

Article

The Aim and Impact of Communication in Dental Health Promotion Campaigns

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Abstract: (1) Background: This study delved into a current topic in dental medical practice to analyse the role and impact in the communication of messages within health promotion campaigns. (2) Methods: This study analyses the patients’ opinions about the role and importance of using an effective communication style in health promotion campaigns. The main aspects aim to analyse, based on patients’ opinions, the consistency of messages in health promotion campaigns, the repetitive nature of these messages, the adaptation of communication methods according to the target group’s background and the importance of collaboration between state bodies and those organizing health promotion campaigns. (3) Results: The results of this study once again emphasize the close connection between the efficiency of health promotion campaigns, the way campaigns are coordinated and the messages intended for the target population. Most patients are aware about an effective communication in health promotion campaigns, believing that it may influence the recipients’ decision to adopt a healthy lifestyle concerning oral health. Regarding the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns for oral health, the study’s results reveal a significantly lower positive impact among rural patients compared to urban ones. This indicates the need for a change in how information is communicated to the population and to increase the level of health education. (4) Conclusions: In conclusion, the data obtained provide valuable and profound insights into how patients perceive the importance and role of communication in health promotion campaigns. The understanding of their perceptions and requirements forms the basis for developing and implementing efficient health communication and strategies, ultimately leading to improved community health and well-being. By personalizing and adapting the messages and communication methods, health promotion campaigns can become much more effective with a greater impact on health-related behaviors and attitudes.

Keywords: communication; health promotion; campaign; oral health; education

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Introduction

Health promotion activities have gained a major role in educating the population, becoming a preventive tool for the entire medical system. The way messages are transmitted contribute to an increasing awareness of health issues and facilitate access to health services [1]. The global nature of communication in health promotion activities is evident when considering international directives adapted to national and regional needs. The World Health Organization emphasizes the development and implementation of effective health communication strategies [2]. These efforts are supported by a series of scientific studies that explore the identification of the most effective communication methods in health promotion campaigns [3].

Health promotion campaigns can have a significant impact on an individual's education, information and encouragement in considering their health issues [4]. To provide such information, it is required to address the needs of the individual and to minimize any confusion they may have through efficient communication. Health promotion campaigns are only a part of public health initiatives and plans [5,6]. Studies in the specialized literature emphasize the importance of improving communication between medical professionals and patients, an aspect that will lead to an increased level of knowledge among the population regarding the methods and means through which health can be promoted and illnesses can be prevented [7,8].

The information transmitted through health promotion campaigns needs to be communicated in a clear manner, in the understanding of those to whom it is addressed and with minimized specialized language [9,10].

Considering the large number of patients who turn to dentists for dental treatments and their limited time for a consultation and treatment plan, the information of the beneficiaries of medical services can be carried out in a much more extensive context through health promotion campaigns [11,12].

The messages sent within the health promotion campaigns by specialists in the field must be consistent, relevant and credible [13]. The credibility of the messages transmitted through health campaigns needs to capture attention through the ways in which the relevant information is communicated to the target audience [14]. The success of a health promotion campaign results primarily from the feedback expressed by the participants, which has the role of confirming whether the messages transmitted were correctly understood. The campaign's effect will produce a long-term change in the population's behaviour; additionally, it will increase the population's willingness to approach health care services and make a shift to a healthy behaviour when it comes to health [15].

Materials and Methods

This observational prospective study focuses on a questionnaire addressed to patients from different dental offices in Timiș County. The questionnaire aimed to analyse the patients' opinions regarding the role and effectiveness of health promotion campaigns.

The questionnaire was created through Google Forms and was distributed to patients in an electronic format. The time for completing the questionnaire was between 8 and 10 minutes. Initially, patients were asked to consent for their attendance in the study. The questionnaire itself is made up of 10 closed, choice or selection questions, with three answer options. The online format questionnaire respected the confidentiality of the participants and could be accessed by patients for 30 days. In total, 106 people aged between 18 and 65 were registered. The questionnaire also included information related to demographic data, patient's gender (M/F), age, place of origin (urban/rural) and studies.

The first question refers to the quality of the information provided to patients in health promotion campaigns. Through this question, we aimed to analyse patients' opinions regarding the importance of the way in which information is transmitted within health promotion campaigns, so that the recipients correctly perceive the messages.

The second question assesses the view of the participants about the role of specialists in the field involved within health promotion campaigns. It was observed to what extent patients consider that a campaign is successful, with or without the contribution of specialists in the field who, as a rule, lend credibility to those who are less knowledgeable in that field.

