



**NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY**

**INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE**

**THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS ONLINE COUNSELING IN COMPARISON  
TO FACE-TO-FACE COUNSELING AMONG UNITED ARAB ENIRATES  
CITIZENS**

**MASTER DEGREE OF  
COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL GUIDANCE**

**REEM AL MUNTASER**

**NICOSIA**

**JUNE, 2022**



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## Approval

We certify that we have read the thesis submitted by Reem Al Muntaser titled "The Attitude Towards Online Counselling in Comparison to Face-To-Face Counseling Among United Arab Emirates Citizens." and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Educational Sciences.

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## **Declaration**

I, Reem Al Muntaser hereby declare that all information, documents, analysis and results in this thesis have been collected and presented according to the academic rules and ethical guidelines of Institute of Graduate Studies, Near East University. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced information and data that are not original to this study.

Reem Al Muntaser

7/06/2022

## **Acknowledgments**

This work would not have been feasible without the dedication of my supervisor, Assist.Prof. Dr. Gizem Öneri Uzun, who was always approachable and dedicated to assisting me in delivering this paper.

I'd also like to thank my parents, family and friends, who have been my rock during this entire journey. Without them, I wouldn't have accomplished it.

**Reem Al Muntaser**

## **Abstract**

### **The Attitude Towards Online Counselling in Comparison to Face-To-Face Counseling Among United Arab Emirates Citizens**

**MA, Department of Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance**

**June 2022, 56 pages**

This research compares United Arab Emirates (UAE) citizens attitude toward online and face-to-face counseling. The aim of this research is to get a better understanding on UAE citizens attitude toward seeking either online or face-to-face counseling. After getting the ethical approval from the Scientific Research Ethic Committee, the use of both qualitative and quantitative research, which will include sharing the questionnaire online to the participants, as well as a focus group interviewing the participants. The research covered 180 participants who completed socio-demographic form, The Online Counseling Attitude Scale (OCAS), and the Face-to-Face Counseling Attitude Scale (FFAS). In which, a convenient sampling was used to secure replies from the participants and the results of this quantitative data was obtained using SPSS software. In addition, the qualitative data was obtained using a thematic analysis. Furthermore, it has been indicated that UAE citizens favor online counseling. However, there is a marginal difference when compared to face-to-face counseling. With that being said, more research is needed to address and understand on whether the digital solution will act as an alternative to face-to-face counseling. Counseling can act as functional source for seeking mental health service due to its easy accessibility.

**Key Words:** *Online counseling, face-to-face counseling, attitude, mental health.*

**ÖZET**  
**Karşılaştırmada Çevrimiçi Danışmanlığa Yönelik Tutum**  
**Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri Vatandaşları Arasında Yüz Yüze Danışmanlık**

**MA, Psikolojik Danışmanlık ve Rehberlik Anabilim Dalı**  
**Haziran 2022, 58 sayfa**

Bu araştırmada Birleşik Arap Emirlikleri (BAE) vatandaşlarının çevrimiçi ve yüz yüze danışmanlığa yönelik tutumları araştırılmak istenmiştir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, BAE vatandaşlarının çevrimiçi veya yüz yüze danışmanlık aramaya yönelik tutumlarını daha iyi anlamaktır. Bilimsel Araştırmalar Etik Kurulu'ndan etik onay alındıktan sonra, hem nitel hem de nicel araştırmaların kullanılması, sorgulayıcının çevrimiçi olarak katılımcılarla paylaşılmasının yanı sıra katılımcılarla bir odak grup görüşmesi yapılması şeklinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada kullanılan ölçekler, kişisel bilgi formu, Çevrimiçi Danışmanlık Tutum Ölçeği (OCAS) ve Yüz Yüze Danışmanlık Tutum Ölçeği'ni (FFAS) tamamlayan 180 katılımcıyı kapsamaktadır. Katılımcılardan yanıt alabilmek için uygun örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmış ve bu araştırmanın sonuçları SPSS yazılımı kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre BAE vatandaşlarının çevrimiçi danışmanlığı tercih ettiği belirtilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, yüz yüze danışma ile karşılaştırıldığında anlamlı farklılıklar bulunmaktadır. Dijital çözümün yüz yüze danışmanlığa bir alternatif olarak hareket edip etmeyeceğini ele almak ve anlamak için daha fazla araştırmaya ihtiyaç vardır. Çevrimiçi danışmanlık kolay erişilebilirliği nedeniyle ruh sağlığı hizmeti aramak için işlevsel bir kaynak olabilir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** *Çevrimiçi danışma, yüz yüze danışma, tutum, ruh sağlığı.*

## Table of Contents

<b>Approval</b> .....	1
<b>Declaration</b> .....	2
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	3
<b>Abstract</b> .....	4
<b>ÖZET</b> .....	5
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	6
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	8
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	9
<b>CHAPTER I Introduction</b> .....	10
Background.....	10
Importance of research .....	14
Purpose of the Study .....	15
Research Questions.....	15
Limitations of the study .....	16
Definition of Terms .....	16
<b>CHAPTER II</b> .....	18
Literature Review.....	18
Background.....	18
Advantages of online and face-to-face Counseling .....	20
Disadvantages of online and face-to-face counseling.....	21
Ethical consideration.....	23
Response of participant towards online and face-to- face counseling.....	25
Theoretical Framework .....	26
<b>CHAPTER III</b> .....	28
Methodology .....	28
Research Design .....	28
Participants.....	29
Data Collection Tools .....	30
Quantitative Tools.....	30
Qualitative Tools.....	31
Data Collection Procedure .....	32
Data Analysis Procedure .....	33
Quantitative Data Analysis .....	33



