables learning by doing might increase self-efficacy and agency, meaning a sense of control in laptop use, whereas allowing inexperienced members enough time to adopt new skills is beneficial for their learning. The need for learning new skills and receiving digital support might depend on the age distribution of members in Clubhouse communities. From the results of this thesis, it is not evident whether smaller Clubhouse communities with a limited number of staff and peers can consistently provide face-to-face learning opportunities for members with challenges in learning but motivation to use the Internet.

Probing what kinds of skills members wish to learn also in Clubhouses other than those in the region of ESKOT ry could be beneficial for developing digital skills training according to the needs of Clubhouse members in different Clubhouse communities. Providing opportunities for digital skills training according to preferred learning styles might increase digital inclusion (Greer et al. 2019, 7). Based on the results, individual teaching at the Clubhouse provided by staff and peers might be the most appropriate way of learning the basic skills for beginners. Courses might cause computer anxiety for inexperienced users but serve those possessing some basic digital skills.

Greer et al. (2019, 7) and Farooq et al. (2015, 773) suggest probing the learners' interests to evoke their motivation for Internet use. The perceived benefits of course contents might not be the same for all members. Some members might not have the means for strong authentication needed for online services, which might be worth considering when planning courses. The Finnish Clubhouse Coalition could examine the individual interests of Clubhouse members in the offline

world and raise awareness of the benefits of Internet use for pursuing these interests online to increase the appeal of online engagement. Opportunities to receive assistance specific to interests might encourage more Clubhouse members to pursue interests online. Further, informing Clubhouse members about the availability of digital support facilitated by Clubhouses might raise trust in non-users to start using digital devices. Co-operating with external agencies of interest to Clubhouse members could be beneficial for introducing their online operations to members.

According to the results, a member with a recurrent need for face-to-face support might be interested in learning various new skills. Laptop use at home raises ethical questions related to promoting the autonomy of Internet use while considering information security issues when members pursue their interests online. If the digital skills of the members improve, the digital support organized by Clubhouses might need to be responsive to new emerging needs (Seale 2014, 226). The need for digitally skilled staff and peers might increase if more members with the recurrent need for face-to-face support start using loan laptops.

Including the virtual Clubhouse as part of permanent operations requires embedding participatory practices as part of the activities. Ensuring Clubhouse operations promote participation requires that members have opportunities to influence the virtual Clubhouse and assistance in pursuing their interests online outside the Clubhouse activities. (Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos 2022b). Facilitating online participation is necessary after contact restrictions to ensure equal and inclusive practices. Provided that more Clubhouse members have opportunities to go online, digitally skilled staff and peers are available at the Clubhouses, and over-the-phone, digital skills training continues after the contact restrictions and members are involved in developing the virtual Clubhouse as in the principals of the Clubhouse program, there is potential for further increasing digital inclusion of Clubhouse members.

Fostering online engagement, autonomy and agency might require considering options beyond loan devices. The Finnish Clubhouse Coalition can utilize the re-

sults of this thesis in combination with the existing reports for developing the hybrid model of Clubhouse operations. A follow-up of how Clubhouse members have adapted to the hybrid model Clubhouse and outcomes of Internet use for the offline resources mentioned in chapter 2.1 could be topics for further studies on the digital inclusion of Clubhouse members. Further research within the Clubhouse context could go further into how participating online has evolved among members with different levels of digital skills and their motivation for online participation. For purposes of regional development of the operations, these studies could be conducted in distinctive Clubhouse communities or within Clubhouses operating under their shared associations.

11 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The digital divide, or digital exclusion, and digital inclusion, are interdisciplinary topics studied in communication science, sociology, psychology, economy, and educational science (van Dijk 2017b, Research history, para.1). In digital divide research, concepts such as digital inclusion and digital participation are used interchangeably, are overlapping, and have no established evaluation framework (Hänninen et al. 2021, 8, referring to Owal Group 2019). Further, the Finnish translations are new and ambiguous, making it challenging to discern their meaning. Digital transformation predominantly refers to the digitalization of businesses, whereas the digitalization of the third sector is a more recent phenomenon.

Applying foreign research material on digitalization in the thesis required considering its feasibility in the Finnish context. Most of the information available about the digitalization of social services in Finland applies to public sector services and the challenges and benefits of using services from a service users' point of view. Challenge for the thesis was considering the appropriateness of themes and concepts in the context of the unique mental health-promoting Clubhouse practice in the Finnish operating environment and combining English and Finnish source literature.

