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Support Flexibility in Professional Online Communities: From Support-Seeking to Collective Resilience-Building During Sustained Societal Crisis

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Abstract

Professional online communities increasingly function as digital social infrastructures during societal disruption, yet less is known about how their support practices reorganize during prolonged crises. This study examined how social support, engagement patterns, and support-seeking behavior changed in a large Hebrew-language professional Facebook group for Israeli educators across routine and crisis periods. Quantitative content analysis was conducted on an analytic sample of 1008 posts published between January 2022 and July 2025, covering the pre-war period and the wartime period following October 2023. Posts were coded for informational, emotional, and instrumental support and for support-seeking, and negative binomial and logistic regression models examined engagement and predictors of support-seeking. Informational support was dominant (69.3%), followed by support-seeking (30.7%), emotional support (12.8%), and instrumental support (4.4%). During wartime, support-seeking and instrumental support were less frequent, whereas informational and emotional support were more frequent. Informational posts received approximately three times more likes, while support-seeking posts received fewer likes but sustained comment activity. Anonymous authors were more likely to seek support, but posts by anonymous authors received fewer comments. The findings suggest an aggregate pattern of support flexibility in the analytic sample, reflected in a relative shift from reactive support-seeking toward proactive informational sharing and emotional processing as part of collective resilience-building during sustained societal crisis.

Keywords: professional online communities; digital community resilience; social support; support-seeking; crisis adaptation; digital social infrastructure; collective resilience-building; uncertainty



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1. Introduction

Social media platforms have transformed professional practice by creating digital spaces for knowledge sharing, collaborative problem-solving, and peer support [1,2]. Professional online communities increasingly operate as digital social infrastructures that connect practitioners across geographical and institutional boundaries [3,4]. They are not only spaces for routine professional exchange but also adaptive social systems in which support norms, participation practices, and collective responses may shift during societal disruption [5,6].

This adaptive capacity is closely related to community resilience, understood as the ability of a community to respond to disruption by modifying its structures and functions

while maintaining essential characteristics and collective continuity [7–9]. In professional online communities, resilience may be expressed through continued participation during crises but also through changes in how members request support, share information, provide emotional validation, and participate in collective sense-making. Digital professional communities may therefore transform individual knowledge, concerns, and coping efforts into shared community resources [10,11].

Social support theory provides a framework for examining these processes. Support may take informational, emotional, and instrumental forms [12–14]. In online communities, informational support appears through advice, guidance, knowledge, referrals, and reusable informational materials; emotional support through empathy, encouragement, validation, and solidarity; and instrumental support through tangible goods, direct services, material assistance, or coordinated action. Social support is particularly relevant during disruption because it can buffer the effects of stress and contribute directly to well-being [15]. Support-seeking and support provision reflect reciprocal processes through which members mobilize one another. These processes are shaped by platform affordances—that is, the possibilities and constraints for action created by a platform’s technical and social features, such as visibility, persistence, asynchronous communication, and anonymity [5,6,16].

The role of professional online communities becomes particularly visible during crises, when formal systems may be disrupted, delayed, or insufficiently responsive [17,18]. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how professionals relied on digital networks when traditional coordination and support structures could not meet urgent needs [19–22]. During such periods, online communities may serve as support groups, solution repositories, information channels, and spaces for collective sense-making, with emotional support becoming as important as informational assistance [18,23,24].

Several gaps remain in understanding support dynamics and resilience-building in professional online communities under sustained disruption. Limited research has examined how different forms of social support change over extended crisis periods, how support-seeking and support-providing behaviors interact at the community level, and how visible engagement patterns reflect recognition, validation, practical response, or collective attention [17,25,26]. In addition, much of the literature gives limited attention to culturally and locally situated communities experiencing prolonged societal disruption [27,28].

The present study addresses these gaps by examining a large Hebrew-language professional Facebook group for Israeli educators across routine pre-war and prolonged wartime periods. Unlike research centered primarily on acute events or COVID-19-related disruption, this study traces support patterns across a three-and-a-half-year period marked by repeated and sustained societal disruption. It examines not only the prevalence of informational, emotional, and instrumental support and support-seeking but also their associations with engagement, anonymity, posting context, and historical period.

The study makes three specific contributions. Empirically, it provides a cross-period analysis of naturally occurring professional exchanges during routine and prolonged crisis conditions. Analytically, it examines support functions, support-seeking, and platform engagement within a single framework, thereby distinguishing what forms of support become visible from how they are publicly recognized and responded to. Theoretically, it integrates social support theory, communities of practice theory, and community resilience theory to conceptualize support flexibility as the aggregate reconfiguration of support exchange while core knowledge-sharing functions remain active. Practically, it identifies implications for the design and institutional use of professional online communities during prolonged disruption.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Support in Online Professional Communities

Social support theory provides a central framework for understanding how professional online communities function as support networks. Social support refers to the perceived availability of assistance through one's social relationships and is commonly expressed in informational, emotional, and instrumental forms [12–14]. Informational support includes advice, guidance, professional knowledge, referrals, information about coping strategies, and reusable informational or pedagogical materials; emotional support includes empathy, encouragement, care, reassurance, validation, solidarity, and shared emotional experience; and instrumental support includes tangible goods, direct services, material assistance, coordinated action, or other forms of practical help. Recent research on online communities similarly shows that digital support is often organized around informational and emotional assistance, particularly in contexts of uncertainty, crisis, and peer interaction [29,30]. These support forms may operate through buffering mechanisms, in which support reduces the impact of stressors, and through direct effects, in which social connection contributes to well-being regardless of immediate stress levels [14,15].

In professional online communities, social support becomes visible through everyday interaction. Members share informational materials and professional experiences, seek and provide advice, validate professional difficulties, and sometimes coordinate practical assistance [5,6]. Informational support is often especially prominent because advice, professional strategies, and reusable informational or pedagogical materials can be readily circulated and adapted across professional contexts [31–33]. Following the functional distinction in social support theory, such materials constitute informational rather than instrumental support because their primary function is to transmit knowledge or professional guidance; instrumental support, by contrast, involves tangible assistance, direct services, or coordinated practical action [13]. Emotional support may take the form of solidarity, encouragement, reassurance, or collective processing of difficult experiences, whereas instrumental support may be less frequent because it generally requires greater coordination and may extend beyond the online platform [34–37].

Platform affordances shape how support is organized and accessed. Visibility, persistence, searchable archives, asynchronous communication, and multimedia sharing allow support to circulate beyond the original exchange and remain available to both active and less visible members [16,38,39]. Asynchronous communication may also enable more considered responses, potentially strengthening informational and emotional support [40,41].

