Mevlana International Journal of Education (MIJE)
Vol. 5(1), pp. 77-87, 1 April, 2015
Available online at http://mije.mevlana.edu.tr/
http://dx.doi.org/10.13054/mije.14.64.5.1

Reality therapy oriented intervention program for cyberbullying behaviors and testing its efficiency

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Article history
Received:
26.07.2014

Received in revised form:
27.03.2015

Accepted:
27.03.2015

Key words:
Cyberbullying, Choice Theory, Reality Therapy, Intervention

The purpose of this study is to develop an intervention program for cyberbullying based on reality therapy and also to investigate the efficiency of this program for such behavior. For the study, firstly, the concept of cyberbullying is analyzed and discussed within the framework of choice theory. Secondly, a psychological counseling program intended to reduce cyberbullying behaviors is developed and a pilot scheme is launched. Remarks of experts are taken into consideration in analyzing the pilot scheme and the program's suitability with reality therapy is established. An intervention program is implemented at a high school in Istanbul in the first half of the 2012-2013 school year. In the study, designed with 2x3 split-plot method, experimental and control groups consisting of 12 people are formed and a ten-session program is implemented for the experimental group. Analyses show that cyberbullying behaviors decreased in the experimental group, while there was no change in the level of cyberbullying behaviors in the control group.

Introduction

Rapidly evolving technology continuously presents to us new and different communication opportunities and every new communication technology brings with it some problematic consequences. New technology has increased the use of electronic devices in schools, such as cell-phones and the Internet, and, consequently, perplexing practices involving these tools have emerged (Wright, Joy, Christopher, & Heather, 2009). One of the most prevalent problems among these is a new form of bullying, conceptualized as cyberbullying. While bullying behaviors are often encountered in schools, cyberbullying has recently emerged as a widespread problem (Baker & Kavşut, 2007).

According to Arıcak, Tanrıkulu, Siyahhan and Kınay (2013), cyberbullying "includes all relational or technical harmful behaviors directed to an individual, a group or a legal personality by using information and communication technologies". Cyberbullying, in other

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words, can be defined as "intentional and recurring behaviors which support hostile behaviors and include use of information and communication technologies, such as e-mail, cell phone, pager, sms services and websites with the purpose of doing harm to others" (Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber, 2007; Ang & Goh, 2010; Arıcak, 2009; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Totan, 2007; Wright et al., 2009). Cyberbullying includes many purposes, such as embarrassment, harassment, humiliation or insult, and it can be done by an individual alone as well as by a group (Anderson, 2010).

Although the lack of balanced power and recurrence are said to be two criteria of cyberbullying behaviors (Nocentini et al, 2010), another approach doesn't consider recurrence as a condition, because cyberbullying has a sustainable affect, everything on the Internet can be seen later and other people, as well as the cyberbullies, can spread this bullying easily (Levy et al., 2012). The inability to use social media opportunities and imbalance in power concerning Internet knowledge and computers lead unqualified people to fail to defend themselves in those instances. Some studies propose two new criteria for cyberbullying; one is anonymity, which means that the doer of the cyberbullying is unknown, and the other is publicity, which means that bullying can also be observed by other people (Nocentini et al, 2010).

Because cyberbullying can be observed by more people than traditional bullying, it can cause more severe problems than traditional bullying (Dooley, Pyżalski & Cross, 2009). Depression, social isolation, and self-destructive behavior are some common problems (Mason, 2008; Wong-Lo, Bullock, & Gable, 2011). Some consequences, such as a difficulty in perceiving emotional problems or problems with friendships, as well as feeling unsafe in school, can occur (Sourander et al, 2010). Moreover, other studies show that victims have low self-confidence and diminished self-respect (Didden et al, 2009; Mason, 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). A study on 10-12 year-old students, by Navarro, Yubero, Larrañaga, and Martínez (2011), shows that victims of cyberbullying have social anxiety and are especially fearful of negative consideration. It's been observed that female victims are more likely than males to exhibit such symptoms (Dooley, Gradinger, Strohmeier, Cross, & Spiel, 2010)

Given all these aspects, cyberbullying has become a problem which needs to be focused upon in the schools. Although there are descriptive studies about the issue, the number of studies discussing types of intervention is inadequate. This study is, first of all, important because it is an intervention program aimed at the reducing of cyberbullying behaviors. The results of this study are expected to provide benefits both for academics and practitioners.

