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Original Article

The Effect of Group Counseling with Self-Control Technique to Reduce Online Game Addiction among Students

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Abstract. The phenomenon of online game addiction among students has caused various negative impacts, such as a decline in academic achievement, lack of social interaction, and decreased responsibility in daily life. This condition indicates the need for structured counseling interventions. This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design using a pre-test and post-test control group design. The sampling technique was purposive sampling involving 40 students of SMA Muhammadiyah Cipanas, divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received three informational services and seven sessions of group counseling using the self-control technique, while the control group only received three informational services. The research instruments included a Likert-scale questionnaire, observation, interview, and documentation. Data were analyzed using an Independent Sample T-Test with the assistance of SPSS. The results showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups ($t = 2.152$; $p < 0.05$), indicating that group counseling with the self-control technique was effective in reducing online game addiction. This finding was supported by observations and interviews, which revealed students' improved ability to manage gaming time and academic responsibilities. Thus, self-control-based group counseling proved to be relevant and can serve as a practical counseling strategy in schools.

Keywords: Game Online, Game Addiction, Self-Control

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Introduction

The rapid development of information technology in recent decades has brought various conveniences, including in the field of digital entertainment. One form of digital entertainment most popular among teenagers is online gaming. Online games are growing rapidly not only as a means of entertainment but also as part of popular culture that is deeply embedded in students' daily lives. While online games have positive aspects, such as improving strategic thinking and teamwork skills, excessive and uncontrolled use can have serious negative impacts, one of which is addiction. Online gaming addiction has become a worrying phenomenon in the world of education. Many students spend hours playing games, neglecting schoolwork, social interactions, and even their physical and mental health. Fitriyadi et al. (2023) stated that online gaming addiction results in a decreased interest in socializing face-to-face and has the potential to disrupt character development. Pradana (2021) data from the Cisarua Mental Hospital also shows an increasing trend in children addicted to gadgets, including online games, who require treatment.

This phenomenon demands serious attention and management from various parties, including educational institutions. Schools, as environments responsible for students' academic

and psychosocial development, play a strategic role in preventing and addressing online gaming addiction. One approach that can be used is through guidance and counseling services, specifically group counseling with self-control techniques. These services are aimed at helping students recognize addictive behavior, understand its impact, and develop self-regulation skills to independently control gaming urges.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach. Khairani et al. (2024) found that group counseling services with self-control techniques helped students manage addictive behavior more effectively. Meanwhile, research by Mullatifa (2023) showed that the intensity of online gaming was negatively related to learning concentration, which ultimately could lower students' academic achievement. These studies reinforce the urgency of comprehensive and structured interventions.

Group counseling, as part of guidance services, provides a safe and supportive space for students to share experiences, receive emotional support, and learn from one another. Self-control techniques applied in counseling aim to help students identify triggers for addictive behavior, set personal boundaries, and practice skills such as time management, decision-making, and problem-solving. Through positive group interactions, students are also encouraged to develop intrinsic motivation to transform bad habits into more adaptive behaviors.

This research is motivated by the persistently high rate of online game addiction among students and the unequal implementation of counseling services specifically addressing this issue. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of group counseling services using self-control techniques on reducing online game addiction among students at Muhammadiyah Senior High School in Cipanas. This research is expected to provide an empirical contribution to counseling practices in schools and serve as a basis for developing more effective and contextual intervention programs to address the challenges of digital addiction in adolescents.

Online gaming addiction can be explained through seven main aspects that illustrate the complexity of addictive behavior. The first aspect is salience, a condition in which gaming becomes the most important activity in a person's life, dominating daily thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Second, tolerance describes an individual's need to increase the duration of play to achieve the same level of satisfaction. Third, mood modification, the ability of games to alter a player's mood, such as by calming themselves or avoiding stress. Fourth, relapse, the individual's return to excessive gaming patterns after attempting to reduce the intensity of play. Fifth, withdrawal, the emergence of negative emotional symptoms when an individual stops or reduces gaming, such as anxiety and anger. Sixth, conflict refers to interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts that arise from gaming, including lying, neglect of responsibilities, and fracturing social relationships. Finally, problem, the emergence of various physical and psychosocial problems that impact health, education, and social relationships. These seven aspects are important indicators in assessing the level of online gaming addiction and underlie the need for appropriate interventions to address it.

