

Explaining the Role of Media Literacy in Psychological Impact (Fear, Obsession, Hypochondria, and Fatigue) of COVID-۱۹ and Proposing a Model in Social Networks

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Abstract

Today, the influence of social networks has become the primary concern for thinkers, especially in the field of social communications. In other words, with the advent of social networks into the media landscape, a profound transformation occurred in the way audiences are influenced by new media content. Previously, audiences focused on the source's credibility for message reception; however, with the rise of new media, the audience has transformed into users. Over time, the credibility and influence of users from social media content have become widespread, encompassing all aspects of life. This research aims to identify the impact of media literacy with components such as media consumption regime, content understanding, hidden agendas, conscious selection, critical perspective, and message analysis on the psychological effects of fear, obsession, hypochondria, and fatigue related to COVID-۱۹. The central question is whether social networks contribute to psychological influence. In this context, a grounded theory approach was employed to study the topic. The statistical population of this research consists of ordinary users over ۱۸ years old who use social networks for more than three hours daily. The sampling framework was assessed based on two criteria: ۱) Input (data saturation) and ۲) Output (theoretical saturation). Consequently, interviews continued until data and theoretical saturation were achieved. Considering theoretical saturation, in-depth interviews were conducted with ۱۵ participants. In the in-depth interviews, data were entered into Atlas.ti software, where open coding was first performed, followed by categorization into core categories. Thus, based on users' media consumption regimes during the quarantine period of the lethal COVID-۱۹ disease, social networks served as a replacement for face-to-face interactions. Therefore, categories such as hidden agendas of the message, conscious message selection, critical message perspective, and message analysis lacked validity. Simultaneously, positive influences, including reduced anxiety, empathy, sense of belonging, psychological relief, intellectual sharing, and consolation, prevailed over negative psychological impacts.

Keywords

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Role of Media Literacy, Social Networks, Psychological Influence, Fear, Obsession, Hypochondria, Fatigue

1. Problem Statement

Modern media have outpaced other competitors in transmitting information, injecting the most data into citizens' lives, much of which is generated by the citizens themselves. Consequently, this type of non-expert information is often exaggerated and sometimes incorrect, becoming a significant source of psychological distress for citizens, leading to widespread psychological harm. In crisis media management, various factors come into play. Given that modern media are primarily managed by the citizens themselves, often on an individual basis, there is no effective management over them. Additionally, service providers for these platforms, whether due to sanctions (such as Instagram) or self-sanctioning (like Telegram), lack communication with judicial authorities, making it impossible to manage misinformation in social media as done in other countries.

One notable experience in managing social media during pandemics is the vaccination literacy for the SARS disease, where planned initiatives successfully raised citizens' health literacy and minimized vaccine hesitancy. Therefore, this academic research focuses on managing the infodemic messages related to COVID-19, emphasizing the communication target (the citizens) rather than the communication source (social media), under the concept of media literacy. Media literacy serves as a crisis management tool where, instead of controlling social media, the focus is on educating citizens to use social media effectively, preventing negative impacts. In other words, negative influence from the media can lead citizens—social media users—to experience psychological issues related to COVID-19, such as obsession, anxiety, hypochondria, and fatigue, all stemming from the infodemic information. This situation complicates the ability to respond adequately to the phenomenon, leading to adverse consequences, as common observations confirm the increased fear and despair among citizens, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which poses future challenges.

This issue was also highlighted by Oh, who analyzed two feelings—fear and despair—derived from data obtained during the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) outbreak in South Korea in 2015. The relationship between social media, risk assessment, and preventive actions was established. The findings indicate that social media usage correlates positively with people's emotions and risk perception. Moreover, it shows that social media use enhances protective behavior through self-related emotions and risk interpretation for the public. It also suggests that disregarding collective emotional responses as irrational reactions during a pandemic may not lead to successful crisis management. The results provide decision-makers and communicators with insights to understand the complex nature of infectious disease outbreaks and develop improved strategies considering people's reactions to successfully cope with pandemic scenarios (Oh et al., 2020).

Thus, social media significantly influences the psychological impact of COVID-19. This research examines the situation in Iran, where a lack of reliable and professional resources in classical media and cyberspace complicates matters. It investigates whether social media has similar effects to classical media or produces different outcomes. Given the importance and necessity of this research, it is essential to note that examining the aforementioned literature reveals that misinformation disseminated through social media can have a detrimental impact on any epidemic. This study argues that understanding people's behavior regarding information sharing is crucial for proposing an effective strategy to combat the spread of misinformation related to COVID-19.

Considering the above points, along with the fact that COVID-۱۹ mortality rates in Iran are double the global average and that Iran, as a developing country, lacks the healthcare facilities of advanced countries, preventative management becomes more critical than therapeutic management. Thus, using media literacy can equip citizens with the necessary education to receive and process the best information while avoiding the psychological effects of COVID-۱۹.

Additionally, this research aims to investigate the reasons behind citizens' susceptibility to infodemic information on social media regarding COVID-۱۹ and the psychological impacts it has had on them. The two main objectives of this research are:

۱. To understand users' media literacy concerning COVID-۱۹ and mental health.
۲. To articulate the psychological effects of COVID-۱۹ based on information from social media.

This qualitative research, based on grounded theory, will derive descriptive hypotheses after conducting the study. In other words, the research progresses with initial questions, and new theories emerge from the results. Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative research questions are not predetermined with precision during the initial planning stages; they evolve throughout the investigation. Qualitative researchers rarely follow their initial questions exactly. In qualitative research design, unlike conventional quantitative approaches, fundamental questions should not be precisely defined in the research's initial framework.

Given that this study is qualitative, the questions will remain open and may change based on the responses received. Thus, a few thematic categories can be established for this research:

۱. Media literacy will be examined from the dimensions of content understanding, hidden agendas, conscious message selection, critical perspective, and message analysis. Throughout the interviews, it is likely that other indicators related to media literacy and health literacy may also emerge.
۲. The psychological impacts of social media on mental health, including anxiety, obsession, hypochondria, and COVID-۱۹ fatigue, will be explored, with the possibility of additional issues arising during the research.

۲. Conceptual Framework of the Research

The conceptual framework is a logical explanation and connection of the fundamental concepts, ideas, and elements to be studied. Additionally, prior studies and the researcher's personal experiences play a crucial role in developing the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework of qualitative research must logically relate to the four research dimensions: objectives, questions, methods, and validity. To construct a conceptual framework for qualitative research, it is essential to clarify and explain the fundamental concepts and foundations of the research while utilizing previous theoretical and practical studies (Maxwell, as cited by Mohammadpour, ۲۰۱۳).

Furthermore, the interpretive social approach serves as the primary perspective in this study, positing that due to the creative nature of humanity and the fluidity of social reality, no specific path or method can be proposed for understanding or changing these realities. Since the ultimate source and reference for any construction and alteration of social realities is humanity itself, understanding how people perceive reality, change it, and ascribe meaning to it is vital. Moreover, since social reality, as human constructs, lacks predetermined laws and is constantly evolving, a universal model for social realities and their modification cannot be

established. These realities are not only undiscoverable and uncontrollable but can only be understood and interpreted. This approach emphasizes the primacy of humanity over the environment, believing that realities are constructed and given meaning through human interpretation and daily life. Therefore, not only is the way people understand and perceive realities important, but it also manifests in various forms (Boustani, ۲۰۰۹: ۸-۹).

Additionally, based on this approach, since people's interpretations of their surroundings are shaped within the social context of daily life, the meanings produced are context-dependent and are made meaningful within that context. Despite discussions on ontology and epistemology, and the general arguments of the symbolic interactionism perspective, grounded theory is one of its sub-branches in examining social phenomena. It asserts that the positivist tradition, which dominates theoretical frameworks, is not contextually grounded and lacks roots in social realities (Kaf, ۲۰۰۶: ۱۰۷). Therefore, we must enter the research field without predefined concepts and focus solely on categorizing and formulating them. However, the reality is that our minds are not devoid of concepts, and inevitably, these pre-recorded theories and concepts will influence our work, especially in formulating questions and categorizing the collected texts through interviews, theoretical sampling, and comparisons.

The concepts derived from these theories will not be used to construct a theoretical model, define variables, operationalize, or build a questionnaire. However, since we are certain that these theories are also constructed based on realities and somewhat abstract these realities, a specific understanding of these concepts also exists among the people we study. Thus, we are compelled to utilize the concepts present in these theories, which also exist in the understanding of our subjects, and not insist on the claim of having empty minds. The concepts discussed in the theoretical foundations will guide us in formulating questions and directing the progress of this research, ultimately being used in the final analysis and conceptualization of the role of media literacy in the psychological impact of COVID-۱۹.

-Definition of Media Literacy

- A set of approaches that audiences actively adopt to engage selectively with media and critically analyze and evaluate media content to interpret the meanings of the messages they encounter.
- A specific capability that transforms the audience into an active subject in relation to texts.
- A collection of perspectives we actively utilize to engage with media, interpreting the meanings of the messages we encounter.
- A blend of effective media utilization techniques and insights for distinguishing between different media.
- An understanding based on skills that allows one to differentiate between various media types and identify and categorize different media productions.

Media literacy is the ability to understand how media operate and construct meanings within them, enabling access, analysis, and production of communication in various media forms while critically consuming content. Media literacy serves as one of the essential tools for intelligent and effective interaction with different media, aiming to grant greater control over our interpretations, as all media messages are inherently interpretive. Media literacy encompasses increasing access, usage, critical understanding (including decoding, analyzing, and evaluating), and producing media products (Bahnor and Chabaki Darzabi, ۲۰۱۳).

