

The Effect of a Rational Emotional Behavior Therapy (REBT) Group Counseling Program on the Internet Addiction among University Students

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Abstract: Internet addiction is a common problem in our universities as the number of Internet users are increased. The Internet has positive aspects including informative, convenient, resourceful and fun, but for the addicts, these benefits develop into severe disadvantages. We examined the effect of a REBT group counseling program derived from choice theory and control theory of reality therapy theory for group counseling on the Internet addiction among university students. Participants in the treatment group attended the REBT group counseling program that was held one session per week for 10 consecutive weeks, whereas the participants in the control group received no treatment. The findings indicated that the treatment program effectively reduced Internet addiction among university students. At the same time, the results revealed the significant effects of the REBT group counseling program on the dependent variables.

1. Introduction

Technology is changing the nature of problems. Symptoms often identified were a preoccupation with the Internet, an inability to control use, hiding or lying about the behavior, psychological withdrawal, and continued use despite consequences of the behavior (Young, 2007). The Internet has positive aspects including informative, convenient, resourceful and fun, but for the excessive Internet users, these benefits turn out to be useless. Most individuals use the Internet without negative consequences and even benefit from it, but some individuals do suffer from negative impacts. Psychologists and educators are aware of the potential negative impact from excessive use and related physical and psychological problems (Griffiths, 2000 & Greenfield). Users who spend a significant amount of time online often experience academic, relationship, financial, and occupational difficulties, as well as physical impairments (Chou, 2001). Some researchers (Brenner, 1997, Nie & Erbring, 2000.) have even linked Internet use with an increase in psychological difficulties such as depression and loneliness.

Excessive Internet use is a more common problem in Turkey. Internet use in Turkey has increased rapidly and has become a major part of daily life. However, the advancement of Internet technology not only brings benefits, but also negative results. Of these negative aspects, excessive Internet use is increasing dramatically. Internet addiction is called addiction disorder, pathological Internet use, excessive Internet use, and compulsive Internet use. (Kim, 2008) Internet addiction is described as an impulse control disorder that does not involve the use of an intoxicating drug and is very similar to pathological gambling (Young, 1996).

“Healthy Internet use” is the use of the Internet for an expressed purpose in a reasonable amount of time without cognitive or behavioral discomfort. Problematic Internet use is “a psychiatric condition which involves maladaptive thoughts and pathological behavior” (Davis, 2002). Problematic Internet use is excessive time spent on various activities on the Internet to an extent that might have negative effects on the user’s physical and psychological health; social, academic, professional, and marital relationships, and other areas of life (Young, 1997). Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, (2000) define problematic Internet use as intensive use of the Internet, failure to control Internet use, serious harm to the user’s life resulting from this use. Problematic Internet use has been associated with increases in impulsivity and increases in social comfort while online (Davis, 2002). Problematic Internet use can cause Internet addiction. Young characterized Internet addiction as staying online for pleasure averaging 38 hours or more per week, largely in chat rooms, and concluded that Internet addiction can shatter families, relationships, and careers (Young, 1996).

Internet addiction, also described as pathological Internet use, is defined as an individual's inability to control his or her use of the Internet, which eventually causes psychological, social, school and/or work difficulties in a person's life (Young & Rogers 1998; Davis 2001). Addictive Internet use is defined as "an impulse control disorder that does not involve an intoxicant" and is akin to pathological gambling (Young, 1998). Young further categorized five specific types of Internet addiction: (1) cyber sexual addiction to adult chat rooms or cyber porn; (2) cyber relationship addiction to online friendships or affairs that replace real-life situations; (3) net compulsions to online gambling, auctions, or obsessive trading; (4) information overload to compulsive web surfing or databases searches; and (5) computer addiction to game playing or programming (Young, 1998). Like other addictions, furthermore, Internet addiction has been linked to a variety of problems. Besides little sleep, failure to eat for long periods and limited physical activity, it also disrupts the studies and other aspects of the daily life of an individual (Cao & Su, 2006).