Online gaming addiction in students arises not only from the appeal of the game itself, but is also influenced by various personal and social factors. One trigger is a lack of attention from those closest to them, such as parents. Some individuals feel acknowledged when they receive attention, even if that attention stems from deviant behavior. In situations like this, excessive gaming can become a form of expression or protest to attract attention (Ifdil, et al., 2024). Furthermore, emotional conditions such as depression can also drive someone to seek escape through online gaming. The sense of comfort and entertainment offered by gaming makes this activity a means of avoiding psychological pressure, which ultimately leads to addiction. A lack of parental supervision and control, especially when children are pampered with unlimited facilities, also increases the risk of addiction. Children who are not given firm guidance tend to exhibit impulsive behavior. The lack of meaningful activities or productive routines exacerbates the situation, as in situations of unemployment, gaming often becomes a primary escape. Furthermore, social environments such as peers at school can introduce and reinforce gaming

habits, even if the child is not introduced by their family. Another equally important factor is parenting style. The way parents educate and model their children plays a significant role in shaping their behavior. Inappropriate parenting practices from an early age can contribute to the development of excessive gaming habits (Irawan & Siska, 2021).

In some cases, online gaming can have both positive and negative effects. Research by Darwis et al. (2020) shows that while positive impacts from gaming include improved English language skills, typing fluency, and increased insight into computer usage, the negative impacts are far more prevalent and concerning. Online gaming addiction can cause physical problems such as eye pain due to excessive screen exposure, numbness in the wrists due to prolonged device use, and digestive disorders due to irregular eating patterns. Furthermore, emotionally and socially, individuals addicted to gaming also tend to exhibit aggressive behaviors, such as irritability or defiance toward parents. This situation reinforces the urgency that online gaming addiction impacts not only academic and social aspects but also the physical health and interpersonal relationships of adolescents within the family and beyond.

To address the negative impacts of online gaming addiction, students need to strengthen self-control. Self-control is an individual's ability to manage impulses, resist momentary urges, and direct behavior toward long-term goals. There are three main aspects of self-control that students need to pay attention to and improve: cognitive control, behavioral control, and decision-making control. Cognitive control relates to the ability to think rationally and objectively before acting, especially when faced with temptations such as playing games at inappropriate times. Behavioral control refers to the ability to regulate actions to align with established norms or goals, such as limiting game play time and completing study assignments first. Decision making control, on the other hand, emphasizes an individual's ability to choose the most appropriate course of action based on considering risks and benefits, such as choosing to study over playing when facing an exam (Ulusoy, 2022). These three aspects are interrelated and play a crucial role in shaping individuals who are able to resist negative impulses, prioritize, and take responsibility for their actions, making them highly relevant in efforts to reduce online gaming addiction among students.

Self-control does not emerge spontaneously; it is influenced by various factors, both within the individual and their environment. Both internal and external factors play a crucial role in shaping and strengthening students' self-control. According to Siallagan et al. (2021), internal factors include age and psychological maturity. As a person ages, their ability to control themselves generally improves along with the development of thinking and self-evaluation skills. Psychologically mature individuals are better able to distinguish between beneficial and harmful actions and have more rational judgment before acting. Meanwhile, external factors such as family environment and culture also influence the development of self-control. Parenting patterns, values taught within the family, and habits instilled from childhood are important foundations for guiding children's behavior. When parents are able to set clear boundaries, serve as role models in managing emotions, and create a supportive environment, children's self-control tends to develop more optimally. Therefore, efforts to strengthen self-control need not only focus on the individual but also involve consistent and positive environmental support.