2.2. Professional Online Communities as Digital Communities of Practice

Professional online communities can be understood through communities of practice theory, which explains how practitioners develop shared competence through sustained participation around a common domain of interest [42]. In digital environments, these communities extend professional interaction beyond formal organizational structures, enabling members to exchange knowledge, discuss practice-based challenges, and build shared repertoires across geographical and institutional boundaries [3,4]. They therefore function not only as communication spaces but also as digital communities of practice where professional knowledge, social support, and collective learning are produced through interaction [43,44].

Knowledge sharing is a central mechanism in these communities. Members contribute resources, practical strategies, experiences, and problem-solving suggestions, often motivated by reciprocity, altruism, shared professional identity, and expectations of mutual contribution [34,36,45,46]. However, research suggests that surface-level sharing is often more common than deeper collaborative knowledge construction, partly because brief

resource-sharing requires less time and cognitive or emotional effort than sustained dialogue or joint problem-solving [34,46]. From a social support perspective, this helps explain why informational support is often highly visible in professional online communities [6,13].

Platform affordances support both active and peripheral participation, but these forms of participation contribute to the community in different ways. Visibility, persistence, searchable archives, and asynchronous communication allow peripheral participants to observe and learn from exchanges even when they do not post or respond themselves [11,16,42]. Active participants, by contrast, contribute experiences, resources, and suggestions and may refine or extend the contributions of others through discussion [11,44]. Through the visibility and persistence of these contributions, individual experiences can become shared community resources that other members may retrieve, reuse, and adapt in their own professional practice [11,16,44]. This cumulative process may become especially important during disruption, when formal systems are unable to respond quickly enough to emerging professional and social needs [17,19].

2.3. Support-Seeking, Anonymity, and Engagement

Support-seeking and support provision are reciprocal processes central to the functioning of professional communities. Support-seeking involves publicly or semi-publicly acknowledging a need for advice, information, validation, or assistance [6]. In professional contexts, this can create tension between vulnerability and credibility, because requesting support may imply uncertainty, lack of knowledge, or difficulty coping [47]. Support-seeking is therefore not only a functional act but also a social and identity-related act shaped by professional norms and perceived reputational risk [6,48].

Anonymity can reduce the social cost of support-seeking by allowing members to request assistance without fully exposing their professional identity [6,49]. At the same time, anonymity may limit trust, credibility, or response depth because other members have fewer identity cues on which to base their response. Research on enterprise social media similarly shows that professionals engage in reputation and connection management when navigating the tension between personal vulnerability and professional credibility on networked platforms [48]. Thus, anonymity may support participation while also reshaping how requests are interpreted and answered [16,49].

Engagement metrics provide observable indicators of how communities respond to different forms of support. Likes, comments, and shares do not simply measure popularity; they can signal recognition, approval, validation, and collective attention [50,51]. Different support forms may generate different engagement patterns: informational posts may receive broad but low-cost engagement through likes, whereas support-seeking posts may generate fewer likes but more substantive comment-based responses [26,32]. This distinction reflects differences in response cost, because approving shared information requires little effort, whereas answering a support request requires time, expertise, emotional labor, or practical involvement [26,34].

2.4. Crisis Adaptation and Digital Community Resilience

Crisis periods can alter both support needs and support practices within professional online communities. When formal systems are disrupted or insufficiently responsive, professionals may rely more heavily on informal digital networks for problem-solving, emotional support, resource coordination, and collective sense-making [17–19,21,23,24]. Research on COVID-19 showed that professional online communities can rapidly reorganize during disruption, suggesting that crisis may change not only the volume of support exchanged but also the visibility and relative importance of different support forms [17,22].

Community resilience provides a useful framework for understanding these transformations. Resilience refers to a community's capacity to adapt to disruption by modifying structures and functions while maintaining essential continuity [7–9]. Social capital is central to this process because trust, reciprocity, and shared identity enable communities to mobilize resources under stress [10,52,53]. In professional online communities, resilience may therefore be expressed through continued participation, knowledge redistribution, emotional processing, and new norms for vulnerability and support [10,11].

However, most crisis research has focused on sudden or time-limited disruptions, particularly COVID-19, while less is known about professional online communities during sustained societal crises marked by ongoing uncertainty and repeated disruption [19,22,54]. Such crises may affect support-seeking in contradictory ways: shared stress may normalize vulnerability, while cognitive overload and professional pressure may reduce explicit requests for support [23,55]. In the Israeli context after 7 October 2023, civil society organizations rapidly assumed welfare, logistical, and support functions where formal state systems were strained, illustrating how non-state infrastructures can become central during crises [56]. In these conditions, professional online communities may become adaptive digital social infrastructures that sustain knowledge circulation, social connection, and collective functioning under prolonged adversity [7,8,10].

Taken together, prior research points to two unresolved tensions. First, platform visibility and persistence can broaden access to support while simultaneously increasing the reputational costs of publicly acknowledging professional uncertainty or need [5,6,48]. Second, crisis conditions may intensify the need for support, while cognitive and emotional overload may reduce the likelihood of explicit support-seeking [23]. Existing studies rarely examine how these tensions unfold at the community level during sustained rather than acute disruption. This limits understanding of whether professional online communities merely maintain activity during crises or reorganize the functions, direction, and public recognition of support.

2.5. Research Context, Theoretical Integration, and Research Questions

Social support theory, communities of practice theory, and community resilience theory are complementary but not interchangeable. Social support theory specifies what is exchanged—informational, emotional, and instrumental assistance—and how support may buffer stress or contribute directly to well-being [12,13,15]. Communities of practice theory explains how such exchanges become embedded in sustained professional participation, shared repertoires, and collective learning [3,4,42]. Community resilience theory shifts the analytical focus from individual exchanges to system-level continuity and reorganization under disruption [7–10]. Their integration therefore connects the content of support, its embedding in professional practice, and its potential reconfiguration under sustained crisis. No single perspective alone fully explains how support is requested, provided, and publicly recognized while core community functions remain active.

For analytical clarity, the study uses four non-mutually exclusive support indicators. Three represent support functions: informational support involves advice, guidance, professional knowledge, and reusable informational or pedagogical materials; emotional support involves empathy, encouragement, validation, and solidarity; and instrumental support involves tangible assistance, direct services, or coordinated practical action. The fourth, support-seeking, is a cross-cutting indicator of whether a post explicitly requests assistance [6,13].