According to Silverblatt (۱۹۹۵), media literacy comprises five components:

١. Awareness and understanding of the impact of media on individuals and society.
٢. Comprehension of the mass communication process.
٣. Development of strategies leading to the analysis of media messages and discussions about them.
٤. Awareness of media content as a text that provides insight into ourselves and our contemporary culture.
٥. Cultivating and promoting the pleasure of understanding, appreciation, and high evaluation of media content.

Media literacy is grounded in the principle of responsibility, meaning that the primary responsibility for enhancing media literacy lies with the individual. There will be no motivation for change unless the individual is accountable for their media literacy. Institutions such as government, family, schools, and religion can serve as resources to assist individuals, just as they can act as barriers (Pater, ٢٠١٤: ٨٩).

In another definition provided by UNESCO, media literacy emphasizes the ability to understand, evaluate, and utilize media (٢٠١١ Moeller et al.).

-Definition of Research Concepts

In the following lines, we will provide a precise definition of the research concepts. This study aims to explore the role of media literacy in the psychological impact of COVID-١٩ on social media, seeking to derive a new model from the research findings. Therefore, this section will only present a preliminary model for entering the subject, while the main model will be addressed at the conclusion of the research.

Media Literacy: Media literacy is one of the most essential tools for intelligent and effective interaction with various media. The goal of media literacy is to provide greater control over our interpretations, as all media messages are inherently interpretative. Media literacy involves increasing access, usage, critical understanding (including decoding, analyzing, and evaluating), and producing media products (Bahnor and Chabaki Darzabi, ٢٠١٣).

Social Media: Digital social networks are a chain of communications and social network groups or the non-physical presence of individuals in a virtual space (Wikipedia, ٢٠٢٠). In this research, social media refers to platforms such as Instagram and Telegram, which have ٤٧ million and ٤٩ million users in Iran, respectively. Other platforms like Facebook have not gained attention in Iran due to censorship, and Twitter is primarily used for political matters, with only ٢ million users, lacking popularity among ordinary citizens.

٢. Background of the Research

Regarding the background of the research, it is important to note that since this is a new disease, most studies are contemporary and were conducted during the peak of the COVID-١٩ pandemic. Here, we will refer to a limited number of these studies:

- Walaa Qasem Taleb (٢٠٢١): The role of social media in shaping public awareness in Iraq about the coronavirus (a survey conducted in Nasiriyah). This study examines the role of social media in raising awareness and disseminating health-related information about the coronavirus in Iraq. It was conducted through a descriptive field survey randomly among ٣٠٢ social media users in Nasiriyah. The findings indicate that the significant role of social media in shaping and enhancing public health awareness should not be underestimated, as the

capacities and characteristics of these social networks have become evident in light of the circumstances imposed by COVID-19 on society. Additionally, one feature of social media is its ability to disseminate information related to the prevention of the emerging coronavirus to audiences who may not be well-informed about the topic, at minimal cost and in the quickest time. Furthermore, various scholars in society positively contribute to providing services to the public through more widely used social networks. These scholars play a role in awakening thoughts within the community and can influence individuals and society. Moreover, social media has become a platform for doctors and institutions to disseminate information and health tips, transforming incorrect behaviors into correct and healthy practices, thereby utilizing these networks to inform the public about COVID-19 news and information. A significant number of users of these networks have adequately received recommendations and guidelines on ways to prevent and transmit this virus through these social networks, without considering the methods used by these networks in shaping health information that is immediately presented to social media users.

- Setareh Mashhadi and Hashem Marandi (۲۰۲۱): In their thesis on the impact of the DRM technique in creating false memories from fake COVID-19 news, they state that with the growing popularity of social media and the widespread dissemination of fake news, the question arises of what mechanisms lead to the formation of fake news. Numerous studies have been conducted to distinguish fake news from real news. With the outbreak of COVID-19 worldwide, many fake news stories emerged, posing significant health risks. This research investigates the impact of exposure to a barrage of COVID-related news using the DRM technique for false memory formation. The examination of false memory formation when presenting news that is semantically related to another news item revealed that presenting news can lead to the creation of false memories regarding news that was never presented. In other words, exposure to several news items can create a similar concept in the minds of the study's participants, making it difficult for them to discern whether they have seen that news before. This suggests that false memories and subsequently fake news may arise based on the news presented in the media.

- Obi-Ani et al. (۲۰۲۰): In their study titled “Social Media and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Observations from Nigeria,” they state that social media serves as an unparalleled tool for disseminating information to citizens. Social media acts as a double-edged sword, allowing citizens to access confidential information without barriers. However, this same tool has also been used to misinform the public and spread unverified and misleading messages. The question arises: What are the advantages and disadvantages of social media's role in disseminating misinformation about pandemics like COVID-19? This qualitative study examines social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, blogs, online newspapers, and YouTube, where discussions about the pandemic are most prevalent. Given that the main sources of information used by the public outside of organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO), the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC), and state institutions are the most widespread messages from these associations, the study analyzes these messages. The research investigates the roles that social media play in either limiting or facilitating the dissemination of news about the pandemic nationwide. The article concludes that one cannot overemphasize the importance of social media in information dissemination. It also claims that these platforms have been misused, as individuals hide behind pseudonyms to spread fake messages, creating panic among the general public (Obi-Ani, ۲۰۲۰).

4. Methodology

The methodology of the present research is qualitative. In other words, to investigate the role of media literacy in the psychological impact of COVID-19, this study employs grounded theory, through which the relevant categories related to psychological impact from social media have been identified, and the role of media literacy in this impact has been logically analyzed.

The statistical population for this research consists of ordinary users aged over 18 who spend more than three hours on social media. Sampling was conducted based on two criteria: information saturation and theoretical saturation. Since this is a qualitative study, open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews are considered the best tools for data collection in this type of research. Considering the saturation of opinions, interviews were conducted with 10 participants.

According to Guba and Lincoln (2000), assessing the accuracy and confirming the validity and reliability in qualitative research includes four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which are outlined as follows (Guba & Lincoln, 2000):

A. Credibility: Continuous engagement, the use of triangulation in research, peer debriefing, searching for disconfirming evidence, and the acceptability of the researcher are actions taken to ensure the credibility of qualitative research.

B. Transferability: Therefore, providing more details about the participants and interviewees, along with their characteristics and attributes, can assist in the appropriateness of the data. Demographic information such as gender, education level, field of study, and individuals' activity experience, along with their areas of activity, were provided in this research regarding the interviewees.

C. Dependability: In the present study, all interviews were transcribed by the researcher and a co-interviewer. Additionally, the voices of the interviewer and interviewee were recorded with the interviewee's permission. A written version of the recorded interviews was then prepared; the data collection tool was the interview question form, which is provided in the appendix.

D. Confirmability: In this research, all findings and the manner of interpreting and analyzing them have been documented and recorded at each stage.

To analyze the data, the Atlas.ti software was used, which has broader capabilities than other similar software like MAXQDA, allowing for better reporting and analysis of the content. Accordingly, all content was entered into this software, and then the data analysis was conducted based on open codes, axial codes, and final indices.

5. Analysis of Qualitative Findings

In the current analysis, several major categories such as media literacy, psychological impact, social media, and the consequences of COVID-19 have been examined. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 citizens, aiming to ask fewer questions about topics already addressed by others and to capture the inner thoughts of individuals regarding this disease. These insights were entered into the Atlas.ti program, followed by open coding. In

the second stage, the open codes were re-categorized into axial codes, and the results are presented in the research findings as follows.

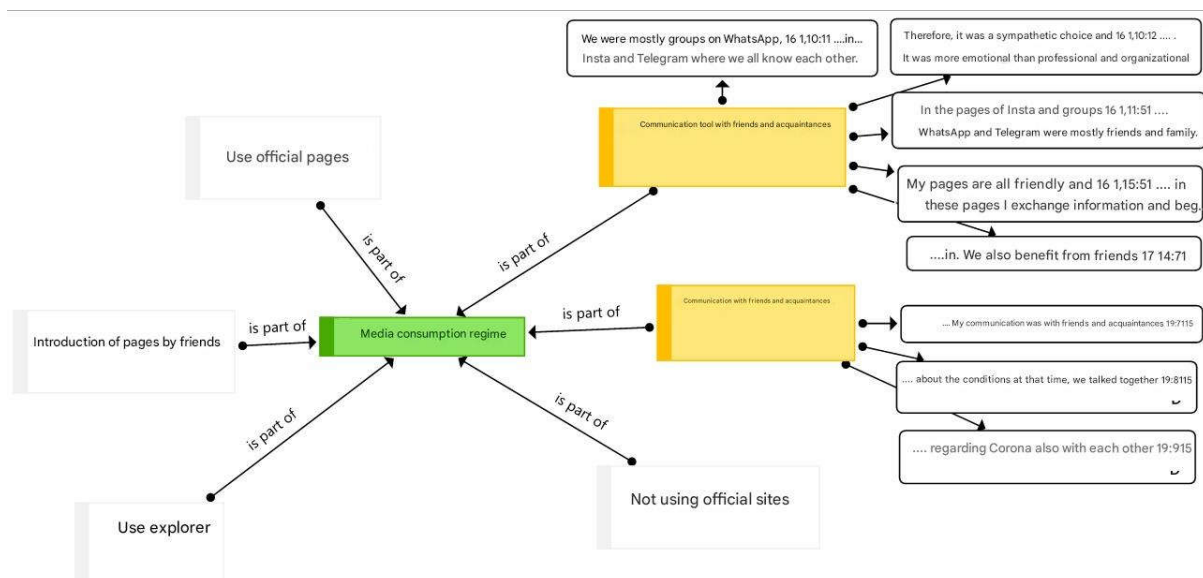
Media Literacy in Social Media During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The most important factor in this research is the role of media literacy in the psychological impact on citizens. In other words, to what extent can media literacy influence the reduction or increase of psychological impact? For this purpose, in this section, the indicators of media literacy have been interviewed, categorized into six major themes: media consumption regime, understanding of message content, hidden goals of the message, conscious selection of the message, critical perspective on the message, and message analysis.

