



Use of Social Networks in Dental Students at a Private Peruvian University

Kiara Jesbel Dioses Palacios¹ & Valeria Lau Nakamatsu² & Valeria Alejandra Olivos Vivanco³ & Roberto Antonio León Manco⁴

^{1,2,3&4} Faculty of Dentistry, Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University, Lima, Perú

Correspondence: Kiara Jesbel Dioses Palacios, Lima, Perú.

Email: kiara.dioses@upch.pe

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Abstract

Introduction: Currently, faced with the great demand for dental health services, it is necessary to establish a proper communication between patients and future professionals in social media.

Objective: Determine the use of social networks in undergraduate students of the Teaching Dental Center (TDC) at Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University (CHPU), Lima - Peru, 2020.

Material and methods: A cross-sectional study was carried out, with a sample of 115 undergraduate students. The study is based on a survey with 12 qualitative questions (dichotomous and polytomous). The study variables were: use of ICTs, age and sex. For the statistical analysis, a descriptive analysis was carried out and for the bivariate analysis the z distribution was determined using the Kolmogórov-Smirnov test, consequently the U Mann Whitney and Chi-square tests were used; the study presented a confidence level of 95% and a $p < 0.05$.

Results: About the 73.04% (n=84) students who use their social networks Often/Frequently for more than two hours a day, 82.14% (n = 69) were female and 17.86% (n = 15) were male. The average number of social networks used per respondent is 4.67.

Conclusion: A frequent use of social networks was determined by the undergraduate students of the Teaching Dental Center at Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University, Lima-Peru, 2020.

Keywords: Social Networking, Oral Health, Students, Dental

Introduction

Currently, people are connected all the time through various technological tools; social networks are the most prominent, due to their reach, characteristics and impact on society. They allow interactive and dynamic communication among users. Through social networks it is possible to share information, personal data and achieve a fluent and effective communication with specific groups of interest and other users of the same network. Its functions are mainly based on strengthening the relationship between network members, which leads to the development of cooperation practices through mutual support and response to specific needs that members have, emotional release of expressions and

feelings, among many other functions.

In social networks, lately there is a lot of information available on health issues aimed at patients and health professionals, in some of them it is possible to exchange information, those focused on patients allow them to learn more about diseases that they or any person may suffer, and those for health professionals become spaces for exchanging diagnostic or treatment knowledge. This phenomenon also includes oral health, and there is evidence of greater access to information through the use of social networks via the Internet, and their use is beneficial for spreading information compared to traditional methods, since they reach more people (especially adolescents and young adults, who are the ones who use social networks the most) and are more economical in a health education program. In relation to dentists, they use social networks as means of advertising, education, and as means of communication with their peers (to receive and provide information on new techniques, procedures and treatments, stimulating their learning, personal and professional development) and their patients.

From the aforementioned information, it was found relevant to deepen the topic of social networks, due to its strong impact in recent years, especially in the context of pandemic where communication through these media has been vital. The importance of this study is based on analyzing the association of students with social networks and how this contributes to communication with their patients, because currently the efficient use of virtual media is essential for professional development. The aim of this study was to determine the use of social networks in undergraduate students of the Teaching Dental Center (TDC) at Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University (CHPU), Lima - Peru, 2020.

Material and Methods

Design and sample

The study design was cross-sectional. The study population consisted of all undergraduate students of the TDC-CHPU, Lima - Peru in the year 2020. Initially, according to projections provided by the Academic Secretariat of the Faculty of Dentistry itself, a sample of 183 undergraduate students in their 3rd, 4th and 5th years was estimated, who volunteered to participate in the study. However, only 115 responses to the survey were obtained, 68 people did not respond, obtaining a loss rate of 37.2%; for this reason, the final sample of students surveyed was 115.

For the inclusion criteria of the present study, all TDC-CHPU 3rd, 4th and 5th year undergraduate students enrolled in academic year 2020 were considered because the selection was non-probabilistic; on the other hand, TDC-CHPU 3rd, 4th and 5th year students who did not authorize their participation were excluded.

