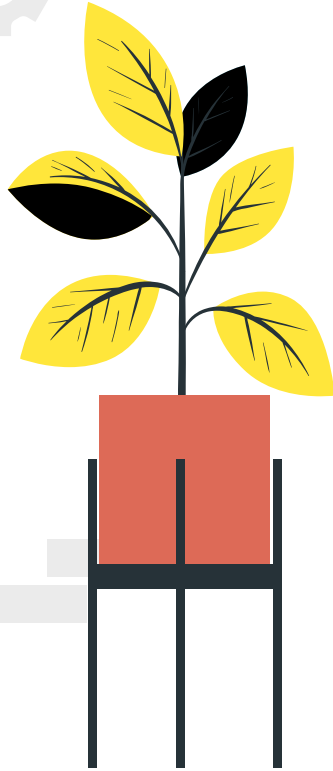


SPRING 2021

Pandemic Stories: Social Media Use in Times of Crisis

Marina Aloyants
Department of English and Communications
American University of Armenia
Yerevan, Armenia





Outline

01

Introduction

02

Research Questions

03

Methodology

04

Survey Findings

05

Interview Findings

06

Conclusions

07

Limitations

08

Avenues For Future
Research





Introduction

The COVID outbreak changed economies, politics, healthcare, and social lives.

It shifted the entire world into the online realm. But, how did this shift affect people?

Some research found an increase in social media use while others found the opposite, but why did people's communication change and how did social media impact them?

My research found answers to these questions.





Research Questions



How did the pandemic affect social lives?



What was the role of Social Media?



Methodology



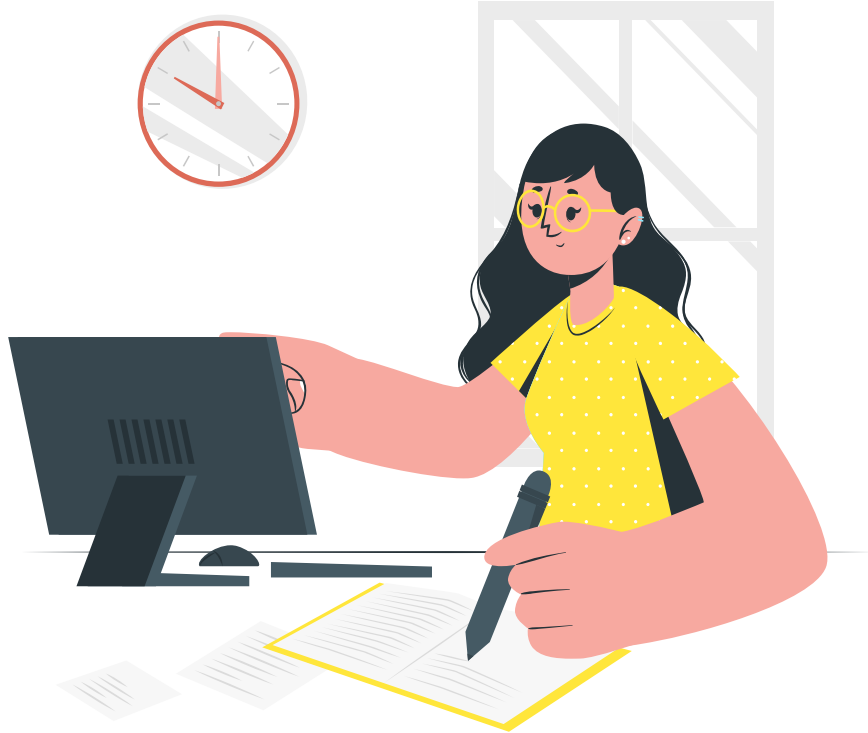
Online Survey

- 170 participants
 - 73.5% female
 - 26.5% male
 - Aged under 15 to 60+
 - From all 9 provinces
 - 5 occupation categories
- 9 questions

In-depth Interviews

- 18 participants
 - 50% female
 - 50% male
 - Aged 9 to 40+
 - 4 occupation categories
- Online Zoom interviews
- 7 questions





Survey Findings



51.5%

Of participants felt an increase in their social media usage during the pandemic.

