

# Review of: "Elderly social connectedness through social media platforms: a scoping review"

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I read this article with a great deal of interest since my own research has focused on the potential of social media in the area of narrative gerontology, a nascent form of therapy associated with positive outcomes in terms of improving the emotional states of aged care patients. I am interested in how this kind of therapy can be facilitated by social media like Facebook and YouTube to create virtual discussion groups among aged care patients.

I enjoyed reading this scoping review. My comments may appear to be critical, but only because I am trying to identify areas that might be clarified or improved. In general, I am favorable toward this research.

However, the literature review could have been organized better. Many paragraphs appear to be drawing the same conclusions from the literature as those preceding them. Perhaps sub-headings, or more explicit segues between paragraphs, would help the reader understand how the various sections of the review are connected with one another and where the authors are ultimately heading.

The scoping review addresses three research questions:

- (1) *how is social connectedness related to the mental health of the elderly in Ghana?*
- (2) *how do social media platforms aid social connectedness for the elderly in Ghana?*
- (3) *what challenges do elderly users experience as they use popular social media platforms in Ghana?*

Of the three research questions, RQ3 seems most interesting. There are no obvious a priori reasons to expect differences between Ghana and, say, the US as to how social connectedness is related to mental health, or how social media facilitates social connectedness. The results of the scoping review confirm this expectation. As with studies in other, mostly Western, countries, social connectedness is positively associated with well-being in Ghana (RQ1), and social media allow users in Ghana to “connect with distant relations, maintain peer contact, and form new friendships” (RQ2).

However, one can imagine several challenges in the actual use of social media that are unique to Ghana (RQ3). Unfortunately, the conclusions drawn from the scoping review seem to be generic and not directly related to the articles reviewed. For example, the authors conclude that “the surge in cyberbullying on social media platforms is another setback to the elderly use of these platforms”, but it is not obvious that any of the studies in Table 1 address this issue.

The study makes a brief attempt to estimate the number of social media users in Ghana aged 65+, but stops short of

anything systematic. Yet, this could be a significant impediment to how social media can be used to increase social connectedness among the elderly (RQ3). Social media require a critical mass of users before members of an explicit or implicit social group can find and interact with one another online. This potential “critical mass” problem could be explored more rigorously in future research.

One final point is that the criteria for article selection could have been clearer on a couple of fronts:

1. Why include only review articles, or do the authors also review articles analyzing primary data? If only review articles are included, then why? This is explained in terms of “efficiency”, but this decision almost certainly resulted in relevant studies being omitted.
2. What constitutes “older publications”? What year was the cut-off? Why?

Overall, however, I enjoyed reading this article and encourage the researchers in their future endeavours.