Media Consumption Regime of Social Media Users

The media consumption regime is the most important factor in the selection of media by the audience, and in this research, it is based on user perspectives. In other words, it is the first stance when a user encounters social media, which holds significant importance. In this study, the reasons for encountering social media were identified as open codes:

١. Communication tool with friends and acquaintances
٢. Connecting with friends and acquaintances
٣. Using official pages
٤. Introduction of pages by friends
٥. Using the explore feature
٦. Not using official websites



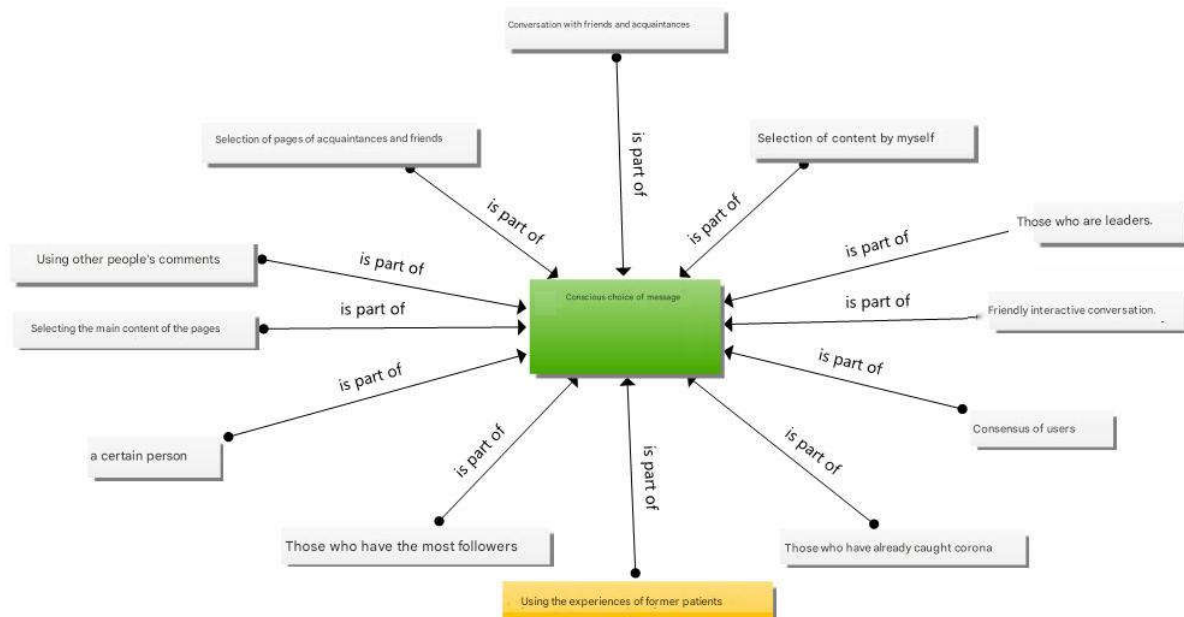
Picture of the media consumption regime of social network users

Figura ١ - Regimen Usus Mediorum Usorum Retium Socialium

Sicut in diagrammate praedicto observatur, maxima opinio in usu instrumenti communicationis vel connexionis cum amicis et notis fuit, aliter dictum, prima correctio cogitationis in mediis socialibus cum respectu mediorum haec est, quod utentes utuntur mediis socialibus ad communicandum inter se et non ut medium classicum diffusionis. Alio modo, theoria effectus mediorum, quae una ex praecipuis theoriis scientiarum communicationis est, in cridine pandemiae COVID-19 omnino obsoleta facta est et demonstratum est quod media socialia sicut Instagram et Telegram magis adhibita sunt ad informationem interpersonalem inter utentes permutandam. Usus functionis exploratoriae in Instagram una ex modis utendi medio sociali Instagram est, quo homines se algorithmis mediorum socialium committunt et cum respectu ad id quod eorum interesse in algorithmis fuit, scilicet COVID, facultas mittendi informationem similem ei quam utens elegit, valde augetur, et usus paginarum officialium sicut BBC vel nuntii urgentis, necnon commendatio quarundam paginarum ab amicis, inter alia quae memorata sunt.

Electio conscia nuntii COVID utentium mediorum socialium: Secundus status in litteratura mediorum electio conscia nuntii est, quae in hac inquisitione ex quaestione utentium extracta sunt:

1. Colloquium cum amicis et notis
2. Electio paginarum notorum et amicorum
3. Usus commentariorum aliorum
4. Electio materiae a me ipso
5. Colloquium amicale interactivum
6. Qui duces sunt
7. Consensus utentium
8. Qui prius COVID contraxerunt
9. Usus experientiarum aegrotorum praeteritorum
10. Qui maximos sectatores habent
11. Persona determinata
12. Electio materiae principalis paginarum.



Informed selection of Covid messages by social network users

Figura 1 - Selectio Consicii Nuntii Ab Usoribus Retium Socialium

The diagram of conscious message selection by social media users during the COVID-19 pandemic indicates that the selection or choice of messages has two aspects:

1. Interaction with friends and acquaintances
2. Use of official and published content

In other words, social media, unlike broadcast media where the audience can only select from the transmitted messages, on social media the messages occur in the form of dialogue and interaction. In other words, social media are first created for interaction, and when they reach a certain level of users, then pages or channels are formed, and users find this platform suitable for publishing their own information.

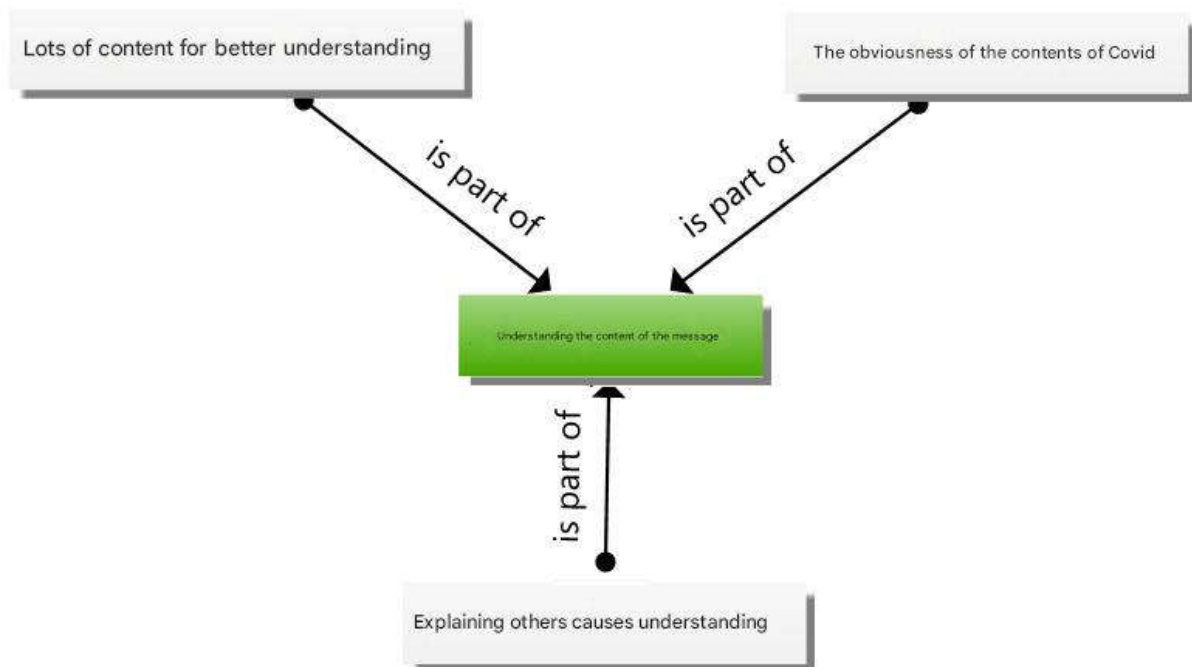
Therefore, the first principle in message selection is in the first stage, and when the subject is interaction with friends and acquaintances, the criteria and metrics that the selection is based on a specific purpose and calculation lose their meaning.

In this diagram, the categories of conversation with friends and acquaintances, using others' comments, friendly interactive conversation, those who have previously had COVID-19, using (conversation) the experiences of previous patients, and selecting content by myself indicate an interactive relationship, and social media is only a tool for interaction. On the other hand, open categories such as selecting the pages of acquaintances and friends, those who are leaders, user consensus, those who have the most followers, a specific person, and selecting the main content of the pages follow the broadcast approach in the media, all of which also have a personal aspect and are less selectable with media literacy techniques.