Variables

The main variable was the use of social networks; for this variable a survey previously used by Gómez Castillo (Mexico; 2014) was applied, which was modified for the present study. The final survey consisted of 12 questions, of which from question 1 to question 10, were of qualitative type, with values: Never/Rarely/Sometimes and Often/Frequently. While in question 11, it was of qualitative type, with values: Several times a day and Several times a week/Sporadically and in question 12, it was of qualitative type, with values: Expert and Intermediate.

In addition, the number of social networks they use was counted, which could be: Facebook, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. Similarly, the sex and age of the students were recorded.

Procedures

For the implementation of the project, some specific adaptations were made to the instrument according to the population of the present study. Then, a validation by expert judgment was carried out by six teachers of the Faculty of Dentistry at CHPU, who have professional experience, postgraduate studies and knowledge in public health; a consistency was obtained by Cronbach's alpha equal to 0.99. Subsequently, the study started with the recruitment of 3rd, 4th and 5th year undergraduate students of the TDC-CHPU enrolled in the academic year 2020. Through the sending of invitations via institutional e-mail for their participation in the study, informed consent and the survey were completed using the Google Forms platform. The survey was configured in such a way that all the questions had to be answered in order to be sent, so there was no possibility for incomplete surveys. The month of October 2020 was given to answer the surveys; at the end, the information was downloaded in Excel with each coded record and the anonymity of the participants was maintained.

Statistical Analysis

A descriptive analysis was performed and for the bivariate analysis, the z distribution was determined using the Kolmogórov-Smirnov test, and the Mann-Whitney U test and the Chi-Square test were used. The study presented a confidence level of 95% and a $p < 0.05$. The STATA 17.0 statistical program with license series number: 401709310706 was used.

Ethics

This study was conducted after receiving approval from the institutional ethics committee at Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University (IEC-CHPU) dated August 14th, 2020

and SIDISI code N°202209.

Results

About the use of social networks according to age and sex of undergraduate students; concerning the question "You use your social networks more than 2 hours a day", of the 115 respondents, 26.96% (n=31) use Never/Rarely/Sometimes, while 73.04% (n=84) use Often/Frequently. On the other hand, regarding students who Often/Frequently use their social networks more than 2 hours a day, 82.14% (n=69) were female and 17.86% (n=15) were male. In addition, those who Never/Rarely/Sometimes use their social networks more than 2 hours a day, 61.29% (n=19) were female and 38.71% (n=12) were male. A statistically significant association was found between both sexes and the variable use of social networks, obtaining a $p=0.019$ ($p<0.05$) (Table 1).

About the use of social networks according to main networks in undergraduate students, the average number of social networks used by the 115 respondents is 4.67 (SD= 1.25). Furthermore, it was found that, of the 78 Facebook Messenger users, 35.90% (n=28) use the internet Never/Rarely/Sometimes since childhood or adolescence; while 64.10% (n=50) use the internet Often/Frequently since childhood or adolescence, obtaining a $p=0.035$. Additionally, of the 104 Instagram users, 23.08% (n=24) use Never/Rarely/Sometimes their social networks more than 2 hours a day; while 76.92% (n=80) use Often/Frequently their social networks more than 2 hours a day, obtaining a $p=0.004$. On the other hand, of the 51 TikTok users, 15.69% (n=8) Never/Rarely/Sometimes use their social networks more than 2 hours a day; while 84.31% (n=43) Often/Frequently use their social networks more than 2 hours a day, obtaining a $p=0.015$. Finally, of the 104 Instagram users, 91.35% (n=95) used Several times a day on their social networks; while 8.65% (n=9) used Several times a week/Sporadically their social networks, obtaining a $p=0.003$. Statistically significant association was found in the use of social networks according to main networks in undergraduate students, among Facebook Messenger users who use internet Never/Rarely/Sometimes and Often/Frequently since childhood or adolescence, among Instagram users and TikTok users who use Never/Rarely/Sometimes and Often/Frequently their social networks more than 2 hours a day and among Instagram users who use Several times a day and Several times a week/Sporadically their social networks ($p<0.05$) (Table 2).

