

# Social Media Usages During COVID-19 Confinement: The Lebanese Older People

Nisrine Zammar  
*Lebanese University, Lebanon*

## ABSTRACT

Although Lebanon currently has the highest proportion of adults aged 65 years and above, we noticed the lack of sufficient studies and information on older people in many fields. The Lebanese older population suffered from the outbreak of Covid-19, because the confinement isolated them and hindered their participation in societal activities. Hence, most of them replaced the traditional social interactions with the usages of social media. The literature review reveals that most of the studies conducted in Lebanon on Covid-19 pandemic did not provide valuable information on the older people in relation to social media usages during the pandemic. Thus, this study aims at filling this gap by addressing the social media role and usage habits in the life of the Lebanese older people during the confinement. And based on the findings of this study, we will suggest some implications for the benefit of a post-pandemic older population in Lebanon.

## KEYWORDS

Social Media, Usages, Covid-19 Confinement, Older People, Lebanon

## INTRODUCTION

Although Lebanon currently has the highest proportion of adults aged 65 years and older (10%) among all Arab countries (Abdulrahman et al., 2014), older people are suffering from much discrimination, none the least from the lack of pension programs and the lack of sufficient studies and information on older people, in many fields. The Lebanese older population also suffered from the outbreak of Covid-19 because the confinement isolated them, limited their mobility, and hindered their participation in societal activities. Hence, most of them replaced traditional social interactions with the use of social media.

The literature review reveals that most of the studies conducted in Lebanon on the Covid-19 pandemic covered mostly health and healthcare issues across all age groups (Webster et al., 2015), and none of them provided valuable information on the older people in relation to social media usage during the pandemic.

Thus, this study aimed at filling this gap by addressing the social media role and usage habits of the Lebanese older people during their confinement. Based on the findings of this study, we suggest some implications for the benefit of a postpandemic older population in Lebanon.

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## BACKGROUND

In a report on the national strategy for older persons in Lebanon in the period 2020–2030, the Lebanese Republic, Ministry of Social Affairs (2021) highlighted the global trend of demographic change due to the aging of the world's population, including Lebanon.

What makes Lebanon an interesting case are the special factors that lead the country to have the highest percentage of older people in the Arab world. Two of the most important factors are:

1. The successive waves of migration of Lebanese young adults due to the economic crisis.
2. The devastating consequences of the explosion at Beirut's port on August 4, 2020.

In this paper, we will examine:

- The role that social media played during the pandemic as an answer to the elderly's limited mobility and social activities in the absence of some traditional means of social interaction.
- To what extent social platforms participated in the reconfiguration of the daily lives of the Lebanese older people during Covid-19 confinement.

Our hypotheses would be as follows:

- During the confinement, the Lebanese older people transposed their personal social interactions on social media platforms.
- The social media platforms helped Lebanese older people reconfigure their daily lives.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, numerous studies have focused on social media matters, and the number of these studies is still increasing due to the growing importance of social media in all aspects of our lives. Zhou and Men (2023), for example, discussed new ways to further theorize the impact of digital media. They also discussed about the insufficiency of such research and provided suggestions for future theory development in corporate digital communication. On the other hand, Khataan et al. (2022) developed a conceptual model that identifies the factors affecting students' intentions to use Facebook in education. Zhao et al. (2022) aimed at understanding how social media works as a knowledge-translation strategy for healthcare providers, policymakers, and patients, in order to provide them with information for their healthcare decision-making.

In a more complex manner, Mao and Wang (2022) elaborated on three pairs of ethical principles that are reflected on social media: Egoism and altruism, monism and pluralism, and utilitarianism and deontology.

Generally, it is believed that social media is not really accepted among the elderly. Yet, surprisingly, Teng and Joo (2017) found that the elderlies are more addicted to social media than the teenagers. They investigated the elderly's adoption of social media and how they cope with this new technology. More specifically, they determined the effects of the usage of social media among the Malaysian elderly.

For this particular study, we were inspired by Sheldon et al. (2021), who revealed that older adults, specifically the Baby Boomers, rely on Facebook and Instagram to compensate for the lack of social activities and face-to-face interactions in their daily lives. In addition, we found relevant to our study the work carried out in the USA on the usage of social networks by older people (Khoo & Yang, 2020; Nam, 2019). Hence, we adopted Katz et al.'s (1974) four categories of media usage: Information, social relations, personal identification or self-promotion, and entertainment. As Sheldon

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