

Identification of the Dimensions and Components of the Social Integration Model Based on Reducing Risk Behaviors in Women Recovering from Addiction in Tehran

Zahra. Shams Ehsan¹, Tahmures. Shiri^{2*}, Mohammad Hadi. Mansourlkoorej³

¹ PhD Student, Department of Social Sciences, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

² Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

* Corresponding author email address: shiri.tahmures@gmail.com

Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Shams Ehsan, Z., Shiri, T., & Mansourlkoorej, M. H. (2025). Identification of the Dimensions and Components of the Social Integration Model Based on Reducing Risk Behaviors in Women Recovering from Addiction in Tehran. *Psychology of Woman Journal*, 6(1), 62-68.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.pwj.6.1.8>



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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study was to identify the dimensions and components of the social integration model based on reducing risk behaviors in women recovering from addiction in Tehran.

Methods and Materials: Given the study's objective, the research is applied, and its methodology is qualitative. The statistical population of this research includes 10 experts and specialists in the field of social sciences who have conducted research at universities, as well as experts in social sciences, psychiatry, cyber-police managers, the Drug Control Headquarters, and others. A purposive non-random sampling method was employed. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews. Data analysis was carried out using NVivo12 software.

Findings: Based on the conducted analysis, 15 categories were identified and confirmed. The identified categories include family support, social acceptance, economic empowerment, access to psychological services, physical health support, life skills training, participation in cultural and social activities, support and participation of non-governmental organizations, sustainable housing facilities, vocational and technical training, creating a sense of identity and personal value, government support programs, rehabilitation and reintegration facilities, support groups, and self-help, as well as regular monitoring and follow-up.

Conclusion: This study highlights key social integration factors for reducing high-risk behaviors, emphasizing the importance of family support, access to psychological services, and economic empowerment in fostering social reintegration and resilience.

Keywords: *Social Integration, Social Exclusion, Family Support, Social Acceptance, Economic Empowerment.*

1. Introduction

Official institutions can facilitate social participation in society not only by creating opportunities for voluntary collective actions but also by supporting and backing collective activities in the form of social organizations (Piran et al., 2016). In societies where institutional support in facilitating social action and communication between active social groups, as well as organizational and logistical backing, is at an optimal level, social groups encounter fewer institutional barriers in their activities. In this regard, some of the actions that governments can take to support social organizations include: facilitating the processes of formation, registration, and licensing of social organizations, and reducing bureaucratic hurdles and cumbersome administrative regulations; ensuring the security of collective activities and gatherings of social groups; supporting organizational activities related to equipping and developing financial and credit resources and the establishment of group organizational headquarters; avoiding a security-based approach to the activities of non-governmental organizations and refraining from discrimination in providing state support and backing in a way that either improves or hinders the activities of specific groups (Bastan, 2023). In addition to facilitating social organization, providing a social space for communication between citizens and creating opportunities for warm, face-to-face interactions between individuals in society is also considered part of the mission of the government and official institutions. Managing urban spaces and designing social spaces play a key role in the development of social participation. The social value of urban open spaces, such as sports stadiums, clubs, parks, and public squares, lies in their role in enabling social relationships (Mehdizadeh & Ebrahimi, 2014). The more such spaces are considered in the design of human settlements, the more opportunities and possibilities for the formation of social relationships and public participation are provided. At this level, increasing access to the internet can also play a significant role in expanding individuals' social networks. Studies in different societies show that internet use has a positive and meaningful impact on the social networks of marginalized or excluded groups. For example, elderly individuals who use the internet have a broader social network and greater access to people and services they need compared to those who do not use the internet. Therefore, increasing access to the internet is part of social integration policy, and efforts must be made to bridge the digital divide