Qualitative Data Analysis .....	33
<b>CHAPTER IV .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Results and Findings .....	36
Findings.....	36
Qualitative findings:.....	41
<b>CHAPTER V Discussion.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>CHAPTER VI Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>46</b>
Conclusion .....	46
Recommendations .....	47
<b>References .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>51</b>
Appendix- A: Sociodemographic Form .....	51
Appendix -B: The Online Counseling Attitude Scale (OCAS) and Face-To-Face Counseling Attitude Scale .....	52
APPENDIX C: Scientific Research Ethic Committee Letter .....	54
APPENDIX –D: Plagiarism Report .....	55
APPENDIX –E: Author Resume .....	56

### **List of Tables**

Table 1. Demographic Variable- Gender.....	29
Table 2. Demographic Variable- Age.....	29
Table 3. Sumamry transcribed of participant’s feedback.....	34
Table 4. Descriptive statistics of Gender Preference .....	36
Table 5. Paired sample statistics .....	37
Table 6. Descriptive statistics: Attitude toward discussing personal problems with an online or face-to-face counselor .....	38
Table 7. Overall Mean of online and face-to-face counselling .....	38
Table 8. T-Test: gender preference towards online and face-to-face counseling.....	39
Table 9. Participant response to the qualitative questions .....	42

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1. Hierarchical Coding Frame.....	42
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### **List of Abbreviations**

**APA:** American Psychological Association: is a scientific and professional organization that represents psychologists in the United States (Willis, 2018).

**COVID:** Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is defined as illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China (Cennimo, 2021)

**HIPPA:** Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, a federal law that required the creation of national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge. (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), 2018).

**MENA:** Is an acronym for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The region is typically considered to include around 19 countries, but the definition can be stretched to include up to 27 (CHEN, 2022).

**PTSD:** Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, or rape or who have been threatened with death, sexual violence or serious injury (Torres, 2020).

**UAE:** United Arab Emirates is a country made up of seven 'emirates' Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwain, Ras Al-Khaimah, Fujairah

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background**

Mental health has been the subject for some researchers; however, limited research has been conducted to address the newly emerged mental health solution, such as online counseling. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), telepsychology “is the provision of psychological services using telecommunication technologies” (Health Information Technology and Telepsychology, 2016). It has emerged as a viable alternative to traditional face-to-face counseling in recent years, at least for a segment of the population. The growth in development has shifted the traditional medium, the internet has changed everyday events, it has shifted the way we view communication and the way we interact with each other. We can now communicate while traveling. Hence, the Internet is now considered the preferred medium of communication.

In one way or another, everything now requires the use of the internet. Booking a flight, paying expenses, and scheduling your first online counseling session are just a few examples. Online counseling provides mental health support for those who are in need from various locations. It also includes delivering sessions through several means such as video, chat, audio, or a combination of all. Online counseling has helped people to communicate with a mental health expert, through accessible and secured online platforms and applications. Everyone can now access an expert with one click, you can book a session within a few seconds and it does not require any effort, which is convenient for the large number of populations. Nonetheless, little is known about how online counseling has emerged and how it evolved to become a new approach for those who have limited adequate access to mental

health services. Though, an increasing in demand can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Businesses, stakeholders, and even governments are now investing in online counseling. People began seeking online solutions, mostly due to its simple accessibility, cost, and convenience. According to a study conducted by University of Zurich and written by Birgit Wagne researches for 'counselling online' increased by 124% since the COVID outbreak. During the pandemic, the majority of the population had their movements restricted and were not able to engage in their daily life activities. Considering those who visit their counselors in their clinic and have their sessions conducted face-to-face. The pandemic has affected their movement, due to factors such as, quarantine, lockdown and self-isolation, which by some means or other affected their treatment plan. Online counseling made it easier for the therapist as well as the client to digitally communicate. Moreover, according to Sora (2021) in her journal article titled Acceptance and Use of Telepsychology From the Clients' Perspective: Questionnaire Study to Document, The content and structure of online therapy is the same as in a face-to-face session. Putting into consideration, the restrictions on the session time, confidently and ethical matters. It is crucial to identify solutions that ensure everyone has access to mental health care. because if neglected, poor health outcomes, suicide, divorce, substance misuse, child neglect and abuse, and adolescent misbehavior are all possible results. These are all well-documented negative consequences of failing to address the issue. Yet, mental health stigma is a huge barrier for individuals seeking mental healthcare. As they consider several factors which prevents them from seeking help, such as being seen as incompetent, afraid of being judged by society, and the believe that they can never get better. According to a representative European sample, 6.5% of people needed mental health care, but more than 3% of those who needed it did not obtain it. The stigma is even aggravated in the Arab countries, especially in the Gulf. People tend to avoid asking for help to avoid any

sort of labeling. The majority of United Arab Emirates (UAE) nationals are conservative and they tend to consider social norms. "There is a lot of stigma surrounding mental health," said Paula Keenan, a project manager with Community Mental Health. "People would prefer attribute an issue to a physical ailment than as a symptom of mental health." (Samaha, 2009), Moreover, according to Dr Amal Alhalyan, "Mental illness is taboo, and is often blamed on a lack of religion," said a specialist registrar in psychiatry. "Depression was regarded by some people to be a sign of bad spirits or possession, and they would resort to home-made cures to attempt to get rid of it," she added. Furthermore, Dr. Lata Bijlani, a general practitioner at Falcon Medical Clinic and a 22-year resident in Dubai, discusses the social stigma surrounding mental health and the reality that insurance does not cover the expenditures. "In today's digital age, it is simpler to convince people to open up about their psychological problems online than in person," Dr. Bijlani says. This is especially true for teenagers and millennials,' who rarely go offline and never leave their phones. Taking this into consideration, the features that online counseling offers are seen conducive.

