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PILOT STUDY OF A LIFE SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME ON LIFE SKILLS AND RISK BEHAVIORS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AMONG YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

This research aimed to 1) develop a life skills enhancement programme on the life skills and risk behaviours of social media addiction among young adolescents, and 2) study the results of the life skills enhancement programme on the life skills and risk behaviours of social media addiction among early adolescence. This research used a quasi-experimental approach to study 4 students. Purposive Sampling was carried out at junior high schools in an urban area through a general information questionnaire, Social Media Addiction Screening Scale: S-MASS and Life skills test during a 10-week period for the life skills enhancement programme. For the results, all participants of the pilot study had decreased social media usage behaviour, and two of them changed their social media addiction level from high risk to moderate risk, and moderate risk to low risk of social media addiction, respectively, after the programme. Further, life skills were increased among all participants after the programme.

Keywords: Life Skills, Life Skills Programme, Social Media, Social Media Addiction, Adolescence

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Introduction

Nowadays, use of social media is an important activity in our lives. It has made our world smaller so that we can communicate and do many things more easily (Jatyananda et al, 2021; Charoensereechai et al, 2022). Roughly 75% of the total population in Thailand, accounting for about 52 million people, use social media. Further, the trend shows an increase by up to 4.7% in 10 months (Kemp, 2020). Adolescents comprise the age group considered to have the most social media usage in the population (Damjub, 2019). This is because social media fulfils their need to find information and express their identity as well as socialise (D' Arienzo et al., 2019). However, adolescents, especially those in the early stage of adolescence, often lack sufficient life skills to restrain and control themselves from using social media too frequently, thus making them have excessive social media behaviour, which negatively affects their daily lives (Hilliard & Parisi, 2020; Lau, 2017; Paul et al., 2012). Ultimately, it could lead to social media addiction (Phanichsiri & Tuntasood, 2016). Life skills are essential for adolescents to help them deal with their social media usage from managing their thoughts and emotions (Siriattakul et al., 2015). Life skills help to promote positive behavioural changes and thus manage their social media behaviour so that they can prevent social media addiction. Many studies have been done on life skills programmes for different types of addiction groups (Du et al., 2010; El Sayed et al., 2019; Seal, 2006). However, there are currently no life skills programmes that specifically target social media addiction problems among adolescent groups. This problem is related to the daily life activities of adolescents. As an occupational therapist, the researcher recognises the importance of the issue, so life skills enhancement programmes should be developed under the theory of cognitive and behavioural therapy in combination with the group process of occupational therapy.

The objectives of this research are (1) to develop a life skills enhancement programme on the life skills and risk behaviours of social media addiction among young adolescents, and (2) to study the results of the life skills enhancement programme on the life skills and risk behaviours of social media addiction among young adolescents.

Research Methodology

This research used a quasi-experimental design for evaluating the results of the life skills enhancement programme using a general information questionnaire and Social Media Addiction Screening Scale: S-MASS, developed by Chanvit Pornnoppadol et al. in 2013 for evaluating adolescent behaviours related to social media use. Moreover, S-MASS categories for social media addiction at three levels comprised low risk, moderate risk and high risk of social media addiction. The other data collecting tool is a life skills test that was developed by Rumruen & Chaiso (2016). The test is used for evaluating the life skills level of adolescents. This study recruited four junior high school students studying at Chiang Mai University Demonstration School in academic year 2021. Students were screened with purposive sampling by S-MASS scores, and some of them that had S-MASS scores higher than 16, from moderate risk to high risk of social media addiction, were selected for this study. Other than S-MASS score criteria, this study also had two other criteria including (1) people who use social media for non-educational purposes for more than 2 hours per day, which creates a risk of becoming addicted to social media (Phanichsiri & Tuntasood, 2016), and (2) people who had 2 social media accounts or more. The life skills enhancement programme was based on the life skill concept from an occupational therapy perspective (Abaoglu et al., 2017). Further, this programme was developed by using cognitive and behavioural therapy in combination with the group process of occupational therapy (Cole, 2018). The life skills enhancement programme was validated for content validity by five qualified persons that had 10 years of experience in the adolescent field of work and knowledge of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and group process in occupational therapy, including a mental health occupational therapist, a

mental health occupational therapy lecturer, a child and adolescent psychiatrist, and a specialist in psychology. This programme contained 10 total periods with 1 session per week for 1 hour (El Sayed et al., 2019; Seal, 2006). The programme consisted of 3 components: 1) analytic thinking skill consisting of activities to analyse the benefits and harm of managing the use of social media goal-setting activities, 2) emotional and thought management skill consisting of self-awareness and learning techniques to manage thoughts and emotions, and 3) social skill including communication techniques and interpersonal skills.