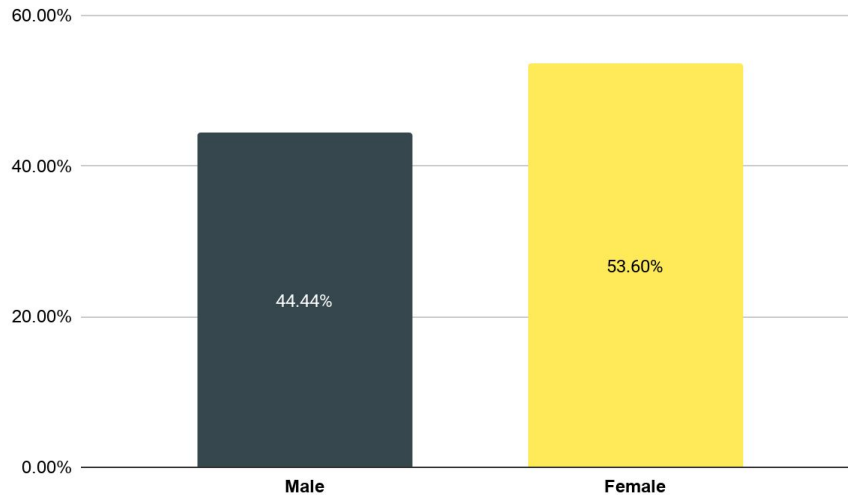
42% felt no difference and 6.6% felt a decrease.





Gender Perspective

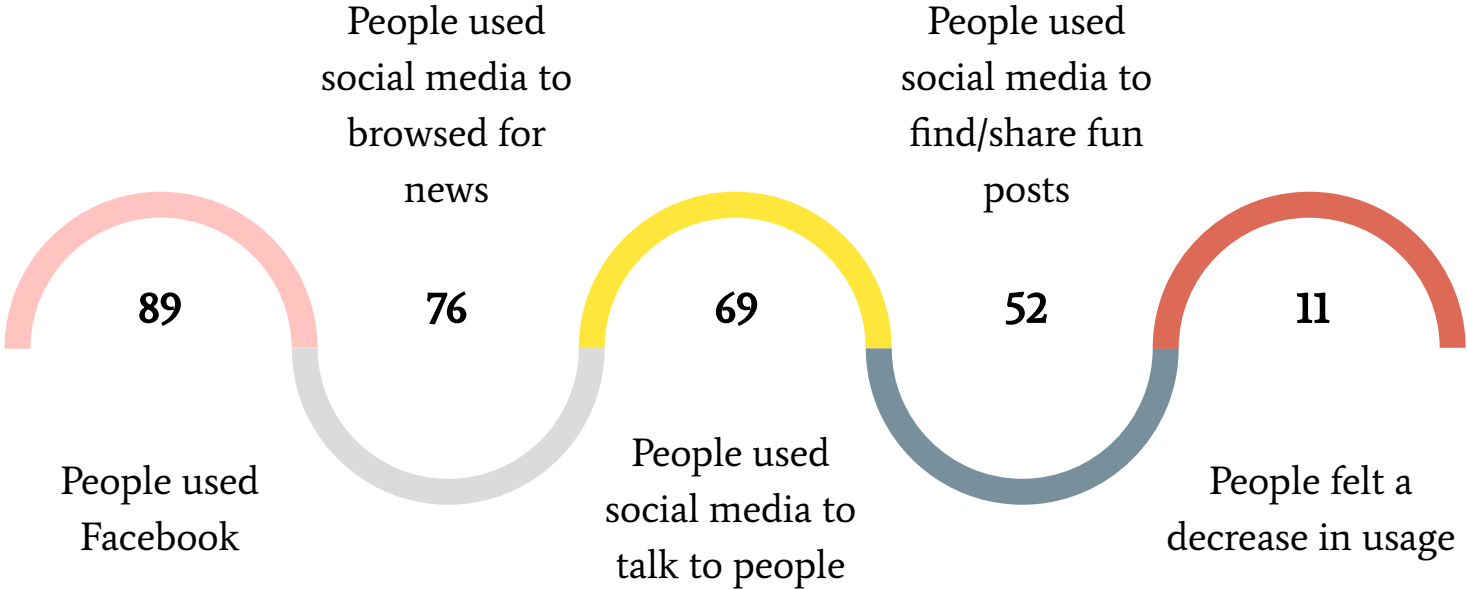
Social Media Usage Increase Among Genders



Females were **9.1%** more likely to have an increase in social media use than males.