The present study examines a large Hebrew-language professional Facebook group for Israeli educators during the prolonged societal crisis that followed the outbreak of war in October 2023. Although the empirical setting is an educators' community, the study

addresses the broader question of how professional online communities reorganize social support, engagement, and support-seeking under sustained disruption. This focus extends prior research on individual support-seeking, short-term crisis response, and COVID-19-related disruption by examining community-level support mobilization during a prolonged societal crisis [54,55,57,58].

Using quantitative content analysis, the study examines 1008 posts published between January 2022 and July 2025, spanning routine pre-war and wartime periods. Posts are coded for three support functions—informational, emotional, and instrumental support—and for the cross-cutting support-seeking indicator, and are analyzed in relation to engagement patterns, including likes and comments. The study therefore investigates both the distribution of these support indicators and the ways in which support is recognized, requested, and responded to across periods of routine and crisis [5,6,50,51].

The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. Which support indicators—informational, emotional, and instrumental support, and support-seeking—are most prevalent in the professional community?

RQ2. How does member engagement vary across these support indicators?

RQ3. How do social support patterns and engagement behaviors shift between routine and crisis periods?

RQ4. What factors, including author anonymity, posting context, and community engagement, predict support-seeking behavior, and does the crisis period moderate these relationships?

3. Method

This study employed quantitative content analysis to examine social support patterns and resilience-related support content in the professional Facebook group described above [59]. Quantitative content analysis is appropriate for systematically identifying, categorizing, and comparing communication patterns across large collections of naturally occurring online posts. The study received approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee of Ashkelon Academic College (approval no. 195), and explicit consent for data collection was obtained from the group administrator. Following ethical frameworks for computer-mediated social media research in semi-private spaces [60], all personally identifiable information was anonymized. Author identity was coded only as “named” or “anonymous,” and the data were stored securely under institutional policies.

3.1. Sampling Strategy

The study examined a large Hebrew-language Facebook group for Israeli educators, with approximately 90,000 members. Data collection used a two-stage sampling strategy designed to combine systematic cross-period coverage with the focused retrieval of theoretically relevant support-related posts.

The two stages addressed complementary sampling needs. Systematic monthly sampling provided regular cross-period coverage of visible routine activity and naturally occurring professional exchange. A systematic sample alone, however, could underrepresent less frequent but theoretically central posts involving crisis, emotional support, support-seeking, and resilience. Focused keyword retrieval therefore increased sensitivity to these forms of content. Combining the two stages balanced temporal coverage with theoretical relevance, while deliberately producing an analytically enriched rather than population-representative sample.

In the first stage, posts were sampled systematically across the study period from January 2022 to July 2025. For each month, posts were ordered chronologically and sampled

at a regular interval of approximately every 10th to 15th post, depending on monthly post volume. Formally, the monthly systematic sample was defined as:

$$S_m = \left\{ p_{m, r_m + jk_m} : j = 0, 1, 2, \dots, \lfloor (N_m - r_m)/k_m \rfloor \right\}$$

where S_m denotes the sampled posts from month m , $p_{m,i}$ denotes the i -th post in month m , so that the sampled positions are given by $i = r_m + jk_m$; N_m denotes the number of visible posts in month m , r_m denotes the starting position, k_m denotes the sampling interval, and M denotes the total number of months in the study period. The Stage 1 sample was then defined as the union of all monthly samples, $S_1 = \bigcup_{m=1}^M S_m$, yielding approximately 400 posts reflecting routine professional exchange and naturally occurring support patterns.

In the second stage, focused keyword-based sampling was used to identify posts containing theoretically relevant crisis, support-seeking, emotional support, and resilience-related terms. The Stage 2 sample was defined as:

$$S_2 = \{p_i \in P \mid C(p_i) = 1\}$$

where P denotes all visible posts in the study period, p_i denotes post i , and $C(p_i)$ is an inclusion indicator coded 1 when the text of the post contained at least one keyword from the predefined keyword set. The keyword set included Hebrew-language terms related to coping, anxiety, emotional support, war, emergency, evacuations, advice, recommendations, and resilience. Duplicate posts already included in Stage 1 were removed.

The final dataset included 1008 posts representing both routine professional exchanges and crisis-related support mobilization. This cross-period content analysis enabled comparison of community support dynamics across routine and crisis contexts [61]. The unequal temporal distribution, with 26.9% pre-war posts and 73.1% wartime posts, reflects the combined sampling strategy, particularly the focused retrieval of crisis-, resilience-, and support-related content. Because the second stage deliberately enriched the dataset for predefined content, the sample should not be interpreted as a probability sample or a complete archive of group activity. Keyword selection, platform visibility, and content deleted before collection may have influenced inclusion; accordingly, prevalence estimates describe the analytic sample rather than the full distribution of group activity [59].

3.2. Procedures and Ethical Considerations

Data were collected, following ethics approval, during the second half of August 2025 using the Instant Data Scraper browser extension for Google Chrome (Web Robots, Vilnius, Lithuania; available online: <https://chromewebstore.google.com/detail/instant-data-scraper/ofaokhiedipichpaobibbnahnkdoiiah>, 1 February 2026). Although Facebook's Graph API can provide more systematic access, it requires platform authorization and institutional partnerships that are often unavailable for research in closed or semi-private groups [62,63]. The browser-based approach was selected because it enabled data collection from content visible to group members, was conducted with administrator consent, and allowed for researcher verification of content relevance while protecting user privacy [60,64,65].

The extension captured post date, author anonymity status, textual content, likes, and comments. Author names, profile images, profile links, and direct post links were not recorded. Collection involved systematic chronological scrolling across multiple days to reduce temporal bias. This approach has four limitations: it does not capture total post volume, algorithmic filtering may affect post visibility, engagement metrics represent snapshots at the time of collection, and deleted posts before collection could not be accessed.

Despite these constraints, the dataset provides substantial insight into social support patterns across routine and crisis periods.

3.3. Data Preparation

Extracted data were exported to Microsoft Excel (Microsoft 365, Microsoft Corp., Redmond, WA, USA) for cleaning and coding, then imported into IBM SPSS Statistics for analysis. Duplicate posts, spam, commercial advertisements, unrelated announcements, and off-topic content were excluded. Posts without textual content or outside the study's focus on professional support, practice, and crisis-related exchange were removed. All quoted post excerpts were originally written in Hebrew and were translated into English by the author. Translations preserve the meaning and register of the original posts; identifying details were removed.