As a reference in compiling this research, the authors cite several previous studies that reinforce the urgency of addressing online gaming addiction among students. Research by Utami et al. (2023) showed that self-control techniques in group counseling significantly reduced online gaming addiction in college students, as evidenced by a decrease in the addiction category from very high to moderate after four counseling sessions. This finding aligns with research by Sholihah (2022), which found that self-control techniques reduced students' average addiction scores from 83.50 to 61.50, with a Wilcoxon statistical test showing a significance of 0.005. Furthermore, Nija and Lianawati (2020) also demonstrated that group counseling services incorporating self-control techniques reduced the average online gaming addiction score by 29.4% in students at Sejahtera High School in Surabaya. This evidence indicates that

a group counseling approach incorporating self-control techniques is highly effective in helping students overcome online gaming addiction in a structured and systematic manner.

Therefore, the focus of this research is crucial because online gaming addiction impacts not only academic aspects but also character development and emotional balance in students. In today's era of ever-evolving technological advancement, schools, as educational institutions, must play a strategic role in providing effective guidance and counseling services. This research is expected to serve as a reference for observing, demonstrating, and assisting students through the implementation of group counseling services with self-control techniques in schools, enabling them to reduce addictive behaviors related to online games and develop healthier, more productive, and responsible lifestyles from an early age.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method using a pre-test and post-test control group design conducted at SMA Muhammadiyah Cipanas. The sample consisted of 40 students determined through purposive sampling, based on inclusion criteria that aligned with the research objectives: (1) grade XI students aged 16–17 years, (2) indicated to have online game addiction as shown by low pre-test questionnaire scores, and (3) willing to participate in the entire series of sessions. These criteria ensured that the group counseling intervention using the self-control technique was focused on students who genuinely showed symptoms of online game addiction, thereby making the results more valid and measurable. The selection of SMA Muhammadiyah Cipanas as the research site was also based on empirical findings from the guidance and counseling teacher, who observed that some students had a tendency to excessively play online games.

The experimental group received three informational services and seven sessions of group counseling with the self-control technique, while the control group received only three informational services. Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes, which was considered sufficient for students to understand the material, practice the techniques, and engage in deeper discussions.

Instrument

The research instruments consisted of a Likert-scale questionnaire, observation, interviews, and documentation. The questionnaire was tested using SPSS version 20, and the reliability analysis produced a coefficient of 0.960 from 44 valid items. This result exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.361, which indicates that the instrument was highly reliable and suitable for measuring the research variables.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted by comparing pre-test and post-test scores, where higher scores indicated better self-control and reduced online game addiction. Statistical analysis employed the Independent Sample T-Test using SPSS to examine differences between the experimental and control groups. Additionally, normality and linearity tests were conducted to ensure that the data met the assumptions of parametric testing.

Results and Discussions

The categorization of online game addiction in this study was based on questionnaire scores that were interpreted inversely: lower scores indicated a higher level of addiction, while higher scores reflected stronger self-control and reduced addictive behavior. Therefore, an

increase in the score from pre-test to post-test was considered an indicator of the success of the intervention.

The pre-test results revealed that the majority of students in the experimental group were in the low category, with 13 students (65%) scoring between 0–102, and 7 students (35%) in the medium category with scores ranging from 102–162. None of the students in this group fell into the high category, indicating that before treatment, most students in the experimental group demonstrated a high level of online game addiction. Conversely, in the control group, the majority of students 18 individuals (90%) were in the high category (162–220), and only 2 students (10%) were in the medium category. No students were categorized as low in the control group, suggesting that although both groups displayed tendencies of addiction, the distribution of severity differed at the baseline.

Table 1. Categorization of Pre-Test Questionnaire

Category	Score Range	Experimental (n/%)	Control (n/%)
Low	0 – 102	13 (65%)	0 (0%)
Medium	102 – 162	7 (35%)	2 (10%)
High	162 – 220	0 (0%)	18 (90%)

Following the intervention, the post-test results showed substantial improvements among the experimental group. The majority of students, 18 individuals (90%), shifted to the high category (162–220), indicating strong self-control and a marked reduction in online game addiction, while only 2 students (10%) remained in the medium category (102–162). Importantly, none of the students in this group were left in the low category, showing the positive impact of the intervention. Meanwhile, the control group exhibited almost no meaningful change compared to the pre-test. Nineteen students (95%) remained in the high category, and only 1 student (5%) was classified as medium. This pattern suggests that mere exposure to informational services without structured counseling was insufficient to bring about significant behavioral change.