To emphasize, it encourages patients as it keeps the client's identity anonymous. This feature is considered a lifeline for those who do not like to share their personal identity and prefer to keep their identity anonymous. In addition to this, in UAE the rural population has estimated to reach 12.95%, and online services is considered more convenient to them because of its easy accessibility. Another factor to consider is the number of mental health specialists per 100,000 in the UAE, which is as following: 0.3 psychiatrists, 0.51 psychologists, 0.25 social workers, 0.04 occupational therapists, and 0.04 other health-care professional's workers (Fatima Rashed Al-Darmaki, 2015). For the reason that mental healthcare in the UAE is an expensive business, advocates in the UAE are looking for low-cost mental health services. A lot of work has been invested to tackle all these concerns of labeling and stigmatizing for those who are seeking mental health services. Consequently, online counseling has eased people to reach to a larger pool of counselors. The UAE government has been addressing these concerns and acted upon it to diminish such misconception. Solutions have been established by working with online platforms that are based in UAE to deliver the services to UAE nationals. For instance, a platform called "Tegahwa" is offering online marriage counseling session free of charges to UAE Nationals (Chakraborty, 2021). Moreover, another platform and application called "Takalam" is also owned by a UAE national called "Khawla Hammad", who created this platform to mainly address the concerns of stigma in the UAE society, and to have the service accessible for everyone (Warner, 2021). On the other hand, face-to-face counseling is the traditional mean of mental healthcare. However, the only difference would be the method of communication. Face-to-face counseling is conducted in a counselor office or clinic, even in a health care setting. Whereas online counseling is conducted through digital communication, like Zoom, Google Meets and Skype. Studies showed, client outcomes and the quality of their connections with therapists were shown to be

equivalent in online counseling and in-person settings. However, many further studies have supported the value of teletherapy (Joyce, 2020).

The transition from face-to-face to online counseling was driven by a shortage of mental health practitioners, as well as the increase in demand for mental health services and the scarcity of skilled counselors. Furthermore, the need for online therapy has grown, and people have begun to devote their time and health looking into online solutions.

Online counseling has been utilized to serve as many numbers of clients as possible offering 24-hour available practitioners unlike face-to-face counseling, where a client will need to book 2 weeks in advance to lock a slot.

The research paper aims to address the effectiveness of both approaches and specifically light on the influence of online solutions.

### **Importance of research**

This research paper aims to understand the differences in the attitude among UAE citizens toward seeking digital or traditional solution for counseling. In addition, this research will also explore recent research and previous ones to understand the importance and preference of both approaches.

In previous researchers, there has been different preference toward seeking both approaches, online counseling made it easier to get through the stigma that has previously been associated with mental health disorders. Online counseling can also act as an effective approach for educating people about mental health. It also helps in developing psychological strength to manage everyday events.

Furthermore, face-to-face counseling is an essential approach to establish an effective communication with client and build rapport. According to the American Psychological



Association. About 75 percent of people who participate in talk therapy experience some benefit.

In this regard, the analysis that is presented in this research paper will provide a better understanding on UAE citizen attitude towards the use of online counseling or if they favor the use of face-to-face counseling.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Examining the perceptions of UAE citizens about online counseling compared to face-to-face counseling.

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitude towards online counseling in comparison to face-to-face counselling among UAE Citizens. Mainly this study looked at UAE Citizens attitudes toward using both online and/or face-to-face counseling.

More specifically, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To determine if online counseling can act as a useful source for UAE citizens.
- To get a better understanding on the preference between online and face- to- face counseling

### **Research Questions**

The research questions of this study are:

Q1: Is there any significant difference amongst UAE citizens' attitude towards online counselling and face- to -face counseling?

Q2: Is there a significant difference in terms of the participants gender?

### **Limitations of the study**

When we discuss mental health in the MENA region, we always face limitation in terms of finding the required literature. In this research paper there was few limitations that could be addressed in future researches. First, the lack of previous literature conducted in the UAE and in the MENA.

The fact that little studies have been conducted to address the ethical concerns on the use of face-to-face counseling.

Second aspect would be the limitations in the scope of discussions. Furthermore, the majority of the participants who took part in the study are between the ages of 25 and 34, with only a few participants between the ages of 35 and 55. As a result, there has been no age diversity in this research. Adding to this, the quantitative data could have designed to reach larger number of participants rather than implementing it into a focus group.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Anonymity:** The quality or state of being anonymous (anonymity, n.d.)

**Attitudes:** according to the APA dictionary of psychology attitude are relatively enduring and general evaluation of an object, person, group, issue, or concept on a dimension ranging from negative to positive. Attitudes provide summary evaluations of target objects and are often assumed to be derived from specific beliefs, emotions, and past behaviors associated with those objects.

**Convenient:** suitable for your purposes and needs and causing the least difficulty (convenient, n.d.).

**Ethics:** Ethics codes provide professional standards for counselors with the purpose of protecting the dignity and well-being of clients. (American Counseling Association Code of Ethics, 2016).

**Face-to-face counseling:** Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose (Charles, n.d.)

**Online counseling:** Online counseling is defined as the delivery of therapeutic interventions in cyberspace where communication between a trained professional counselor and client(s) is facilitated using computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies (Richards & Viganó, 2012).

