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# THE EFFECT OF USING FACEBOOK ON ELDERLY PEOPLE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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**ABSTRACT** — The use of the Facebook communication network during the pandemic Coronavirus by the elderly was beneficial because it played a role in connecting family and friends, when physical encounters could not take place. Social media has presented numerous benefits on mental health, such as: developing skills in using new technologies that delay cognitive impairment, lower levels of loneliness and positive visions of the future. Many users said that in addition to being close to family, they learned about the pandemic and what it means, but they also expanded their list of friends in the virtual environment. Through the video call option, they were able to communicate with the loved ones and managed to overcome social isolation and the feeling of loneliness. Therefore, the use of Facebook has been beneficial among the elderly, giving them a pleasant environment of social and emotional connection with the loved ones, communication with virtual friends has been developed, and self-confidence has increased. Facebook communication network users obtained a higher score when assessing social satisfaction and increased confidence in technology.

**KEYWORDS** — psychiatry, pandemic, the elderly, Facebook, benefits.

## INTRODUCTION

With the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, social media quickly became one of the main communication tools used among the category of young adults (Brez, 2020; Cucu & Lența, 2020; Sandu, 2019; Șteți, 2021), and therefore the services of Facebook has had significant advantages helping to reserve the communication between people in a safe conditions.

Not just for bring them nearer to family and favorite ones, additionally by managing to beat the sensation of loneliness and social isolation and provide them the opportunity to reach out, regardless of the pandemic conditions (Hajek & König 2020).

## METHODS

This study is based on a questionnaire that consists of a set of 18 questions using both the "Google Forms" online platform and another physical questionnaire that was completed by elderly respondents.

This form aims to focus on the advantages of Facebook among the elderly. The questionnaire consists of questions on general and personal data (age, gender, location), the effect of Facebook on their perception of life throughout the pandemic, how they managed to get over the loneliness and the way they adapted to the restrictions through the web setting.

It was found that almost all the subjects got closer to their families through the Facebook network. Additionally, they had access to useful information regarding the pandemic, and its continuous updates; Moreover, elderly people could enlarge their list of friends, even within the virtual setting (Ciobotea et al 2016; Rinderud, 2021; Zhang et al, 2020).

The accuracy of the answers provided by the participants is considered a limitation, because it is difficult to control.

According to the study conducted within the United States of America, that involved 1620 participants in the age of over fifty years old, it had been shown that individuals who use social networks had lower levels of loneliness compared to different group of participants (Bell et al, 2013, Yu et al, 2016).

In people aged over sixty years, who participated in a study, conducted in third world countries, it was demonstrated that using the social network platforms were not associated with the feelings of loneliness neither social or emotional isolation. (Hajek & König 2020, Luca et al 2020)

Studies were conducted in different countries, such as Germany, which showed that elderly who used the Facebook network throughout the pandemic reported lower scores of social isolations; In contrast to participants who didn't frequently use the Facebook network. (Hajek & König 2020)

## RESULTS

Following the distribution and completion of the questionnaire, it was shown that the people who used Facebook most often are between 60–64 years old, which represents a percentage of 45.1%. In the

second place, people aged 65–70, which represents a percentage of 21.6%. People aged 71–75 and 76–80 are represented by the following percentages: 19.6% and 13.7%, respectively.

Regarding the distribution by the sex of the participants, the elderly in the study group are 62.7% females, and 37.3% are males.

Regarding the area of origin, 74.5% of the people who completed the questionnaire are from the urban area, and 25.5% from the rural area.

When asked if they used the social network Facebook during the pandemic, 90.2% had a positive answer and only 9.8% answered that they only used it for a few times.

It was found that the majority (58.8%) of the elderly used Facebook between 1–3 hours a day, 31.4% used it between 4–6 hours a day, 7.8% used it between 7–9 hours a day and only 2% utilized it for 30 minutes a day.

They declared that the time spent on this social network increased significantly with the onset of the pandemic.

As for the purpose of using Facebook during the pandemic, the participants have

Declared that they used it to communicate with their families (70.6%), for informational purposes (65.2%), and 54.9% communicated with both family and friends.

When people were asked if Facebook helped them get closer to family and the loved ones during the pandemic, most of them had a positive response (78.4%), only 17.6% reported the answer *sometimes*, and a negative answer was represented by a percentage of 3.9%.

This question demonstrates that the social network during the pandemic was beneficial for most elders by bringing them closer to their loved ones.

Among the communication options offered by Facebook, the participants involved in this study stated that they prefer the video call option in a percentage of 62.7%, text messages by (49%), audio call by (29.4%), and audio messages by (19.6%).

Following the question *Who did you communicate more with on Facebook during the pandemic?* it was found that 86.3% of people answered that they have communicated with their children, 68.6% communicated with their grandchildren, 25.5% did communicate with their friends, and 9.8% did connect with their former colleagues.

After communicating with family and friends, 66.7% of the elderly in the study group said they felt calm, 43.1% said that the feeling of loneliness had decreased, 35.3% said that the state of anxiety was reduced and the impact of social isolation was not so strong, 31.4% felt safe, and 29.4% said they were happier. These are just some of the benefits that the social

network Facebook has brought to the elderly. The answers to the question about how Facebook was helpful were: 54.9% answered that they met new people, 45.1% met their former colleagues / friends, 41.2% had renewed friendships.

When older people use the social network Facebook, they said they feel comfortable because: they talk to family (80.4%), they talk to close friends (58.8%), they get news updates (51%), watch funny videos with children or animals and make them feel good (41.2%), communicate with virtual friends (29.4%), watch favorite shows (19.6%).

People who participated in this study stated that they prefer this social network because it has the option of video calling (62.7%), have access to photos of family and friends (51%), can call both audio and video relatives from another country at no extra cost and can hold a video conference with all family members (47.1%).

The people from the studied group declared in a percentage of 100% that the decision to create a Facebook account, as well as the use of this social network was a correct one.

## DISCUSSION

During the pandemic, the use of the social network Facebook was beneficial among young people, and more specifically among the elderly. Not only it did bring them closer to their families, but it also gave them information about what was going on around the world and helped them reunite with former colleagues / friends.

Communication on social networks offer the elderly a pleasant environment to stay socially and emotionally connected with loved ones.

Through the video calling option, they were able to communicate with loved ones and managed to overcome social isolation and feelings of loneliness more easily, by increasing the level of support and social contact.

The ability to communicate with virtual friends has been developed and was beneficial for increasing self-confidence.

The use of the Facebook communication network was associated with a state of peace, support and security. It helped them during the pandemic to access information, kept in touch with family and the loved ones, adapted more easily to the sudden changes associated with the pandemic, and social isolation did not have as strong an impact as before.

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