

Simplicity for Whom?

Caregiver Perspectives on Dementia-friendly Design & Wellbeing

Yixuan (Barbara) Wei¹, Dag Aarsland², Wei Liu¹

¹ Department of Engineering, NMES, King's College London, London, United Kingdom

² Department of Psychological Medicine, IoPPN, King's College London, London, United Kingdom

- Simple for designers ≠ simple for people with dementia
- Designer-defined use scenarios may hinder technology acceptance among people living with dementia
- Dementia design should prioritise familiarity over reduction of functionalities

INTRODUCTION	METHODS	RESULTS	CONCLUSIONS	REFERENCES
Contemporary product design often equates simplicity with minimal, aesthetically refined interfaces influenced by modernist principles [1-2]. However, such reduction may obscure meaning and usability for people living with dementia. Drawing on interviews with individuals and caregivers, this study reveals that designer-defined simplicity and use scenarios can hinder technology acceptance, suggesting that familiarity and embodied experience should be prioritised over abstraction [3-4].	This study conducts an analysis of semi-structured interviews with 29 people living with early-stage dementia and 30 caregivers. Using reflexive thematic analysis [5], the data were revisited to explore perspectives on contemporary dementia technologies. Through iterative and interpretive coding, new themes were identified around minimalism, usability challenges, and mismatches between designer assumptions and users' lived experiences.	 Seemingly “simple” appliances remain more usable due to established routines, physical affordances, and long-term familiarity.  Simplified digital interfaces Interfaces with enlarged text and reduced functions often disrupt learned interaction patterns, leading to confusion despite intentions for clarity and ease of use.  Devices requiring continuous bodily engagement introduce challenges, including misuse, uncertainty, and physical discomfort (e.g., touchscreen sensitivity).	Across categories, reduced functionality does not necessarily translate into perceived simplicity, highlighting a mismatch between design intentions and lived experience. Additionally, even purposefully designed simplicity still requires learnability, particularly in stages of memory decline; simplified designs continue to demand a learning process, underscoring that simplicity does not equate to ease of use.	[1] Rams, D. (1995). <i>Less but better</i>. Verlag Form. [2] Norman, D. A. (2013). <i>The design of everyday things</i> (Revised and expanded ed.). Basic Books. [3] Krippendorff, K. (2006). <i>The semantic turn: A new foundation for design</i>. CRC Press. [4] Hassenzahl, M. (2010). <i>Experience design: Technology for all the right reasons</i>. Morgan & Claypool. [5] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. <i>Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health</i>, 11(4), 589–597. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806 CONTACT  yixuan.wei@kcl.ac.uk ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION AAIC>26