Discussion

Nowadays, social networks are one of the technological tools that stimulate fluent communication, sharing information and personal data with specific groups of interest and other users of the same network.⁷ In addition, social networks are being employed in the field of general and oral health, where there is greater access and diffusion of information

to the population (especially to adolescents and young adults), and are also used as means of advertising, education and communication between health professionals and their patients.

In the present study it was found within the use of social networks according to age and sex of undergraduate students, that the majority of respondents Often/Frequently use their social networks more than 2 hours a day, being the female sex compared to the male sex the one that predominated, this differs from a study conducted by Valencia Ortiz, R; Cabero Almenara, J; Garay Ruiz, U. (2020) which determined that male students used social networks more hours per week than the female sex, while women use them with a more communicative purpose, men use social networks focused on leisure and consumption.

In relation to the use of social networks according to main networks in undergraduate students, it was evidenced that the average number of social networks used by respondents is 4.67, this differs from a study by Sanchez, Ruiz, and Sanchez (2015) where they found that a group of university students at the University of Malaga employed an average of 2.82 social networks.

In addition, it was observed that the majority of Facebook Messenger users use the internet Often/Frequently since childhood or adolescence. In a study conducted by Del Prete A and Redon S. (2020), it was found that adolescents started using social networks at an early age, between 9 and 10 years old, with the help of their parents or relatives, generally with a playful purpose. Likewise, before the age of 12, it is evident that the motivations for the use of social networks are playful, or due to the need to belong to a group, especially in adolescence where identification with friends is essential for identification and self-definition.

On the other hand, regarding Instagram and TikTok users, it was found that most of them Often/Frequently use their social networks more than 2 hours a day. In the study conducted by Fuster et al. (2020), it was evidenced that 44.7% of students in the study, between 12 and 18 years old, use Instagram every day, and 50.7% use it less than 2 hours daily. On the contrary, according to a study conducted by Becerra Chauca and Taype (Peru, 2020), TikTok is available today in more than 150 countries and has more than 800 million monthly active users. This application is dominated by young people between 16 and 24 years of age -unlike other social networks- who make up 41% of the users of this application. A study by Olivares (Spain, 2020), explains that the success and impact of this social network is based on the virality of its contents and the simplicity of use.

Finally, it was found that the majority of Instagram users use their social networks several times a day. This is similar to the study conducted by Sánchez, Ruiz, and Sánchez (2015), where 61.4% of respondents mention that they connect to social networks several times a day affirming that the use of social networks is a daily habit for them. In a study by García, Tirado, and Hernando (2018), the Uses and Gratifications theory is mentioned,

which argues that people actively select their social media according to their interests and needs to obtain a reward and satisfy their desires; they mostly seek information, entertainment and sociability to generate interaction with other users. In the case of Instagram, it is an application that allows users to show creativity, in the study it was determined that regarding this social network the feeling of social presence was the gratification associated with its high frequency of use.

During the development of this research project, there was a limitation with the size of the sample. Initially, it was planned to conduct 183 surveys to students from third to fifth year of undergraduate studies in person, which was beneficial because it was possible to control, accelerate data collection and reach the proposed sample. However, due to the national health emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus, it was decided to send the surveys by institutional e-mail, and only 115 students responded to the survey, which was the number that made up the final sample, with a loss rate of 37.2%.

Considering the strong impact of social networks in recent years and the lack of similar studies that evaluate the use of social networks by university students at a Teaching Dental Center, the results found constitute relevant, new and useful information, as they provide information on the frequency and preference of young university students for the use of certain social networks and how they use them to communicate with their patients, access to them from different devices, among others.

Conclusion

Social networks are digital tools that have had a great increase in recent years and allow constant and dynamic interaction between users. Frequent communication between health professionals and patients is essential to strengthen their relationship and will allow them to exchange relevant information regarding diagnosis, treatment or other important aspects. In this study a frequent use of social networks was determined by the undergraduate students of the Teaching Dental Center at Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University, Lima-Peru, 2020.