The third question aims to analyse to what extent patients consider the success of a health promotion campaign depends on, based on the relevance of the information transmitted to the target audience.

The fourth question included in the questionnaire evaluates to what extent patients consider the frequency of information delivery to be important and whether they believe that this leads to a better perception of the information transmitted through promotional campaigns of health. Contrary to this hypothesis, patients have a negative answer to this question, i.e., they believed this should be resorted to only when it comes to serious problems regarding the health status of the population.

Question number five concerns the background of the patients. Some campaigns promote health in dentistry by paying attention to the accessibility of information depending on the background of the audience. For example, those from an urban environment have much faster access to information, while those from a rural environment can often be deprived of the ease of accessing information.

The sixth question aims to assess the increase in the population's awareness of the importance of health promotion campaigns when effective communication is created between the specialists who organize these campaigns and the target group.

Through the seventh question included in the questionnaire, we wanted to observe to what extent the participants believe that the mostly used method of disseminating health promotion campaigns is related to social media. These days, when it comes to exposing new information, it will most often first circulate on social media and subsequently be distributed to a wide audience.

Question eight analyses the opinion of patients regarding the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns in Romania, their credibility in relation to the environment from which the recipients come as well as the target group to which the campaigns are addressed.

The ninth question observe the extent to which participants believe that specialist involvement would make a difference in terms of health promotion and behavioural change for patients and the target audience.

Through this question, we wanted to see if patients not only considered the target group as important, but also the needs of the target group and the importance that specialists give in this respect.

Question ten concerns the opinion of the participants related to the support that the specialists can receive from state bodies, so that they are supported in the implementation of successful health promotion campaigns. This question is based on the resources that can be used by specialists to find out if participants believe that these actions would be valuable for health promotion by specialists and the transmission of information at a higher level.

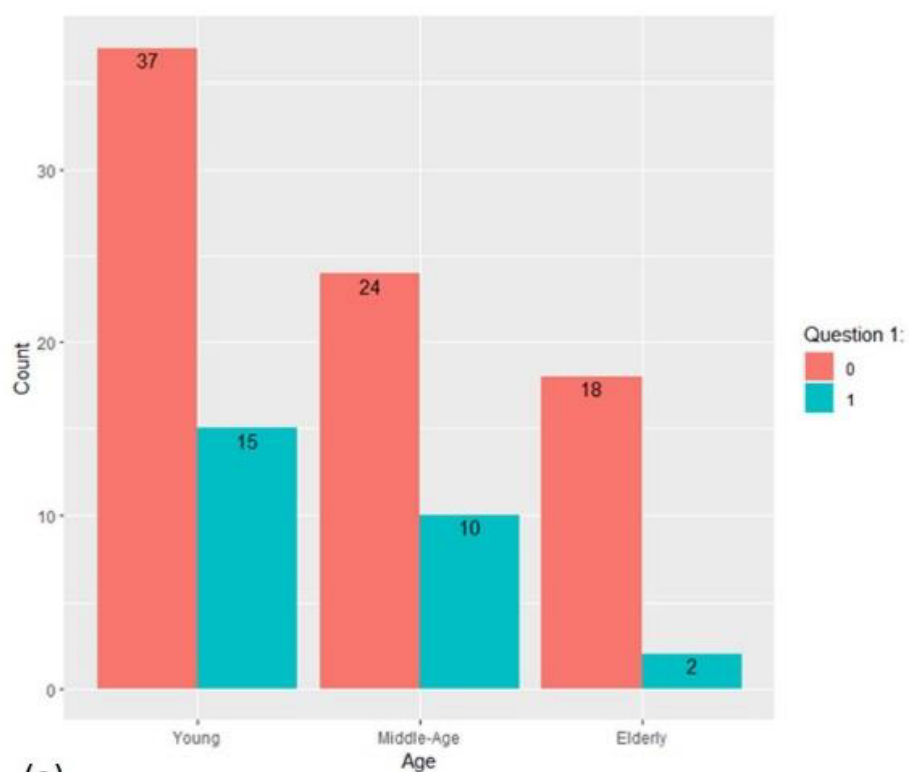
Results

Following the results of the questionnaires, it is revealed that 37 young people, 24 adults and 18 elderly people believe that the accuracy, clarity and consistency of the information transmitted regarding health promotion campaigns is essential in all situations. Fifteen young people, ten adults and two elderly individuals consider that this aspect does not constitute a guarantee regarding the patients' perception of the messages transmitted through health campaigns (Figure 1a).