These people demonstrated two or more Internet addiction symptoms, namely, spending more time on the Internet than intended, feeling an urge to instantly connect to the Internet once arriving home, receiving complaints from family members and friends about too much time on the Internet, and unsuccessful attempts to cut back on Internet use (Chak & Leung, 2004).

Previous studies indicate that people may develop a new lifestyle through Internet activities, which may cause a worsening in their actual social relationships (Whang, Lee & Chang, 2003). In other words, depressive feelings of people relying on the Internet for social support might remain or even worsen toward their real-life interpersonal relationships, increasing their risk of becoming Internet addicted (Yu-Chun, Huei-Chen, Jo Yung-Wei, M.A., and Chung-Ping, 2008).

Internet use may be beneficial when kept to 'normal' levels, however high levels of Internet use which interfere with daily life have been linked to a range of problems, including decreased psychosocial well-being, relationship breakdown and neglect of domestic, academic and work responsibilities (Beard 2002; Weiser 2001; Widyanto & McMurrin 2004; Yao-Guo, Lin-Yan & Feng-Lin 2006; Young 1998). Studies indicated that the potential for negative psychological and social consequences reduced as society became more accustomed to using the Internet. (Kraut, Kiesler, Boneva, Cummings, Helgeson & Crawford 2002).

The explosive growth of the Internet in the last decade has had a huge impact on psychological research in understanding its role in communication and interpersonal behavior. There has been increased interest in the addictive potential of the Internet and the effect this can have on psychological well being (Niemz, Griffiths & Banyard, 2005).

Internet use in university students is becoming a serious problem, possibly resulting in many physical and mental health problems. The advancement of Internet technology not only brings benefits, but also negative results. Of these negative aspects, excessive Internet use is increasing dramatically. Typical The aims of this study were to determine effect of group counseling program on Internet addiction in Turkish University Students.

2. Research Method

2.1 Participants

The subjects for this study were 276 University students who were at Sakarya University in Sakarya province. After the pretest, twenty-four participants were volunteers among sixty-five Internet addicts who had shown Internet addiction disorder. Demographic information of the participants follows. The participants consisted of twenty-eight males and thirty-seven females. They were randomly assigned into two groups, twelve for the experimental group and twelve for the control group, respectively. In the experimental group, there were six males and six females. Twelve were in the control group, of whom six were males and six females.

2.2 Data collection tools

Demographics

This section included questions about the participant's sex and daily Internet use.

Addicted Internet Users

With the following two cases as university students were dependent on Internet addicted in this study. In other words, Internet use six hours a day and from five to eight questions, yes, was adopted as the Internet addicted.

1. Young characterized Internet addiction as staying online for pleasure averaging 38 hours or more per week, largely in chat rooms, and concluded that Internet addiction can shatter families, relationships and careers (young, 1996).

2. She developed an 8-item questionnaire for diagnosing addicted Internet users, which was adopted from the criteria for pathological gambling as referenced in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders–IV (Young, ,1996). In her studies, respondents who answered “yes” to 5 or more criteria were classified as addicted Internet users and those who responded “yes” to less than 5 were classified as normal Internet users. Criteria for Problematic Internet Use Include (Young. 1999):

- Preoccupation with Internet
- Need for longer amounts of time online
- Repeated attempts to reduce Internet use
- Withdrawal when reducing Internet use
- Time management issues
- Environmental distress (family, school, work, friends)
- Deception around time spent online
- Mood modification through Internet use

2.3 Procedure

Prior to the initial commencement of the REBTgroup counseling program, all participants signed an informed consent agreement and completed a demographic information questionnaire. Subsequent to the completion of the pretest assessment, the treatment group participated in the REBT group counseling program that would be held two sessions per week for five consecutive weeks. The control group received no treatment. After completion of the program, both the treatment and the control group completed the posttest assessment. Experimental pretest-posttest control group design as follows,

RG1	T	RG2
RG3	---	RG4

2.4 Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed by independent samples t-test and Mann-Whitney U test. in an effort to examine the initial differences between the treatment and control groups on the pretests. Means, standard deviations, and estimated marginal means of the treatment group and the control group were calculated.

