

The Guidance Effects of Students with Internet Addiction in Taiwan

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Abstract. Aims: The aim of this study was to understand the individual guidance effects of internet addiction for elementary and junior school students. The guidance effects included variability of Internet access, Internet addiction, and depression after guidance. **Methods:** We trained 17 college students of the Health Psychology Department in Chang Jung Christian University, Taiwan, in counseling and guidance lectures for 12 hours and supervision sessions for 20 hours, then the college students gave guidance with 18 students of Internet addiction tendency (age: 9 -14 years old, each one had 3-8 sessions) in Taiwan. Participants' scores of Chen Internet Addiction Scale (CIAS) (Chen, Weng, & Su, 2003) were more than 63 (which were Ko's (2005) definition of Internet addiction CAIS scale scores that were more than 63 would have more tendency to have Internet addiction). We administered the pre-test (December, 2010) and posttest (September, 2011) with 18 Internet addiction tendency students by structured questionnaire including, Internet Access, Depression Scale, and CIAS after 4 months of guidance. Finally, we collected 14 copies. We used paired t-test to analysis data. **Results:** The total scores of the Depression Scale were not significant in pre-test and posttest. But depression-dysphoric mood, hopelessness, low self-esteem and cognition function in the dimension of depression had significantly decreased. CIAS total scores and the individual score in each dimension, including compulsive use, withdrawal, tolerance, problems of interpersonal relationships, and health /time management, had significant relationships between pre-test and post-test. **Conclusions:** Results show Internet addiction behavior could be helped by guidance with college students who have been trained and supervised.

Keywords: Internet Addiction, Elementary and Junior School Students, Guidance Effects

1. Introduction

1.1. Internet Addiction Behaviors

“Internet addiction” is a popular term in studies of computer and Internet high users in Taiwan. Children having mental health problems are more likely to develop internet addiction ⁽¹⁾. Hinič, Mihajlovič, Đukič-Dejanović, Špirič, and Jovanović expand Young's ⁽²⁾ criteria to a list as follows: (1) The incidence of tolerance (spent more time than before on the Internet); (2) Withdrawal symptoms (attempted to decrease Internet use and presented anxiety, subjective sense of compulsion, obsessive thoughts and occupation with the Internet, etc); (3) The incidence of feeling of fatigue and nervousness (when stopping using the Internet will become irritated, so they will access the Internet) ; (4) Because of Internet use, there is much risk of loss of significant relationships, occupational and educational opportunities; (5) There are some problems such as sleeplessness, marital conflicts, employment problems caused by excessive Internet use etc.; and (6) The Internet is a depressor that allows the user to get away from disturbances such as helplessness, guilt, anxiety and depression. ⁽³⁾ Internet Addiction has three subtypes: cyber-affair/relational addiction, net compulsions, and information overload. Child internet addicts are more likely to suffer from depression, experience academic and social problems at school, and develop physical illnesses and obesity. ⁽⁴⁾ Grohol (1999) thought that there were three stages for pathological Internet use: The first was enchantment meaning that individuals had compulsive behaviors about Internet use because of curiosity and freshness. The second stage was disillusionment where individuals would decrease Internet use because of self-awareness from enchantment. The last stage was balance where individuals could have recovery from pathological Internet use and achieve balance from the Internet and the real world. ⁽⁵⁾ From the literature review we can learn that computer users with “Internet addiction” have many problems in interference with individual mental and physical health. These are important issues.

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1.2. Counselling and Guidance of Internet Addiction Behaviors

There are some approaches to treat Internet addiction. In some researchers' views, the most effective approach of treatment for internet addiction is cognitive-behavioral therapy.⁽⁴⁾ Traditionally, counselors involved in the treatment of addictions could take on individual, group, and family counseling. Some researchers believe group counseling is better for treating addictions. Kim developed some cognitive-behavioral approach elements such as time management skills, and teaching reminder cards (how to use such in a group counseling program). Kim based on reality therapy like control theory, the five basic needs, total behavior, friendly involvement, and making a plan to treat college students.⁽⁶⁾ Kim used the core instructions of choice theory⁽⁷⁾ to help clients assert healthy behaviors on the Internet by exploring how they could get their basic needs by requesting information about their actions, wants, self-evaluation plans, and then choosing more effective behaviors.⁽⁶⁾ It was found that treatment programs effectively reduced addiction level and promoted self-esteem of college students with Internet addiction.⁽⁸⁾