3.4. Engagement Metrics

The dataset contained complete engagement information for all posts ($N = 1008$). Raw engagement displayed right-skewed distributions characteristic of social media platforms [50]: likes ranged 0–4300 ($M = 70.61$, $Mdn = 11.00$, $SD = 235.79$); comments ranged 0–780 ($M = 37.53$, $Mdn = 9.00$, $SD = 69.57$). Natural logarithm transformation with +1 shift ($\ln[x + 1]$) reduced skewness while retaining zeros, yielding distributions suitable for regression modeling: $\ln_likes$ ($M = 2.65$, $Mdn = 2.48$, $SD = 1.80$; range 0.00–8.37); $\ln_comments$ ($M = 2.28$, $Mdn = 2.30$, $SD = 1.81$; range 0.00–6.66).

3.5. Variable Coding and Social Support Categorization

Variables were coded using binary format (0 = Absent, 1 = Present) for thematic content and nominal categories for contextual classifications. Binary coding provides reliable, systematic approaches for categorizing content themes in large datasets [66]. Coding proceeded in two stages:

Stage 1 (Micro-coding). Posts were micro-coded for author identity, temporal period, posting context, primary post type, and content elements related to informational sharing, emotional expression, practical support, support-seeking, and resilience-related themes. Resilience-related micro-codes included mental resilience, coping with crisis, hope, and solidarity. These codes were not treated as a separate psychological resilience outcome, but as content elements contributing primarily to the emotional support category. To ensure reliability, 25% of posts were independently coded by a second rater with expertise in qualitative research and educational contexts. Inter-rater agreement was excellent (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.87$). Table 1 presents the micro-codes with definitions and frequencies.

Stage 2: Aggregation of support functions and support-seeking orientation. Micro-codes were aggregated into three support-function categories—informational, emotional, and instrumental support, consistent with social support theory [13], alongside one cross-cutting support-seeking indicator. The support-function indicators captured the form of support requested or provided, whereas support-seeking indicated whether assistance was explicitly requested. Each indicator was coded 1 when the post's primary orientation or relevant micro-codes met its operational definition and 0 otherwise. Classification was based on content function rather than format; for example, a digital worksheet was informational support, whereas physical supplies were instrumental support. Because the indicators were not mutually exclusive, a post could combine support-seeking with informational, emotional, or instrumental content. The four indicators were operationalized as follows:

1. Informational support ($n = 699$, 69.3%): posts providing or requesting advice, guidance, professional knowledge, informational or pedagogical materials, professional

strategies, or practice-based experiences. Digital documents, worksheets, presentations, and similar materials were classified as informational support when their primary function was to transmit knowledge or professional guidance.

2. Emotional support ($n = 128$, 12.8%): posts containing emotional expression or requesting or providing empathy, encouragement, reassurance, validation, coping-oriented support, hope, or solidarity. This category also included resilience-related emotional content, such as mental resilience, coping with crisis, hope, and expressions of solidarity.
3. Instrumental support ($n = 44$, 4.4%): posts offering or requesting tangible goods, direct services, material assistance, practical help, or coordinated collective action, including donations, volunteering, mutual aid, and resource mobilization.
4. Support-seeking ($n = 309$, 30.7%): posts explicitly requesting assistance, including advice, professional input, informational materials, emotional reassurance, tangible help, or practical guidance.

Table 1. Post characteristics, engagement metrics, and social support micro-codes ($N = 1008$).

Strand	Variable	Category	Code	<i>n</i>	%
Post characteristics	Author identity	Anonymous	0	265	26.3
		Named	1	743	73.7
	Period	Pre-war (2022–09/2023)	0	271	26.9
		Wartime (10/2023–2025)	1	737	73.1
	Context	Crisis-related	1	283	28.1
		Routine	2	481	47.7
		Mixed	3	244	24.2
	Primary post type	Support-seeking request	1	291	28.9
		Sharing/resource	2	101	10.0
		Support-seeking + sharing	3	18	1.8
		Informational content	4	598	59.3
	Engagement metrics				
	Likes	Row counts	$M = 70.61$, $SD = 235.79$		
		Log transform ($\ln[x + 1]$)	$M = 2.65$, $SD = 1.80$		
	Comments	Row counts	$M = 37.53$, $SD = 69.57$		
		Log transform ($\ln[x + 1]$)	$M = 2.28$, $SD = 1.81$		
Emotional and resilience-related micro-codes	Mental resilience	Present	1	30	3.0
	Emotional expression	Present	1	58	5.8
	Coping with crisis	Present	1	53	5.3
	Fear/anxiety	Present	1	17	1.7
	Loss	Present	1	5	0.5
	Hope	Present	1	13	1.3
	Solidarity	Present	1	11	1.1
	Any emotional/resilience-related content	Present	1	128	12.8

Table 1. *Cont.*

Strand	Variable	Category	Code	<i>n</i>	%
Instrumental and community-support micro-codes	Mobilization	Present	1	22	2.2
	Donation	Present	1	5	0.5
	Volunteering	Present	1	3	0.3
	Community	Present	1	15	1.5
	Brotherhood	Present	1	8	0.8
	Mutual aid	Present	1	12	1.2
	Any instrumental/community support	Present	1	44	4.4

Notes. (1) Micro-codes are binary (0 = Absent, 1 = Present) unless otherwise indicated. (2) Percentages were calculated relative to the total number of posts ($N = 1008$). (3) M = mean; SD = standard deviation. (4) Higher-order support-function and support-seeking indicators derived from these micro-codes are described in the text.

Each post was coded as present (1) or absent (0) for each of the four indicators based on whether the relevant micro-codes appeared in the post content. The indicators were not mutually exclusive. Support-seeking captured whether assistance was explicitly requested, whereas the informational, emotional, and instrumental indicators captured the form or function of the support requested or provided. Thus, a post requesting advice could be coded as both support-seeking and informational support, while a post sharing professional guidance and expressing solidarity could be coded as both informational and emotional support. Multicollinearity assessment confirmed variables' suitability for regression modeling: all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values < 5 (range 1.025–1.502); all tolerance values > 0.66 , indicating sufficient independence for simultaneous modeling.

3.6. Data Analysis Strategy

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 31.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA). The analysis addressed four research questions. For RQ1, frequencies and percentages summarized the distribution of the support indicators. For RQ2, negative binomial regression models predicted like and comment counts from the support indicators, controlling for author identity and period. For RQ3, logistic regressions tested whether the prevalence of each support indicator differed by period (pre-war vs. wartime) and context (crisis-related, routine, or mixed), controlling for author identity; changes in engagement patterns were examined using negative binomial GLMs including Support Indicator $\times$ Period and Support Indicator $\times$ Context interactions. For RQ4, hierarchical binary logistic regression [67] modeled the likelihood of support-seeking: Model A included author identity, period, and context; Model B added engagement metrics ($\ln_likes$, $\ln_comments$); Model C added interaction terms (Period $\times$ Context, Period $\times$ Engagement) to test whether crisis context moderated relationships between engagement and support-seeking.