The thesis process included planning, considering appropriate analysis methods, performing the data analysis, and drafting the thesis, which was a thorough practice of conducting academic research and data analysis. The process involved familiarizing myself with the diverse research literature, reflecting on topics correlating with the research questions and data, and confirming digital technology-related terms. The challenge was developing research questions in the context of Clubhouses and digital inclusion consistent with the results and choosing a theoretical approach appropriate for examining and backing up the results.

Finding the method for the data analysis was a distinct and elaborative part of the thesis process. The analysis process and dialogue between the results and re-

search material led to insights into the benefits, challenges, and social consequences of digitalization for Clubhouse members. The thesis work resulted in an understanding of the approaches by Clubhouses in facilitating opportunities for Clubhouse members to participate online according to their capacity, motivating those at risk of digital exclusion, and encouraging online participation in and outside the virtual Clubhouse.

The assumption that loan laptops and digital skills training and support are beneficial to the Clubhouse members did not change during the thesis process. However, the study increased my understanding of the reasons and methods for the practices applied in Clubhouses. The thesis work led to acknowledging that in their efforts to increase digital inclusion, the Clubhouses might need to balance the rights of Clubhouse members to pursue their interests and goals online and the responsibility to support safe computer use in ways that do not pose a liability risk for the operations.

The thesis raised ethical considerations about how to implement digital support while promoting safe computer use, and the recommendations include suggestions for increasing the digital inclusion of Clubhouse members in ways that promote their autonomy and agency in Internet use. Digital inclusion may happen gradually through the natural evolution of the virtual Clubhouse and even through Clubhouse members using digital devices for recreational purposes. The knowledge gained writing this thesis can be adapted to various service user groups, increasing its professional relevance.

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APPENDIX 1. The frame for the interview with thematic areas

1. The phenomenon: Participation to the virtual Clubhouse

The main categories of the phenomenon: Using loan laptops for participating in the virtual Clubhouse activities, The impact of loan laptops and digital skills training and support on participation and the sense of community.

Thematic areas: Ways of participating, Experiences about online participation, Utilizing digital skills training and support for the purposes of virtual Clubhouse participation

Interview questions:

- **What is your preferred way of participating in the Clubhouse activities?**
- **How long have you been using Clubhouse provided loan equipment and/or digital support?**
- **Where do you use the loan device?**
- **How often do you use a loan laptop for participating in the Clubhouse activities online?**
- **What are your experiences of using the laptop for participating in Clubhouse activities?**
- **How useful has the digital support provided by peers and workers been for you?**
- **Has the digital support helped you in adapting to virtual Clubhouse activities?**
- **What are the advantages of participating in the virtual Clubhouse activities for you?**
- **What are the disadvantages of participating in the virtual Clubhouse activities for you?**

2. The phenomenon: Digital inclusion and digital participation

The main categories of the phenomenon: Internet use, The impact of loan laptops and digital skills training and support on promoting digital inclusion and digital participation

Thematic areas: Internet use for other purposes than virtual Clubhouse participation, Learning digital skills

Interview questions:

- **How has the loan laptop affected your Internet use?**
- **How often do you use a computer?**
- **Where do you use the loan laptop?**
- **What purposes do you mainly use the loan laptop for?**

Use might be related to online banking, online services for public administration and online social and health care services.

Using online services and Internet applications for different purposes may also be thought about with the help of these examples*:

Information and news: using search engines, news services, and reading online newspapers and magazines
Education and career: following online courses, independent learning, finding online courses and training, and searching for job vacancies
Social communication and entertainment: chatting, using social networking sites, online gaming, and downloading or uploading music or video
Shopping and commerce: online shopping, searching products and comparing prices, using online auction platforms

*The clusters of Internet applications with a particular usage purpose by van Dijk (2012b, 203).

- **Have you learned some digital skills by utilizing digital support provided by peers and workers?**

  Digital skills may be thought about with the help of these examples:

  - Using digital devices (computers and smartphones)

- Using browser to access the Internet and search engines for information search

- Using websites and online services

- Using software (eg. Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint)

- Using email

- Using online collaboration platforms (eg. Microsoft Teams)

- Using instant messaging applications (eg. WhatsApp)

- **What are your experiences of the digital training and support provided by your Clubhouse?**

- **What kind of digital skills would you like to achieve?**

3. The phenomenon: Contact restrictions during COVID-19 epidemic

The main categories of the phenomenon: The consequences of COVID-19 contact restrictions to participating in Clubhouse activities, Adapting to the online environment

Thematic areas: Changes in the ways of participating, Opportunities to participate when Clubhouses were closed from members

Interview questions:

- **How did you participate in the Clubhouse activities before the COVID-19 contact restrictions?**

- **How have you been participating in the Clubhouse activities during the COVID-19 contact restrictions?**

- **How well have you been able to participate in the Clubhouse activities during the COVID-19 contact restrictions?**