3. Results

Independent samples t tests found significant differences that two groups were not statistically equivalent on two variables including Addictive Automatic Thought and averaging use of Internet 38 hours or more per week. The results of this study are reported in Tables 1-2 and Figures 1-2.

test	Groups	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	
pretest	yes/no	treatment	12	12,08	145,00
		control	12	12,92	155,00
		Total	24		
hours		treatment	12	12,50	150,00
		control	12	12,50	150,00
		Total	24		

Mann-Whitney U: Y/N= 67.00 Z: -.314 P, .754 / Mann-Whitney U: H= 72.00 Z: ,000 P: 1,00

Table 1. Results on Pretest for Treatment and Control Groups

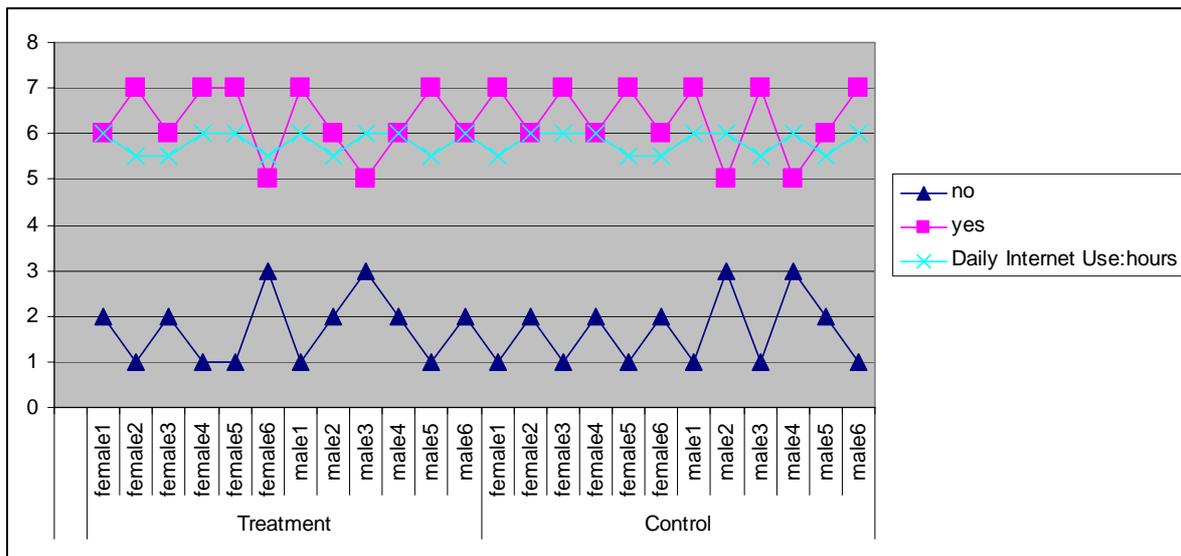


Figure 1. Results on daily Internet use and 8-item questionnaire for diagnosing addicted Internet users

As exhibited in Table 1, Mann-Whitney U scores, Mann-Whitney U: Y/N= 67.00 Z: -.314 P, .754 / Mann-Whitney U: H= 72.00 Z: ,000 P: 1,00 There is no differences between treatment and control groups about Internet addiction and Internet use 38 hours or more per week.