Table 2. Categorization of Post-Test Questionnaire

Category	Score Range	Experimental (n/%)	Control (n/%)
Low	0 – 102	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Medium	102 – 162	2 (10%)	1 (5%)
High	162 – 220	18 (90%)	19 (95%)

In terms of mean scores, descriptive statistics showed that the experimental group achieved a notable increase from an average of 111.70 in the pre-test to 193.90 in the post-test, producing a substantial difference of 82.20 points. By contrast, the control group only showed a slight improvement, with their average score rising from 169.70 to 181.05, a difference of 11.35 points. This stark contrast demonstrates that while both groups received informational services, the addition of structured self-control group counseling in the experimental group led to a much greater improvement in outcomes.

Table 3. Comparison of Mean Scores in Pre-Test and Post-Test

Group	Pre-Test (M)	Post-Test (M)	Difference
Experimental	111,70	193,90	+82,20
Control	169,70	181,05	+11,35

To ensure that the data met the assumptions for further statistical testing, normality tests were conducted using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method. The results indicated that the experimental group had an Asymp. Sig. value of 0.994, while the control group had an Asymp. Sig. value of 0.746. Since both values were greater than 0.05, the distribution of the data for

both groups could be considered normal. This confirmed that the data were appropriate for analysis using parametric statistical techniques.

Table 4. Results of Normality Test

Group	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Experimental	0,994	Normally Distributed
Control	0,746	Normally Distributed

Linearity testing was also carried out to examine the relationship between the independent variable (group counseling with the self-control technique) and the dependent variable (level of online game addiction). The results showed that the experimental group obtained a significance value of 0.359 and the control group 0.567, both greater than 0.05. These results confirm that there was a linear relationship between the variables, further validating the use of parametric testing.

Table 5. Results of Linearity Test

Group	Sig. Deviation from Linearity	Description
Experimental	0,359	Linear relation
Control	0,567	Linear relation

The Independent Sample T-Test was then performed to determine whether there were significant differences between the experimental and control groups after treatment. The analysis produced a t-value of 2.152 with 38 degrees of freedom (df) and a significance value of 0.038 ($p < 0.05$). These results demonstrate that there was a statistically significant difference in post-test scores between the two groups. The experimental group achieved a mean score of 193.90, compared to 181.05 in the control group, with a mean difference of 12.85 points. The 95% confidence interval for this difference ranged from 0.763 to 24.937, further reinforcing the reliability of the findings.

Table 6. Results of Independent Sample T-Test

Variable	Levene's Test (Sig.)	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% CI (Lower–Upper)
Experimental – Control	0,816	2,152	38	0,038	12,85	0,763 – 24,937

Substantively, these findings confirm that the group counseling intervention with the self-control technique was effective in reducing online game addiction among students. Members of the experimental group not only displayed higher scores in the post-test but also showed tangible improvements in their ability to manage gaming time, prioritize academic tasks, and demonstrate personal responsibility. By contrast, the control group, which only received informational services, did not experience meaningful change. This contrast highlights the limitations of information-only approaches and emphasizes the necessity of structured, repetitive, and skill-based interventions to achieve significant behavioral improvements.

Discussions

The findings of this study indicate that there was a significant difference between the experimental group, which received group counseling with the self-control technique, and the control group, which only received informational services. The significant increase in post-test scores among the experimental group confirms that the application of the self-control technique within a group counseling framework is effective in reducing students' online game addiction.

These results are consistent with previous studies that emphasized the importance of self-control in addressing addictive behaviors. Utami et al. (2023) reported that the use of self-control techniques in group counseling successfully reduced the level of online game addiction among university students. Similarly, Nija and Lianawati (2020) demonstrated a 29.4% decrease in addiction scores among high school students after receiving group guidance with the self-control technique. Sholihah (2022) also found that high school students who participated in self-control-based counseling showed improved awareness and time management skills, which in turn reduced the intensity of gaming. The consistency of these results reinforces the conclusion that self-control-based counseling interventions are effective across different educational levels and contexts.

