Pornography Addiction: Shedding Light on Internet Help Resources

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An Empirical Study of the Candeo Treatment Program by Sam Hardy and Joshua Ruchty of Brigham Young University

Introduction

Problematic Porn

Pornography usage rates have increased sharply over the last few decades (Díaz-Landino, in press). These trends may be attributed to internet pornography’s accessibility, affordability, and anonymity (Cooper 1998), factors that to sexual addicts, make online porn virtually too easy to acquire.

Ironically, these same factors that make online porn so convenient may be advantageous to addiction treatment programs, allowing addicts to overcome many of the obstacles that prevent recovery.

Candeo – What is it?

Candeo is a online, subscription-based recovery program for pornography addiction. Candeo guides subscribers through 10 levels of instruction – including text, video, and interactive exercises – all aimed toward restructuring thought processes in order to alter addictive behaviors.

Candeo – treatment model

The Candeo treatment model views and treats pornography as both an addiction and an obsessive-compulsive dysfunction. Therapeutic techniques are based on a cognitive-behavioral approach to managing unwanted thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this pilot study is to empirically evaluate the effectiveness of the Candeo Program by collecting self-reported improvement data from Candeo subscribers.

Methods

Participants

Participants completed an online questionnaire which measured several psychological and behavioral measures before and since beginning Candeo, allowing us to calculate improvement since beginning the program.

Perceptions of relative helpfulness

Participants were asked to compare Candeo’s helpfulness with other treatments they had explored or in which they were currently participating.

Psychological dimensions of recovery

Measures 11 variables representing psychological dimensions (such as positive affect or perceptions of agency over the addiction) the Candeo model aims to change. By recital, participants rated these dimensions from before and after beginning Candeo.

Behavioral dimensions of recovery

Participants recalled the frequency of sexual behaviors, such as pornography usage and masturbation, both before and since beginning Candeo.

Results

Perceptions of relative helpfulness

On average, participants rated Candeo at least as helpful as every other form of treatment they had tried in the past. See figure 1 for detailed comparisons.

Psychological dimensions of recovery

A repeated-measures MANOVA revealed both significant, (F(11, 112) = 44.83, p < .001), and large effect sizes (Partial η² = .82). A follow-up univariate ANOVA again confirmed significant differences and large effect sizes for all variables between pre-Candeo and current psychological dimensions. Differences are reported in Table 2.

Behavioral dimensions of recovery

All behaviors except exhibitionism (due possibly to low n = 18) showed both significant differences and large effect sizes between pre and post Candeo participation. See Table 3 for average means and standard deviations.

Correlations

Because the Candeo model posits that changes in psychological dimensions will improve behavior, we conducted a bivariate correlation between changes in psychological and behavioral dimensions. The results are displayed in Table 4.

Discussion

The present study was a preliminary examination of the Candeo online program for pornography addiction. The analyses provide a number of important insights about the potential effectiveness of online treatment formats, and the elements of the Candeo program in particular. In general, participants reported that Candeo was more helpful than other treatments they had tried.

Nevertheless, in clinical research, something is usually better than nothing (Oxford, 2008). Also, with retrospective accounts there is concern over self-report bias and problems with accurate recall. However, retrospective analyses of change are often related to longitudinal data on change (Jensen, Mortensen, & Lotz, 2008). The present study was a preliminary examination of the Candeo online program for pornography addiction. The analyses provide a number of important insights about the potential effectiveness of online treatment formats, and the elements of the Candeo program in particular. In general, participants reported that Candeo was more helpful than other treatments they had tried.

In sum, the Candeo program shows promise, and thus may potentially serve as an effective component of an overall approach to recovery from pornography addiction.

References


