

## The Effect of Using the Potential of Social Networks in preventing Drug Addiction from the Perspective of Elites

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the current research is to examine how social networks may be used to prevent drug addiction from the elites' point of view. The research method is survey. 34 specialists and academics in the fields of psychology, media management and communication comprised the statistical population for the research. The research tool included a researcher-made questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed using the validity method of content analysis and the reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha test. Data analysis was done using SmartPLS. The findings demonstrated that social networks' potential (educational, informative, entertainment, and guidance functions) is helpful from an elite viewpoint in reducing drug addiction.

**Keywords:** Educational function, Informative function, Entertainment function, Guidance function, Social Networks, Prevention of drug addiction.

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### Introduction

In the modern era, drug addiction is one of the most significant problems that makes human health very perilous. Today, a sizable portion of the populace is exposed to the risks and harms brought on by drug usage, which may occur for a variety of reasons, including personal, social, economic and political factors (PourManafi and Ghorbani, 2017: 10). According to epidemiological findings, hashish usage, which includes marijuana, grass, and crystal meth with varying THC levels, is the second most common substance usage pattern among people aged 15 to 64. The first consumer substance occurs in high schoolers, the second consumers substance occurs in the students of universities, and the third consumers occurs in the working population of industrial environments in Iran. According to the results of Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police in the first nine months of 2019, hashish was the second substance in the country with about 83 tons, indicating its consumption level. 2019: Serami (p. 1) The analysis of a significant number of cases in which young people were arrested in Tehran for the crime of marijuana consumption exhibits their lack of knowledge of the legal punishment for drug consumers and the severity of it. as well as the formation of a wrong belief in their minds that there is no harm in consuming weed and hashish, reveal the cultural poverty of society's youth.

So far, researchers have employed various strategies such as educating the individuals and informing the parents, teachers and utilizing social networks. Meanwhile, preventive activities based on social media have always been of interest because, obviously, social networks play an undeniable role in all aspects of the social and cultural life of society. (Brazi, 2016: 86). Social networks, particularly among young people and teens, have emerged as the most attractive forms of interactivity and communication between age groups (Tripathy and Ahad, 2019: 695). Virtual social networks are built on the second generation of the web that provide users the ability to construct and display public profiles, access the information of other members, sharing content, trade common terminologies, and creating new lifestyles (Pacharsaib 2010: 322). More people are using social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram to share and publish their content (Harrigan et al., 2020: 1). In general, it can be claimed that

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social networks now have a significant impact on many aspects of contemporary digital life, from online marketing and communication to politics, education, and public interactions, and they may provide unique benefits for each of these domains. (2017) (Bashir and Bahat, p. 131). Teenagers and young adults in Iran have embraced social networks swiftly, and Iranians now hold the third-place position globally in these networks (Kazemi, 2017: 16). People's awareness and decision-making are impacted by the content that they consume from social networks (Barda et al., 2015: 600). (Dabus and Aon Barakat, 2020: 2).

The findings of Castillo et al study (2020) shows that social networks may operate as a tool to improve young people's health and also play a significant role in the area of education. Research by Evans et al. (2020) and Hunter et al. (2019) show that educational social networks had a significant impact on lowering drug usage among students at George Washington University. According to the research done by Pourmanafi and Ghorbani in 2017, "Modern prevention: the role of virtual media in preventing drug addiction in the cyber space," signifies that 1- virtual space and responsibility, 2- virtual space and social participation, 3- virtual space and awareness, 4- virtual space and special products and finally, 5- virtual space and management can play a significant role in preventing drug addiction. In a study titled "Identifying the effectiveness of providing educational messages on social networks in order to prevent drug abuse in teenagers and young people and investigating the effect of these messages," Foroozan (2017) found that the combination of targeted network use and educational messages was the most effective method of preventing drug abuse among teenagers and young people. The decline in addiction tendencies is significantly correlated with social difficulties. The results of Zarei's research (2017) shows that there is an inverse relationship between the optimal use of media and social networks and the tendency for addiction. Hashemi and Mehr (2015) in a research titled the role and function of mass media and social networks and popular campaigns in the prevention of addiction, state that one of the important factors is the formation of popular campaigns that raise awareness and create public sensitivity in society. It deals with the problems and damages of addiction. On the other hand, mass media and social networks are able to shape these campaigns and provide space for them to be expanded and considered important, and they themselves can be effective in preventing addiction.