4. Results

4.1. Prevalence of Support Functions and Support-Seeking

To address RQ1, the prevalence of the three support functions—informational, emotional, and instrumental support, and the cross-cutting support-seeking indicator was examined. Each variable was coded as present (1) or absent (0). Because these four indicators were not mutually exclusive, prevalence was summarized as marginal proportions with 95% Wilson confidence intervals. A within-post comparison using Cochran's Q confirmed

that marginal prevalences differed significantly across support indicators, $Q(3) = 844.95$, $p < 0.001$. McNemar pairwise tests with Holm–Bonferroni correction indicated that all pairwise differences were significant, all adjusted $p < 0.001$. Table 2 presents the prevalence of each support indicator.

Table 2. Prevalence of Support Functions and Support-Seeking in Professional Community Posts ($N = 1008$).

Support Indicator	Present (n)	Present (%)	95% CI
Support-seeking	309	30.73	27.92–33.64
Instrumental support	44	4.40	3.27–5.85
Emotional support	128	12.84	10.88–15.03
Informational support	699	69.32	66.40–72.12

Notes: (1) The support indicators are binary and may co-occur; percentages therefore need not sum to 100%. (2) Confidence intervals are Wilson score intervals.

In the analytic sample, informational support was the most prevalent support function (69.3%), suggesting that knowledge, advice, and reusable professional materials were central within the sampled exchanges. For example, one member wrote, “Attaching a worksheet I made for my students to practice multiplication facts. Feel free to use and adapt.” This was classified as informational rather than instrumental support because the post transmitted a reusable pedagogical resource rather than tangible material assistance. Support-seeking appeared in 30.7% of posts, as illustrated by the request, “I would love to receive ideas for an experiential Zoom lesson for fourth grade.” Emotional support appeared in 12.8% of posts, including explicit expressions of encouragement and solidarity such as, “Thank you to all of you for keeping the spirit up. We’re stronger together.” Instrumental support was least frequent, appearing in 4.4% of posts; for example, “If anyone needs extra art supplies, I have plenty to give away.” In this case, the offer involved tangible goods rather than information or advice. Across the four non-mutually exclusive indicators, informational support showed the highest marginal prevalence, whereas instrumental support showed the lowest.

4.2. Engagement by Support Function and Support-Seeking

To address RQ2, engagement was modeled with generalized linear models specifying negative binomial distributions, log link functions, robust Huber–White standard errors, and Pearson scale adjustment. Predictors were the four binary support indicators (0/1), with author identity (anonymous vs. named) and period (pre-war vs. wartime) included as controls. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3. Engagement by Support Function and Support-Seeking (negative binomial GLMs; $N = 1008$).

Predictor (Reference)	Likes—RR (95% CI)	<i>p</i>	Comments—RR (95% CI)	<i>p</i>
Informational support	3.15 (1.86, 5.33)	<0.001	1.36 (0.99, 1.88)	0.060
Support-seeking	0.45 (0.22, 0.95)	0.036	1.01 (0.66, 1.55)	0.955
Instrumental support	1.27 (0.62, 2.58)	0.514	1.08 (0.72, 1.62)	0.706
Emotional support	0.93 (0.49, 1.78)	0.824	0.96 (0.66, 1.38)	0.810
Author: Anonymous (vs. Named)	0.70 (0.47, 1.04)	0.079	0.75 (0.57, 0.99)	0.045
Period: Pre-war (vs. Wartime)	1.33 (0.96, 1.85)	0.088	2.23 (1.75, 2.85)	<0.001

Notes: (1) Model fit—Likes: $LR \chi^2(6) = 42.50$, $p < 0.001$. Comments: $LR \chi^2(6) = 56.37$, $p < 0.001$. (2) RR = rate ratio. (3) Reference: corresponding support indicator absent, author named, and period wartime.

Posts containing informational support received approximately three times more likes than posts without informational support and marginally more comments. Support-seeking posts received approximately 55% fewer likes than posts without support-seeking content, while comment levels did not differ significantly. Instrumental and emotional support showed no independent associations with engagement. Anonymous authors received significantly fewer comments and marginally fewer likes than named authors. Pre-war posts received significantly more comments than wartime posts.

4.3. Temporal and Contextual Changes in Support Functions and Support-Seeking

To address RQ3, four separate binary logistic regression models examined whether the three support functions—informational, emotional, and instrumental support—and the support-seeking indicator varied by period (pre-war vs. wartime) and posting context (routine [reference category], crisis-related, or mixed), controlling for author identity. Table 4 reports the log-odds coefficients with standard errors, B (SE), together with odds ratios (ORs), 95% confidence intervals, and *p*-values. Engagement was then modeled using negative binomial generalized linear models with a log link, testing Support Indicator $\times$ Period and Support Indicator $\times$ Context interactions for likes and comments. The context models also controlled for period, and all models controlled for author identity. Table 5 reports the omnibus Wald χ^2 tests for each interaction set.

Table 4. Period and Context Predictors of Support Functions and Support-Seeking.

Support Indicator	Post Period	Post Context	
	Wartime vs. Pre-War	Crisis vs. Routine	Mixed vs. Routine
Support-seeking	−0.49 (0.16); OR 0.61 [0.45, 0.84]; <i>p</i> = 0.002	−0.26 (0.17); OR 0.77 [0.56, 1.08]; <i>p</i> = 0.129	−0.46 (0.19); OR 0.63 [0.44, 0.91]; <i>p</i> = 0.012
Instrumental support	−0.32 (0.15); OR 0.73 [0.54, 0.97]; <i>p</i> = 0.033	−0.12 (0.16); OR 0.89 [0.65, 1.21]; <i>p</i> = 0.455	−0.24 (0.17); OR 0.79 [0.57, 1.09]; <i>p</i> = 0.152
Emotional support	0.80 (0.22); OR 2.22 [1.43, 3.43]; <i>p</i> < 0.001	0.29 (0.21); OR 1.33 [0.89, 2.00]; <i>p</i> = 0.165	0.54 (0.21); OR 1.72 [1.15, 2.57]; <i>p</i> = 0.008
Informational support	0.64 (0.19); OR 1.89 [1.31, 2.75]; <i>p</i> = 0.001	0.17 (0.20); OR 1.18 [0.79, 1.76]; <i>p</i> = 0.411	0.24 (0.21); OR 1.27 [0.83, 1.93]; <i>p</i> = 0.273

Notes. (1) Each row reports a separate logistic regression model controlling for author identity (N = 1008). (2) ORs > 1 indicate higher odds that the corresponding support indicator was present. (3) Reference categories were pre-war for period and routine for context. (4) Bold indicates *p* < 0.05.