Table 1: Use of social networks according to age and sex of undergraduate students

Use of social networks	n	%	Age			Sex				p**
			X	SD	p*	Female		Male		
						n	%	n	%	
Internet user since childhood or adolescence										
Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	49	42.61	21.1 2	1.84	0.470	38	77.5 5	11	22.4 5	0.82 2
Often/Frequently	66	57.39	21.3 5	1.88		50	75.7 6	16	24.2 4	

You cannot imagine your life without digital platforms and social networks										
Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	74	64.35	21.3 9	2.05	0.500	55	74.3 2	19	25.6 8	0.45 5
Often/Frequently	41	35.65	21.0 0	1.43		33	80.4 9	8	19.5 1	
You are able to do many things at the same time using the Internet										
Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	42	36.52	21.2 4	2.10	0.674	31	73.8 1	11	26.1 9	0.60 3
Often/Frequently	73	63.48	21.2 6	1.72		57	78.0 8	16	21.9 2	
You have Internet access from different devices										
Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	10	8.70	20.9 0	1.37	0.765	7	70.0 0	3	30.0 0	0.61 1
Often/Frequently	10 5	91.30	21.2 9	1.90		81	77.1 4	24	22.8 6	
If you lose your cell phone, you feel isolated and anxious										
Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	10 1	87.83	21.2 3	1.84	0.659	77	76.2 4	24	23.7 6	0.84 7
Often/Frequently	14	12.17	21.4 3	2.03		11	78.5 7	3	21.4 3	
You have skills to navigate the Internet and solve technical problems										
Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	57	49.57	20.9 3	1.66	0.093	48	84.2 1	9	15.7 9	0.05 4
Often/Frequently	58	50.43	21.5 7	2.00		40	68.9 7	18	31.0 3	
You believe that the Internet is a space for self-expression										
Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	48	41.74	21.1 0	2.11	0.181	37	77.0 8	11	22.9 2	0.90 4
Often/Frequently	67	58.26	21.3 6	1.67		51	76.1 2	16	23.8 8	
You use your social networks more than 2 hours a day										
Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	31	26.96	21.8 7	2.42	0.110	19	61.2 9	12	38.7 1	0.01 9
Often/Frequently	84	73.04	21.0 2	1.56		69	82.1 4	15	17.8 6	
You communicate with your patients through social networks										

Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	18	15.65	22.1 7	2.36	0.065	12	66.6 7	6	33.3 3	0.28 3
Often/Frequently	97	84.35	21.0 8	1.71		76	78.3 5	21	21.6 5	
You use other tools to communicate with patients										
Never/Rarely/ Sometimes	30	26.09	21.5 3	1.83	.239	26	86.6 7	4	13.3 3	0.12 7
Often/Frequently	85	73.91	21.1 5	1.87		62	72.9 4	23	27.0 6	
Frequency of use of social networks										
Several times a day	10 1	87.83	21.1 4	1.67	0.303	80	79.2 1	21	20.7 9	0.06 8
Several times a week/ Sporadically	14	12.17	22.0 7	2.81		8	57.1 4	6	42.8 6	
Self-assessment of ability when using social networks										
Expert	40	34.78	21.1 0	1.91	0.331	30	75.0 0	10	25.0 0	0.77 9
Intermediate	75	65.22	21.3 3	1.84		58	77.3 3	17	22.6 7	
Total	11 5	100.0 0	21.2 5	1.86		88	76.5 2	27	23.4 8	
* Mann-Whitney U Test. **Chi-Square Test.										

Table 2: Use of social networks according to main networks in undergraduate students

Use of social networks	Number of social networks			Facebook			Facebook Messenger			WhatsApp			Instagram			YouTube			TikTok		
	X	D	P*	n	%	P*	n	%	P*	n	%	P*	n	%	P*	n	%	P*	n	%	P*
Internet user since childhood or adolescence																					
Never/ Rarely/ Sometimes	4 4 7	1 3 1	0 1 1	4 5	4 2 .	0 6	2 8	3 5 .	0 0	4 9	4 2 .	N A	4 2 .	4 0 .	0 1	4 3	4 2 .	0 9	2 2	4 3 .	0 9