Understanding the content of COVID messages by social media users:

Alterum vero quod ad tertiam categoriam litterarum medicarum attinet, est intellectus contentorum nuntiatorum ad COVID-19 pertinentium. Contra omnes nuntiationes mediales, sive classicas sive novas, quae multis complexitatibus praedita sunt et quae praecognitione indigent, materiae ad COVID-19 pertinentes hoc modo non fuerunt. Ad intellectum nuntiatorum COVID-19 tres categoriae detectae sunt:

1. Simplicitas et evidentia materiarum circa COVID-19
2. Copia informationum ad meliorem intellectum ducens
3. Explicatio ab aliis



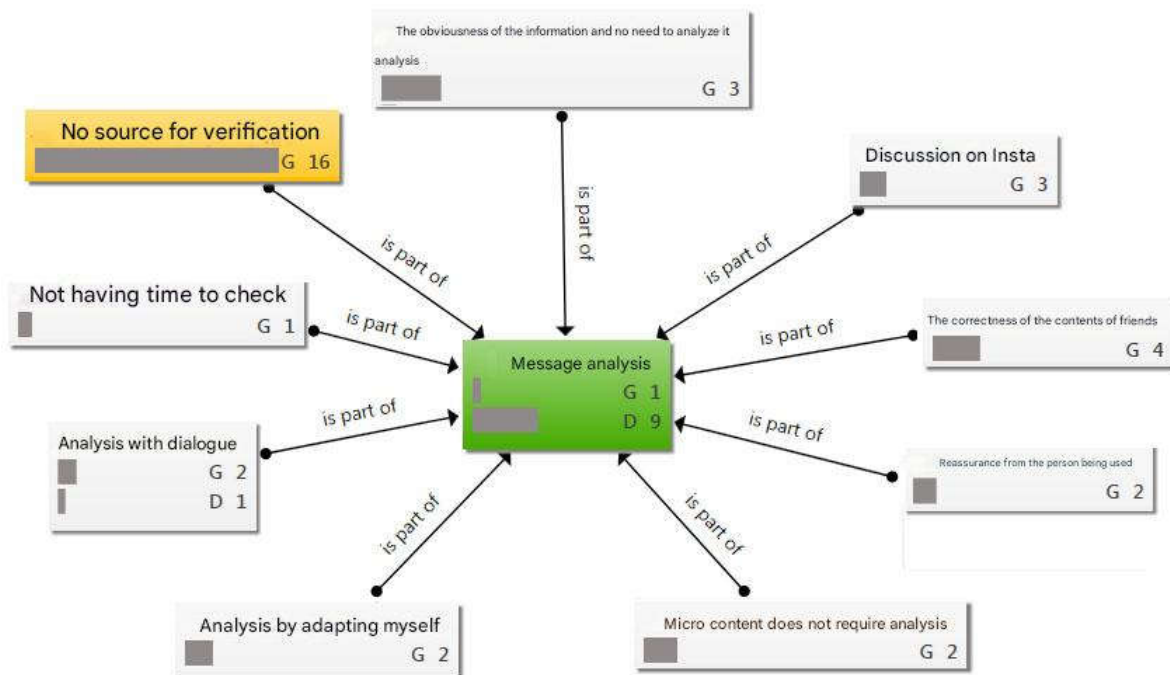
Social network users' understanding of the message of Covid-19

Figura 3 - Intellectus contentorum nuntiatorum COVID-19 ab utilisatoribus retium socialium.

Sicut in figura "Intellectus contentorum nuntiatorum COVID-19 ab utilisatoribus retium socialium" observatur, nulla conata sunt ad intelligentiam informationum de COVID-19 et circa eam. Si ad ipsam materiam attendatur, ipsa ex quattuor partibus constat: 1- Morbus respiratorius ignotus [de quo nulla specialis informatio exstat]; 2- Modi praeventivi; 3- Modi curativi; 4- Numerus infectorum et mortuorum. Hac ratione perspicitur ad intellectum nuntiatorum ad COVID-19 pertinentium nulla specialia peritia necessaria est, et omnes cives facile materias recipere, intelligere et permutare possunt. Hac ratione affirmari potest hanc categoriam efficacitate in crise pandemiae COVID-19 non praeditam fuisse.

Analysis contentorum nuntiatorum COVID-19 ab utilisatoribus retium socialium:

Analysis contentorum nuntiatorum COVID-19 ab utilisatoribus retium socialium est una ex principalibus categoris litterarum mediarum, quae magis respicit ad concordantiam informationis cum necessitatibus utilisatorum. In hac inquisitione in colloquiis peractis novem categoriae apertae enumeratae sunt, quae sunt: 1- informatio evidens, 2- absentia fontis ad veritatem probandam, 3- disputatio et colloquium in Instagram, 4- rectitudo materiae amicorum, 5- fiducia in persona utente, 6- minutiae non egent analysi, 7- concordantia cum meipso, analysis per colloquium, 8- tempus non habere ad veritatem probandam.

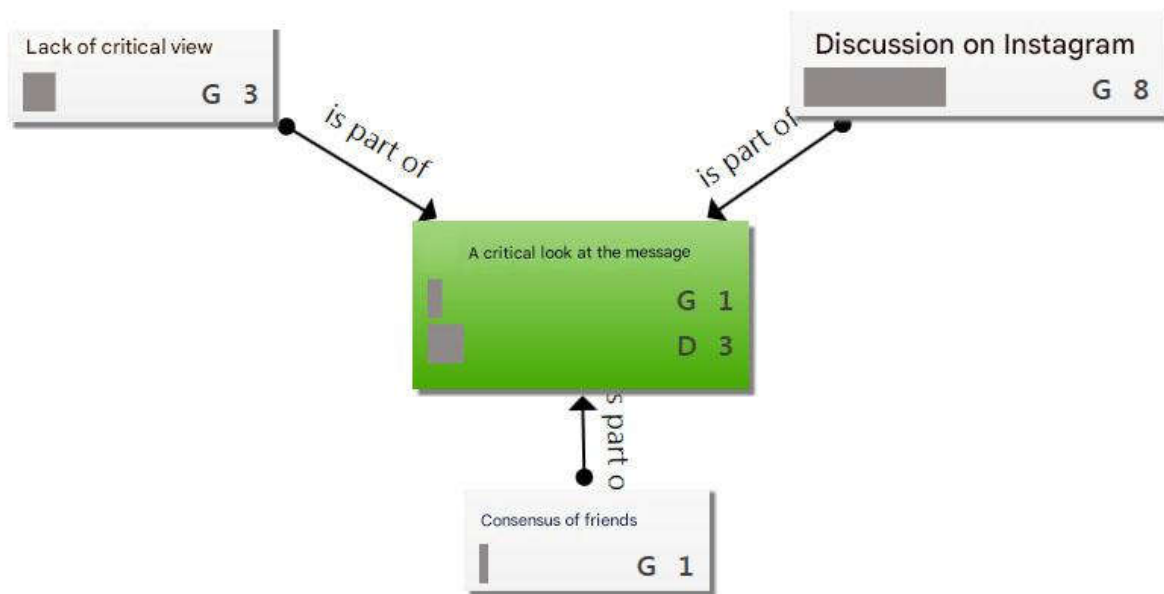


Analysis of social media users' Covid messages

Figura 4 - Analysis contentorum nuntiatorum COVID-19 ab utilisatoribus retium socialium

Sicut in categoris supra memoratis observatur, manifestum est quod categoriae sunt: evidentiā informationis, rectitudo materiae amicorum, disputatio et colloquium amicorum, minutiae non egent analysi, concordantia cum meipso et analysis per colloquium; quae indicant quod nuntia non indigebant analysi. Igitur post primam colloquium, ad hanc conclusionem perventum est quod quaestio an fuerit officialis fons ad veritatem probandam, quam omnes interlocutores expresserunt non habuisse officialem fontem ad veritatem probandam, quae in diagrammate cum sedecim frequentia venit et indicat negligentiam officialis et publici in hac re.

Critica consideratio nuntiatorum COVID-19 ab utilisatoribus retium socialium plerumque evenit quando nuntia sunt officialia aut ignota, sed etiam in praeteritis materiis saepe repetitum est quod materia ad COVID pertinens plerumque in forma colloquii et interactionis evenit, et ideo manifestum est quod individui interagunt cum illis qui fruuntur consensu optabili et non indigent provocare partem adversam. In intervento facto, tantum tres categoriae apertae venerunt: 1- disputatio et colloquium in Instagram, 2- consensus amicorum, 3- absentia criticae considerationis.



Picture of the critical view of the message of Covid users on social networks

Figura 6 - Consideratio critica nuntiatorum COVID-19 ab utilisatoribus retium socialium. Attenta categoriarum praedictae figurae, observatur quod individui magis disputatione et colloquio ambiguitatem solverunt, et nonnulli etiam aperte asseruerunt se non habere criticam considerationem de rebus. Fortasse dici potest quod in temporibus crisis, attitudo credendi est multo fortior quam attitudo sceptica, quod etiam in temporibus revolutionum aut bellorum observari potest, quod magis ad hominum conservationem conducet, et attitudo sceptica, quae etiam critica dicitur, in temporibus stabilitatis efficax est.

Occulti fines nuntiatorum COVID-19 ab utilisatoribus retium socialium: Ultima categoria centralis huius inquisitionis fuit media literacy, id est occulti fines in nuntiis COVID in retibus socialibus, quae in quinque categorias apertas venerunt: 1- non habere occultum nuntium propter familiaritatem, 2- non habere occultum nuntium propter absentiam lucri, 3- non habere occultos fines, 4- nuntium occultum est inefficacia gubernii in COVID, 5- hostes esse magis COVID in paginis officialibus.