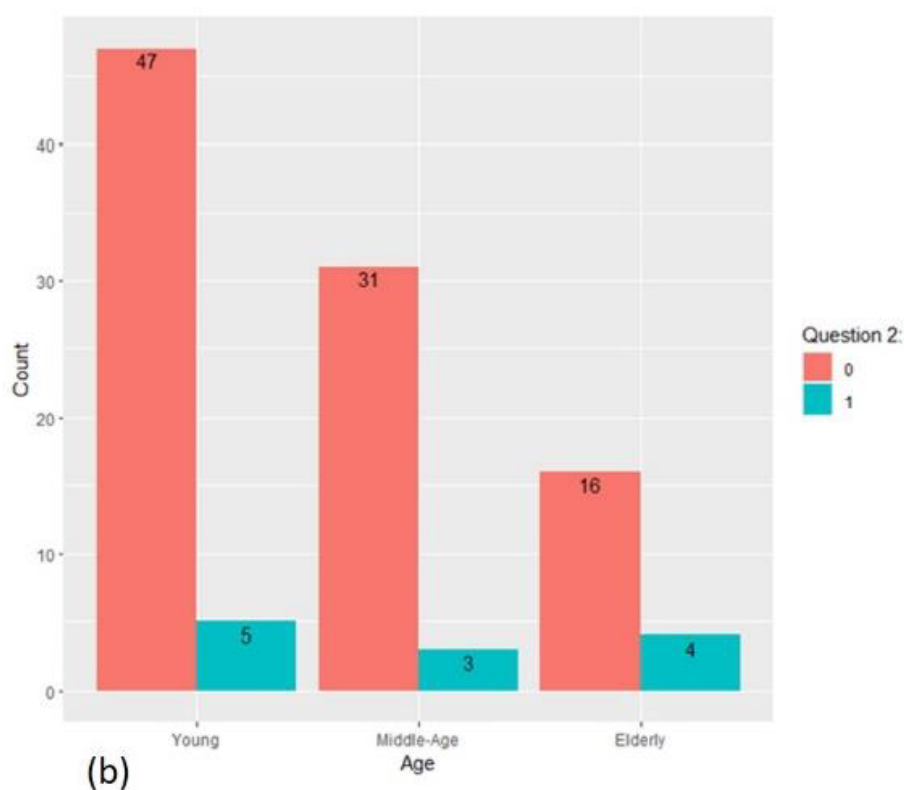
After the centralization of the questionnaires of the second question, out of a total of 106 participants, 47 young people, 31 adults and 16 elderly people believe that in order to enjoy credibility, health promotion campaigns must be organized by specialists in the field. Only five young subjects, three adults and four elderly subjects believe that the promotion campaigns do not need to be organized by specialists in healthcare in all situations. This aspect is defining when it comes to the credibility of the messages sent within health promotion campaigns (Figure 1b).

The results reveal that out of the three age categories, most of the young people, 47, believe that the target group to which these campaigns are addressed must be taken into account when promoting a series of messages related to a healthy lifestyle. At the same time, 31 adults and 16 elderly people share the same opinion. Those who consider this aspect important, but not in all situations, are nine young people, three adults and four elderly; therefore, a much smaller number of patients do not consider this an important aspect (Figure 2a). Following the centralization of the questionnaires, the results show that the frequency of organizing health promotion campaigns is important for the prevention and education of the population. The messages reach the target group, and they adopt a healthier lifestyle. This opinion is supported by 26 adults and 22 young and 14 elderly patients. Twenty-nine young people, eight adults and five elderly people think that this aspect is important, but only in the case of serious conditions. A very small number of patients do not consider this aspect when it comes to the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns (Figure 2b).

Regarding the means of the communication of health promotion campaigns in dental medicine, the background of the participants who are part of the target group, mainly the young people, believe that these health promotion campaigns must be accessible to everyone, regardless of urban or rural origin. In this study, 42 young people, 28 adults and 14 elderly people embrace this opinion. A small number of participants believe that the means of communication for health promotion campaigns in dental medicine do not need to be individualized according to the background of those who are part of the target group. Three young people and one elderly person consider that this aspect is of no importance (Figure 3a). A total of 42 young people believe that effective communication between specialists and the target group ensures the success of health promotion campaigns. A total of 28 adults and 18 elderly people share the same opinion. Some participants consider communication important, but not essential for improving the level of awareness of patients (ten young people, five adults and two elderly people). One subject believes that communication between specialists and the target group in health promotion campaigns is not important (Figure 3b).



