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**Using Smart Technologies in Mental Health Promotion:  
A Comparative Study of South Korea and Japan**

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the determinants of using smart technologies in mental healthcare intervention and demonstrates the attributes of a comprehensive stepped-care method of mental healthcare. The determinants influence users', experts', authorities' and other stakeholders' views and roles in mental healthcare management. The examined determinants and attributes include user satisfaction, users' positive and negative experiences, their views on the use of technology and their healthy change behavior. The research focuses on pioneering projects using smart technologies in mental healthcare, especially in South Korea and Japan, as these technologies are not currently as widely invested or optimally used in this form of care. The findings of the research can assist the mental healthcare systems in South Korea and Japan to improve mental healthcare services, since users prefer comprehensive stepped-care using smart technologies rather than the hardly accessible "conventional" mental healthcare systems. The new approach can support the transformation of our mental healthcare systems into services that add to the quality of life of people in South Korea and Japan. Furthermore, there are tremendous opportunities and challenges to using cutting-edge smart technologies in the field of mental healthcare. First, the study investigated the key concepts in this field through the lens of Gestalt psychological therapy with the researcher as an observer who recorded 19 participants' cases. Next, semi-structured interviews with 29 interviewees and 2 unstructured focus group interviews were undertaken. Then, experimental research survey interviews were conducted in South Korea with 15 participants of a mobile counseling service in actual use over 4 weeks. A comparative study was conducted through an online survey of 264 participants (150 Korean and 114 Japanese) to analyze the factors contained in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and examine the acceptability of mental health intervention using smart technologies. This helped with the realization that smart technology intervention related to mental healthcare is still in an early stage in South Korea and Japan. The current procedure is to counsel using mobile phone applications available on smart technologies related to mental healthcare. The primary results demonstrate that smart technologies remain useful among their users, although sensitive issues relating to privacy, risk and ethics still remain. While smart technologies are accessible to the public, mental health (as well as mental illness) management can be developed by users, front line service providers, healthcare administrators, policy makers and governments for the whole continuum of care and many types and levels of mental health intervention, as the work of developers such as e-Mental Health Technologies has demonstrated. The wider use of smart technologies in mental healthcare can help reflect positive and negative experiences which may influence users' views and health behavior. Importantly, the study found user satisfaction to be more influential in the health psychology field than face to face mental healthcare due to perceived views on accessibility and reliability. Finally, this research is concluded by the construction of a suitable comprehensive stepped-care model of mental healthcare in South Korea and Japan for future research which may also assist mental healthcare organizations by helping them improve their service structure and become more proactive in mental healthcare strategies.