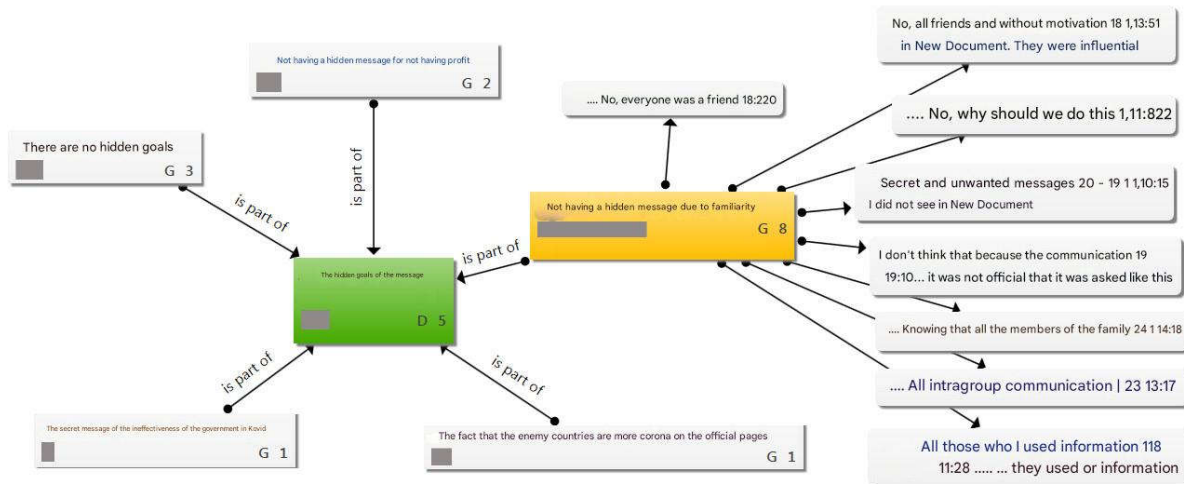


Illustration of the hidden goals of the message of Covid users on social networks

Figura 1 - Occulti fines nuntiatorum COVID-19 ab utilisatoribus retium socialium

Attenta praedictis categoriam, observatur quod plerique interrogati aut nuntium occultum negaverunt aut, propter familiaritatem et absentiam lucri, nullam rationem habuerunt ad nuntium secretum mittendum. Interea, nuntius occultus inefficaciae gubernii in administratione COVID et "coronarius" magis esse hostium in paginis officialibus commemoratus est. Considerans quod usus retis socialis Instagram in forma interactionis amicalis plerumque erat, expositae huiusmodi nuntiis etiam improbabilia videntur. Ergo dici potest quod in nuntiis ad COVID pertinentes, nuntii occulti a usoribus non sunt agniti.

Effectus psychologici COVID-19

COVID-19, praeter magnam mortalitatem, alia etiam incommoda civibus attulit, quorum unum ex maximis effectibus psychologicis erat, praesertim in tempore crisi pandemiae, quod multa problemata omnibus hominibus, inter quos et populum Iranicum, attulit. In hac dissertatione academica, effectus psychologici COVID-19 considerati sunt, cum quaestiones in quattuor categoriam principalibus: anxietas, obsessio, morbus fictus, et lassitudo examinatae sunt, quae infra commemorantur.

1. Anxietas COVID-19 ab usoribus retium socialium

Primum thema quod ad effectus psycholicos pertinet est anxietas COVID-19 ut effectus psychologicus huius pandemiae. Communissimum argumentum de anxietate COVID-19 est quod retia socialia anxietatem augent, cum tamen per investigationes, id est per colloquia, patefactum est retia socialia etiam anxietatem COVID-19 minuere posse. Categoriae quae in sectione augendi anxietatem COVID-19 repertae sunt, includunt:

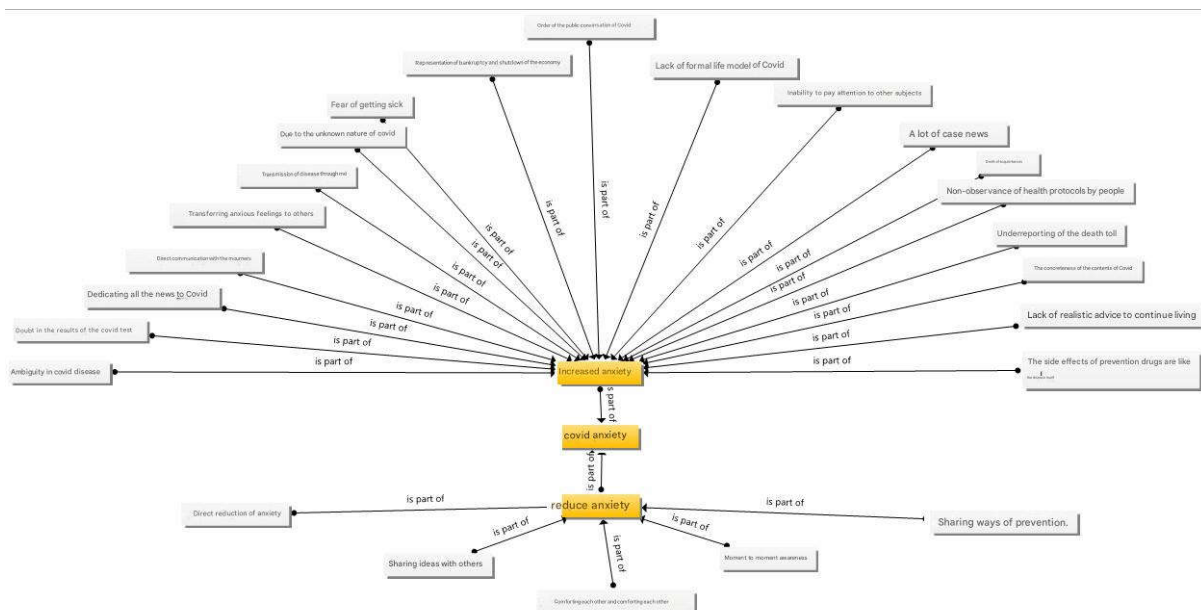
1. Directio colloquii publici COVID
2. Absens exemplum vitae in COVID
3. Impossibilitas ad alia argumenta attendere
4. Multitudo nuntiorum incidentium
5. Nuntius mortis cognatorum

٦. Non observatio protocollorum sanitatis a populo
٧. Parum nuntiatum est de numero mortuum COVID
٨. Tangibilitas nuntiorum COVID
٩. Absentia consiliorum realistarum ad vitam continuandam
١٠. Effectus medicamentorum praecaventium similes ipsi morbo
١١. Repraesentatio ruinae et clausurae oeconomicae
١٢. Timor inficiendi
١٣. Ignorantia COVID-١٩
١٤. Transmissio morbi per me
١٥. Transmissio sensus anxietatis ad alios
١٦. Directa connexio cum dominis luctus
١٧. Omnes nuntios ad COVID dedicatos
١٨. Dubitatio in eventibus testium COVID
١٩. Ambiguitas in morbo

Factores minuendi anxietatem COVID-١٩ ab usoribus retium socialium

Factores qui anxietatem COVID-١٩ minuunt includunt:

١. Consolatio inter se
٢. Communicatio cogitationum cum aliis
٣. Conscius momenti de invicem
٤. Communicatio modorum praecaventium
٥. Directa diminutio anxietatis COVID-١٩



The image of anxiety of covid 19 users of social networks

Figura 9 - Anxietas COVID-19 ab usoribus retium socialium

Ut in figura supra observatur, duo capita centralia anxietatis augendae et anxietatis minuendae ex dictis interrogatorum elicitata sunt. Primum quaestio est an rete sociale anxietatem generaverit, vel tantum instrumentum communicationis fuerit quod in scena exstitit. Examina contentorum nuntiorum anxietatis augendae COVID indicant quod tantum tria capita sunt:

1. Dubitatio in eventibus tentaminum COVID
2. Repraesentatio ruinae et clausurae oeconomicae
3. Parum nuntiaturum est de numero mortuorum

Haec tria factores augmenti COVID fuerunt, et sedecim aliae categoriae tantum ob existentiam instrumenti communicationis retis socialis Instagram exstiterunt, cum nuntii officiales et divulgationes in eo non essent. Ita non potest asseri effectum negativum mediae socialis in anxietatem COVID, cum hoc tantum instrumentum communicationis et interactionis inter usores existat, et tantum facultatem interactionis amplificavit. Haec notio ad saeculum tertium pertinet, et si platforma sicut Instagram aut Telegram non adhiberetur, aliae platformae substituentur et eadem effecta habebunt.

In praeterea, observatur quod in tempore quarantinae, haec retia socialia anxietatem civium minuerunt, sed quia antea exstiterunt, minus civium aut usorum est qui tempus sine retibus socialibus imaginari possit. Si cogitatur quod retia socialia non exstarent, et simile tempore ante societatem informationis, tantum media diffusa erant, in quibus civis tantum ex nuntiis radiophonicis et televisificis uti poterat, et simul in quarantina esse. Oportet cogitare quomodo poterat diversas informationes accipere et, cum condicionibus suis, praecavere aut affectus exprimere, quae omnia possunt ad dolorem ex COVID reducendum conferre.

2. Obsessio COVID ab usoribus retium socialium

Secundum caput centrale in parte effectuum psychologicorum COVID est obsessio vel excessus in praecavendo COVID-19. Aliis verbis, multi cives aut usores plus agunt quam quod normale est aut in mediis officialibus nuntiatur. Hic thema investigatum est, quod in tres categorias dividitur:

1. Manifestationes obsessionis COVID
2. Factores obsessionis COVID
3. Non obsessio, sed actus errati

Manifestationes obsessionis COVID ab usoribus responsivis includunt:

1. Sensum dubitationis de [transmissione universali]
2. Transmissio per cibaria
3. Temporalis lavatio manuum
4. Non exeundum extra urbem
5. Timor contagionis circumstantium per me
6. Transmissio per materias congelatas

Factores obsessionis COVID etiam includunt:

١. Contradictiones in nuntiis
٢. Incertitudo in illo tempore
٣. Absentia curationis definitivae
٤. Confirmatio et repetitio informationum falsarum
٥. Coniuratio ad populum mundi delendum
٦. Publica disinfectio omnium et ubique
٧. Informationes desperatae

Denique unus casus etiam est "non obsessio, sed actus errati," qui post publicationem figurae pertinenti explicabitur.