(a)



(b)

Figure 1. (a) Patient's opinions over the clarity and consistency of information conveyed through health promotion campaigns; (b) patient's opinions over the organization of health promotion campaigns by specialists in the field.

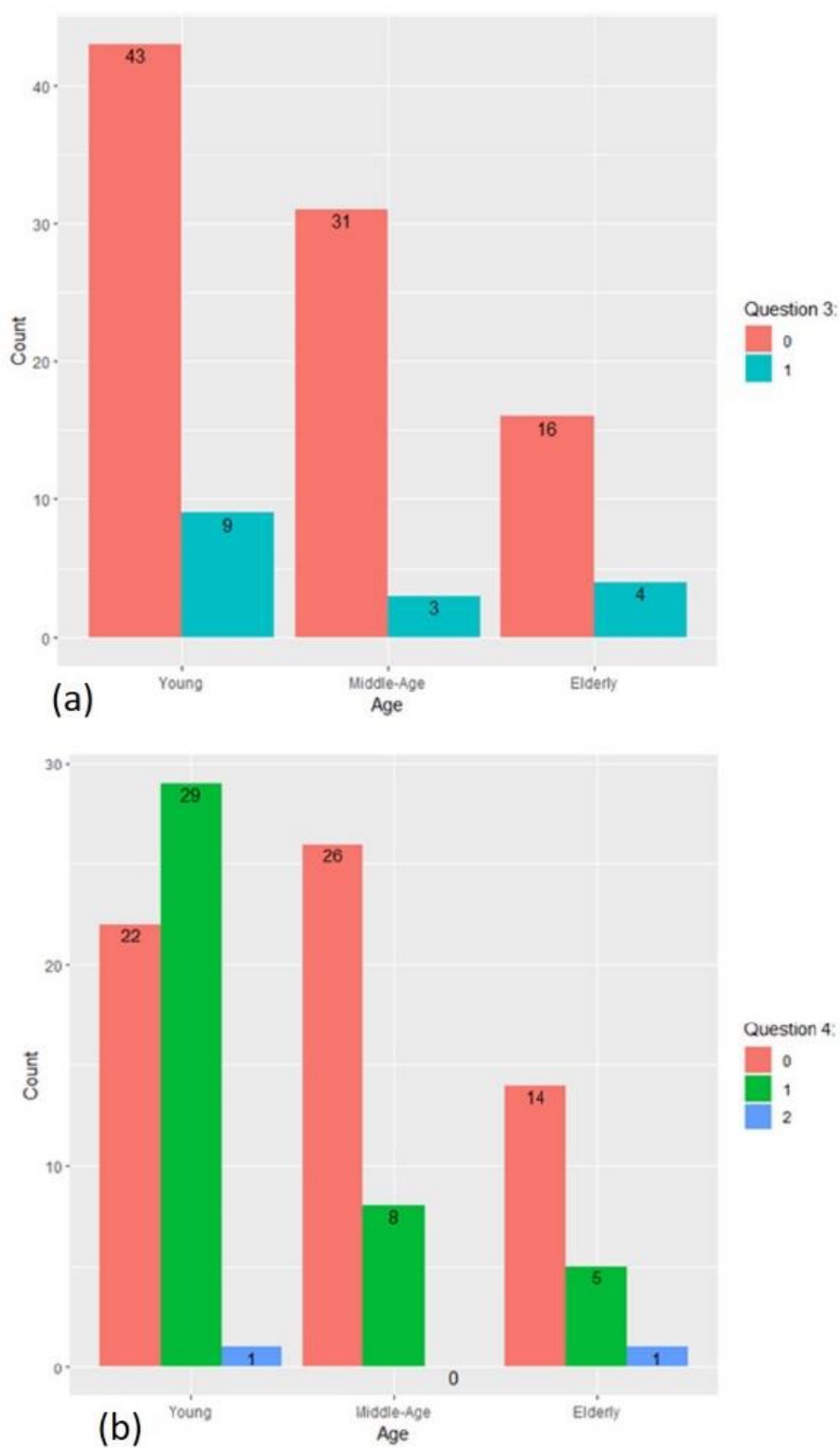


Figure 2. (a) Patient's opinions on the relevance of information conveyed through health promotion campaigns in relation to the target group; (b) patient's opinions on the repetitive nature of health promotion campaigns.