Intervention Program

Theoretical Base of the Program

This program is based on choice theory. The treatment approach of choice theory in the area of psychological counseling is reality therapy. According to choice theory, the responsibility for the control of behavior belongs to person. However, when people have a problem with someone, instead of controlling and changing their own behaviors, they generally prefer to take control of the behaviors of the other person and change him or her. Consequently, this leads people to have relational problems with other people (Glasser, 1997). According to Glasser (1985), when people behave differently than what we expect, we try to persuade them to behave in the way we want. However, we cannot be successful in those cases. We don't have any control over other people's behaviors and desires. We can only control our own behaviors.

Reality therapy, which has been developed based upon choice theory, is based on principles that train counselees to make more effective choices about developing satisfactory relationships with other people. The most important goal of reality therapy is to make people aware that the real responsibility for his behavior belongs to himself. Therapy process includes understanding the fact that upon having this awareness, desired change is only possible with person's own behaviors and choices and putting a change plan which will prompt the person into practice (Glasser, 1999).

Reality therapy tries to create a process in which responsible and realistic behaviors are put into practice for the counselee and a successful identity is formed in this way. Designing a plan to change unrealistic and dysfunctional behavior is the focus of therapy. Reality therapy provides explanations for what counselees actually do and establishes specific changes which need to be made (Palancı, 2004).

Reality therapy points out responsibility. Responsible people are aware of what they want and what they can achieve, and they are independent and active while achieving these. In this sense, responsible people can control life better and display behaviors accordingly. Therefore, one of the most important goals of therapy is to provide people with responsibility. The therapy process includes confronting the counselee with what he does, what he feels and his thoughts, and realizing new choices in order to display efficacious behaviors. It shows the counselee how he can take control of his life and how he can live effectively. To that end, the counselee, firstly, is helped to understand what is dysfunctional in his current behavior. As the dysfunction in his behaviors is realized, the counselee will begin to be motivated to search out new proper behaviours (Palancı, 2004).

Preparation Process of Intervention Program

Moving from these features of choice theory and reality therapy, subsequently related literature was examined for the preparation of the program.

Secondly, intervention studies for cyberbullying were investigated. At this point, it was observed that studies for this problem are generally prevention programs. Therefore, moving from a literature review (Bauman & Pero, 2010; Bayar, 2010; Burnukara, 2009; Dempsey, Sulkowski, Dempsey & Storch, 2011; Dooley et al, 2009; Erdur-Baker, 2009; Grigg, 2010; Jose, Kljakovic, Scheib, & Notter, 2011; Katzer, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak, 2009; Schneider, O'Donnell, Stueve, & Coulter, 2012; Schultze-Krumbholz & Scheithauer, 2009; Smith et al., 2008; Twyman, Saylor, Taylor, & Comeaux, 2010) which explains the relationship between traditional bullying and cyberbullying, intervention programs developed for the issue of the solutions to school bullying, peer bullying and conflict (Ayas, 2008; Dölek, 2002; Güner, 2007; Uysal, 2006) were examined.

Lastly, literature related with group counseling was examined, applications and activities which could be used in the study were determined and a group program was designed taking literature related to cyberbullying into account.

A pilot scheme of this program was launched in a private high school in Istanbul, during the 2011-2012 school year, and some adjustments were made to the program within the scope of the results of this pilot scheme. The final shape of the group program was examined by two experts in order to evaluate its suitability with the fundamentals of reality therapy. After these two examinations, the group counseling program was finalized.