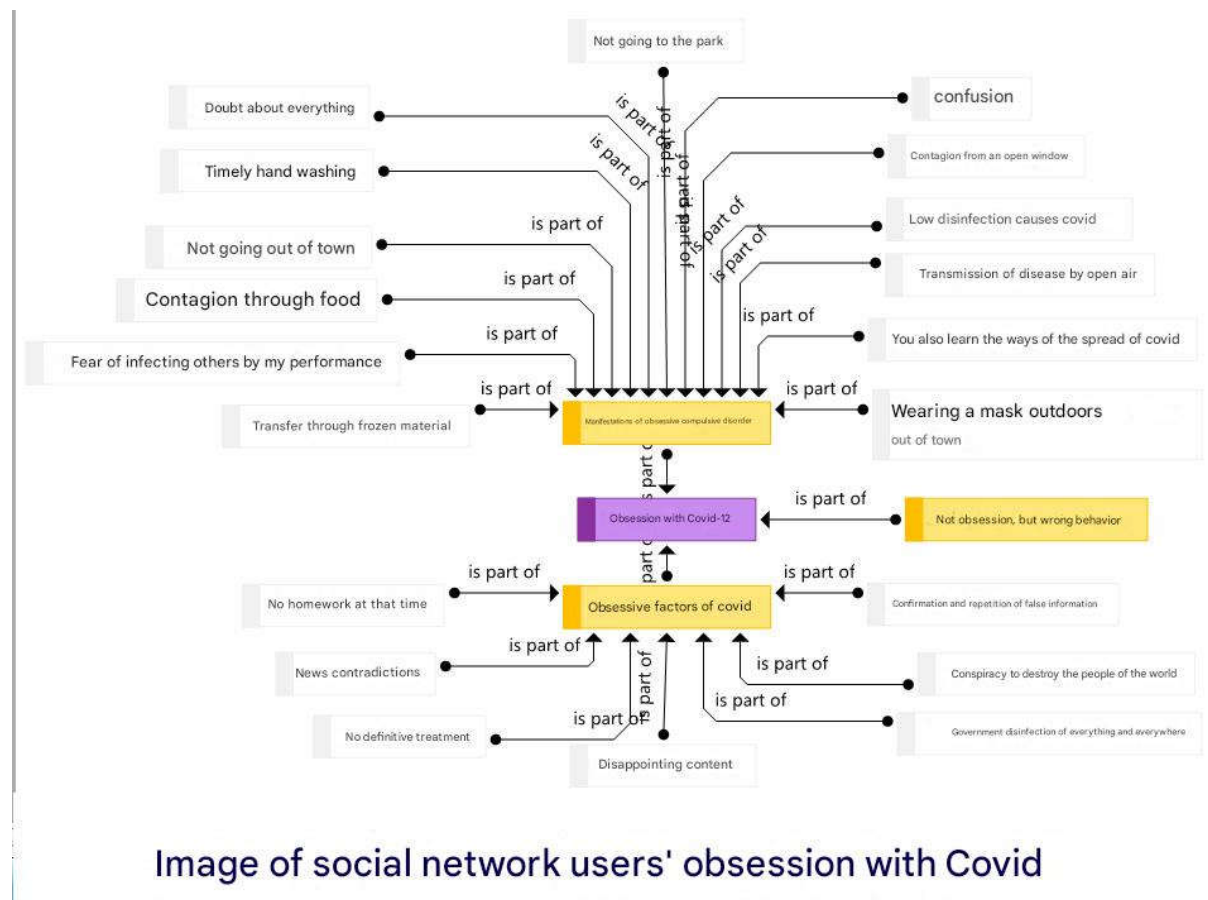


Figura ^ - Obsessio COVID ab usoribus retium socialium

Condiciones contextuales temporis crisi, id est apicem COVID, taliter erant ut multi homines morerentur, quod timorem in omnibus, incluso usoribus, creavit. Incertitudo fortasse maximus factor obsessivus haberi potest, quoniam ambiguitas semper timorem generat. Sed contradictiones in nuntiis, confirmatio et repetitio informationum falsarum, disinfectio publica omnium et ubique, atque absentia curationis certa; haec sunt quae ex actionibus publicis et mediis officialibus in retia socialia transierunt et obsessionem creaverunt.

Notandum est obsessionem fere rem visibilem esse, cum anxietas res mentalis sit. Forsitan homines post tempus id obliviscantur aut detorqueant, sed obsessio vel eius consequentia plerumque res physica consideratur et minus ex mente excidunt aut detorqueantur, quod fecit ut respondores ad eam plerique referant. Denique, capita de desperatione et coniuratione, quae a populo ipso producta et divulgata sunt, non in categoria mediae socialis cadunt, quoniam nulla pagina officialis ad desperationem aut coniurationem COVID tendit.

Memorandum est "actum erratum" esse notionem adhibitam; id est, distinctio "actuum errorum ab obsessione" in praecedenti investigatione aut fundamentis theoreticis non visa est. In communitate Iranensi, ob absentiam mediorum referentium, actus errati disseminati sunt, et manifestationes huius actus errati ut obsessio acceptae sunt, quod genus deviationis in resultantibus investigationibus domesticis esse potest. In regionibus progressis, ob existentiam mediorum referentium, haec quaestio non observatur et in documentis non apparet, et dici potest hanc esse propriam Iraniae.

¶. Hypochondria COVID ab usoribus retium socialium

Hypochondria una ex consequentiis negativis programmatis salutis in mediis est, id est, in hac investigatione quinque capita aperta enumerata sunt, quibus nonnulli de absentia hypochondriae aperte mentionem fecerunt. Circiter septem codices in forma usus experientiarum priorum aegrorum adhibiti sunt, et reliquae categoriae in tribus capitibus aperti sunt:

١. Dolor abdominalis et hypochondria
٢. Inappetentia et hypochondria
٣. Quocumque sensu anomalo hypochondria habetur

Haec tria capita aperta in forma unius capitis centrali "signorum hypochondriae COVID" comprehensa sunt, quae in figura inferiore visibilia sunt.

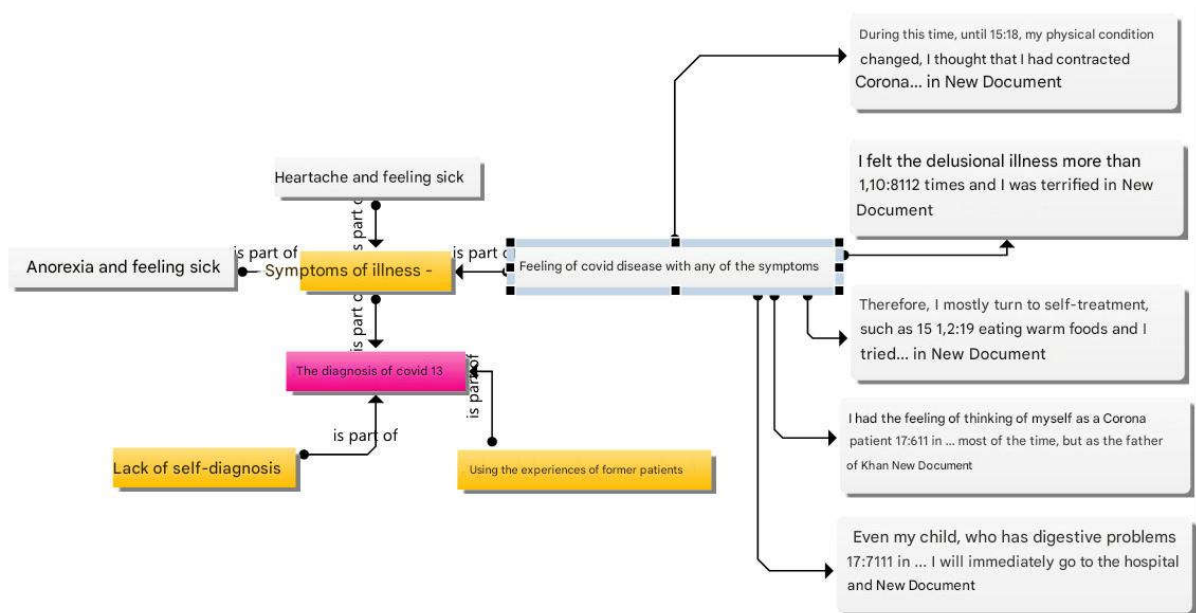


Image of the sick perception of the users of social networks

Figura 4 - Hypochondria COVID ab usoribus retium socialium

Ut in figura praemissa visum est, fere maxima pars contentorum sensum hypochondriae demonstrat, praesertim cum homines in quarantina erant et nihil agere poterant. Cum conscientia signorum morbi, quisque ex his signis se ipsum aegrotare putavit.

4. Fatigatio COVID ab usoribus retium socialium

Fatigatio COVID significat non observantiam protocolorum sanitariorum post aliquod tempus. Aliter dicendum, homines initio omnia protocola observant, sed post aliquod tempus de re fatigantur et iam aut credunt in protocollo et eius effectum, aut vitam suam quam in quarantina et limitationibus praeferunt. Ad hanc rem, responsoribus quaestiones de fatigatio COVID positae sunt, quae in forma capitum apertorum infra enumeratae sunt.

