Abstract

According to social cognitive theory, self-efficacy appraisals are a critical component of self-regulation and are highly predictive of behavioral outcomes (Bandura, 1997). The purpose of this study was to test the predictive power of coping self-efficacy appraisals (CSE) in understanding engagement with a web intervention for traumatic stress (My Trauma Recovery). The Triggers and Relaxation modules were utilized to test study hypotheses. Participants (N = 34) were trauma survivors who were part of a larger study. Self-reported engagement at 3 time points during the 15-minute session were measured and CSE at baseline as an independent variable. Repeated measures ANOVA indicated CSE was a significant predictor of engagement with the triggers module (F (1,23) = 5.24, p = .03), but not for the relaxation module (F (1,17) = .11, p = .75). Thus, higher perceived coping capability predicted greater engagement with a module designed to help build skills to manage posttraumatic intrusions.

Introduction

Social cognitive theory proposes that self-efficacy self-appraisals are a critical component of self-regulation and are highly predictive of behavioral outcomes (Bandura, 1997). The process of adaptation to traumatic stress requires extensive self-regulation and coping self-efficacy (CSE) is a powerful predictor of posttraumatic recovery (Benight & Bandura, 2004). Web interventions for traumatic stress have received increased attention with some positive outcomes as well as concerns about engagement (Benight, Ruzek, & Waldrep, 2008). The purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that CSE level would predict engagement with a web intervention for traumatic stress (My Trauma Recovery).

Method

The Triggers and Relaxation modules were utilized to test experimental hypotheses. Participants (N = 34) were trauma survivors who came into our human/computer interaction lab as part of a larger study investigating machine learning in this type of intervention. Self-reported engagement at 3 time points during the 15-minute session were measured and CSE at baseline as an independent variable. Mean age was 33.91 (SD = 15.54) for this mostly female (97.1%) sample. Most participants reported at least some college (61%).

Results

Repeated measures ANOVA indicated support for the hypothesis that CSE would be a significant predictor of engagement with a web intervention for trauma for the Triggers module (F (1,23) = 5.24, p = .03), but not for the Relaxation module (F (1,17) = .11, p = .75) (see Figure 1). Thus, greater trauma related CSE at baseline was related to increased engagement for the Triggers module, but not for the Relaxation module.

Discussion

Social cognitive theory provides a framework for understanding trauma survivor engagement with technology based interventions. The present findings support the utility of coping self-efficacy for trauma as a predictor of engagement with specific challenges related to trauma memories. Significant literature supports the importance of CSE beliefs in predicting posttraumatic outcomes (Benight & Bandura, 2004; Luszczynska, Benight, & Cieslak, 2009). The present findings suggest those with lower CSE may avoid critical aspects of a web-intervention system and may need additional support (coach or therapist) to make inroads in such an intervention. Future studies are needed to confirm this hypothesis.