Explaining the Perspectives of Students at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Networks

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Besides advantages and opportunities such as facilitating communication and transfer of information and experiences, smartphones have disadvantages, such as changes in family and social relationships and also people's values and habits. However, its continuous use is associated with sleep disorders, isolation, stress, anxiety, and reduced academic performance. Considering the increasing use of mobile phone capabilities, especially social networks, among young people, this technology presents both advantages and disadvantages. This study aimed to explain the students' prespectives on the use of social networks.

Methods and Materials: This qualitative study conducted using the content analysis method in 2021. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with several students, who were selected through purposive sampling. Sampling continued until saturation was reached, resulting in a total of 23 semi-structured interviews. The five-step framework analysis method was employed, utilizing MAXQDA 10 software to analyze the data to analyze the data.

Results: Among the interviewees, 13 (56.52%) were female and 10 (43.48%) were male, and their average age was 26 ± 3.56 years. The findings from the analysis of the interviews led to the identification of 6 main themes and 26 sub-themes related to the disadvantages of using social networks, including personal identity crisis, family crisis, moral crisis, individual efficiency crisis, psychological and physical crisis, social personality crisis, growth and development crisis. Also, three main themes and 10 sub-themes related to the advantages of using social networks included expanding communication, general and scientific information, personal and social character excellence, increasing social capital, and expanding cultural interactions.

Conclusion and Discussion: Social networks, with the features they offer, have gained significant popularity and acceptance among communities, especially among young people. However, considering the negative effects of social networks on lifestyle, personality, and social relationships, as well as the potential for time-wasting and physical and mental damage to users, they can pose a threat if misused. Therefore, it is essential to implement proper planning to prevent addiction to social networks and foster a culture of responsible use to mitigate potential risks.

Keywords: Social networking, Students