

PROGRAM THEORY OF SPORT-RELATED INTERVENTION FOR PREVENTING INTERNET ADDICTION

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Abstract

Internet addiction has become one of the most serious public health concerns (Hur, 2006; Young, 1998). A recent study documented that the internet penetration rate among Korean adolescents has reached 90.6% in 2002 and 19.1% of Korean middle school students were identified as potential risk users and high-risk users in 2009 (Seo, Kang, & Yom, 2009). Interestingly many Internet addiction studies have argued that Internet addiction, in part, results from the lack of physical activities (Young, 1998). That means that the increase of the level of physical activities can contribute to reduce Internet addiction. Although such idealistic conception of sport widely remains in interventionists, there is little evidence on why and how sport can be used to prevent the Internet addiction. This makes us vulnerable when claiming the effectiveness of sport-related intervention programs because we have not provided much of a theoretical rationale or evidence-based foundation for sport-related programs (Hartmann, 2003; Smith & Waddington, 2004). In this regard, this study aims to develop a sport-related Internet addiction intervention program by developing a program theory of Internet addiction prevention.

This study followed two steps. In the first step, the level of adolescents' Internet addiction and factors influencing Internet addiction were investigated through a national survey. The participants were 9,180 elementary, middle, and high school students in Korea. They were asked about the level of Internet use and reasons for why they have been using the Internet. The second step was to develop an Internet addiction prevention program theory on the basis of the findings of the first step, guided by Lipsey's (1983) theory-driven approach.

The findings of this study indicate that Internet addiction results from individual-related factors such as low self-control, boredom, low self concept, stress, low social skills, and low self confidence. In addition, Internet addiction-related environmental factors include the lack of parents' control on Internet use, less hours spent communicating

with their families, the lack of parents' understanding of Internet addiction, convenient access to Internet games, and the lack of family-related constructive leisure time. Based on these results, this study developed a normative program theory of Internet addiction prevention, which consists of problem definition (e.g., what problems are being existed in Internet addiction), program treatment (e.g., what activities are being conducted to reduce Internet addiction), program mechanism (e.g., what are mediating factors generating expected program outcomes), and program outcomes (e.g., which outcomes are being generated through the program) (Bickman, 1990; Chen & Rossi, 1987, Lipsey, 1993). The program needs to treat the following mediating variables: Internet addict's new goal setting, social skill, focus shifted, alternative behavior development, program implementer's positive feedback and social support. In terms of program treatment on environmental factors, the program theory includes the increase of the level of communication between adolescents and parents, providing information on the Internet addiction to parents, forming a relationship between at-risk addicts and teachers, and change of adolescents' Internet use place. Program mechanism (i.e., mediating factors of the program) consists of more self control to use Internet, positive self and self confidence, social support, positive relationship between adolescents, parents, and teacher, and the increase of positive self. When such program elements are delivered through sport activities, the expected program outcomes would be the reduction of Internet addiction and academic achievement. In sum, this study contributes to future Internet addiction prevention program, showing the ways to effectively and scientifically design the program and reduce the Internet-related addiction problems.

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