Capita aperta fatigatio COVID includunt:

1. Universitas omnium in contagione COVID
2. Fatigatio ex contradictionibus
3. Retiacula socialia et normalizatio fatigationis COVID
4. Non observantia populi
5. Convivium limitatum
6. Exitus non necessarii e domo
7. Non usus chirothecarum
8. Non usus maskarum ob non-standardizatione

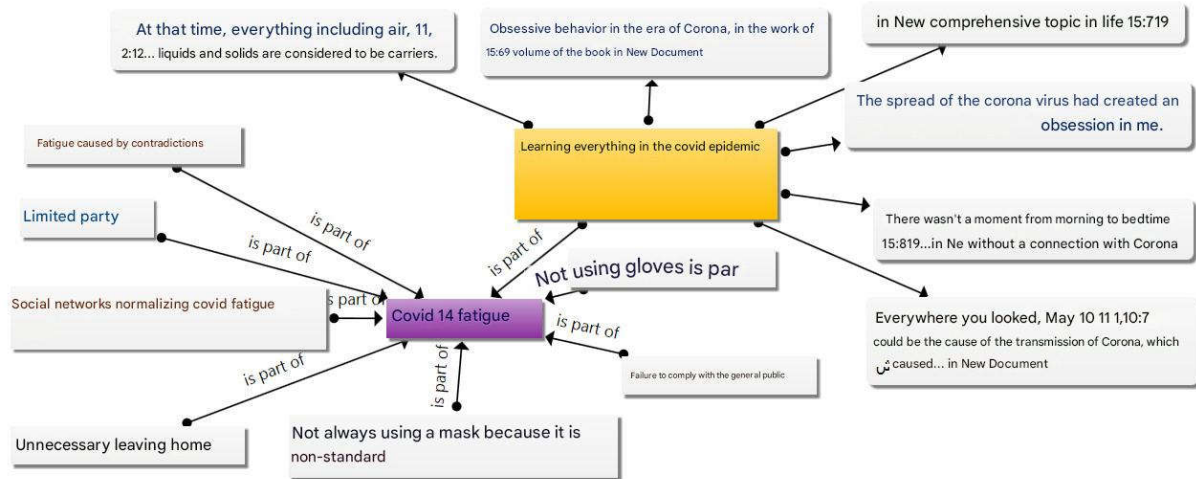


Image of the fatigue of social media users

Figura 10 - Fatigatio COVID ab usoribus retium socialium

Ut in figura praemissa visum est, capita aperta in duas categorias dividi possunt. Prima categoria causas vel factores ad fatigationem pertinentes, quae sunt:

1. Universitas omnium in contagione COVID
2. Fatigatio ex contradictionibus
3. Retiacula socialia et normalizatio fatigationis COVID
4. Non observantia populi

Inter haec quattuor capita aperta, universitas omnium in contagione COVID cum sex frequentia indicat, cum omnia possint esse causa transmissionis morbi, tunc abstinencia nullum effectum habet. Praeterea, quidam aegroti affirmaverunt se omnes protocolla sanitariorum observasse.

Secunda categoria est genus fatigationis, quae consistit in capitibus apertis:

1. Convivium limitatum
2. Exitus non necessarii e domo
3. Non usus chirothecarum
4. Non usus maskarum ob non-standardizationem.

Retiacula Socialia in COVID-19

Maximus factor mediatu in hoc studio sunt retiacula socialia. Aliter dicendum, munus reticulorum socialium ut fons communicationis vel medium communicationis est res quae consideranda est, ut perspicuum sit quam valde influentia fuerint.

Certe in hoc studio non intendimus ipsas reticula socialia examinare, cum hoc in aliis studiis tractatum sit et in litteris investigationis etiam memoratum. Capita aperta quae obtenta sunt in duas categorias dividuntur: prima ad informationem pertinent, quae includit:

١. Notitia de nuntiis COVID
٢. Notitia de condicionibus in patria
٣. Notitia de condicionibus COVID in patria
٤. Notitia de modis praecavendis.

Secunda categoria, quae etiam plura capita aperta includit, ad interactiones humanas pertinet, et reticula socialia tantum instrumentum in hoc contextu inter usores sunt, quae includunt:

١. Notitia de amicis et cognatis
٢. Ad communicationem cum aliis
٣. Interactio intra coetum
٤. Non solus esse
٥. Animi aliorum
٦. Alii curam mei habent
٧. Quarantine fieri contemplativum
٨. Substitutio instrumenti communicationis telephonii.

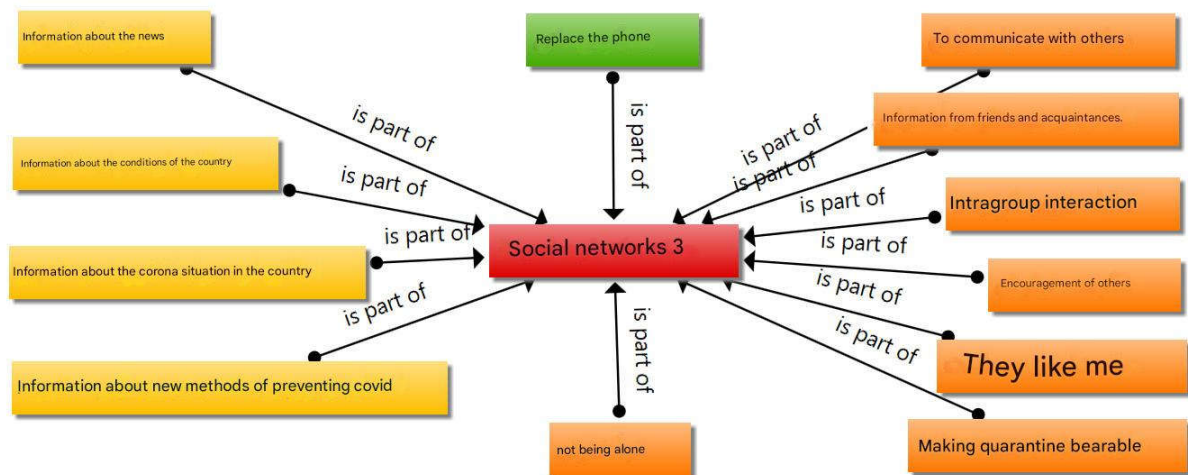


Illustration of the use of social networks in Covid-19

Figure ١١ - Use of Social Media During COVID

In light of the aforementioned figure, it can be observed that the most significant themes are related to interaction. Given the qualitative nature of the methodology, we were not aiming for quantitative results; however, a simple observation indicates that social media served as an important tool in the third millennium for interaction, coping, and dealing with COVID. This significantly marginalizes many media influence theories and shows that during a crisis,

citizens, as users, engage in interaction with one another, while topics of interest to official and unofficial advertising agencies are pushed to the periphery.

Psychological Consequences of COVID-١٩

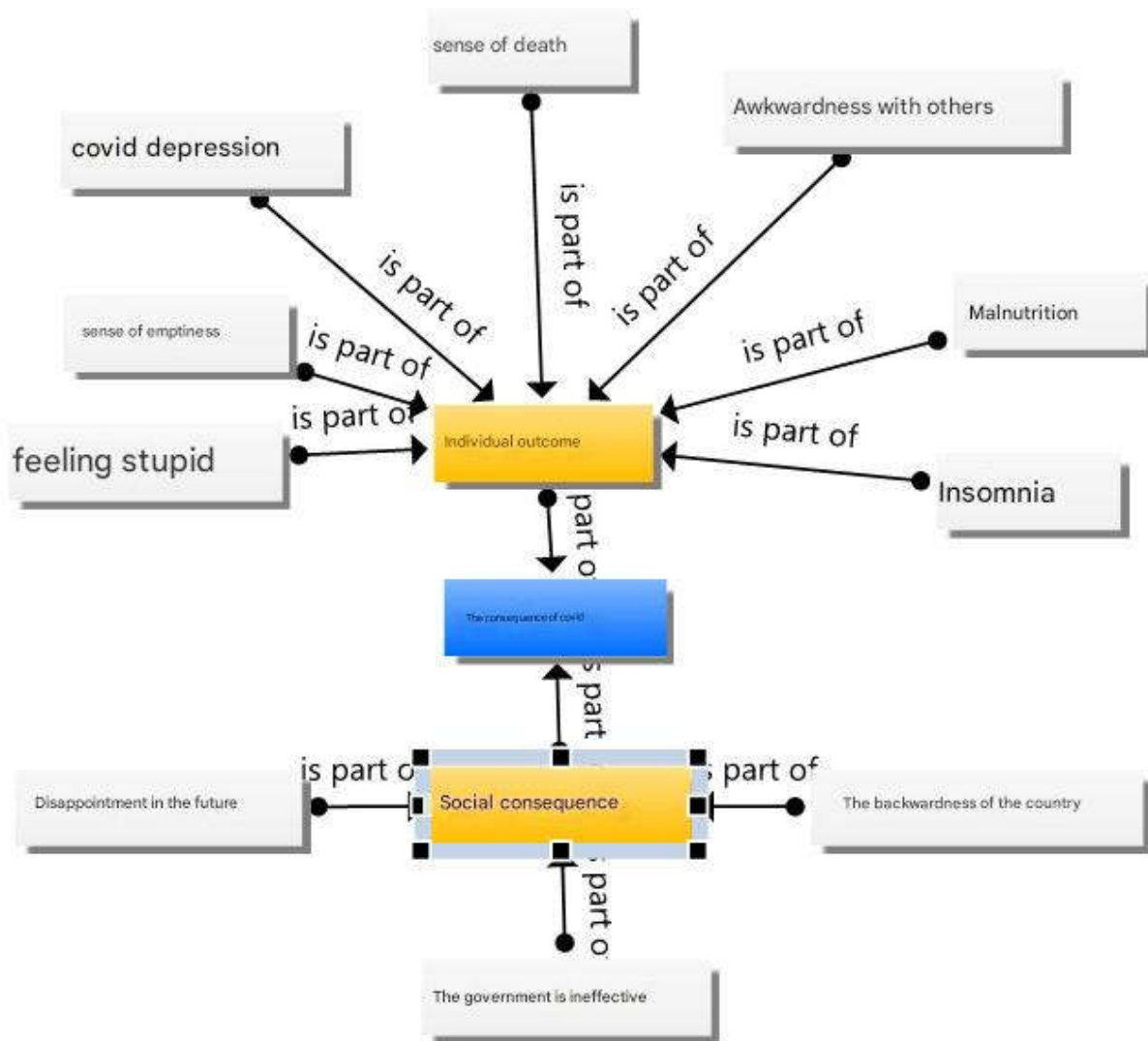
One of the issues that was not addressed in the initial research was the social consequences of COVID, which was raised through another question and included as a consequence of COVID. Although some individual consequences share commonalities with psychological effects, they have been presented separately to ensure that nothing is overlooked.