Table 5. Engagement differences by period and posting context: Interaction effects.

Support Indicator (Binary)		Likes	Comments
Period Pre-war vs. Wartime	Support-Seeking $\times$ Period	$\chi^2 = 0.12$ (1), <i>p</i> = 0.733	$\chi^2 = 0.01$ (1), <i>p</i> = 0.918
	Instrumental $\times$ Period	$\chi^2 = 0.42$ (1), <i>p</i> = 0.516	$\chi^2 = 0.01$ (1), <i>p</i> = 0.932
	Emotional $\times$ Period	$\chi^2 = 2.42$ (1), <i>p</i> = 0.120	$\chi^2 = 15.21$ (1), <i>p</i> < 0.001
	Informational $\times$ Period	$\chi^2 = 0.15$ (1), <i>p</i> = 0.700	$\chi^2 = 0.45$ (1), <i>p</i> = 0.500
Posting context Routine, Crisis-related, Mixed	Support-Seeking $\times$ Context	$\chi^2 = 7.92$ (2), <i>p</i> = 0.019	$\chi^2 = 1.42$ (2), <i>p</i> = 0.491
	Instrumental $\times$ Context	$\chi^2 = 1.78$ (2), <i>p</i> = 0.410	$\chi^2 = 0.49$ (2), <i>p</i> = 0.782
	Emotional $\times$ Context	$\chi^2 = 4.25$ (2), <i>p</i> = 0.120	$\chi^2 = 3.28$ (2), <i>p</i> = 0.194
	Informational $\times$ Context	$\chi^2 = 13.98$ (2), <i>p</i> = 0.001	$\chi^2 = 1.17$ (2), <i>p</i> = 0.557

Notes. (1) Entries are Wald χ^2 tests of the interaction terms from negative binomial GLMs (log link) with robust SEs. (2) Likes and comments were modeled separately. (3) Poisson models with robust standard errors yielded the same significance pattern. (4) Bold indicates *p* < 0.05.

As shown in Table 4, wartime posts had lower odds of support-seeking and instrumental support but higher odds of emotional and informational support. This pattern suggests

a reorganization of support practices during wartime rather than a uniform increase or decrease across all forms of support. Informational support during this period often involved the proactive provision of reusable professional materials. For example, one member wrote, *“A resilience booklet I prepared for the sweet children. . . Sharing with love.”* This post was classified as informational support because its primary function was to provide pedagogical content that other educators could use. Emotional support was reflected in posts expressing and collectively processing crisis-related experiences. For example, one member wrote, *“Since October 7, 2023, I have had a hard time stopping and celebrating professional achievements publicly,”* thereby articulating an emotionally complex professional experience in the context of the ongoing crisis. With respect to posting context, mixed-context posts had lower odds of support-seeking and higher odds of emotional support than routine posts, whereas crisis-related posts did not differ significantly from routine posts.

As shown in Table 5, period did not moderate the association between any of the support indicators and likes. However, period moderated the association between emotional support and comments, indicating that emotional-support posts were associated with relatively greater discussion during wartime. For example, one wartime post expressed collective encouragement and solidarity: *“Thank you to all of you for keeping the spirit up. We’re stronger together.”* This post was classified as emotional support because its primary function was encouragement and collective emotional reinforcement rather than the provision of information or tangible assistance. Posting context moderated the association with likes for both support-seeking and informational support. An urgent request such as, *“I’m supposed to teach two lessons tomorrow for ninth grade on the topic of the current crisis. Is there any adapted material recorded or prepared?”* illustrates the cross-cutting nature of the coding: the post was coded as support-seeking because it explicitly requested assistance and as informational support because the assistance requested consisted of professional materials and guidance. By contrast, the statement *“I am attaching a presentation on identifying personal resilience. I gave it to eighth graders”* illustrates informational support provision, because the author proactively shared a reusable pedagogical resource. Comments did not vary significantly by posting context for any of the support indicators.

4.4. Predictors of Support-Seeking Behavior

To address RQ4, the analysis fitted three nested binary logistic regression models predicting whether a post was coded as Support-seeking (1 = yes). Model A (author, period, context) showed solid baseline fit—omnibus $\chi^2(4) = 62.34$, $p < 0.001$; $-2LL = 1180.15$; $R^2(\text{Cox-Snell/Nagelkerke}) = 0.060/0.085$; Hosmer-Lemeshow $\chi^2(6) = 8.35$, $p = 0.064$, with 69.3% classification. Model B added engagement covariates (likes [ln], comments[ln]), improving fit ($\Delta\chi^2(2) = 100.69$, $p < 0.001$; omnibus $\chi^2(6) = 163.03$, $p < 0.001$; $-2LL = 1079.46$; $R^2 = 0.149/0.211$; H-L $\chi^2(8) = 17.06$, $p = 0.029$) and raising classification to 72.7%. Model C added period moderation, yielding a modest further improvement ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 8.36$, $p = 0.079$; omnibus $\chi^2(10) = 171.39$, $p < 0.001$; $-2LL = 1071.09$; $R^2 = 0.156/0.221$; H-L $\chi^2(8) = 23.51$, $p = 0.003$) with 73.3% classification. Table 6 reports coefficients and odds ratios.

Support-seeking posts were markedly less common among named authors than among anonymous authors, with named authors showing approximately 64% to 66% lower odds of support-seeking across the three models. Wartime posts were also less likely to be support-seeking in Models A and B, although this period effect was no longer significant after the interaction terms were added in Model C. Relative to routine posts, mixed-context posts showed lower odds of support-seeking in Model A, but this association weakened after engagement variables were included. Engagement showed the clearest pattern: higher ln_likes was associated with lower odds of a post being support-seeking, whereas higher ln_comments was associated with higher odds of support-seeking. This pattern

is illustrated by an anonymous member seeking guidance during the crisis: *“Following an incident in my classroom, I’m looking for a brief guide to help educators and families explain the death of relatives during this difficult war to young children who didn’t witness the events directly.”* This post drew more than 470 comments, illustrating how support-seeking posts can generate collective discussion and advice-sharing. Period moderated both engagement effects. During wartime, the negative association between likes and support-seeking was weaker, and the positive association between comments and support-seeking was also weaker. Context-by-period moderation was negligible. Overall, model fit improved substantially after engagement variables were added, while the interaction model provided only modest additional improvement.