and facilitate the digital integration of marginalized individuals and groups (Zhang & Li, 2022). Social exclusion is considered a dynamic process through which some individuals from social groups are deprived of participation in various economic, political, social, or cultural aspects of society, putting them at risk. In this regard, social integration refers to the process of the reintegration and participation of these individuals in society (Kermani, 2022). Actions such as designing and implementing participatory programs and activities at local levels and engaging citizens in these processes are effective drivers for increasing social integration. Social integration, as the growth of a sense of belonging and participation in various aspects of society, is not only measured by economic and political indicators but also includes aspects related to public space. Thus, social integration is a process whereby marginalized individuals and groups become integrated into the general population, developing and maintaining a network of social relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Social relationships are inherently valuable, and being part of a network of social relationships significantly increases individuals' chances of accessing life opportunities. Therefore, improving social relationships and enhancing the social participation of marginalized groups are of great importance in social integration policies (Sohrabi et al., 2022). Social integration is a process that ensures individuals exposed to poverty and social deprivation have the necessary opportunities and resources to fully participate in economic, social, political, and cultural life and enjoy the living standards available in the society in which they live. It guarantees that they have a greater role in decisions affecting their lives and access to fundamental rights (Simplican et al., 2015). Differences in the field of social integration highlight various environments where social integration might occur. The interpersonal dimension of social inclusion—such as social interactions, relationships, and social networks—can take place in a private setting, such as an individual's home, and researchers measure this by evaluating the quantity and quality of an individual's friendships (Bates & Fabian, 2004; Giddens, 2020). In contrast, many definitions of social inclusion include access to social facilities and participation, which gives social integration its public dimension. Thus, even if an individual has many friends, their level of social integration will be incomplete without access to the broader community (Bates & Davis, 2004); therefore, having limited relationships with family and friends will not necessarily reflect or strengthen social integration. Social integration is both a process and a goal. Improving social integration

requires addressing social exclusion by removing barriers to community participation and taking active, inclusive steps to facilitate this participation. Therefore, social inclusion, as a political response to the challenge of exclusion, is a more intentional process of encompassing and welcoming all individuals, embracing equality and tolerance. It is important to note that social integration is not the same as social cohesion, even though these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. However, integration should help make communities more cohesive (Simplican et al., 2015).

At the micro level, social integration emphasizes individuals' skills and competencies in communication and social interaction within society. Social activities, which fall under the concepts of social relationships, social participation, and, more broadly, social capital, have characteristics that distinguish them from other social activities. For example, in these activities, out-group relationships are more significant than in-group relationships. These activities typically intersect with the activities of formal institutions, and thus participation in them requires knowledge and awareness of the structures, regulations, and operations of formal institutions. This means that planning at the individual and group levels requires the acquisition and enhancement of skills and competencies that are generally not required in other social groupings (Giddens, 2020). Typically, education plays a key role in equipping individuals with the skills and competencies needed for active participation in society. Research shows a positive correlation between education and social participation due to the enhancement of awareness and improvement of social and communication skills that enable individuals to influence others (Barker & Martin, 2011). Therefore, education, raising awareness, and increasing communication skills among marginalized groups through relevant institutions to facilitate their access to social participation opportunities should be an essential focus in social integration policies.

For example, creating an environment for residents of informal settlements to participate in programs and initiatives aimed at improving and organizing these settlements is one of the most important strategies for involving marginalized residents in such areas in social participation programs, which is recognized in many countries. Organizing events, festivals, national and religious ceremonies, and other gatherings that provide opportunities for members of the community to meet, discuss, and communicate are also programs that can help expand social networks and increase the participation of

marginalized individuals and groups (Sohrabi et al., 2022). Moreover, utilizing the potential of social initiatives in this context can also prove beneficial. One such initiative, used in many countries worldwide for supporting and caring for marginalized or at-risk groups, is the Time Bank. A Time Bank is a model for providing and receiving social and supportive services using time as a unit of credit. In this system, members receive time credits for the hours they contribute in providing services and can use those credits later to receive help and services from other members of the bank. The experience of Time Banks in the United States and the United Kingdom and their success in utilizing local communities to support vulnerable individuals, such as the elderly, led other countries to adopt this model as a response to their own social issues. For example, the Time Bank model has been used in Japan as part of the community's response to the aging population. Recently, the Swiss government tested a retirement scheme based on the Time Banking model. In this scheme, young adults who care for the elderly can store the time spent in the bank and use it when they themselves need services in old age. Time Banks are expanding in other countries, such as South Korea, New Zealand, Taiwan, Senegal, South Africa, Denmark, France, Greece, Portugal, Spain, and more. Some operate locally and small-scale, while others function on a national level (Kermani, 2019). The social integration process requires adopting policies that align with the social and cultural capacities of the local community, the network of relationships among target individuals, and the legal capacities of the society being examined. Therefore, it is necessary to thoroughly examine and understand the existing capacities and contexts, and develop them within a systematic and structured framework aligned with the local model. Consequently, the researcher seeks to answer the main question: How can the dimensions and components of the social integration model based on reducing risk behaviors be identified?