In constructivist approaches, counselors can work with families to map their perceptions of these situations through narrative construction. They must see the family as a social unit amid concerns that technological, economic and social pressures should affect household functioning. For example, adolescents have computer issues, and these are linked to the parents' ability to control computer access at home. Counselors can work with families and through providing contextual analyses and support, assist families to reframe their situations. If clients' technological and environmental contexts under their conditions were include in counseling process, and then this could enhance their insight in problem solving. Constructivist approaches let families get a better sense of their conditions in context, so they prompt cultural and economic changes in order to explore potential solutions.⁽⁹⁾

A multi-level intervention was developed by Shek, Tang, and Lo. The multi-level intervention had following features such as emphasis on healthy use of the Internet, understanding the change process in Internet addiction behavior, a directive, client-centered counseling style, adoption of a family perspective, and a multi-level counseling model (individual, family counseling, and a peer support group). Shek, et al. found 59 Chinese clients with Internet addiction problems had decreased Internet engagement after participating in the program. There were positive changes in parenting attributes.⁽¹⁰⁾ The South Korean government designed programs to cure computer over-users in Internet-addicted or online game-addicted children. The programs were created by forbidding the addictive behavior and habituation to the cues that triggered it to break the addiction cycle, accompanied with social-skills training and family therapy, which also included education and training activities. During the program, the addicted students received treatment for 12 days and 11 nights. Koo et al. evaluated the program and found that about half of the 33 students participating in this camp considered themselves to have become better people after a 1-year period of follow-up.⁽¹¹⁾

From a literature review, we know that counseling and guidance of the young with Internet addiction could use multiple approaches like cognitive-behavioral therapy, reality therapy, constructivist approaches, and multi-level intervention. The methods involve individual, family, group, camp education and counseling. The purpose of this study was to explore the effects with Internet addicted students after guidance sessions by college students. We hope our study can explore the individual guidance effects in Taiwanese children with Internet addiction and offer experiences and suggestions to future researchers.

2. Methods

2.1. Subjects and Procedure

We trained 17 college students of the Health Psychology Department in our university in counseling and guidance lectures for 12 hours and supervision sessions for 20 hours, then these students gave individual guidance to 18 students (15 face-to-face guidance, 3 e-mail guidance) of Internet addiction tendency (age: 9 - 14 years; each had 3-8 sessions) from grades 3 to 6 from elementary schools and grades 1 to 3 from a junior high school in Taiwan. Participant scores on the Chen Internet Addiction Scale (CIAS)⁽¹²⁾ were more than 63 which reached Ko's (2005) definition of Internet addiction in CAIS scale scores where more than 63 would have more tendency to exhibit Internet addiction⁽¹³⁾. We administered the pre-test (December, 2010) and posttest (June, 2011 and September, 2011) with 18 Internet addiction tendency students by structured

questionnaire including, Depression Scale, Internet Access, and CIAS at 4 months after guidance. Finally, we collected 14 copies respectively.

2.2. Instruments

The Instruments included Depression Scale, Internet Access, and CIAS. The Depression Scale was developed by Chang's depression screening scale for children and adolescents. The scale had 34 items, of which the content includes measures of depression-dysphoric mood, hopelessness, low self-esteem & cognition function, somatic complaints & psychomotor retardation, and conduct-social problems^[14]. Internet Access was used from Lin's scale^[15]. There were 18 items in this questionnaire, that included the hours that students spent surfing the Internet on week days (From Monday to Friday), weekends and vacation days (Statuary, Sunday and vacations), the years of using the internet, frequency of surfing the Internet that included the motivation & purpose, and internet access. CIAS was revised to match students of elementary school age, which was a 26 item self-reported scale assessing five dimensions of internet-related symptoms and problems, including compulsive symptoms, withdrawal symptoms, tolerance symptoms, interpersonal & health problems and time management problems^[12]. The instruments all used a 4-point Likert scale. The higher the score, the more depression, frequency of using the internet, and internet addiction tendency the reporter had. The instruments provided good validity and reliability^[16].

2.3. Data analysis

According to the data analysis, first we used P-P plot to understand the distribution of data, and found normal distributions. So, we used paired t-test to analysis data concerning the difference of pre-test and posttest according to the Depression Scale, Internet Access, and CIAS.