**Stigma:** Stigma involves negative attitudes or discrimination against someone based on a distinguishing characteristic such as a mental illness, health condition, or disability (Caddell, 2022).

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### Background

According to an article in the Cornell Chronicle that was written in 2007. The history of online counseling has emerged in the 1986 with the creation of Dear Uncle Ezra, a Cornell University question and answer forum where people commonly discussed mental health difficulties. It's unclear who was answering the questions or whether or not they were professional therapists. Uncle Ezra was described as "an unidentified Cornell staffer with a mental health background". Dear Uncle Ezra was followed by a slew of prominent mental health advice columns and forums. Psychologist John Grohol founded a public mental health chat in 1995, which grew into Psych Central, a popular mental health publication and forum. After that, Psychologist Leonard Holmes offered the first mental health consultation service in which participants may donate money to him. Other fee-based mental health services sprung up rapidly, but none of them are still operational now (Rauch, 2017).

Dr. David Sommers was the first to develop internet therapy that allowed for ongoing communication as well as a confidential therapeutic connection. His approach was diametrically opposed to the public mental health advice columns and forums that had previously dominated the industry. His practice, which began in 1995, relied on emails and occasional real-time conversations to conduct business. Hundreds of clients in a variety of nations receive therapy. Clients paid Sommers a charge for private, one-on-one counseling that mirrored traditional therapy more closely than the free public forms.

In the same year, therapist Ed Needham established Cyberpsych Counseling, charging \$15 per hour-long session. Throughout the 2000s, online counseling grew in popularity and acceptance. Businesses and therapy practices began to strive to scale up so that they could serve thousands of people at the same time (Rauch, 2017).

A 2014 study published in the Journal of Affective Disorders found that online treatment was just as effective as face-to-face treatment for depression (Morin, 2019). Telepsychology is increasingly being incorporated in clinical practice, being offered in many psychotherapy centers, especially after the impact of the pandemic. Online therapy can take less time than face-to-face counseling. You can simply dial a number or log in to a site, and the session can happen wherever you are comfortable. When you can't access a therapist in person, video appointments can be as effective.

Furthermore, in another article entitled Telemental health for children and adolescents written by Nicole E Gloff , they have stated that when comparing to in-person treatment, online counseling can be just as successful in treating mental health issues.

Moreover, A recent research entitled Video therapy and therapeutic alliance in the age of COVID-19 written by Susan Simpson, has even compared the quality of the therapeutic alliance and empathy across platforms (video conferencing, phone, and face-to-face) and found that there was no significant difference.

Whereas another article entitled Therapist Adherence and Competence with Manualized Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for PTSD Delivered via Videoconferencing Technology written by B. Christopher Frueh (2007), stated that Clients continue to feel connected with their therapist even when in online settings but this appears to be particularly true if their therapist is comfortable working online.

In addition to this, a journal written by Rakesh Maurya entitled *Counselors' Perceptions of Distance Counseling: A National Survey*, reviewed that online counseling offers an overview of counseling theoretical frameworks and associated interventions. While Cognitive-Behavioral and Solution-Focused Therapy were the most commonly used theoretical orientations, a variety of other models, such as Psychodynamic, Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing, and Person-Centered Therapy, were also beneficial. A number of psychiatric and somatic conditions, including anxiety, sadness, and conduct disorders, have been proven to benefit from online counseling. Anger management, PTSD, self-esteem, marital trouble, grieving, and sadness were also highlighted as difficulties that practitioners successfully handled using online counseling. When it came to client issues with long-term effects and efficacy, online therapies performed similarly to face-to-face interventions. (Francisco & Archer, 2016; Gibson et al., 2011).

### **Advantages of online and face-to-face Counseling**

Online counseling has increased the accessibility of mental health services, in a study called *Mental Health Service Provision in Low- and Middle-Income Countries* which was conducted in Canada and written by Shanaya Rathod stated that there has been an increasing access to evidence-based services in rural areas or communities without specialized mental health services in Canada and in low- and middle-income countries (Francisco & Archer, 2016; Gibson et al., 2011).

As for client concerns treated via online counseling, Baca (2016) Practitioners are able to reliably diagnose a wide range of disorders, according to the survey. And distant counselors are successful in assisting clients with issues like panic disorder and childhood depression. Moreover, despite the fact that people are now open to mental health services, there are quite number of sigma who are still stigmatizing seeking mental health services, but find online counseling as an appealing choice. In a study conducted in Malaysia stated that Asians are

less comfortable with self-disclosure and are less likely to psychologize their difficulties. Given the severity of such cultural obstacles, online counseling's inherent attributes of relative anonymity and geographical distance may make it an appealing choice for many who would otherwise go untreated (Kah P. Wong, 2018).

According to the American Psychological Association. Around 75% of people who participate in talk therapy benefit from it in some way.

On the other hand, face-to-face counseling provides more control, in which the therapist can easily change the pace of individual sessions to suit the client's needs. The therapist can also provide instant feedback on the client's development.

People with a range of mental problems have been shown to benefit from face-to-face treatment and talk therapy., it has been declared that in some situation face-to-face counseling is more effective than antidepressants alone.

### **Disadvantages of online and face-to-face counseling**

In contrast, online counseling may not be the best solution for every concern. The American Psychological Association (APA) issued a number of guidelines cautioning against using online counseling if the client is profoundly mentally ill. For instance, if they are in danger of harming themselves or others. (APA, 2014).