2. Methods and Materials

The research method, based on the objective, is applied. The statistical population of the study includes 10 experts and scholars in the field of social sciences, who have conducted research in universities, as well as specialists and professionals in social sciences, psychiatry, police officers from Cyber Police (FATA), members of the Anti-Drug Council, and others. The criteria for selecting participants included holding a doctoral degree or having more than 10

years of experience in the relevant field, having sufficient time, interest, and ability to participate in interviews. A purposive non-random sampling method was employed. Initially, the researcher identified the main topics for the interviews, and the interview questions were designed within the framework of the Grounded Theory paradigm model. To enhance theoretical sensitivity, the researcher began analyzing the data after the first interview and continued the analysis while immersing in the data and making continuous changes to the questions. The interviews lasted approximately 40 to 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted face-to-face by the researcher at the participants' office or university, with prior appointments scheduled. To ensure accuracy and extract key points, the interviews were recorded with the participants' prior consent. Finally, after reviewing the interview transcripts and achieving theoretical

saturation, the interviews with 10 experts were concluded. This study utilized both library-based research and interviews (document review and semi-structured interviews with experts) to identify the dimensions and components of social integration based on the reduction of risky behaviors. The data were analyzed using NVivo12 software.

3. Findings and Results

This section addresses the identification of factors related to social integration based on reducing risky behaviors, considering both international and domestic literature, and provides a qualitative analysis to establish a preliminary framework for the researcher. Table 1 presents the qualitative analysis from the articles.

Table 1

Identification of Social Integration Factors Based on the Reduction of Risky Behaviors Extracted from International and Domestic Articles

No.	Method
1	Family Support
2	Social Acceptance
3	Economic Empowerment
4	Access to Psychological Services
5	Support for Physical Health
6	Life Skills Training
7	Participation in Cultural and Social Activities
8	Support and Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations
9	Sustainable Housing Facilities
10	Vocational and Technical Training
11	Creating a Sense of Identity and Personal Value
12	Government Support Programs
13	Rehabilitation and Reintegration Facilities
14	Support and Self-Help Groups
15	Regular Monitoring and Follow-up

Family support is highlighted as a crucial factor in reducing risky behaviors, offering individuals emotional and practical assistance. Social acceptance is another key component, fostering a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation, which can influence behavior positively. Economic empowerment is also recognized as a significant contributor, as access to financial resources can provide individuals with the stability needed to engage in healthier life choices.

Access to psychological services is essential for supporting mental health, and the availability of such services can significantly reduce the likelihood of risky behaviors. Additionally, support for physical health is considered an important factor, as it directly impacts

individuals' well-being and their ability to manage stress and other challenges.

Life skills training plays a vital role in equipping individuals with the necessary tools to navigate life's challenges, reduce risky behaviors, and promote healthy decision-making. Participation in cultural and social activities is another important factor, as it encourages positive engagement within the community, offering a sense of purpose and belonging.

The support and involvement of non-governmental organizations can contribute to the reduction of risky behaviors by providing resources, guidance, and support to individuals in need. Sustainable housing facilities are also linked to reducing risky behaviors, as stable living

conditions are associated with improved mental and physical health.

Vocational and technical training is identified as a factor that can help individuals gain employment and financial independence, which in turn reduces the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors. Creating a sense of identity and personal value is another factor, as individuals who feel valued and have a strong sense of self are less likely to engage in harmful behaviors.

Government support programs are essential for offering resources and assistance to individuals at risk, while rehabilitation and reintegration facilities help individuals transition back into society after facing challenges. Support and self-help groups provide a community for individuals to share experiences and receive guidance, which can help in reducing risky behaviors.