The increasement of addiction in the young generation and their tendency to use drugs and taking into account the special conditions of society and basic factors such as weak education, severe economic and income fluctuations and shortages, restrictions on entertainment, increasing treatment costs compared to addiction prevention, Iran's location On the main drug corridor of Afghanistan and Europe, having the maximum population of the vulnerable young generation, diminishing the boundaries of class, gender, and age in drug use and weakening the foundation of families and increasing depression among people, etc., it is necessary to study and More studies should be done to increase the potential of social networks in order to develop preventive programs against drug addiction. The results of the internal and external survey showed that there is little research on the importance of preventing drug addiction through the functions of social networks. Therefore, according to the functions of social networks and the urgent need to provide a comprehensive and complete model to prevent addiction to drugs, which is achieved through the functions of these networks, in the present research, an attempt has been made to provide a comprehensive preventive model. Action should be taken against drug addiction in social networks.

### **Theoretical Framework**

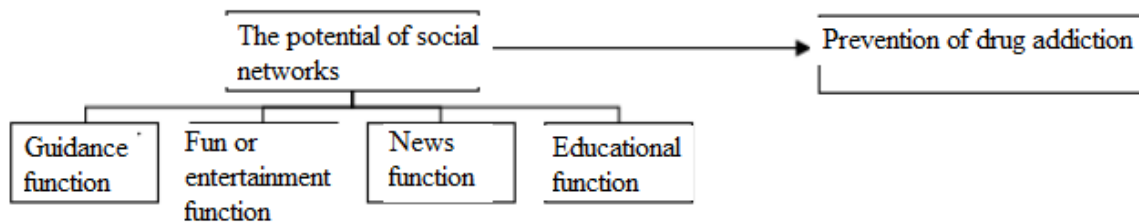
Harold Laswell and Charles Wright are two researchers who have paid attention to the function of media. They believe that media has several functions: 1. the function of monitoring the environment (news role), 2. Guidance role, 3. Educational role, 4. Entertainment and leisure roles. (McQuail, 1382: 83). These two theoreticians believe that in the first function, the media monitor, take care and prepare and deliver news, and in the second function, they are responsible for selecting and interpreting information. This is where the media carries criticisms and suggestions for how people view reality. In this role, the media strengthens social values, consensus and disclosure of deviations, referring to the base of intellectual leaders, preventing the threat of social stability and public panic, managing public thoughts and monitoring the government and protection. In the third function, the media tries to protect the

cultural heritage of societies and institutionalize common human experiences by helping social cohesion. Harold Laswell, an American sociologist and theoretician, considers the media to transmit culture, information, values and norms from one generation to another and from members of the society to newcomers. Commonly, social cohesion increases. Hahneman, another theoretician in the field of media, says that the functions of mass media can be divided into three parts: 1. Production: in the sense that mass media are able to do something that may be based on the lines of It is predetermined and teaching methods that will lead people to their goals. 2. Innovation: means to encourage new ideas and create change. 3. Maintenance: means to preserve and maintain the existing relationships. (Tankard and Severin, 1384: 452).

**Research hypotheses**

1. The first hypothesis: the educational function of social networks is effective in preventing drug addiction from the point of view of elites.
2. The second hypothesis: the informative function of social networks is effective in preventing drug addiction from the point of view of elites.
3. The third hypothesis: the entertainment function of social networks is effective in preventing drug addiction from the eyes of elites.
4. The fourth hypothesis: the guidance function of social networks is effective in preventing drug addiction from the elite's point of view.

**Conceptual Model**



*Figure (1): The conceptual model of the research taken from the researchers' studies*

**Methodology**

The current research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-survey in terms of data collection. The statistical population of the research was specialists and professors of communication, media management, and psychology, 34 of whom were selected by available sampling. The research tool included a researcher-made questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed using the validity method of content analysis and the reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha test. Data analysis was done using SmartPLS software.

**Data analysis and research findings**

26.5% of the respondents have experience of 5 to 10 years, 41.2% between 10 and 15 years, 20.6% between 15 and 20 years and 11.8% have more than 21 years of experience in their field of expertise. 17.65% of the respondents have a master's degree and 82.35% have a doctorate. 61.8% of the experts have a psychology degree, 20.6% have a communication degree, and 17.6% are media management. Finally, 82.4% of the experts were academic staff members, 8.8% had a psychology job, and 8.8% had no answer.