Of 170 Participants...





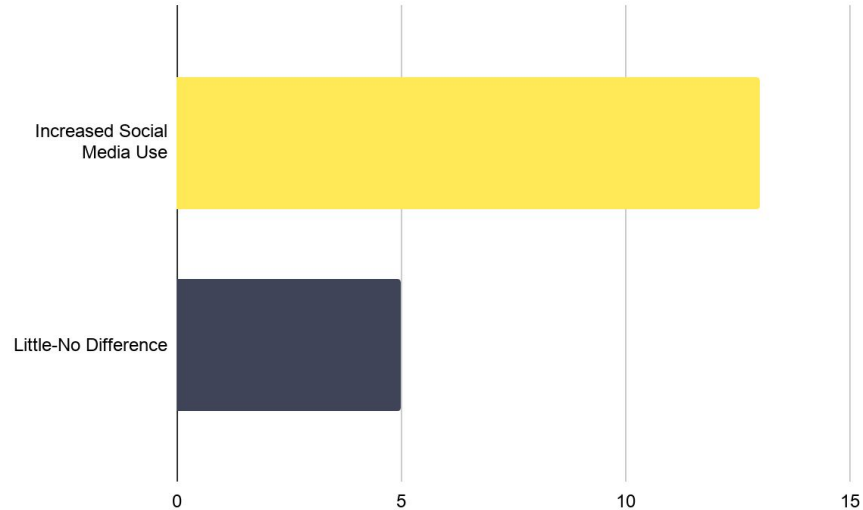
Interview Findings





Start of the pandemic

Social Media Usage in The First 2 Months



Social media use increased in the first 2 months after COVID appeared in Armenia, mainly to search for news and updates.

Lifestyle Changes

Managing work/studies online

More confident in online classes
Time management problems

Offline activities

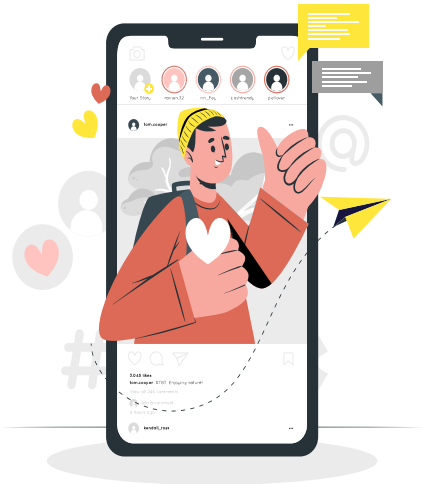
Books, yoga, cooking, walks
Fear of infection

Online distractions

Youtube videos, vlogs, IG stories
Addiction

Frequent use of calls and audio messages

Preserving sense of normality
Loneliness



Downsides of Connectivity

Overwhelming news flow

Unfollowing news pages
Anxiety and helplessness

Intense COVID-related work load

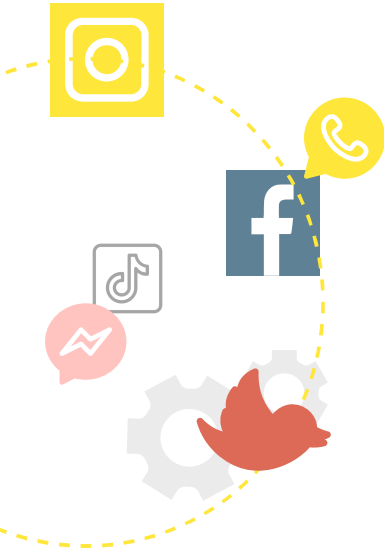
Receiving COVID news at work
Fear of infection, fatigue