3. Results and discussion

The total scores of the Depression Scale were not significant with pre-test and posttest. Limiting factors of the result might be that 14 copies were too few to analyze, and/or the college students' guidance abilities were limited and could not offer high efficiency of guidance. But depression-dysphoric mood, hopelessness, and low self-esteem & cognition function had significantly decreased between pre-test and post-test. That result showed that college students involved in guidance with Internet addicted students, so that addicted students could be supported by others to decrease their hopelessness and increase energy feelings.

Internet access, hours for surfing the Internet on week days, and weekends and vacation days presented a slightly decreased trend, but had no significant relationship between pre-test and posttest. That results showed that the frequency and duration of online in addicted students could not be affected by college students' guidance, which might be because the secessions of guidance were few. Other reasons included that they had the online need for the teachers' assignment, entertainment demands or hiding in fictitious world to reduce the stress feelings in the real world. There were some absolutely necessary reasons for them to use Internet, so Internet access was not so easy to decrease. We address that the behaviors of Internet addiction was a sign which the addicted children needs help. Besides of the need for school homework, they also had other psychological factors letting them sustain the Internet use hours. Whatever, when teachers and counselors face pupils' Internet addicted problems, they must have the attitudes that addicted problems are shaped by multiple factors. They should involve their parents to monitor the online behaviors and help pupils face their psychological disturbances.

Our study presented that CIAS total scores and each dimensions including compulsive use, withdrawal, tolerance, problems of interpersonal relationships, and health /time management had significant relationships between pre-test and posttest (see Table 1). The Internet addiction behaviors were decreased after intervention as compatible with Kim's result.^[8] This results showed addicted students had the awareness of Internet addictions, and they had the motivation to change the situation, so they could engaged in the guidance process. The parents were informed of their kids having the tendency of Internet addiction, so they agreed their kids to join in the guidance and increased the alertness of Internet addiction at the same time.

Our study's interventionists were trained college students to accompany Internet-addicted students; that is comparatively different from other research studies that used counselors who accepted complete

counseling training programs.⁽⁶⁻⁸⁾ Because there are few counseling resources in elementary and junior high schools in Taiwan, if we could train college students majoring in psychology to accompany addicted students, they both may have benefits: the one receiving guidance experiences with youngsters; the other receiving the chance to improve their psychological health. Although trained psychology majors do not have sufficient skill to manage serious problems, they could share familiar experiences of growth, offer emotional support, and decrease the loneliness feelings of interrelationships with youngsters. Finally, their engagement in school systems could support teachers, because teachers are unable to care for every student. College students training in psychology would be a source for elementary and junior high schools. Even though college students could help, there are limits where they might not be able to handle serious problems and they should be supervised by the supervisor intensively, to improve their skills, to discuss their interventions whether correct or not, and to be supported during the guidance period. The schools should offer support in the guidance process and manage the children's problems when the college students cannot handle these.

Our study's limitations were that the returned number of questionnaires was too few to analyze thereby affecting the results. We hope to collect more data for analysis in future research. We suggest that teachers manage Internet addiction students in elementary school and junior schools, and allow community resources such as college students studying psychology be involved in support services, which may work in dealing with problems of Internet addictions.

Table 1 The effect on 4 months after guidance in Internet-addicted students (N=14)

Variables	T value	Mean(Pre-test)	Mean(Posttest)
Depression total scores	3.101	56.21	34.93
Depression-dysphoric mood	3.663**	23.29	13.21
Hopelessness	2.262**	5.36	3.14
Low self-esteem & cognition function	2.783*	14.57	9.97
Somatic complaints & psychomotor retardation	2.125	6.36	4.14
Conduct-social problems	1.880	6.64	4.64
Internet access	1.303	43.14	41.29
Hours for surfing the Internet on week days (hours)	.694	2.00	1.86
Hours for surfing the Internet on weekends and vacation days	1.794	3.50	3.14
CIAS total scores	5.624***	85.07	60.86
Compulsive use	4.25**	16.86	11.50
Withdrawal	4.090**	17.71	13.29
Tolerance	4.946***	14.07	9.93
Problems of interpersonal relationships	4.864***	22.00	15.14
Health /time management	3.343**	14.43	11.00

4. Conclusion

The scores of internet addiction and depression were significantly decreased between pre-test and posttest. Results show Internet addiction behavior could be helped by guidance provided by college students who have been trained and supervised. Such college students being placed into the Internet-addicted youngsters' schools should be a good resource, but school systems should necessarily support the guidance process.

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