Table 6. Logistic regression models predicting support-seeking behavior.

Predictor (Reference)	Model A			Model B			Model C		
	B (SE)	OR (95% CI)	p	B (SE)	OR (95% CI)	p	B (SE)	OR (95% CI)	p
Author: Named (vs. Anonymous)	−1.086 (0.157)	0.34 (0.25–0.46)	<0.001	−1.032 (0.169)	0.36 (0.26–0.50)	<0.001	−1.085 (0.170)	0.34 (0.24–0.47)	<0.001
Wartime (vs. Pre-war)	−0.446 (0.161)	0.64 (0.47–0.88)	0.006	−0.386 (0.173)	0.68 (0.48–0.96)	0.026	−0.379 (0.382)	0.68 (0.32–1.45)	0.321
Crisis (vs. Routine)	−0.257 (0.169)	0.77 (0.56–1.08)	0.129	−0.294 (0.180)	0.75 (0.52–1.06)	0.101	−0.355 (0.339)	0.70 (0.36–1.36)	0.295
Mixed (vs. Routine)	−0.457 (0.183)	0.63 (0.44–0.91)	0.012	−0.354 (0.193)	0.70 (0.48–1.02)	0.067	−0.382 (0.404)	0.68 (0.31–1.51)	0.344
likes (ln)	—	—	—	−0.517 (0.057)	0.60 (0.53–0.67)	<0.001	−0.800 (0.126)	0.45 (0.35–0.58)	<0.001
comments (ln)	—	—	—	+0.376 (0.055)	1.46 (1.31–1.62)	<0.001	+0.652 (0.126)	1.92 (1.50–2.46)	<0.001
Wartime × likes	—	—	—	—	—	—	+0.368 (0.141)	1.44 (1.10–1.91)	0.009
Wartime × comments	—	—	—	—	—	—	−0.349 (0.140)	0.71 (0.54–0.93)	0.013
Wartime × Crisis	—	—	—	—	—	—	+0.095 (0.400)	1.10 (0.50–2.41)	0.812
Wartime × Mixed	—	—	—	—	—	—	+0.038 (0.460)	1.04 (0.42–2.56)	0.934

Notes: (1) DV: Support-Seeking = 1. (2) Model A included author identity, period, and context. Model B added engagement covariates. Model C added interaction terms. (3) Significant results are in bold (two-tailed $p < 0.05$). (4) OR = exp(B); B = log-odds coefficient.

5. Discussion

This study examined how the support ecology of a professional online community differed between routine and sustained crisis conditions. Rather than treating crisis as producing a uniform increase in support activity, the findings point to a redistribution in what was shared, how needs were expressed, and how different forms of content were publicly recognized. The discussion therefore focuses on three interpretive issues: the community’s knowledge-sharing function, the distinction between endorsement and substantive response, and the role of anonymity and crisis context in shaping visible support practices.

5.1. Support Functions, Support-Seeking, Engagement Patterns, and Anonymity

The pattern of support practices suggests that the sampled community functioned primarily as a knowledge-sharing infrastructure rather than as a space centered on explicit requests for assistance. Informational support is particularly compatible with professional online communities because advice, professional strategies, and reusable pedagogical materials can circulate quickly, remain accessible, and be adapted across professional contexts [31–33]. By contrast, emotional and instrumental support generally require greater personal disclosure, relational involvement, or practical coordination, which may help explain their lower visibility in the sampled exchanges [13,34].

The engagement findings further distinguish public endorsement from substantive response. Informational posts attracted substantially more likes, consistent with the low-cost recognition of useful and reusable content, whereas support-seeking posts received fewer likes but continued to generate comments. Likes may therefore function primarily as signals of visibility, recognition, or approval, while comments more often represent a substantive response requiring time, expertise, emotional labor, or practical involvement [26,51,68,69]. This distinction suggests that highly visible approval should not be treated as the only meaningful indicator of community support.

Author anonymity was strongly associated with support-seeking. Named authors showed substantially lower odds of posting support-seeking content than anonymous authors, suggesting that anonymity may reduce the social cost of requesting assistance in professional settings. This aligns with research showing that professionals often balance vulnerability with reputation management when participating in networked platforms [47,48]. At the same time, anonymity carried engagement costs, as anonymous authors received fewer comments and marginally fewer likes. This may reflect credibility concerns in identifiable social media environments, where limited identity cues can affect how posts are received [6,69]. The finding points to a design tension: anonymity may encourage support-seeking, but it may also reduce the depth or visibility of community response.

5.2. Crisis-Driven Change in Support Provision and Emotional Intensification

The wartime period was associated with lower odds of support-seeking and instrumental support but higher odds of informational and emotional support. This pattern suggests that crisis did not simply increase all forms of support. Rather, support practices appeared to reorganize, with greater emphasis on shared information and emotional processing. Such a shift is consistent with research showing that crises can disrupt formal support structures and increase reliance on informal digital networks for knowledge exchange, problem-solving, and emotional support [18,19,24,70].

The decrease in support-seeking during wartime may appear counterintuitive. One possible interpretation is that sustained crisis conditions made explicit requests for support less likely to appear in the sampled posts. Another possibility is that the increased prevalence of proactively shared informational materials reduced the relative visibility or necessity of direct requests. In this sense, informational support may have operated as anticipatory support by making potentially useful materials available without requiring an explicit public request [15,23]. However, because the analysis is based on posts and does not track individual members over time, these interpretations concern aggregate patterns in posted content rather than demonstrated changes in members' motivations or behavior.

Emotional support increased during wartime, and emotional support posts generated relatively more comments during the crisis period. This suggests that emotional content became more discussion-oriented under conditions of collective stress. Prior research on professional communities during crises similarly shows that emotional support, shared coping, and collective processing can become central to professional online interaction when uncertainty and disruption intensify [23,24]. The asynchronous nature of Facebook may also enable members to respond reflectively, potentially supporting emotional validation and collective sense-making [40,41].

5.3. Professional Online Communities as Adaptive Social Infrastructures

The moderation results suggest that crisis conditions altered the relationship between engagement signals and support-seeking. In routine periods, higher likes were more strongly associated with lower odds of support-seeking, while higher comments were more strongly associated with support-seeking. During wartime, both relationships weakened.

At the level of observable post patterns, this may indicate that the distinction between endorsement-oriented and response-oriented engagement became less pronounced under collective stress [51,68]. Because the analysis does not track individual members over time, this result should not be interpreted as evidence that the same members changed how they responded.