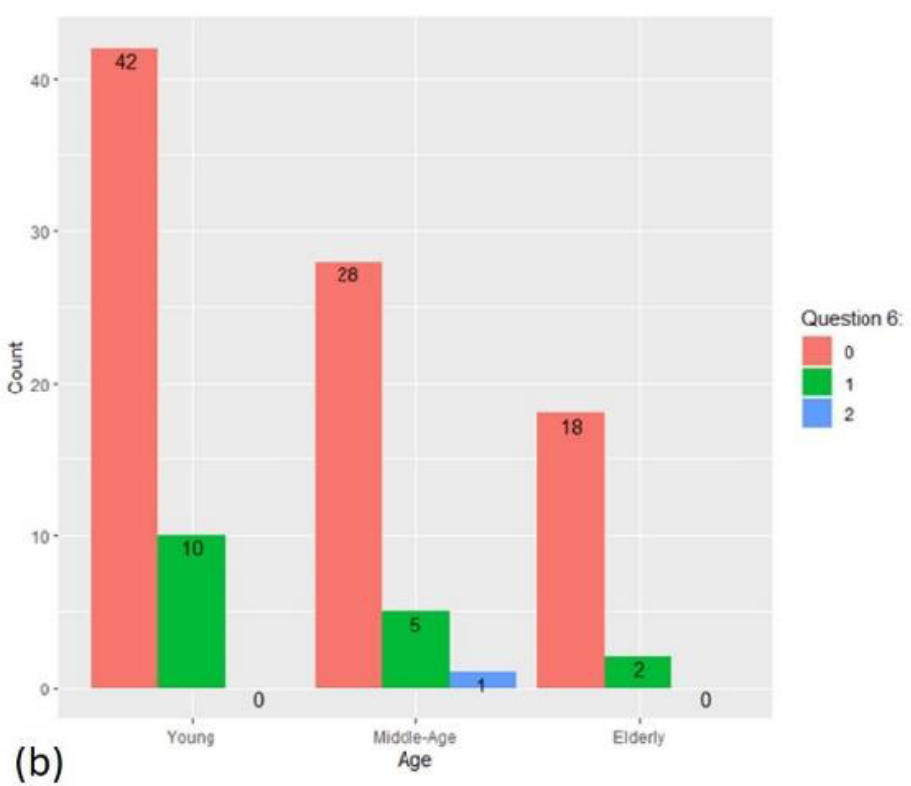
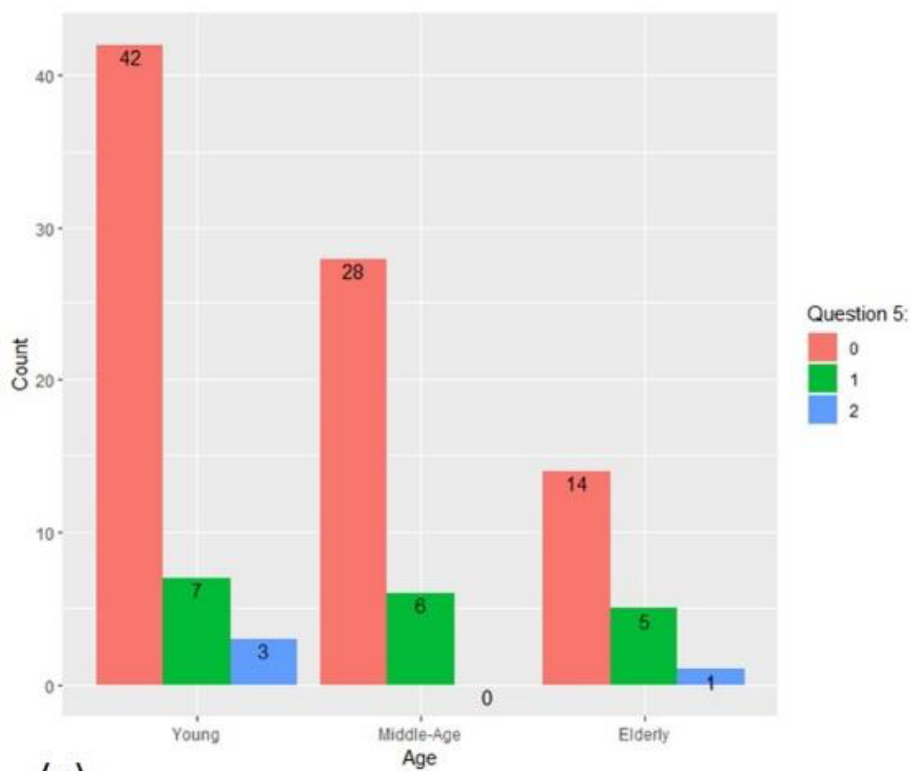


Figure 3. (a) Individualized communication methods in relation to the background of the target group; (b) patient opinions on the optimization of communication in health promotion activities.