Social Media negativity

Deactivating Tik Tok account
Addiction, insecurities, unrealistic expectations

Lockdown frustrations

Unfollowing governmental pages
Spreading humorous posts



Impacts of the 44 Day War

Spreading online awareness

Increased social media use
Opening Twitter accounts

Overwhelming news flow

Social media deactivation
Depression

Disinformation/fake news

Increased Twitter/FB use to counter it
Frustration, helplessness

Use of more 'secure' or local platforms

Telegram and Zangi
Sense of paranoia



Current Situation

Desensitized to COVID news

Disconnected from news pages
Apathetic to bad news after war

More socially involved

People reaching out more
Showing more patience

Resumed offline communication

Virus is less of a threat after war
Planning events via Facebook

Continued online habits

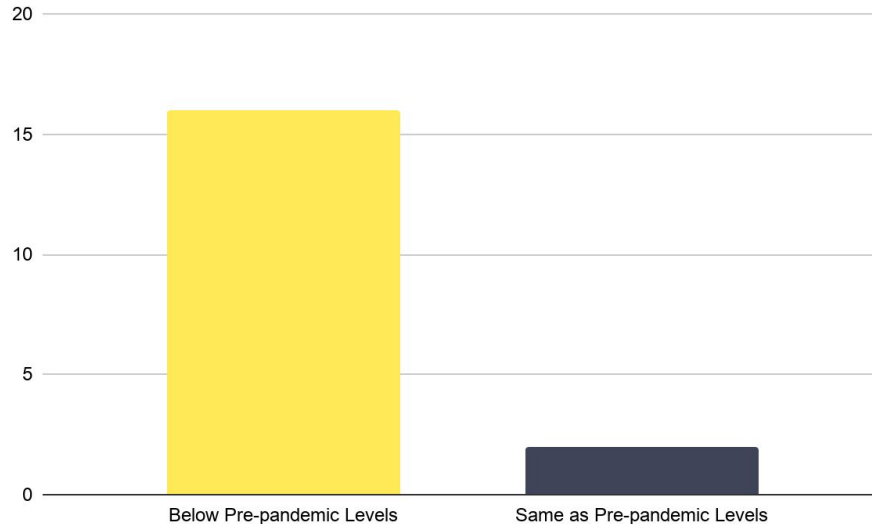
Video calls, audios, Zoom meetings
Less reliant on traditional communication





Importance Drop

Social Media Usage Compared to Pre-Pandemic Levels



Following lengthy lockdowns and the war, COVID became **less threatening**, less important for people by March 2020.

Social media use dropped **below pre-pandemic levels** as people started caring less about the virus and communicating offline.

Conclusions

The crises increased social media usage for news consumption, human connectivity, and distraction.

When a crisis reaches its peak, people became tired and anxious from exposure to negative information and start limiting their social media use.

Some people simply substituted “negative” platforms like Facebook with more “neutral” messaging applications like Telegram.



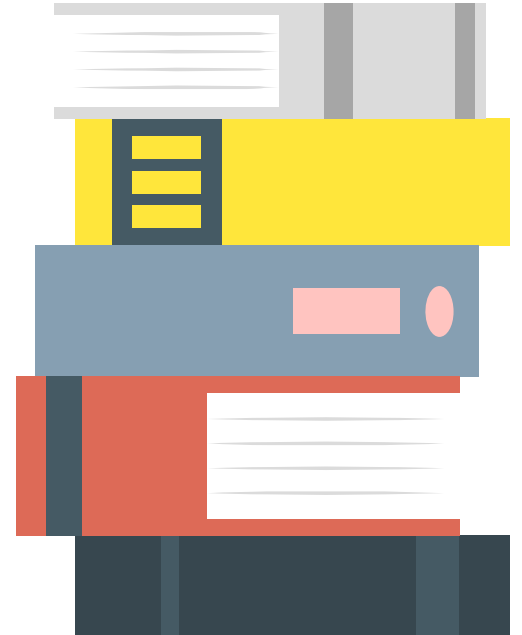
Limitations

- The survey and interview sample size is too small to be generalized to Armenia's population.
- The survey sample did not have a proportionate distribution of males and females.
- The research was limited to a span of 5 months. More data could be collected with a longer study.
- People from villages, provinces, and those over 50 are underrepresented in the interview sample.



Avenue for Future research

- Are there differences in the reasons for increased or decreased social media use between males and females?
- What kind of COVID-related humor was shared during the pandemic, to whom, and why?
- How did COVID-related humor change people's emotional/mental states?
- Did the purpose of social media platforms change during COVID? What effect did they have?



Thank you!



Pandemic Stories:
Social Media Use in Times of Crisis