'Me and the Others': An evaluation of an interactive material for the prevention of non-substance addictions among high school students

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INTRODUCTION

Universal prevention programs (for everyone in a particular population/group) can be effective for youth along a continuum of risk (e.g., [1]Griffin et al., 2003) and school contexts are an important setting for their implementation as it is possible to provide interventions for a larger number of adolescents, on a regular basis, and with the possibility of being included in curricula. Part of their goals is to change attitudes (a cognitive component) towards a particular subject, raise awareness for risk factors and promote protective ones.

'Me and the Others' is a Portuguese universal prevention program for youth addictive behaviours (substance and non-substance addiction), that includes 7 thematic blocks, offered regularly (weekly or biweekly during 90' each): Family dynamics; Addictions without substance – gaming and gambling, the internet misuse, online shopping; Cybersex – online relationships – the use of social networks; Cyberbullying and hate speech; New Psychoactive Substances; Addiction's personal, family and social consequences; Social support – treatment network / Helplines.

Gambling and gaming are increasingly popular activities among adolescents. Although gambling is illegal in Portugal for youth under the age of 18 years, gambling opportunities are growing, mainly due to similarity between gambling and other technology-based games (e.g., [2]Calado et al., 2014).

OBJECTIVE

Analyse the impact of the thematic block of gaming and gambling and internet misuse on adolescents' perceptions about risk factors related with non-substance addictions.

METHOD

Study design

Quasi-experimental design, with pre and pos test design, but no control group.

Procedure

Online survey [Qualtrics platform]
1. **Pre-test** (before the 1st session - baseline)
2. **Post-test** (after the last session)

Participants

Pre-test		Pos-test	
N 118 students	50% Male	**N** 14 students	64.3% Male
AGE 13-20 years (M = 16.0 SD = 1,55)	87.3% portuguese	AGE 15-19 years (M = 16.57 SD = 1,22)	92.9% portuguese

Instruments

• Socio-demographic questions
• Generalized problematic internet use scale[3]. (dimensions: preference for online social interaction (α = 0.780); mood regulation (α = 0.768); poor self-regulation (α = 0.795); negative outcomes (α = 0.753).
• Measuring DSM-5 internet gaming disorder[4] (α = 0.856)
• Measure based on the Theory of Planned Behavior[5]
• Risk Perception questions (e.g., "It's okay to share my passwords with other people if they're my friends")

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the limitations (data analysis only with 14 adolescents and without a control group) results show in part that adolescents raise their awareness towards non-substance addictions (e.g., be more aware of time control) and are more critical when analysing benefits of technology .

Currently the goal is to increase the sample and to conduct the follow up; in future studies to include a control group.

RESULTS

Pre & Post test comparisons

Paired t-tests showed significant ($p < .005$) and partially significant ($p = .005$ or $p < .089$) differences from the pre test to the post test:

No significant effects in total scores, only in specific items from the standardize measures
• Control items (Internet use). E.g.,
  • Internet use: time online & internet use (e.g., Generalized Problematic Internet Use Scale 2)/ increased ability to control time

• Attitudes towards technologies
  • Less positive (Risk perception questions)

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