General Goals of the Program and Sessions

The program was developed to intervene in cyberbullying behaviors displayed by high school students. In this sense, it was aimed that students displaying cyberbullying behaviors would gain awareness, recognize their own and others' emotions, understand consequences of their behaviors, gain responsibility, and develop their social relationships positively. In accordance with this general aim, the main goals of the program were the following:

It was aimed that students would

- Know and express their basic needs
- Recognize responsibilities on their feelings
- Comprehend their responsibilities while developing social relationships
- Know cyberbullying behaviors and realize their effects
- Find out basic needs which lead cyberbullying behaviors and make realistic choices in order to satisfy these needs
- Recognize the feelings of people who are exposed to cyberbullying
- Understand how cyberbullying behaviors effect social relations.

In accordance with these goals, hypotheses below were questioned in order to test the efficacy of the program.

(1) H_0: There are no significant differences between pre-test, post-test and follow-up test scores of the experimental group on a Cyberbullying Scale
H_1: There are significant differences between pre-test, post-test and follow-up test scores of the experimental group on a Cyberbullying Scale in favor of the follow-up test and post-test
(2) H_0: There is no significant difference between post-test scores of the experimental group and the control group on a Cyberbullying Scale
H_1: There is a significant difference between post-test scores of the experimental group and the control group on a Cyberbullying Scale in favor of the experimental group
(3) H_0: There are no significant differences between pre-test, post-test and follow-up test scores of the control group on a Cyberbullying Scale
H_1: There are statistically significant differences between pre-test, post-test and follow-up test scores of the control group on a Cyberbullying Scale

Method

Design of the Study

This study is an experimental study with 2x3 split-plot design consisting of pre-test, post-test and control group.

Participants

This experimental study was conducted at a public high school. In order to form study groups, 318 students in the 10^{th} and 11^{th} grades were administered a "Cyberbullying Scale" (Arıcak, Kınay & Tanrıkulu, 2012). The names of the 30 students who achieved the highest scores were ordered from high to low and the participants were randomly assigned as the experimental and the control group. Students in the experimental group were interviewed one

by one beforehand, given general information about the group study and their informed consent was obtained. At this stage, all of the students, except one, accepted to participate in the group study and the group study started with 14 students. Before the second session started, two students left the group; one, because of his transfer to another school and the other, because he didn't want to continue this group study. The study, after this stage, continued with an experimental group consisting of 12 students.

The students in the control group weren't given a pre-interview. Because the experimental group continued with 12 students, three students in the control group were removed randomly in order to have an equal number of students in the two groups. After the experimental study was completed, a post-test was given to both groups one week later, and a follow-up test was given six weeks later. The average age of the students in the experimental group (Two females, 10 males) was 15.91 (*SD*=0.66) and they were all 10^{th} graders. The average age of the students in the control group (Four females, eight males) was 16.83 (*SD*=0.71), with seven of them being 10^{th} graders while five of them were 11^{th} graders. In order to test whether the difference between the experimental group (*M*=22.33, *SD*=7.95) and the control group (*M*=17.16, *SD*=5.11), in terms of displaying cyberbullying behaviors, was statistically significant or not, pre-test results were analyzed, and it was seen that the difference between pre-test results of two groups was not statistically significant [$t_{(22)}$=1.89, p<.05]. Moving from this finding, it can be said that the experimental group and the control group were statistically equal to each other before the program.

After the groups were formed, sessions of application commenced. Two sessions were held in the first two weeks and one session was conducted each week for the coming six weeks. In accordance with a request from the school management, sessions were held at different times and on different days in order not to have them during the same course hours. In this way, the sessions were completed between September 2012 and December 2012. On average one session lasted for 60 minutes.