Some other aspect that was addressed by Richards in his entitled article The impact of technology on therapeutic alliance and engagement in psychotherapy: The therapist's perspective, is that counselors may nevertheless experience hesitation regarding the use of online counseling depending on their years of experience and seniority. For many senior experienced counselors, their foundational preparation occurred before the Internet age, while other experienced counselors had some use of adjunct technologies in their face-to-face practices, including encrypted email/text contacts and a professional website (Richards, 2018).

Vincent (2017) added in his article Advancing telecommunication technology and its impact on psychotherapy in private practice: Telecommunication technology and psychotherapy, that when compared to younger experienced counselors, elder counselors (61-70 years) were partially more cautious to shift to complex technology (40-60 years of age). (Richards, 2018). Another disadvantage that might arise is the access to internet, online counseling requires the use of internet to be able to conduct the session. This might be applicable for other countries. However, in UAE 99% of the citizens are active internet users according to a study conducted in 2021 by the global media insight.

In spite of the advantages of online counseling, face-to-face visibility for the client and therapist to detect body language and tone-of-voice indicators is not possible with services that only use written communication, such as email or online chat.

In a study entitled College students' attitudes, stigma, and intentions toward seeking online and face-to-face counseling written by Matthew D. Bird, the results indicated that there were higher degrees of self-stigma and discomfort with online counseling compared to face-to-face counseling. Most likely, this is due to the lack of knowledge regarding online counseling, and That could help to explain why people are less likely to seek aid from this sort of treatment. Face-to-face counseling includes limitations, for instance, client who live in rural areas have limited access to resources to seek an in-person session. In addition to this, the lack of mental health services and therapist in rural area. Also, counselors and client are at high risk of developing a personal relationship which will affect the outcome of the therapeutic relationship along with disclosing the code of ethics. Furthermore, UAE was ranked second most costly in a Mental Health Price Index compiled by German market researchers Kenkou, with an average of \$163 for a one-hour therapy session, behind Switzerland, where therapists charge an average of \$206 per session (Webster, 2022).



## **Ethical consideration**

Major elements should be placed into consideration before engaging in an online counseling for both the client and counselor's sake. The American Psychological Association (APA) recommends that therapists employ teletherapy to assist their patients during a crisis, despite the fact that many therapists are not completely trained in online counseling (Perry et al., 2020). Ethically, counselors are not allowed to abandon their clients. To provide online psychotherapy, training is needed and guidelines are also offered by APA to ensure appropriate technology-related competences, as well as, clinical and therapeutic competences specific to the online setting. In particular, the therapist would require knowledge of ethical approaches and guidelines, as well as specific legal requirements and policies.

There are various advantages to choosing online therapy. However, one of the most common worries concerning the use of unsecure websites or unencrypted communication tools, such as commercially available software that can be easily hacked, compromises privacy, confidentiality, security, and safety in online psychology. By adhering to HIPPA regulations, online platforms and applications can address security and privacy concerns. In which, the regulation mentions that "covered entities must protect individually identifiable health information against deliberate or inadvertent misuse or disclosure." To comply, providers must establish protections to protect confidentiality and prevent unauthorized access and HIPPA strives to protect patient sensitive health information from being divulged. (Grohs, 2015).

According to Julia Stoll in her article Ethical Issues in Online Psychotherapy: A Narrative Review, online unethical, malicious, or abusive behavior may be easy. For example, practicing without a license or adequate training, or even pretending to be a therapist are all examples of unethical activity. To bypass this concern, online mental health providers are required to practice and conduct online sessions only if they are licensed. On the other hand,

in some circumstances where online counseling platforms notify clients before arranging a session with a counselor, the counselor's educational background and licensure status. This will offer the client a clear notion before they book their session and avoid any misconceptions. Previous studies suggest that telehealth training should be included in psychology graduate programs, as well as post-graduate continuing education (Callan et al., 2017).

To emphasize, according to the Survey of psychologists' telebehavioral health practices: technology use, ethical issues, and training needs, which was conducted by Glueckauf around 90% of psychologists agree that "mental health practitioners should undergo training about the clinical, legal, and/or ethical issues linked to telehealth. In order to provide telehealth services, the majority of participants said they needed technical training. In addition, nearly 40% of psychologists felt they needed telehealth training or guidance because they lacked the abilities to handle emergency circumstances while employing online counseling modalities. The lack of self-efficacy among therapists, which was linked to a lack of training opportunities, was found to be a significant obstacle to telepsychology use in a recent study. (Mariana Sampaio, 2021). Therefore, APA and other organization has offered workshops to train therapist on how to conduct online sessions. On the other hand, face to face counselors are also obligated for keeping their clients' information private. This indicates they're in charge of keeping all personal information, such as contact information and client personal details. These must be kept in a secure location where only the therapist and other authorized employees can access them. That information is not to be shared with anybody else by the counselor.

A study conducted in America between 2009 and 2013, showed that there were 999 violations that resulted in disciplinary measures against professional counselors in the 28 states studied. Failure to meet continuing education (CE) requirements was the most often observed

violation. Dual relationship violations were the second most prevalent form of violation, while unprofessional conduct was the third most common type of violation. (Boccone, 2017). Past research conducted by Neukrug, Healy & Herlihy in 1992, it has been stated that the most common ethical complaints to state licensing boards: 27% were practicing without a license, 20% had a sexual relationship with a client, and 15% were "Other" – poor quality of care, violations of the ethics code, and insufficient supervision. (Neukrug, 1992). These are major ethical concerns, that can be avoided once counselors and clients follow the APA Ethics Code Principles and Standards.