Surveying the potential of social networks to persuade the audience and prevent drug addiction from the respondents' point of view:

As the following table indicates, most of the experts have considered the great potential of Instagram to persuade the audience and prevent drug addiction.

**Table (1): Frequency distribution of respondents according to Instagram social network**

Percentage	Frequency	Instagram platform
0	0	Very low
0	0	Low
11.8%	4	Average
29.4%	10	High
58.8%	20	Very high
0	0	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

As the following table indicates, most of the experts have regarded the great potential of Telegram in persuading the audience and prevent drug addiction.

**Table (2): Frequency distribution of respondents according to Telegram social network**

Percentage	Frequency	Telegram platform
8.8%	3	Very low
5.9%	2	Low
14.7%	5	Average
41.2%	14	High
29.4%	10	Very high
0	0	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

As the following table indicates, most of the experts have regarded the great potential of Twitter in persuading the audience and prevent drug addiction.

**Table (3): Frequency distribution of respondents according to Twitter social network**

Percentage	Frequency	Twitter
5.9%	2	Very low
11.8%	4	Low
23.5%	8	Average
32.4%	11	High
23.5%	8	Very high
2.9%	1	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

As the table below indicates, most of the experts have regarded the moderate potential of Facebook to persuade the audience and prevent drug addiction.

**Table (4): Frequency distribution of respondents according to Facebook social network**

Percentage	Frequency	Facebook platform
17.6%	6	Very low
14.7%	5	Low
26.5%	9	Average
17.6%	6	High
20.6%	7	Very high
2.9%	1	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

As the table below indicates, most of the experts have regarded the average potential of LinkedIn to persuade the audience and prevent drug addiction.

**Table (5): Frequency distribution of respondents according to LinkedIn social network**

Percentage	Frequency	LinkedIn
26.5%	9	Very low
8.8%	3	Low
29.4%	10	Average
5.9%	2	High
0	0	Very high
29.4%	10	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

As the table below indicates, most of the experts have regarded the average potential of WhatsApp in persuading the audience and preventing drug addiction.

**Table (6): Frequency distribution of respondents according to WhatsApp social network**

Percentage	Frequency	WhatsApp
2.9%	1	Very low
8.8%	3	Low
32.4%	11	Average
26.5%	9	High
29.4%	10	Very high
0	0	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

As the following table indicates, most of the experts have regarded the great potential of YouTube in persuading the audience and prevent drug addiction.

**Table (7): Frequency distribution of respondents according to YouTube social network**

Percentage	Frequency	YouTube
2.9%	1	Very low
8.8%	3	Low
29.4%	10	Average
32.4%	11	High
26.5%	9	Very high
0	0	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

As the table below indicates, most of the experts have regarded the low potential of Soroush software in persuading the audience and preventing drug addiction.

**Table (8): Frequency distribution of respondents according to Soroush social network**

Percentage	Frequency	Soroush
23.5%	8	Very low
35.3%	12	Low
8.8%	3	Average
5.9%	2	High
2.9%	1	Very high
23.5%	8	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

As the table below indicates, most of the experts have regarded the very low potential of iGap software to persuade the audience and prevent drug addiction.

**Table (9): Frequency distribution of respondents according to iGap social network**

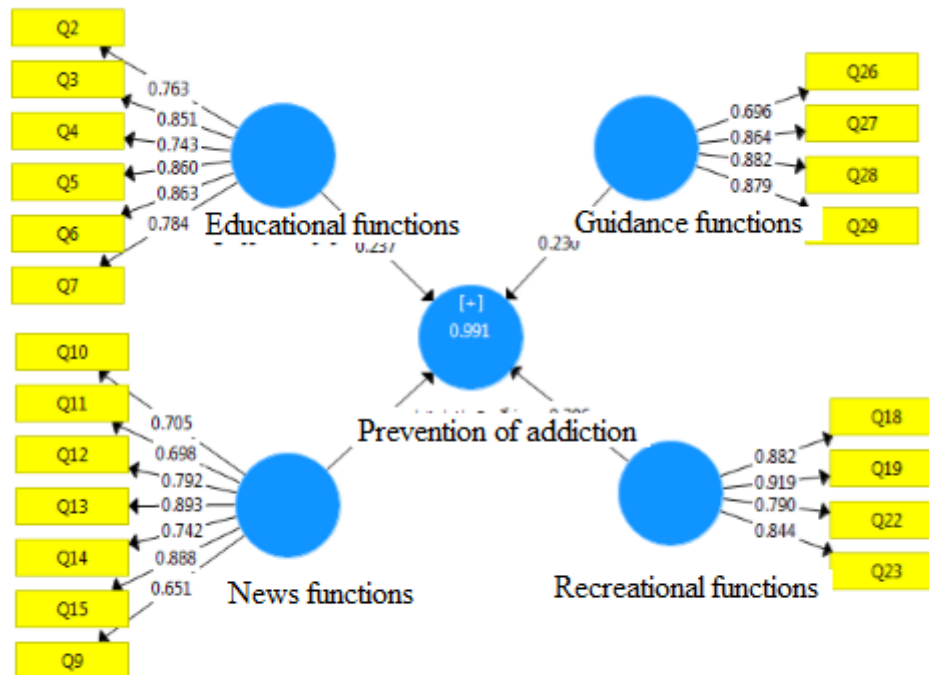
Percentage	Frequency	iGap
32.4%	11	Very low
20.6%	7	Low
29.4%	10	Average
0	0	High
0	0	Very high
17.6%	6	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