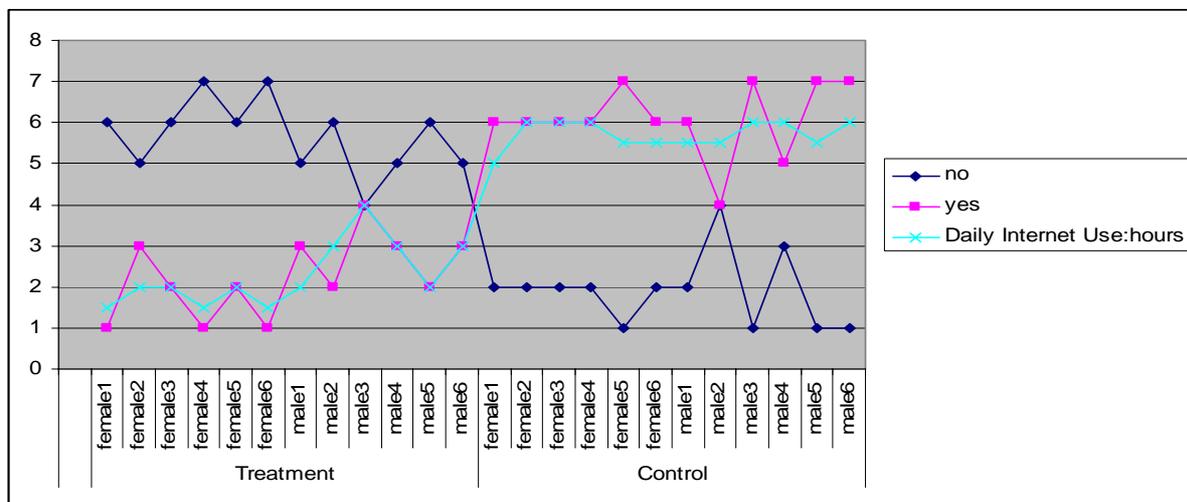
Research Question

Does the REBT group counseling program for Internet addiction University students reduce significantly their Internet addiction level?

test	groups	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	
posttest	yes	treatment	12	6,54	78,50
		control	12	18,46	221,50
		Total	24		
hours		treatment	12	6,50	78,00
		control	12	18,50	222,00
		Total	24		

Mann-Whitney U: Y/N= ,500 Z: -4,219 P, .000 / Mann-Whitney U: H= ,000 Z, -4,266 P: ,000

Table 2. Results About Posttest Of Treatment And Control Groups



On each of the dimensions of the Internet Addicted Scala, after the treatment of the “Rebt Group Counseling Program”, the treatment group demonstrated significantly even lower Internet addiction than did the control group. Rebt Group Counseling Program reduce significantly Internet addiction university students daily Internet use level (Mann-Whitney U: Y/N= ,500 Z: -4,219 P, .000 / Mann-Whitney U: H= ,000 Z, -4,266 P: ,000). The results revealed the significant effects of the REBT group counseling program on Internet addiction.

4. Discussion

Internet addiction is a common problem in Turkey as Internet users are increased. They spent at least 3-4 hours a day online, usually playing games or chatting .Generally, many counselors who specialized in the treatment of addiction such as drug, alcohol, gambling, sex, and even Internet take advantage of individual, group, and family counseling with a heavy emphasis on the rational choice. Many studies on addiction recovery treatment have proved that group counseling is the predominant modality (Kim,2008). University students, also, become to Internet addiction because of many factors such as difficulty adapting to life away from home and underlying psychological problems, including depression or social problems, anxiety and loneliness.

University is a training center for adulthood and an individual must be responsible for oneself. Counselors and University administrators should treat Internet addiction University students for their recovery(Kim,2007) Does the REBT group counseling program for Internet addiction University students reduce significantly their Internet addiction level? The purpose of the present study was to implement this program and examine the effectiveness.

The data collected immediately after the delivery of the treatment of the REBT group counseling program showing that the participants who participated in the treatment group demonstrated significant lower Internet addiction level than did participants in the controlled group. Disclosure the treatment group to the REBT group counseling program significantly reduced university students Internet addiction usage. This may be linked to the fact that exposing the experimental group to R/T group counseling program enables them to aware of their doing and wants, and to plan and perform plan. Also, self-evaluation for the implementation and the choice of more effective behaviors help them improve responsibility.

The treatment group experience psychological support from the counselors. The REBT group counseling program that was used in this study techniques: observation of demonstration, reinforcement, behavioral practice, explanation, role-play, feedback, encouragement, and assignment of behavioral tasks related to Internet excessive usage. In the posttest Immediate after the treatment, participants who participated in the REBT group counseling program exhibited higher self-esteem than did participants who received no treatment

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