### **Response of participant towards online and face-to- face counseling**

According to a study in 2011, it has stated that participants attitude toward computer-based therapy (of any type) can help people with mental illnesses." When the data was studied further, it was discovered that 76.29 % of participants agreed that they believe that computer-based for some illnesses, interventions (of any form) can be a helpful therapeutic approach. The participants in this study presented with 24.13% when asked if computer-based interventions can be as effective as face-to-face (Perle, 2011).

Adding to the above, another form of therapy, called Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, focuses on defining goals and finding answers to issues, according to a 2020 study. College students with mild to severe anxiety were randomly allocated to attend either online or in-person treatment, according to the study. Both therapeutic modalities were equally helpful in lowering anxiety (Seymour, (n.d.)).

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, people are now more open to online solutions, with the increase number of platforms and application created to dedicated this service to the public customers.

Furthermore, in his book entitled *Mental Health and Psychological Practice in the United Arab Emirates*, Amber demonstrated the reason behind why UAE citizen will access online counseling, and according to him geography was one of the factors mentioned, people in rural area do not have access to mental health support. In addition to this, mental health practitioners tend to be concentrated in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Another challenge mentioned in the book is the lifestyle in the UAE, this is due to the fact that people tend to work long hours and have limited time, and the difficulty to secure an appointment with a mental health expert.

Mental health experts in UAE, stated that online counseling requires some essential's skills that practitioners need to acquire. Other practitioners used online counseling when they have already established in-person relationship (Carrie York Al-Karam, 2015).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theories considered pertinent to this online counseling research is the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, this theory aims to explain user intentions by proposing a unified model for information system use. UTAUT was built by Venkatesh, Morris, and Davis as a unified of eight existing acceptance models that have been published as a unified theory of user acceptance of technology. This theory was developed to assist businesses in analysing user behaviour and the elements that influence it. However, it has been adapted to a number of sectors that utilize technological advancements. This theory can help in addressing the user's attitude toward the usage of technology before implementing the use of online counseling to get a better understanding on the user general perception of the use of technology. This is quite essential to understand UAE citizen's perception toward the usage of technology and implementing these solutions to enhance their mental health through online counseling. Furthermore, the acceptance model for information technology is based on

behavioural science and social psychology. Scholars examine organizational and personal behaviour in the adoption of information technology from the consumer's point of view and summarize the technology behaviour laws for accepting new information technology (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Furthermore, Online counseling programs are frequently regarded as less effective because there isn't face-to-face interaction, but incorporating creative techniques into them might help counselors-in-training grow personally, advance their careers, and increase their self-awareness. This is according to (Villarreal-Davis et al. 2021). In order to increase students' creativity while taking online counseling courses, the authors suggested adopting methods including expressive arts, online creative writing, and visual miniatures with mindfulness. Such cutting-edge methods could assist potential counselors in gaining confidence in their counseling abilities. As a result, incorporating innovative techniques into counseling programs may enable students to deliver efficient online therapy. The psychodynamic hypothesis is a psychological theory proposed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and his followers to explain the origins of human behaviour. All psychological theories that regard human behaviour as a result of the interaction of drives and forces within the person, particularly the unconscious, and between the various personality structures are considered psychodynamic. Many research studies utilizing psychoanalytic methods to treat patients with neurotic symptoms found talk therapy to be effective (Janet, 1914). Many current therapies, such as cognitive behavioural therapy and dialectical behavioural therapy, are based on psychoanalysis' underpinnings; nevertheless, they are more research-based than Freud's work.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methodology**

In this study the researchers used mixed method by combining both qualitative and quantitative research method, which will include sharing the questionnaire online to the participants, as well as selecting 8 participants to take part in the focus group.

The use of quantitative and qualitative (quantitative using an online questionnaire and qualitative using a focus group), the interviewer will implement a semi-structured interview which will cover few determined questions followed by an open discussion, the aim is to have the participants express their thoughts and insights freely.

The determined questions in the qualitative method, which will include the following few questions;

1. Have you tried online counseling?

If the answer is yes to the first question, how was your experience?

2. What are your general thoughts about online counselling?
3. Explain why would you consider using or reuse online counselling?

### **Research Design**

The use of a mixed methods research in which combining the elements of quantitative research and qualitative research. More specifically, for the quantitative method non-probability sampling was utilized in this study, and the type of non-probability sample used was convenient sampling. For the reason that the questionnaire was performed online and a convenient sampling method was applied to collect the responses from the participants. In addition to this, the qualitative method covered a focus group of 8 participants who took part in this research, there were a few determined questions addressed to the participants followed by a discussion.

## Participants

A sample of 180 English and Arabic speaking participants completed the questionnaire, the Participants were asked two 10-point Likert scale-style questions to assess their attitude toward the use of online or face-to-face counseling.

Participants who took part of this study were above 18 years and they were informed they can withdraw from the research study at any point. The participants completed the survey voluntary and were not rewarded for completing it. The population sample consist of 46.1% (83) male participants and 53.9% (97) female participants, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1:

### *Demographic Variable- Gender*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	83	46.1	46.1	46.1
	Female	97	53.9	53.9	100.0
	Total	180	100.0	100.0	

56.1% of participants who took part in the study had an average age range of 25–34 years as seen in table 2.

Table 2:

### *Demographic Variable- Age*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	49	27.2	27.2	27.2
	25-34	101	56.1	56.1	83.3

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
35-44	20	11.1	11.1	94.4
45-54	6	3.3	3.3	97.8
55-64	4	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	180	100.0	100.0	

In addition to this, 16% of the participants are working in the field of sales and 15% of participants are full time students.