As the table below indicates, most of the experts have regarded the average potential of Bale platform in persuading the audience and preventing drug addiction.

**Table (10): Frequency distribution of respondents according to Bale social network**

Percentage	Frequency	Bale
17.6%	6	Very low
17.6%	6	Low
20.6%	7	Average
2.9%	1	High
2.9%	1	Very high
38.2%	13	I'm not familiar
100	34	Total

The research model to examine the relationships among variables is provided as follows:



**Figure (2): The intensity values of the effect of the relationships among the research variables**

Figure (2): The intensity values of the effect of the relationships among the research variables in the final model, which is the significant level of the above relationships, are presented in the following form:

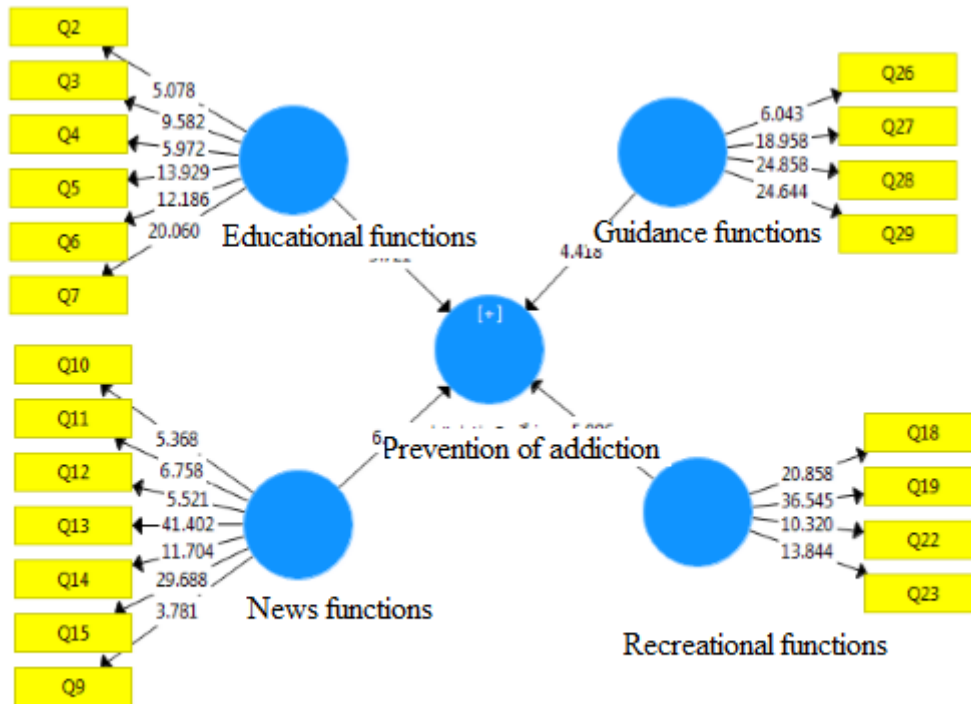


Figure (3): T values of relationships among research variables in the final model, other values of the research model can be observed in the following table:

Table (11): Examination of research hypotheses

Result	Significant level	T-value	Impact intensity	Research hypotheses
Confirmed	P<0.01	5.721	0,237	The educational function of social networks is efficient in preventing drug addiction.
Confirmed	P<0.01	6.016	0.338	The informative function of social networks is efficient in preventing drug addiction.
Confirmed	P<0.01	5.096	0.306	The entertainment function of social networks is efficient in preventing drug addiction.
Confirmed	P<0.01	4.418	0.23	The guidance function of social networks is efficient in preventing drug addiction.

