



# THE ROLE OF GROUP EFFECTS IN THE DECISIONS OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

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## BACKGROUND

Following a diagnosis of type 1 diabetes (T1DM), the child requires constant supervision and this is a huge physical and psychological burden for parents. Because, among medical controls, the parent is the primary manager of a child with diabetes, T1DM is often seen as a family disease because of the important role of parental support. The increase in the number of T1DM children and the need for quick access to reliable information has accelerated the spread of disease-specific social media. The number of T1DM social forums has skyrocketed as parents usually start to expand their knowledge after their children's diagnosis. Our research aims to understand how the interaction of peer parents in a Facebook community influences their daily treatment decisions.

## METHOD

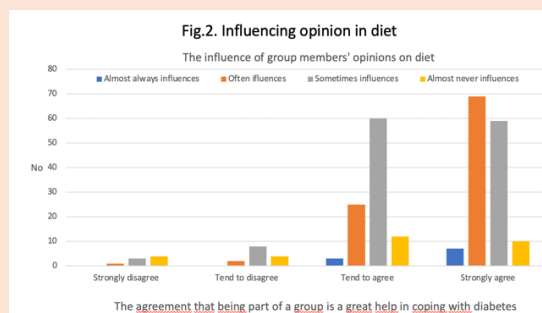
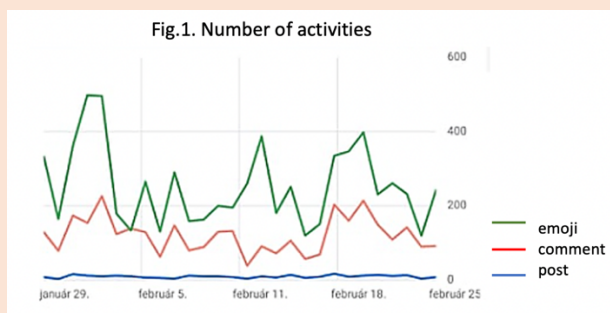
In our research, we used the method of netnography, supplemented by analytical data obtained from the administrators of the Facebook group under study and an anonymous questionnaire based on a volunteer's completion. We analyzed the posts by grouping them according to their topic, the creator's status and the commenter's attitude. Our questionnaire was answered by 267 parents in the group. The questions explored how the respondents themselves perceived the influence of the group and their children's opinions in their everyday decisions. Our data were subjected to a crosstab statistical analysis comparing the influence of parents and children on eating, use of the devices, and physical activity.

## RESULTS

Based on the activity parameters of the group (Fig.1), during the 28 days studied, members created 294 posts, 3416 comments were posted and 7113 emoji were received. Although the distribution of posts is even across the days, the number of posts and reactions shows significant variation. This suggests that there are some posts that sustain interest and activity for days. To investigate whether the T1DM online parenting group is more of a supportive or a counseling community, we used cross-tabulations comparing the responses of group members to the following two questions:

- How much do you feel influenced by the opinions and suggestions of group members regarding insulin therapy, device use, and diet?
- To what extent do you agree with the statement that being part of a group is a great help in coping mentally with diabetes?

Fig.2 shows that the more respondents agree that belonging to a group helps them cope mentally, the greater the proportion of the 'often influences' response increases and becomes dominant over the 'sometimes influences' response in terms of diet suggestions. This means that a growing sense of the group's help in coping with spirituality is accompanied by an increase in the influence of group members' opinions.



The influence of group members and diabetic children's opinion was shown by comparing the measurement for the segment. A direct comparison of the answers to the questions "How much do the opinions of your group members influence you?" and "How much do the opinions of your child influence you?" shows the difference in the degree of influence. Our results suggest that group and children's opinion influences individual choices differently in the areas of therapy (Fig.3, Fig.4). Children's opinions have significantly more influence on parents' opinions on eating (179) than group members' opinions (107), while the influence of the two segments is balanced for use of devices (96/92). It can be concluded that social media strongly support the integration of prescribed therapy into daily life. The increased influence of the diabetic child on parental decisions shows that diabetes education needs to become child-centered in the future and that the parent-child relationship should be considered a crucial element of therapy effectiveness.

Fig.3. The influence of group members and diabetic children's opinion on diet						
DIET	How much are you influenced by the opinions of group members?					
		Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always	
	Almost never	5	6	2	0	13
	Sometimes	10	47	16	2	75
	Often	5	54	56	1	116
How much does your child's opinion influence you?	Almost always	10	23	23	7	63
		30	130	97	10	179
						107

Fig.4. The influence of group members and diabetic children's opinion on use of device						
USE OF DEVICE	How much are you influenced by the opinions of group members?					
		Almost never	Sometimes	Often	Almost always	
	Almost never	34	24	12	1	71
	Sometimes	19	46	33	2	100
	Often	6	22	30	1	59
How much does your child's opinion influence you?	Almost always	8	16	10	3	37
		67	108	85	7	96
						92

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Visiting the T1DM online parenting group is part of the daily routine of parents raising a child with diabetes.
2. The T1DM online parent group is both an important coping supportive and counseling community.
3. In terms of diet, the opinion of children with diabetes has a greater influence on parents than that of group members, while the influence of the two segments is balanced in terms of device use.
4. Diabetes education needs to become child-centered

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