			2 4		0 6	6 1	9 0	3 5		6 1		3 8	3 8		5 7	8 4		1 4	1 9
Often/ Frequently	4 . 8 2	1 . 1 9		6 2	5 7 . 9 4		5 0	6 4 . 1 0		6 7 . 3 9		6 2	5 9 . 6 2		5 7 . 4 3		2 9	5 6 . 8 6	
You cannot imagine your life without digital platforms and social networks																			
Never/ Rarely/ Sometimes	4 . 5 7	1 . 3 1	0	6 8	3 5 . 5	0	5 1	6 5 . 3 8	0	7 4	6 4 . 3 5	NA	6 5	0	6 4	3 7	0	2 9	5 6 . 8 6
Often/ Frequently	4 . 8 5	1 . 1 1	3 0 2	3 9	6 4 . 5	1 4	2 7	3 4 . 6 2	7 3 6	4 1	3 5 . 6 5	NA	3 9	7 0 3	3 7	6 6 . 3	5 5	2 2	4 3 . 1 4
You are able to do many things at the same time using the Internet																			
Never/ Rarely/ Sometimes	4 . 7 4	1 . 2 9	0	4 1	3 8 . 3 2	0	3 0	3 8 . 4 6	0	4 2	3 6 . 5 2	NA	3 9	0	3 6	3 5 . 6 4	0	1 8	3 5 . 2 9
Often/ Frequently	4 . 6 3	1 . 2 3	5 3 4	6 6	6 1 . 6 8	4 3	4 8	6 1 . 5 4	5 3 0	7 3	6 3 . 4 8	NA	6 5	6 0 3	6 5	6 4 . 3 6	9 9	3 3	6 4 . 7 1
You have Internet access from different devices																			
Never/ Rarely/ Sometimes	4 . 5	1 . 5 8	0	1 0	9 3 . 5	0	6 6	7 9 . 9	0	1 0	8 7 . 0	NA	9	8 6 . 5	0	9 9	0	4 4	7 8 . 4
Often/ Frequently	4 . 6 9	1 . 2 2	8 4 4	9 7	9 0 . 6 5	3 6	7 2	9 2 . 3 1	5 7 9	1 0 5	9 1 . 3 0	NA	9 5	9 1 . 6 5	9 1 . 2 9	9 1 . 0 9	8 2 6	4 7	9 2 . 1 6
If you lose your cell phone, you feel isolated and anxious																			
Never/ Rarely/ Sometimes	4 . 7	1 . 2 1	0	9 5	8 7 . 9	0	8 9	8 4 . 6	0	1 0	8 7 . 3	NA	9 1	8 7 . 4 2	0	8 9	8 7 . 9	0	4 3
			1	9	8	0	6	8	0	1	8	NA	9	8	0	8	0	8	0

Often/ Frequently	4 . 4 3	1 . 5 0		1 2	1 . 2 1		9	1 . 5 4		1 4	2 . 1 7		1 3	2 . 5 0		1 2	1 . 8 8		8	5 . 6 9
You have skills to navigate the Internet and solve technical problems																				
Never/ Rarely/ Sometimes	4 . 8 1	1 . 2 0	0	5 5	5 . 4 0	0	3 5	4 . 8 7	0	5 7	4 . 9 5	NA	5 2	0 . 0 0	0	5 1	5 . 0 0	0	2 9	5 . 6 8
Often/ Frequently	4 . 5 3	1 . 2 9	2 2 6	4 5 2	4 8 . 6 0	5 0	4 3	5 . 1 3	4 4	5 8	5 . 0 4	NA	5 2	0 . 0 0	7 4	5 0	4 9 . 5 0	2	2 2	4 3 . 1 4
You believe that the Internet is a space for self-expression																				
Never /Rarely/ Sometimes	4 . 7 1	1 . 2 2	0	4 5	4 . 2 6	0	3 3	4 . 2 1	0	4 8	4 . 1 7	NA	4 2	0 . 3 8	0	4 5	4 . 4 5	0	2 0	3 9 . 2 2
Often/ Frequently	4 . 6 4	1 . 2 8	8 3 6	5 6	5 7 . 9 4	0 1	4 5	5 . 7 6	5 8	6 7	5 . 8 2	NA	6 2	5 9 . 6 2	6 5	5 6	5 . 4 5	0	3 1	6 0 . 7 8
You use your social networks more than 2 hours a day																				
Never/ Rarely/ Sometimes	4 . 4 5	1 . 2 3	0	3 0	2 . 8 4	0	2 0	2 . 5 4	0	3 1	2 . 6 6	NA	2 4	0 . 0 8	0	2 9	2 . 8 7	0	8	1 5 . 6 9
Often/ Frequently	4 . 7 5	1 . 2 5	1 6 7	7 7	7 1 . 9 6	3 9	5 8	4 . 3 6	4 4	8 4	3 . 0 4	NA	8 0	6 . 9 2	4	7 2	7 1 . 2 9	4 4	4 3	8 4 . 3 1
You communicate with your patients through social networks																				
Never/ Rarely/ Sometimes	4 . 2 2	1 . 5 2	0	1 6	1 . 4 5	0	1 3	1 . 6 7	0	1 8	1 . 5 6	NA	1 4	1 . 4 6	0	1 6	1 . 5 4	0	5	9 . 8 0
Often/ Frequently	4 . 7 5	1 . 1 8	4 5	9 1	8 5 . 0 5	5 1	6 5	8 3 . 3 3	6 4	9 7	8 4 . 3 5	NA	9 0	8 6 . 5 4	1	8 5	8 4 . 1 6	8 1	4 6	9 0 . 2 0