The range of this coefficient is between 0 and 1, and it indicates the strength of the association between the variables. The higher the correlation between the variables, the closer this number is to 1. The magnitude of the association between the variables is shown by the values of T, which is calculated by dividing the impact intensity by the standard error. T values between -1.96 and 1.96 show no significant relationship between the pertinent variables. T values between 1.96 and 2.576 imply a substantial relationship between the associated variables with more than 95% confidence. T values between the pertinent variables that are equal to or higher than 2.576 suggest a meaningful relationship with more than 95% confidence.

**Fit test for research model**

Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and convergent validity and divergent validity tests were utilized to examine the measurement model in this study. The reliability and validity of the measurement model were also tested. These outcomes are as follows:

*Table (12): fit indices of the final model*

variable status	R Square	Convergent validity	composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	Variable
Acceptable	---	0.766	0.905	0.896	Educational function
Acceptable	---	0.796	0.867	0.851	Guidance function
Acceptable	---	0.774	0.885	0.881	Entertainment function
Acceptable	---	0.596	0.913	0.887	Informative function
Acceptable	0.921	0.482	0.966	0.96	Prevention of addiction

Given that the R<sup>2</sup> value for the variable measuring addiction prevention (0.921) is nearly high. This model has an excellent fit, according to every fit index that has been evaluated. In light of this, we draw the conclusion that the research model has a strong capacity to measure the key research variables. Because of the model's uniformity, the study results are trustworthy.

#### Discriminant validity

The indicator of cross-sectional load is used to assess discriminant validity. The factor load of each observable variable on its corresponding hidden variable must be at least 0.1 larger than the factor load of the same observable variable on other hidden variables in order for this index to have a valid value. In the initial model, the indicators of publishing educational content to describe the chemical structure of traditional drugs, publishing educational content to motivate those at risk of addiction, publishing news about the amount of yearly drug discovery in Iran, publishing news about the amount of daily drug consumption by consumers, publishing games with content about addiction and its dangers, and designing and holding virtual competitions All observable variables had larger factor loadings than other latent variables and were acceptable, according to the study model's discriminant validity table findings.

*Table (13): Discriminant validity based on cross-sectional load*

Guidance function	Entertainment function	Informative function	Educational function	Indicators
-	-	-	0.763	The dissemination of educational content to describe the chemical structure of industrial drugs
-	-	-	0.851	The dissemination of educational content for the side effects of drug utilization
-	-	-	0.743	The dissemination of educational content in order to teach the skills of saying No to drugs
-	-	-	0.86	Publication of educational content to teach how to interact with drug addicts
-	-	-	0.863	The dissemination of educational content to increase one's knowledge in the field of drug avoidance
-	-	-	0.784	The dissemination of free educational content in social networks by responsible organizations
-	-	0.651	-	The dissemination of news on drug addiction statistics
-	-	0.705	-	The dissemination of news on the problems caused by drug addiction
-	-	0.698	-	The dissemination of news about the arrest of drug dealers
-	-	0.792	-	The dissemination of news about the use of drugs by teenagers and the youth
-	-	0.893	-	The dissemination of news in the field of increasing awareness and providing information about drugs to the youth
-	-	0.742	-	The dissemination of news in the field of increasing awareness and providing information about drugs to the families of young people
-	-	0.888	-	Publication of statistics of deaths caused by drug use
-	0.882	-	-	Publish video clips with the content of addiction and its harm
-	0.919	-	-	Publication of series with the content of addiction and its harms
-	0.79	-	-	Release of short films with the content of addiction and its harms
-	0.844	-	-	Publication of attractive animations with the content of addiction and its harms
0.696	-	-	-	Creation of expert discussion groups in the field of addiction prevention



0.864	-	-	-	Creating news channels by trusted organizations in order to explain and interpret the harms of drugs
0.882	-	-	-	Publication of instructions and explanations of medical professional regarding drugs
0.879	-	-	-	Publication of guidance and explanations of psychologists regarding drugs

The following table's discriminant validity findings demonstrate that each observable variable's factor loading difference from its associated variable is at least 0.1 greater than its factor loading difference from other variables. As a consequence, the diagnostic validity of the research model is satisfactory.