According to the data that resulted from the questionnaires, social media is an important means of communication in health promotion campaigns for 26 young people, 20 adults and 6 elderly participants in the study. A total of 25 young people, 14 adults and 6 elderly individuals believe that social media is not essential for communication in health promotion campaigns in all situations. Only one person from the youth category believes that social media is not one of the most used ways of communicating with the public regarding health promotion campaigns (Figure 4a). The results reflect the fact that patients consider that at present time, health promotion campaigns in dental care are not effective enough, especially among patients from rural areas, with 37 young people, 29 adults and 12 elderly people having this opinion. Eight young patients, five adults and seven elderly people consider health promotion actions to be effective in the urban and rural environments, enjoying credibility from the public. Among the participants, only seven young people and one elderly person believe that in Romania, at the present time, the health promotion campaigns are ineffective, regardless of the background of the participants involved in the target group (Figure 4b).

Following the results, 20 young people, 17 adults and 15 elderly individuals support the fact that in order to produce a real change in behaviour among patients, health promotion campaigns must involve themselves. The specialists in the field have the duty to pay more attention to the needs of the target group to whom they are addressing. A higher number of young people, namely 30, support this statement regarding patients with special needs. Seventeen adults and five elderly people also support this opinion. Only two young people answered negatively to this question (Figure 5a). The majority of the subjects consider that in all situations, it is essential to have an optimal collaborative relationship between the specialists and the state bodies. This partnership should be effective and can help to determine results with a higher impact over the target group. A small number of participants, namely eight young people and seven adults, do not consider this collaboration successful for a health campaign (Figure 5b).

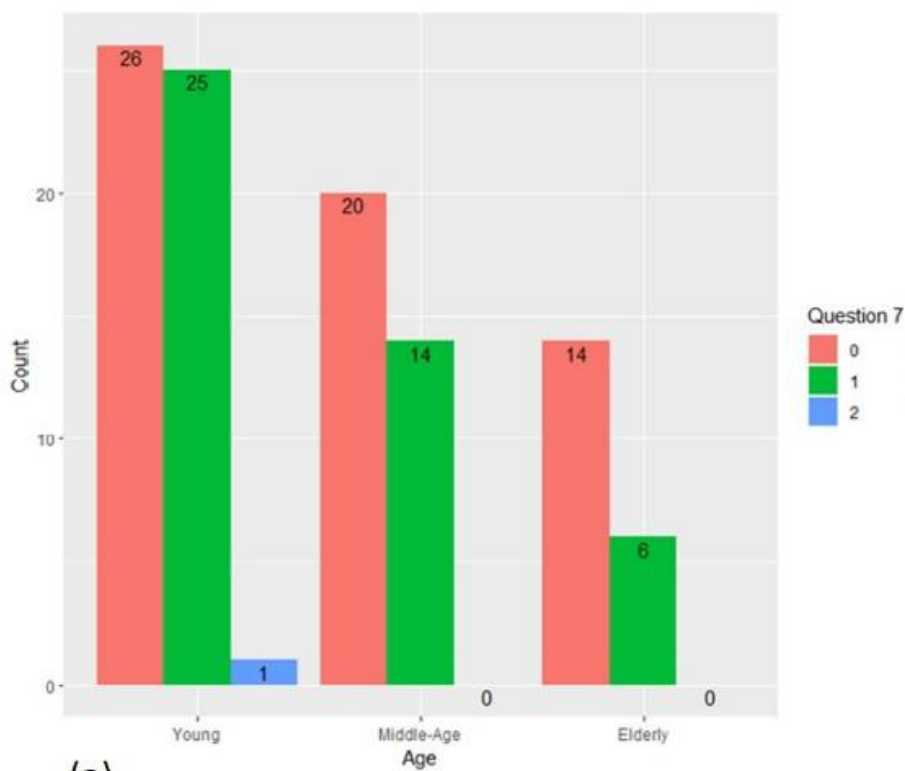
Discussion

The accuracy, clarity and consistency of information conveyed in health promotion campaigns are found to be of great help to patients for their health. They believe that the correct transmission of messages is necessary for the information to be understood correctly, thus contributing to positive behaviour changes. Clear messaging is also essential to prevent misunderstandings and build public trust in shared information.