These findings support a more specific conceptualization of support flexibility. In this study, support flexibility refers to a community-level property expressed through aggregate reconfiguration of posted support exchanges across contexts, rather than an individual psychological trait. Empirically, it is reflected in two related dimensions: changes in the relative prevalence of support functions and support-seeking, and changes in the engagement patterns associated with these indicators. The concept also incorporates functional continuity: despite the redistribution of support practices, knowledge-sharing remained a central and visible function of the community. In the Israeli context after 7 October 2023, recent work shows how civic infrastructures became activated when formal systems were strained [56]. The present study extends this logic to a digital, profession-specific setting by documenting aggregate changes in support exchanges.

Support flexibility is related to but distinct from community resilience. Community resilience refers to the broader capacity of a social system to maintain continuity and collective functioning while adapting to disruption [7–9]. Support flexibility denotes a narrower communicative process through which that broader capacity may be supported: the redistribution of how support is requested, provided, and publicly recognized while core knowledge-sharing functions remain active. It may therefore contribute to or signal collective resilience-building, but it is not equivalent to resilience and does not, by itself, demonstrate that resilience has been achieved. This interpretation aligns with pragmatic understandings of resilience as reorganization, cooperation, and workable response under prolonged uncertainty [10,11].

5.4. Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on a single Hebrew-language Facebook group during a prolonged societal crisis in Israel. The findings may therefore reflect profession-specific, cultural, linguistic, platform, and crisis-related conditions and should not be generalized directly to other communities or settings. Second, the two-stage sampling design produced a theoretically enriched analytic sample rather than a probability sample or complete archive. The keyword-based stage intentionally increased the inclusion of crisis-, support-, emotion-, and resilience-related content and contributed to the unequal distribution of pre-war and wartime posts. Keyword selection, platform search functions, algorithmic visibility, and deletion before data collection may all have influenced inclusion. Consequently, the prevalence values describe the analytic sample and should not be interpreted as population estimates of all group posts. Third, the coding procedure reduced complex posts to binary indicators and higher-order categories. Although intercoder agreement was high, this aggregation may obscure intensity, ambiguity, sequence, and differences between a post's primary and secondary functions. Multimedia content, private exchanges, and support transferred to other channels were not fully captured. Future mixed-methods studies could combine quantitative coding with close qualitative analysis of ambiguous or multifunctional posts and report category-specific reliability. Fourth, the unit of analysis was the post rather than the individual member. The study therefore cannot determine whether observed differences reflect changes in the posting behavior of the same members, changes in the composition of active contributors, or both. Engagement measures were also captured at a single collection point and may not represent final engagement. Accordingly, adaptation and support flexibility are interpreted

as aggregate patterns in posted content and engagement rather than demonstrated within-person change.

Future research should compare professional online communities across professions, platforms, cultures, and crisis contexts. Support flexibility could be examined empirically through changes in the relative distribution of support functions and support-seeking, changes in their associated engagement patterns, and the continuity of core knowledge-sharing activity. Longitudinal member-level designs, mixed-methods research, complete-archive studies, and network or time-series analyses could test whether these patterns predict subsequent community continuity or response capacity.

6. Conclusions

This study shows that professional online communities can reorganize support practices during sustained societal crisis. In the analytic sample, wartime posts showed lower levels of support-seeking and instrumental support but higher levels of informational and emotional support. This pattern suggests a shift from more reactive, request-based support toward proactive informational sharing and emotional processing.

The support indicators were also associated with distinct engagement patterns. Informational support was associated with more likes, whereas support-seeking received fewer likes but sustained comment activity. These findings show that likes and comments reflect different forms of community response.

Overall, the study conceptualizes *support flexibility* as an aggregate, community-level reconfiguration of support functions, support-seeking, and their associated engagement patterns while core knowledge-sharing remains visible. This process is distinct from the broader concept of community resilience but may represent one mechanism through which professional online communities contribute to collective resilience-building by sustaining knowledge circulation, emotional support, and professional connection during prolonged uncertainty.

6.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to social support theory by showing that the distribution of support functions and the occurrence of support-seeking may change differentially during sustained crisis rather than shifting uniformly. Informational, emotional, and instrumental support and support-seeking changed in different directions across routine and crisis periods, highlighting the context-sensitive nature of support practices in digital professional communities.

The study also contributes to research on professional online communities by showing how such communities may operate as adaptive digital social infrastructures during disruption. By linking social support theory with community resilience theory, the study shows how online communities can sustain knowledge sharing, emotional processing, and collective functioning under crisis conditions.

Finally, the concept of support flexibility contributes to research on platform-mediated professional communities by specifying two linked dimensions of community-level reconfiguration: redistribution among support functions and support-seeking, and changes in the engagement patterns associated with them. Unlike community resilience, which refers to the broader capacity of a social system to maintain continuity and functioning under disruption, support flexibility refers specifically to the reorganization of support exchange while core knowledge-sharing remains active. The present findings identify this pattern at the aggregate level of posts and engagement rather than as evidence of adaptation by individual members.

6.2. Practical Implications

For community administrators, the findings support function-sensitive moderation rather than reliance on aggregate engagement counts. Administrators could use post labels for requests, informational materials, emotional support, and urgent practical needs; maintain searchable repositories of frequently shared materials; and monitor whether support-seeking posts receive timely substantive responses. Because likes may underrepresent the value of help-seeking content, monitoring should also consider response time, comment-based assistance, and unanswered requests.

The findings also support carefully designed anonymity options. Verified anonymous posting may reduce the reputational cost of requesting assistance while preserving moderator accountability and community trust. Administrators could also establish referral or escalation procedures for posts indicating acute emotional distress, safety concerns, or needs that cannot be addressed adequately through peer interaction.

Educational institutions and professional associations could treat established online communities as complementary components of crisis-support infrastructure. Practical measures include appointing institutional liaisons, supplying verified professional resources, linking moderators with counseling or emergency services, and using recurrent community concerns to inform professional development and organizational planning. These communities should complement rather than replace formal support systems.

For policymakers and professional bodies, the findings suggest that digital professional communities should be considered in crisis-preparedness planning. Support for moderator training, privacy safeguards, resource verification, and communication protocols could strengthen their capacity to circulate reliable information and identify unmet professional needs during prolonged disruption, while preserving the voluntary and peer-based character of the community.

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Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to ethical and privacy restrictions. The raw data consist of posts collected from a semi-private Hebrew-language Facebook group and cannot be shared publicly because they may contain context-specific information that could enable participant or post identification. A de-identified analytical dataset may be made available upon reasonable request, subject to ethical restrictions.

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