You use other tools to communicate with patients																				
Never/ Rarely/ Sometimes	4 · 8 7	1 · 1 4	· 0 3	2 8 · 7	2 6 · 7	· 0 9	2 0 · 4	2 5 · 6	· 0 8	3 0 · 9	2 6 · 9	NA	3 0 · 5	2 8 · 5	· 0 7	2 6 · 3	· 0 6	1 6 · 7	3 1 · 7	· 0 2
Often/ Frequently	4 · 6	1 · 2 8	4 · 7	7 9 · 8	3 3 · 3	4 2	5 8 · 3	7 4 · 6	8 5 · 9	7 3 · 1	7 4 · 5	NA	7 4 · 5	8 7 · 7	7 4 · 2	7 3 · 7	6 7 · 2	3 5 · 6	8 3 · 3	· 0 4 9
Frequency of use of social networks																				
Several times a day	4 · 7 8	1 · 1 3	· 0 · 0	9 5 · 9	8 8 · 9	· 0 2	6 9 · 6	8 8 · 4	· 0 7	1 0 · 1	8 7 · 3	NA	9 5 · 5	9 1 · 3	· 0 0	8 8 · 2	· 0 7	4 8 · 2	9 4 · 2	· 0 6 5
Several times a week/ Sporadicall y	3 · 8 6	1 · 7 5	5 5	1 2 · 2	1 1 · 1	5 0	9 1 · 5	1 1 · 4	6 2	1 4 · 1	1 2 · 7	NA	8 9 · 6	8 0 · 5	3 1 · 2	1 1 · 8	9 7	3 · 8	5 8 · 8	· 0 6 5
Self-assessment of ability when using social networks																				
Expert	4 · 6 8	1 · 2 9	· 0 · 8	3 8 · 1	3 5 · 1	· 0 5	3 1 · 7	3 9 · 4	· 0 1	4 0 · 8	3 4 · 8	NA	3 7 · 8	3 5 · 8	· 0 5	3 3 · 7	· 0 2	1 7 · 3	3 3 · 3	· 0 7 1
Intermediat e	4 · 6 7	1 · 2 3	5 5	6 9 · 9	6 4 · 9	4 7	4 7 · 6	6 0 · 6	5 0	7 5 · 2	6 5 · 2	NA	6 7 · 2	6 4 · 2	6 8 · 2	6 7 · 3	· 0 2	3 4 · 6	6 6 · 7	· 0 7 1
Total	4 · 6 7	1 · 2 5	· 0 · 0	1 0 · 7	9 3 · 4	· 0 7	7 8 · 3	6 7 · 3	· 0 0	1 1 · 5	1 0 · 0	NA	1 0 · 4	9 0 · 3	· 0 1	8 7 · 3	· 0 2	5 1 · 6	4 4 · 3	· 0 3 5
*Mann-Whitney U Test. **Chi-Square Test. NA: Not applicable.																				

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