Table 1 shows that participants included 2 females (50%) and 2 males (50%). The same as their gender, half of the participants were the only children in their families, and the other half had a brother or sister. All participants lived at their homes with both parents (father and mother), all of whom were married (100%). About participants' personality type, they were divided into two types with half of them in each group, including 2 participants who were introverted personality types and 2 who were extrovert personality types. Lastly, all participants used social media for purposes that were not related to school activities for more than 4 hours per day (100%).

Table 1 General information of the samples

General information	Number of participants	%
Gender		
Male	2	50
Female	2	50
Number of brothers and sisters		
0 person	2	50
1 person	2	50
Current residence type		
Home	4	100
Dormitory	0	0
Welfare housing	0	0
Currently residing with		
Father and Mother	4	100
Father	0	0
Mother	0	0
Parents	0	0
Friends	0	0
Live alone	0	0
Parents' marital status		
Married	4	100
Separated	0	0
Divorced	0	0
Widowed	0	0
Personality type		
Introvert	2	50
Extrovert	2	50
Length of time spent using social media in one day not related to school activities		
1 hour per day	0	0
2 hours per day	0	0
3 hours per day	0	0
4 hours per day	0	0
More than 4 hours per day	4	100

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The data collection in this study was approved by the IRB of the Faculty of Associated Medical Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand (Approval Number: AMSEC-64EX-036) regarding the research settings.

Research Results

Adolescent behaviours related to social media use and social media addiction levels

After joining the programme, all participants had decreased behaviours related to social media use compared to before the programme (100%), which you could see from the S-MASS scores decreased. S-MASS scores can be interpreted into social media addiction levels. 2 of 4 participants had a change in social media addiction levels from high and moderate risk to moderate and low risk, respectively. S-MASS scores and social media addiction levels of the sample are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 S-MASS scores and social media addiction levels of the sample

Participant (n = 4)	S-MASS scores		Social media addiction levels	
	Before the programme	After the programme	Before the programme	After the programme
A	28	22	Moderate risk	Moderate risk
B	40	28	High risk	Moderate risk
C	38	31	High risk	High risk
D	22	15	Moderate risk	Low risk

Life Skills

For life skills, all participants had increased life skills scores after the programme (100%) including mean that increased from 25 to 27.25, and SD that increased from 4.2426 to 4.3493. Lastly, Std. error mean also increased from 2.12132 to 2.17466 after the programme. Life Skills scores are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Life Skills scores of the sample

Life skills score	Participant				(Mean)	(SD)	Std. Error Mean
	A	B	C	D			
Before the programme	30	22	27	21	25	4.2426	2.12132
After the programme	33	25	28	23	27.25	4.3493	2.17466

Conclusion, Discussion and Future Research

From the results, all participants had higher life skills scores and lower S-MASS scores, which changed the social media addiction levels of two participants to a lower level after participating in the life skills enhancement programme. S-MASS scores showed that participants had decreased social media behavioural usage after the life skills enhancement programme due to the realisation of how important it was to control their social media use and learn life skills through participation in the programme. This programme taught participants three main life skills related to the personality traits of adolescents who are at risk of facing social media addiction because they tend to lack these three life skills, leading to prolonged and uncontrolled use of social media (Vondrackova & Gabrhelik, 2016). Moreover, the programme based on cognitive and behavioural therapy should teach participants to realise the importance of their thoughts, emotions and physical symptoms on their behaviour. After that, participants are also taught about how to deal with their thoughts, emotions and physical symptoms, which motivate them to use social media by changing or managing them so as to cause the behaviour changes.

Lastly, the group process of occupational therapy or group dynamic of the group activity helps participants to learn a lot about the social media controlling technique from other members in the group. Moreover, it provides a broad perspective on solving the social media use problem so that participants can realise the external support and environment factors that will help them to deal with their behaviour concerning social media use (Cole, 2018). Overall, the results of the study revealed that the life skills enhancement programme could improve life skills and behaviours related to social media use in all samples. This programme can be a prototype for developing future life skills enhancement programmes for social media addiction problems.

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Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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