## **Data Collection Tools**

### **Quantitative Tools**

The quantitative data included questioner, whereas after completing the demographic questions that covered the age, gender, location and employment status, the participants completed The Online Counseling Attitude Scale (OCAS), followed by the Face-to-Face Counseling Attitude Scale (FFAS).

The OCAS was used to gather information on attitudes toward online therapy. The OCAS is a 10-item questionnaire that was developed by Rochlen in 2004, the scale includes two subscales: Value of Online Counseling (OC-V) and Discomfort with Online Counseling (OC-D) that examines attitudes toward online counseling (OC-D). Participants were asked questions such as "I would confide my personal problems with an online counselor.," and "Seeking help with an online counselor would be the last option I would consider if I were having a personal problem," are two examples., the OCAS was included because it gives a measurable value of online counseling as well as a measurement of online counseling discomfort.

The Face-To-Face Attitude Survey (FFAS) which also includes a 10-item questionnaire with two subscales: Value of face-to-face counseling (FF-V) and Discomfort with face-to-face



counseling (FF-D) is a slight modification of the OCAS, except that the "online counseling" has been substituted with "face-to-face counseling." For instance, FFAS: "I would confide my personal problems in a face-to-face counselor" and "Seeking help with a face-to-face counselor would be the last option I would consider if I were having a personal problem,"

### **Qualitative Tools**

A focus group was employed in the qualitative method, in which eight participants took part in the focus group, the sample was collected through a snowball sampling. Moreover, a semi-structured interview was adopted with a few determined questions to be addressed to the participants followed by unplanned discussion. Before the start of the focus group the participants were provided with a brief introduction and at the end of the focus group there was a closing section. The focus group was conducted in library located in Sharjah, the library rents a medium size room for the purpose of meeting, discussion and also for studying, before booking the room all of the participants agreed to the selected location and accordingly the focus group was set.

As mentioned earlier there were a few planned questions to be addressed to the percipients to obtain a general idea about their feedback and experience with online counseling.

The questions were the following:

1. Have you tried online counseling?

If the answer is yes to the first question, how was your experience?

2. What are your general thoughts about online counselling?
3. Explain why would you consider using or reuse online counselling?

**Data Collection Procedure**

Data was collected in the beginning of May 2022 after the consent of the ethical approval from the Scientific Research Ethic Committee at the Near East University in Northern Cyprus. After obtaining the approval, the data of both quantitative and qualitative was secured.

The quantitative data was conducted and gathered online; questionnaire was designed using Typeform software, and was shared online through social media accounts and WhatsApp. Putting into consideration, that only UAE citizens were permitted to fill in the questionnaire due to the fact that the study is addressing UAE citizens. A total of 180 participated in this study. The questionnaire takes about 6 minutes to be completed by the participants and participants in this study were encouraged to ask friends and other peers to complete the survey in order to acquire a bigger sample size.

The qualitative data was collected through a focus group of 8 participants that was conducted in person in a private library, the focus group took 45 minutes to be completed and the participants were encouraged to participate during the discussion and to respect the other members point of view. Participants personal details were kept confidential, in which no individual have access to it.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

### **Quantitative Data Analysis**

The quantitative data was collected using SPSS software, the use of a T-Test to compare the mean of two samples and descriptive statistics to gather the overall mean of both scales by using SPSS software. In addition to this, the use of Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency of both scales, the Online Counseling Attitude Scale (OCAS) reliability score is .645 which is an acceptable score according to George Ursachi in his article "How reliable are measurement scales? External factors with indirect influence on reliability estimators" (George Ursachi, 2015). Furthermore, the face-to-Face Counseling Attitude Scale (FFAS) reliability score in this study is .686.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

The qualitative data of the focused group was collected using a thematic analysis. After the reduction of the collected data, Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 10), analysis entails three simultaneous tasks. data reduction, data visualization, and conclusion drawing. the use of transcription to cover the main feedbacks shared during the focus group and to gather the participants response to the qualitative questions. According to Krueger & Casey (2000) the use of either a long table or a computer-based approach for cutting, pasting, sorting, arranging and rearranging data through comparing and contrasting the relevant information.

It is possible to analyze the transcripts using Microsoft Word, or indeed 'by hand'. In the data reduction process, the data can be gathered through writing summaries, coding, teasing out themes, making cluster, making partitions, writing memos) the aim is to have the researcher arrange data and remove extraneous information. With that being said, the following summary were extracted based on the participants feedback during the focus group.

Table 3:

*Summary transcribed of participant's feedback*

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Transcription

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“I believe online counseling can act as useful source for those who do not feel comfortable speaking out about their personal problems and online counseling can be a good solution”-

AQ

“I personally tried online counseling the first two sessions were pleasant and effective, but I didn't feel there is a rapport established between me and the counselor on that base I shifted to face-to-face counseling and I am still seeing my psychologist”- MH

“Online counseling is very beneficial due to its easy accessibility and affordable prices”

LM

“I believe online counseling is more convenient than face-to-face counseling I can have access to counselors who are in the same country/ culture as I am in rather than searching for a counselor”- SA

“Both face-to-face and online counseling are useful but online counseling won't restrict you with the location of the session since its conducted online” MJ

“I prefer face-to-face counseling because I can easily talk to the counselor and I prefer to do the sessions in person” KI

“For me online counseling is more convenient, I have tried it and I attended 4 sessions online, it was useful and I recommend it”- RA

