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Social support networks of elderly people during SARS-Cov-2 coronavirus pandemic

The aging of population requires adjustments from the society in providing additional types of services and assistance to the elderly population. These can be provided by formal services and informal social support. The latter are especially important, as it has been shown that the lack of social support is related to a lower level of psychological as well as physical well-being. During the SARS-Cov-2 coronavirus pandemic, the lack of social support for elderly people is even more crucial because of the social distancing. Therefore, the current study aims to identify and describe types of the ego-centered social support networks of elderly people during the coronavirus pandemic. To this aim, the survey among Slovenians, older than 64 years was conducted (from April 25 till May 4, 2020) on the probability Web-panel based sample (n = 605). The ego-networks were clustered by hierarchical clustering approach for symbolic data. The clustering was done for different types of social support (socializing, instrumental support and emotional support) and variables describing the characteristics of the supporting network (i.e., type of relationship, number of contacts, geographical distance). The results are especially important for sustainable care policy planning as well as for crisis interventions planning also for the next possible waves of coronavirus.