Measures

Cyberbullying Scale (CBS)

In order to determine whether the independent variable applied in this study increased cyberbullying behaviors or not, the "Cyberbullying Scale (CBS)" for adolescents, which was developed by Arıcak, Kınay and Tanrıkulu (2012), was used. The scale is a 4 point Likert type scale that consists of 24 items. The minimum obtainable score for this scale is 24 and the maximum obtainable score is 96. Statistical analyses for this scale were conducted in April 2011. Firstly, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried using the principal component analysis for all of the items (N=515). When the component matrix was examined, it was observed that all of the items were loaded under a single factor. This single factor accounted for 50.58 % of the variance. In the meantime, the breakpoint on the scree plot was examined and it was observed that the scale showed a single-factor structure. The factor loads under a single factor varied between .49 and .80. Hence, it was believed that the scale had a single factor structure. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the entire scale was found to be .95 and the test-retest reliability coefficient was .70 (N=103). These results suggest that the measurement tool is both valid and reliable.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is conducted by using SPSS 15.0. Before the analysis of data, sufficiency of research data in terms of parametric techniques is evaluated; observing that normality hypothesis, which is one of the initial hypothetical criteria of independent samples, is met (Kolmogorov Smirnov p=.02), the use of parametric statistical methods has been decided to be used. Therefore, independent samples T-Test is used for comparing the pre-test means of experimental and control groups in this research. For comparing the pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test means of experimental and control groups, One Way ANOVA analysis is used. Independent samples T-Test is used again for comparing the post-test means of experimental and control groups. In this research, statistical analysis of the findings are conducted with respect to .05 significance level.

Results

Findings Related to First Hypothesis

Repeated measures ANOVA was performed in order to examine the difference among the experimental group's pre-test, post-test and follow-up test scores.

Table 1. Pre-test, Post-test and Follow-up test ANOVA results of Experimental Group for Cyberbullying

	N	*M*	*SD*		*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	Dif.**
Pre-Test	12	22.33	7.95	Between groups	636.97	11	57.90		
Post-Test	12	6.66	5.06	Meas.	1874.05	2	937.02	41.12*	2-1
Follow-up	12	7.41	3.80	Error	501.27	22	22.78		3-1
				Total	3012.30	35			

*p=.01 **1: Pre-test, 2:Post-test, 3: Follow-up Test

As shown in Table 1, there are significant differences among the experimental group's pre-test, post-test and follow-up test results on the Cyberbullying Scale [$F_{(2, 22)}$= 41.124, p<.01]. Post-test (M=6.66) and follow-up test (M=7.41) mean scores are lower than the pre-test mean score (M=22.33). On the other hand, there is no significant difference between post-test and follow-up test results. This finding shows that the cyberbullying behaviors of the students who participated in the group counseling program decreased at a statistically significant level in measurements just after application and later on, and that the level of cyberbullying behaviors after the implementation didn't differ from the results of the follow-up studies conducted later on, and thus the effect of the program continued. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the H1 hypothesis is accepted.

Findings Related to Second Hypothesis

The results of t-test analysis for whether there is a significant difference between the post-test results of the experimental and control groups are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Independent Samples t-test results of Cyberbullying Post-test Scores

Post Test	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*
Experimental Group	12	6.66	5.06	22	-3.47*
Control Group	12	15.83	7.58		

* p=.01

As seen in Table 2, there is a significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental group and the control group in favor of the experimental group ($t_{(22)}$= -3.479, p<.01). The cyberbullying scores of the experimental group are lower than those of the control group. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the H_1 hypothesis is accepted.

Findings Related To Third Hypothesis

In order to analyze the differences among pre-test, post-test and follow-up test results of the control group, repeated measures ANOVA was performed.