Finally, regular monitoring and follow-up are critical in ensuring that individuals continue to receive support, remain engaged in healthy behaviors, and avoid relapse into risky patterns. These factors collectively contribute to the promotion of social integration and the reduction of risky behaviors.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the study indicated that social integration based on the reduction of risky behaviors consists of 15 categories: family support, social acceptance, economic empowerment, access to psychological services, physical health support, life skills training, participation in cultural and social activities, support and involvement of non-governmental organizations, sustainable housing facilities, vocational and technical training, creation of identity and personal value, government support programs, rehabilitation and reintegration services, self-help and support groups, and regular monitoring and follow-up.

Policy-making for social integration at the macro level requires reviewing and revising laws, regulations, and institutional procedures that have selectively limited equal and fair access to resources and opportunities in society. Undoubtedly, the responsibility for reforming official laws, regulations, and institutional procedures lies with the government; however, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil institutions, by identifying and highlighting unequal institutions, advocate for their reform by the government. Additionally, considering the synergistic effects of social exclusion and the accumulation of deprivation among marginalized and vulnerable groups, it is

necessary for the government to establish supportive laws and create positive discrimination measures to facilitate the reintegration of the excluded and vulnerable individuals back into society.

At the intermediate level, social integration policy requires the removal of barriers to public participation and engagement in collective institutions and activities. At this level, the government can create the necessary environment for social economy development through the expansion of cooperatives and support for NGOs, which will facilitate the organization and participation of people in various social domains.

At the micro level, social integration policies should focus on maintaining health and improving individuals' literacy and professional skills, as these factors play a determining role in enhancing their resilience and ability to participate in various social spheres. Therefore, continuously improving the literacy and health levels of marginalized individuals should be considered a priority in social integration programs, with attention from the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders in this field.

Social integration policies encompass a range of actions, and achieving their goals requires addressing structural barriers and enhancing the capabilities of marginalized groups to participate in social life. In other words, social integration policies will fail if they do not address the structural causes of inequality and exclusion. What is needed is simultaneous attention to the processes of "barrier removal and facilitation" and coordinated efforts to reintegrate the marginalized and deprived individuals into society.

In this regard, considering the expansion, diversity, and accumulation of social issues, harms, and problems within Iranian society, and the necessity of addressing and responding to these challenges, it seems that reducing feelings of exclusion, or in other words, the social integration of rehabilitated individuals, can reduce the engagement of these individuals (in this study, rehabilitated women) in risky social behaviors. Extensive research on the role of social exclusion in criminal behavior and risky behaviors has generally emphasized the meaningful and direct relationship between social exclusion and criminal and risky behaviors.

5. Limitations and Suggestions

One of the limitations of this study is the relatively small sample size, consisting of only 10 experts, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population.

Additionally, the study relies on a qualitative approach, which, while providing in-depth insights, may introduce researcher bias in data interpretation. The study also focuses exclusively on individuals from specific social and professional backgrounds, which could affect the diversity of perspectives. Furthermore, the research was conducted within a specific cultural and societal context, which may limit the applicability of the results to other regions or populations with different social dynamics. Lastly, the data collection method, based on semi-structured interviews, may be influenced by the participants' willingness to share sensitive information, potentially impacting the depth of the findings.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

- It is recommended that individuals engage in physical exercise and regular physical activity, maintain a balanced diet, get adequate sleep, observe hygiene practices, and manage stress to improve their physical health.
- It is recommended that individuals consider the importance of individual and family counseling, group therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, hypnosis therapy, and other psychological services to improve access to psychological support.
- It is recommended that individuals engage in vocational and technical training by participating in professional development courses, workshops, seminars, and actively participating in groups to improve their job-related skills.
- It is recommended that individuals focus on acquiring necessary economic skills through education and training, creating equal opportunities for all, increasing decision-making power, controlling financial resources, and improving existing structures in society and among capitalists to foster economic empowerment.
- It is recommended that individuals work on improving their life skills, including empathy, self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, effective communication, stress management, emotional regulation, problem-solving, decision-making, and creative thinking.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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