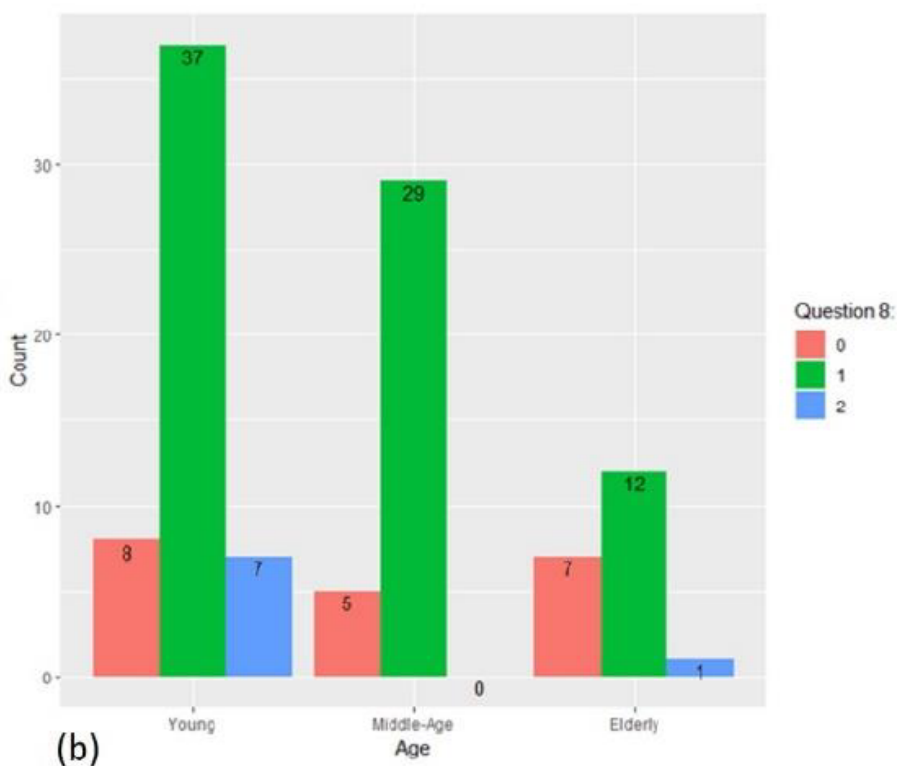
The data also underscore the importance of tailoring information to the intended audience. Patients appreciate campaigns that consider their unique requirements and attributes because they believe these campaigns will have a greater influence on their health habits. Messages adapted to the target group and specific health issues can increase the effectiveness of health promotion initiatives [16–18].

There is a divergence of views when it comes to evaluating the effectiveness and credibility of health promotion campaigns in the field of dental medicine in Romania. Particular attention is directed to improve these campaigns in rural regions, where access to healthcare resources and information may be limited. However, by consistently evaluating the effectiveness and flexibility of these initiatives, it is possible that they can be improved, thereby increasing public confidence in dental healthcare services [19,20].

Last but not least, it should be mentioned that the existence of effective collaboration between specialists and state bodies is widely recognized as crucial in supporting health promotion campaigns and improving public healthcare. This collaborative effort plays a vital role in improving access to health resources and services, as well as implementing dental health policies and programs that produce positive outcomes [21].