GOF criterion: The value of GOF in the current research model is as follows:

$$GOF = \sqrt{Communality * \bar{R}^2} = 0.765$$

Regarding that GoF value is equal to 0.765; thus, it can be said that the overall fit level of the model is excellent and acceptable.

### Discussion and conclusion

Contrary to what is publicly believed, the strongest factors in the prevention of drug addictions are often related to the functions of social networks. Social networks can help a lot in preventing drug addiction. In this research, the impact of using the potential of social networks in preventing drug addiction from the elites' point of view has been investigated, and the results will be presented below: According to the first hypothesis, the educational function of social networks is effective in preventing drug addiction from the point of view of elites. The findings of data analysis utilizing PLS software demonstrated that social networks' educational function is successful in reducing drug addiction. The impact's magnitude was 0.338, which is considered to be modest (between 0.2 and 0.4). The findings of this hypothesis are consistent with those of Castillo et al (2020), Purmanafi and Ghorbani's (2018), and Forouzan's (2019) study (2018).

The informative function of social networks is effective in preventing drug addiction from the point of view of elites, according to the second study hypothesis. The informative function of social networks is successful in avoiding drug addiction, according to the findings of data analysis utilizing PLS software. The impact's magnitude was 0.306, which is considered to be modest (between 0.2 and 0.4). Results from Evans et al. (2020), Purmanafi and Ghorbani (2018), and Forouzan corroborate this theory' findings (2018). In respect to the third hypothesis, the entertainment function of social networks is effective in preventing drug addiction from the eyes of elites. They believe that social networks' entertainment functions are useful in reducing drug addiction. The findings of data analysis utilizing PLS software demonstrated that social networks' entertainment functions are successful in reducing drug addiction. The impact's magnitude was 0.237, which is considered to be modest (between 0.2 and 0.4). This hypothesis' findings concur with those of Forouzan (2018) and Hashemi and Mehr (2016).

In regard to the fourth hypothesis, the guidance function of social networks is effective in preventing drug addiction from the elite's point of view. Elites believe that social networks' guidance functions are successful in reducing drug addiction. The findings of data analysis utilizing PLS software demonstrated that the social network's guidance role is successful in reducing drug addiction. The hit had a 0.23 intensity, which is considered to be weak (between 0.2 and 0.4). This hypothesis' findings are consistent with those of Pourmanafi and Ghorbani (2018), Forouzan (2018), and Hashemi and Mehr (2018). (2016). It is recommended that social networks publish educational content to explain the chemical structure of industrial drugs, the side effects of using different types of drugs, and train the youth to say no to drugs in light of the effect that social networks' educational function has on preventing drug addiction. Responsible groups have played a significant role in preventing addiction and assisting in the elimination of this damage by releasing free educational information on social media platforms, teaching people how to deal with drug abusers, and improving people's understanding about avoiding drugs.

It is advised that social networks disseminate news about drug usage, drug distributor arrests, drug statistics, and the expenses of drug addiction. This is because social networks' informative functions

have been shown to be effective in preventing drug addiction. Drugs for teens and young people, reliable data on drug-related mortality, and more education of young people and their families about drugs all assist them understand the issue and aid in avoiding drug addiction.

It is suggested that social networks offer virtual entertainment programs in the form of video clips, appealing animations, series, and short films with the content of addiction and its harms. This is in light of the effect that social networks' entertainment functions have on the prevention of drug addiction. They have a good chance of reducing drug addiction. Taking into account how social networks' guidance functions may help avoid drug addiction, using the power of virtual networks, publishing advice and justifications from psychologists and medical professionals regarding drugs, and starting and growing discussion groups One of the greatest methods to avoid drug addiction is via the use of specialists in the area of addiction prevention and the development of news channels by responsible organizations to interpret and explain the dangers of drugs.

According to the significant findings of this study, one of the limitations of the current research is that it only looked at the opinions of professors and experts in communication, media management, and psychology in Tehran; thus, the findings of the study may differ in other cities and statistical communities due to social, cultural, economic, and other factors. In order to compare the findings with those of the current study, it is advised to look into the research in other cities and statistical areas with varied cultural, social, and economic aspects. It is advised that researchers design studies in the future that investigate how other elements, such as demography, perceived social support, societal cultural norms, economic situations, etc., relate to the prevention of drug addiction.

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