Table 3. Control Group's Cyberbullying Pre-test, Post-test, and Follow-upTest ANOVA Results

	N	*M*	*SD*		*SS*	*df*	*MS*	*F*	Dif.**
Pre-Test	12	17.16	5.11	Between Groups	810.55	11	73.68		
Post-Test	12	15.83	7.58	Meas.	11.55	2	5.77	.29*	
Follow-up	12	16.16	5.33	Error	424.44	22	19.29		
				Total	1246.55	35			

*p=.74

As seen in Table 3, there is no significant difference among the control group's pre-test, post-test and follow-up test scores on the Cyberbullying Scale [$F_{(2, 22)}$=.299, p>.05]. In other words, the means of the cyberbullying scores didn't change over the time. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, and the H_1 hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion

Data revealed that the intervention program reduced the level of cyberbullying. While there is no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups, a significant difference is found between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. Moreover, data suggest that there are no significant differences among the pre-test, post-test and follow-up test results of the control group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the decrease in the level cyberbullying of the experimental group resulted from the implementation of the intervention program. The monitoring study supports this result as well.

In the literature review, no study originating from a reality therapy based approach and which tries to prevent cyberbullying has been found. In this sense, there isn't any direct data to be compared with the findings acquired from this study. However, according to data acquired from the literature, it is evident that people who have a high level of establishing relationships and the ability to cope with problems positively exhibit a low level of cyberbullying behaviors (Schoffstall & Cohen, 2011; Sourander et al., 2010). According to reality therapy, one of the factors causing behavioral problems is a person's inability to develop realistic and positive relationships with his/her environment. During the group counseling program, participants were encouraged to develop the ability to produce realistic solutions for their social problems. In this sense, it can be stated that the decrease in cyberbullying level at the end of the study is consistent with the literature.

Moreover, it is also suggested that there is a negative relationship between a sense of responsibility and cyberbullying and that people displaying cyberbullying behaviors don't appraise the results of their behaviors and their effect on others (Çelik, Atak, & Erguzen, 2012; Dilmaç, 2009). Reality therapy also focuses on responsibility, the importance of an individual's choices in relationships, and an individual's unsuccessful relationships as the source of behavioral problems. In this sense, it can be stated that studies aimed at recognizing and accepting the responsibility of one's behavior explain the decrease in the level of cyberbullying behaviors.

According to some other studies, it is seen that the most frequent reasons to do cyberbullying are to have fun and to take revenge; in other words the desire to be powerful (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). This case shows that the need for entertainment and being powerful, which are stated as two of basic needs of people, according to choice theory, are not satisfied realistically. Therefore, it can be asserted that in the group sessions training related to the organization of goals and needs is effective for a decrease in the level of cyberbullying.

In light of this data, variables predicting cyberbullying accord with the basic features of reality therapy which explain human behavior. In this respect, it can be stated that with regards to reality therapy, a group counseling program developed to bring those variables which predict cyberbullying behaviors to the center of attention was effective in reducing cyberbullying behaviors.

Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Future Research

Besides the positive results obtained at the end of the intervention program, the research includes some limitations as well. Firstly, the program is designed for small groups. In this respect, the number of participants in the target group should not exceed 15 people. Secondly, the program has been designed within the framework of choice theory. Therefore, the researcher is supposed to be competent with the basic principles of choice theory in order to carry out the program.

The findings of the research positively support the idea that this 'program' can be effective in reducing cyberbullying behaviors. In order to increase the validity of the program, it will be useful to conduct the program with different groups by different researchers and observe whether or not there are similar results. Furthermore, with some adaptations, the program can be carried out as a guidance activity aimed at a whole class, especially in schools, thus its efficacy can be tested.

The current program in this research has been designed on the basis of reality therapy. Carrying out new intervention studies based on different theoretical perspectives will be useful. By these means, not only can the efficiency of the studies be compared but also intervention options will be offered to those researchers directly confronted with this problem.

Monitoring the individuals who participate in a group study, and whose cyberbullying behaviors have been observed to reduce significantly with follow up studies, and examining the effect process of the program will provide an understanding about the level of persistence.

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