The effectiveness of this intervention can be explained through the theoretical framework of self-regulation and behavioral change. According to Baumeister's theory of self-control, individuals who are able to regulate impulses, manage time, and resist short-term temptations are more likely to achieve long-term goals. By engaging in structured group counseling sessions, students were provided with opportunities to practice and internalize self-control strategies. Within the group setting, they were also able to share experiences, receive peer support, and gain motivation from collective discussions, all of which strengthened their commitment to behavioral change. Bandura's concept of social learning theory also helps explain these results, as students learned not only through individual reflection but also through observing and modeling the positive behaviors of their peers during group sessions.

The seven-session design implemented in this study provided sufficient intensity and continuity for students to develop and reinforce self-regulation skills. Previous studies, such as those by Utami et al. (2023), were generally limited to four sessions, which may not have allowed adequate time for consistent behavioral reinforcement. By contrast, the extended structure in this study allowed participants to repeatedly practice the self-control techniques, reflect on their progress, and adjust their behavior over time. This methodological novelty strengthens the empirical contribution of the present study, demonstrating that sustained and structured counseling sessions are more effective in producing lasting behavioral change compared to shorter interventions.

Another important finding is the lack of meaningful improvement in the control group, which only received informational services. This outcome highlights a critical point: providing information alone, without structured follow-up and skill-building, is insufficient to reduce addictive behaviors. Information may raise awareness, but it does not necessarily translate into behavior change unless students are guided through a systematic process of practicing self-control. This aligns with the arguments of Irawan (2021), who noted that overcoming online game addiction requires interventions that address both cognitive and behavioral aspects, rather than relying solely on informational exposure.

From a practical perspective, the results suggest that school guidance and counseling (GC) teachers should integrate the self-control technique into group counseling services as both a preventive and curative measure for digital addiction. The group format provides not only individual skill-building but also social reinforcement, which is crucial in adolescent development. Students who feel supported by their peers are more likely to sustain behavioral changes compared to those who rely solely on individual efforts.

Taken together, the findings of this study reinforce the importance of structured, systematic, and skill-based interventions in addressing online game addiction among adolescents. The novelty of conducting seven group counseling sessions underscores that behavioral change is more effectively achieved when students are given sufficient time, continuity, and opportunities for repeated practice. These findings not only support earlier research but also extend it by demonstrating that longer and more intensive counseling programs can yield greater outcomes.

Conclusions

This study confirmed that group counseling with the self-control technique is effective in reducing online game addiction among students. The results of the statistical analysis demonstrated a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. Students in the experimental group, who participated in seven sessions of structured group counseling in addition to informational services, showed substantial improvements in self-control and a reduction in addictive tendencies compared to those in the control group, who only received informational services. These findings are consistent with previous studies, while also contributing novelty by highlighting the importance of providing a more intensive and structured intervention.

The results underscore that group counseling with the self-control technique does not merely provide information but actively builds students' ability to regulate impulses, manage time, and develop responsible academic behaviors. The group format also offers peer support and motivation, which further strengthens the intervention's effectiveness. This study therefore demonstrates that addressing online game addiction requires more than informational awareness; it requires systematic and repeated practice of self-control skills within a supportive environment.

The practical implication of this study is that guidance and counseling (GC) teachers in schools should integrate self-control techniques into group counseling programs as both preventive and curative strategies for digital addiction. By doing so, students can develop self-regulation skills that will not only help reduce excessive gaming but also foster healthier academic and social functioning. In addition, parental involvement is crucial to reinforcing the outcomes of school-based interventions, ensuring that behavioral changes are maintained outside the school context. For future research, it is recommended to consider contextual factors such as the initial level of addiction, family support, and peer environment, as these may influence the effectiveness of interventions. Further studies could also explore the long-term sustainability of behavior change following self-control-based group counseling, thereby contributing to the development of comprehensive models for addressing online game addiction among adolescents.

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