Thus, the consequences of COVID were consolidated into two main categories: individual and social consequences. In the individual consequences, the following were noted:

١. Sense of death
٢. Depression
٣. Anomaly and misbehavior towards others
٤. Malnutrition
٥. Sense of idleness
٦. Feeling foolish
٧. Insomnia

In the social consequences:

١. Hopelessness about the future
٢. Being a backward country
٣. Government inefficiency



Picture of mental consequences of covid 19

Figure 12 - Psychological Consequences of COVID

It is observed that hopelessness is the most important issue in the social consequences of COVID. Although this research primarily focused on the psychological effects, the social consequences are also aspects that should not be overlooked in studies.

Conclusion and Recommendations

a) Discussion and Conclusion: In the initial framework of this research, which was also presented in the preliminary model, the impact of social networks on the psychological effects of COVID-19 was considered with the mediation of media literacy. This hypothesis was emphasized to provide a background for starting the research work. However, through exploratory interviews, different conditions emerged, which were examined based on the final model of grounded theory.

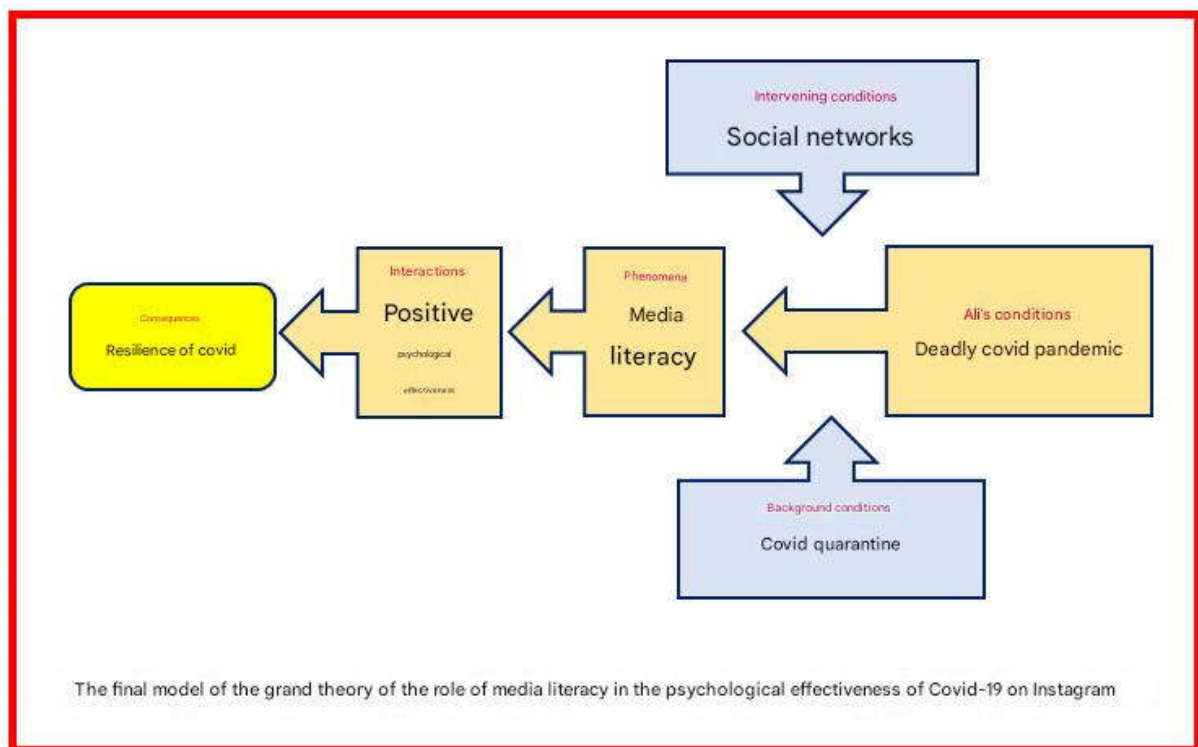


Figure ۵-۷: The Final Model of Media Literacy in the Psychological Impact of COVID-۱۹

The first stage of the crisis is the deadly pandemic of COVID-۱۹. In other words, the COVID pandemic is not a typical crisis but a deadly one that involves all citizens of a community, where everyone has imagined death in their minds. All citizens, who are the users in this research, see themselves and their surroundings at risk of extinction, an experience that has not been seen even in wars, where those distant from conflict have not experienced such feelings; these feelings were experienced during the deadly COVID-۱۹ pandemic.

The second element of the current model is the contextual conditions, which, aside from the causal conditions of the deadly COVID pandemic, include the quarantine of citizens during the peak of the pandemic. In other words, the issue of quarantine has been observed for the first time in the history of Iran. In a state of quarantine, citizens must confine themselves at home to avoid contracting the disease, which is essentially a form of house arrest without receiving services. This has led to the isolation of citizens across the country, to the extent that the feeling of great fear was so pervasive that even in villages, individuals attempted to quarantine themselves to survive this disease. This new contextual condition created a new situation characterized by feelings of fear and despair in the lives of all citizens, which cannot be compared to any other period or crisis.

Social networks are presented as intervening conditions in the deadly COVID-۱۹ pandemic. In other words, in a situation where everyone feels doomed due to the COVID pandemic and is under quarantine, social networks are the only tools and means of communication for users. Thus, social networks have played the most significant role in interactions among citizens, and consequently, a large part of society has felt the sense of quarantine or house arrest less intensely. By exchanging their feelings and thoughts, they managed to overcome this difficult

period; thus, social networks have had a positive psychological impact, fostering peace of mind, social belonging, and shared thinking.

Media literacy fundamentally relates to how audiences engage with media and, in cyberspace, with official (organizational and non-organizational) information. Therefore, when users establish friendly interactions during the crisis of the deadly COVID pandemic, media literacy or information literacy loses its meaning. Although some users acknowledge that incorrect behaviors have also been prevalent among users during this outbreak, it can be concluded that media literacy has not gained significant importance.

The negative psychological impacts identified in this research include anxiety, obsession, illness perception, and COVID fatigue. In contrast, positive psychological impacts encompass reduced anxiety, empathy, feelings of belonging, psychological relief, intellectual sharing, and consolation, which have contributed to enduring the conditions and continuing disease prevention efforts.

Ultimately, the resilience seen in the aftermath of COVID-19 is a consequence of this process, as it is observed that all individuals in society have returned to their normal activities, as if this disease had not caused a standstill and inactivity in society at a specific time.

b) Practical Recommendations: The first practical recommendation, which may not fall within the scope of this research, is the freedom to use social networks globally. In other words, due to the filtering of social networks and their lack of official status, it is impossible for government institutions to utilize these protocols effectively, and the costs associated with their beneficial use are also not feasible. This has resulted in the amateur use of social networks during COVID-19, exemplified by a Telegram channel named after the Ministry of Health being misused by private entities.

The second practical recommendation is the translation of texts for use on social networks, particularly in the field of content marketing during crises, which is notably lacking.

The third recommendation is the establishment of reference pages on social networks for organizations related to crises, as reference pages can enable the correction of information for users.

c) Research Recommendations: The first research recommendation is the approach of differentiating crises when examining social networks, as crises are distinct from one another and cannot be addressed with a single approach. The second recommendation is to differentiate the use of social networks as a means of human communication and collective communication. In other words, a media-centric approach in analyses may yield inaccurate results.

Investigating COVID-19 with an opportunity-focused approach to social networks instead of a threat-focused one will be a subject of future research.

d) Research Limitations: The first limitation of this research is that it was conducted after the quarantine period. In other words, the greatest impact of social networks on the psychological effects of COVID occurred during the peak of the pandemic, while this research was conducted at a later time, minimizing the possibility of recall.

The second limitation pertains to the filtering of Instagram and WhatsApp, which has created a disruption in collecting archival materials. In other words, returning to the time of quarantine has been hindered due to filtering.

The third limitation is the failure of some respondents to express their genuine feelings due to embarrassment or shyness, which made the interview process more time-consuming and required additional questions to obtain responses.

The fourth limitation involves the need for greater self-disclosure from respondents in expressing their inner feelings. Respondents created challenges for this research through their passivity, which required the researcher to ask detailed questions to gather exploratory responses.

Lastly, emphasizing media literacy in the questions posed was another challenge in engaging with respondents, as it often held little relevance.

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