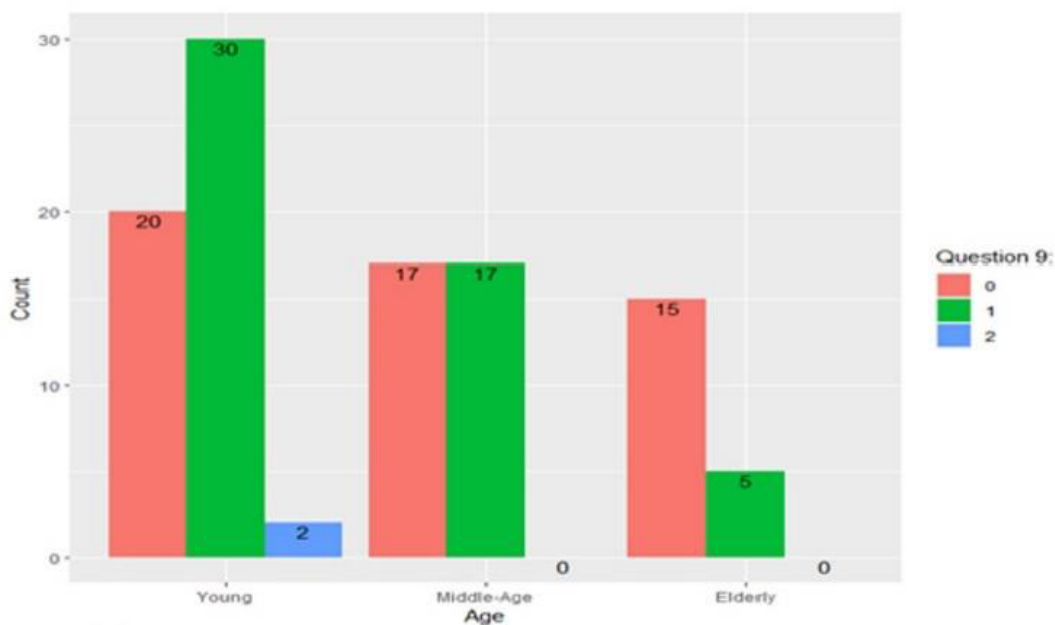


(a)

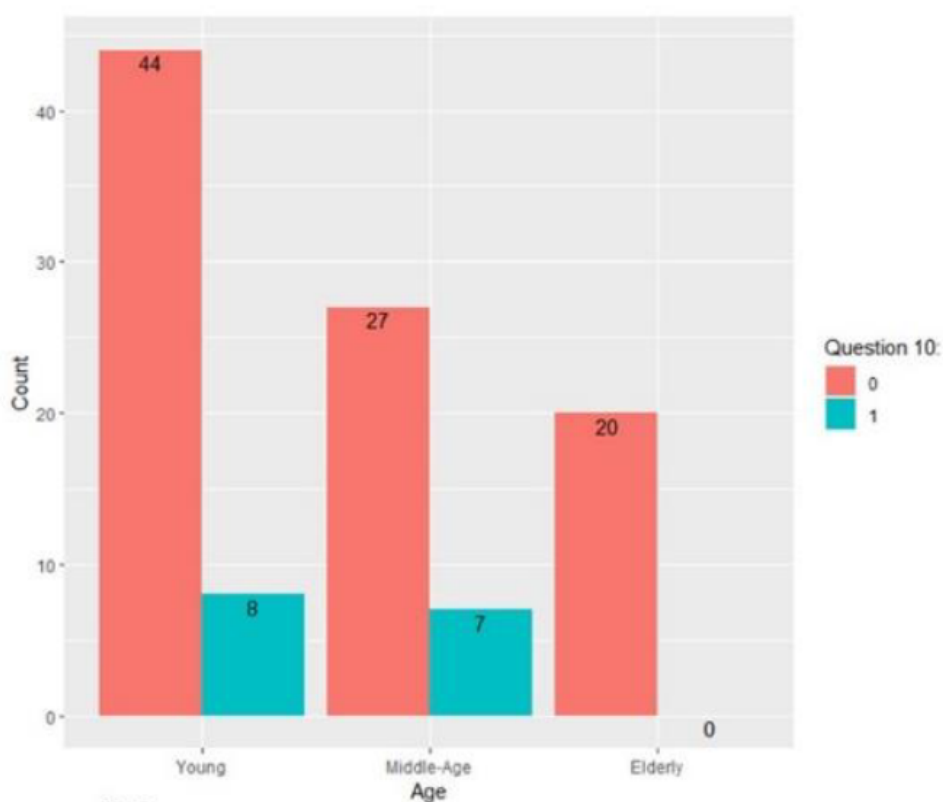


(b)

Figure 4. (a) Patient’s opinions on the role of social media in promoting health campaigns; (b) patient’s opinions on the efficiency and credibility of health promotion campaigns in Romania.



(a)



(b)

Figure 5. (a) Patients' opinion regarding their involvement in health promotion campaigns; (b) the opinion of patients regarding the importance of the existence of an optimal collaborative relationship between specialists who organize health promotion campaigns and state bodies.

Conclusions

Related to the subject of this scientific research, one of the conclusions worth remembering is that the success of health promotion campaigns largely depends on how the messages are communicated to the target population. By establishing a relationship of trust between health care providers and targeted patients, these campaigns create a significant opportunity to positively influence health perceptions, behaviours and preventive healthcare programs. This relationship enables a better understanding of patients' needs and facilitates the tailoring of messages to be as relevant as possible. By cultivating an atmosphere of mutual respect and empathy, health professionals can encourage patients to actively participate in their own health care processes.

Another conclusion of this study is that the success of health promotion campaigns is based on the ability to understand and respond to the specific needs and concerns of different patient groups. Using customized and tailored communication strategies can significantly increase the effectiveness of these campaigns, helping to improve the overall health and well-being of the community in the long term. This involves relevant messages and accurate information communicated through direct channels and the active engagement of the medical community and authorities in the development and implementation of public health initiatives.

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