DOI.10.7860/JCDR/2026/91947.24277 Abstract No.: 11

Effectiveness of Digital Crave Prevention Programme (DC2P) on Cyberchondria and Smartphone Addiction in terms of Knowledge and Skills: Pilot Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Cyberchondria and smartphone addiction have emerged as significant digital health concerns among nursing Students, adversely affecting concentration, psychological well-being, sleep quality, academic performance, and professional competency. Excessive online health searching often increases health anxiety, while compulsive smartphone use contributes to behavioral dependence and impaired digital self-regulation. Considering the increasing prevalence of maladaptive digital behaviors among adolescents and healthcare Students, a structured educational intervention is essential to improve awareness and preventive practices.

Objective: To assess the effectiveness of the Digital Crave Prevention Programme (DC2P) on cyberchondria and smartphone addiction in terms of knowledge and skills among nursing students.

Materials and Methods: A pilot quasi-experimental study with pre-test and post-test control group design was conducted among 20 nursing students (Experimental=10; Control=10) selected through simple random sampling to assess feasibility, reliability, intervention acceptability, and effect size estimation for the main study. Based on pilot effect size (d=0.84), power analysis at 95% confidence interval, 80% power, and 5% level of significance, the estimated sample size for the main study was 70 participants (35 per group). The intervention consisted of a two-day DC2P. On Day 1, baseline demographic assessment and pre-test evaluation of knowledge and skills regarding cyberchondria and smartphone addiction were performed using a structured knowledge questionnaire and observational checklist. Subsequently, a 45-minute lecture-cum-discussion with multimedia presentation was administered. On Day 2, a 30-minute demonstration and hands-on digital wellness skill training session were conducted focusing on screen-time regulation, healthy online-search behaviors, fact verification, and digital self-control strategies. Post-test assessment was conducted on Day 15.

Results: Pilot findings demonstrated high feasibility and tool reliability (Knowledge Questionnaire Cronbach's α=0.89; Skill Checklist α=0.86). In the main study, the experimental group showed statistically significant improvement in mean knowledge scores from 14.80±3.42 to 27.29±2.11 and skill scores from 3.57±1.24 to 6.57±1.08 following DC2P intervention (paired t=12.84, p<0.001). Independent t-test revealed significant post-test differences between experimental and control groups (p<0.001). Pearson correlation analysis showed positive association between knowledge and skill scores (r=0.71). Chi-square and ANOVA demonstrated significant association between post-test scores and selected demographic variables including duration of smartphone use and sleep pattern (p<0.05).

Conclusion: The DC2P was highly effective in improving knowledge and digital wellness skills among nursing students. The intervention demonstrated strong statistical effectiveness, feasibility, and applicability for large-scale implementation in nursing education to promote healthy digital behaviour and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Digital wellness, Digital mental health, Health anxiety, Nursing students.

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