“face-to-face counseling would be better for the counselor and client because they can communicate and counselor can observe the client reaction, for online clients can switch the camera off or even use the chat option which doesn't give you the impression that this is not a counseling session, both online and face-to-face counseling are good option and it depends on the client which method they prefer”. -AM

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Bearing the above in mind, table 3 indicates that around 5 out of 8 participants favored online counseling and 1 was neutral about using both approaches and two favored face-to-to face counseling. This indicates that the participants who took part in the focus group showed preference toward online counseling.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results and Findings

After the data has been collected, a screening has been done to search for any missing values. In this study, there were no missing values. The participants were asked questions to address their attitude toward using online or face-to-face Counseling, a mean of 2.15 reported that using online counseling helped them to learn about themselves, and a mean score of 2.07 for face-to-face counseling. In addition to this, participants presented with a mean of 2.04 when asked if online counseling was available at no charge, results showed that they would consider trying it compared to face-to-face counseling with a mean of 1.92.

### Findings

Table 4 also indicates that there is slight preference among male to confide their personal problems with an online counselor in comparison with females. Both genders showed preference in seeking online solutions.

Table 4:

#### *Descriptive statistics of gender preference*

Gender		I would confide my personal problems with an online counselor	I would confide my personal problems in a Face-To-Face counseling session
Male	Mean	2.7470	2.2892
	N	83	83
	Std. Deviation	1.36009	1.17422
Female	Mean	2.6701	2.3608
	N	97	97
	Std. Deviation	1.13396	1.09150

Moreover, when participants were asked if they are willing to try any of the approaches if it was free of charges, as shown in table 5 participants were more encouraged to use online approach with a mean of 2.0444 compared to face-to-face counseling with a mean of 1.9278.

Table 5

*Paired sample statistics*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
If online counseling were available at no charge, I would consider trying it.	2.0444	180	1.19973	.08942
If Face-To-Face counseling were available at no charge, I would consider trying it	1.9278	180	1.15807	.08632

When participants were asked on whether it is worthwhile to discuss their problems with an online or face-to-face counselor, as seen in table 6 a mean of 2.6 reported they find it worthy to discuss personal problems with an online counselor and a mean of 2.18 reported its worthwhile to discuss their personal problems during a face-to-face counseling session.

‘Table 6

*Descriptive statistics- Attitude toward discussing personal problems with an online or face-to-face counselor*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
It could be worthwhile to discuss my personal problems with an online counselor	180	1.00	5.00	2.6333	1.19075
It could be a worthwhile to discuss my personal problems with a Face-To-Face counselor	180	1.00	5.00	2.1833	1.04894

### **Findings for research questions**

Q1: There is significant difference amongst UAE citizens’ attitude towards online counselling and face- to -face counseling.

In accordance with the results of the collected data there is a difference among UAE citizen attitude toward seeking online counseling in comparison to face-to- face counseling. the overall participants OCAS mean score was 2.764 indicating favourable opinion toward online counselling as seen on table 7. On the other hand, the total FCAS mean score was 2.6050 as shown in table. Which also suggest a positive attitude toward face-to-face counseling and also indicates that there is little preference toward online counseling in comparison to face-to-face counseling.

Table 7:

*Overall Mean of online and face-to-face counselling*

		Online counseling	Face-to-Face counseling
N	Valid	180	180
	Missing	0	0
Mean		2.7694	2.6050



Q2: Is there a significant difference in terms of the participants gender?

When comparing the gender difference in terms of using online and face-to-face counseling, there was a notable preference from male toward online counseling in comparison to face-to-face counseling

The scores of both approaches were spread out as seen in Table 8, using T-Test,

T-Test is statistical test that compares the means of two samples. The results convey that there is a large variance. And also indicates that men show more preference toward online counseling in comparison to females. which correspond to our second research question, that there is a slight difference among gender preference toward the use of both approaches.

Table 8

*T-Test: gender preference towards online and face-to-face counseling*

	Gender	N	Mean
Using online counseling would help me learn about myself	Male	83	2.2289
	Female	97	2.0928
If a friend had personal problems, i might encourage him or her to consider online counseling	Male	83	2.2892
	Female	97	2.1856
I would confide my personal problems with an online counselor	Male	83	2.7470
	Female	97	2.6701
It could be worthwhile to discuss my personal problems with an online counselor	Male	83	2.8193
	Female	97	2.4742
If online counseling were available at no charge, i would consider trying it.	Male	83	2.2771
	Female	97	1.8454
	Male	83	2.8916

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If I were having a personal problem, seeking help with an online counselor would be the last option I would consider	Female	97	3.4433
I would feel uneasy discussing emotional problems with an online counselor	Male	83	2.5301
	Female	97	3.2990
I would dread explaining my problems to an online counselor	Male	83	2.8795
	Female	97	3.4536
I think it would take a major effort for me to schedule an appointment with an online counselor	Male	83	2.9639
	Female	97	3.5876
I would be afraid to discuss stressful events with an online counselor	Male	83	3.0723
	Female	97	3.4948
Using Face-To-Face counseling would help me learn about myself	Male	83	2.1084
	Female	97	2.0412
If a friend had personal problems, I might encourage him or her to consider Face-To-Face counseling	Male	83	2.0241
	Female	97	2.0206
I would confide my personal problems in a Face-To-Face counseling session	Male	83	2.2892
	Female	97	2.3608
It could be a worthwhile to discuss my personal problems with a Face-To-Face counselor	Male	83	2.2048
	Female	97	2.1649
If Face-To-Face counseling were available at no charge, I would consider trying it	Male	83	2.0482
	Female	97	1.8247
	Male	83	2.9277

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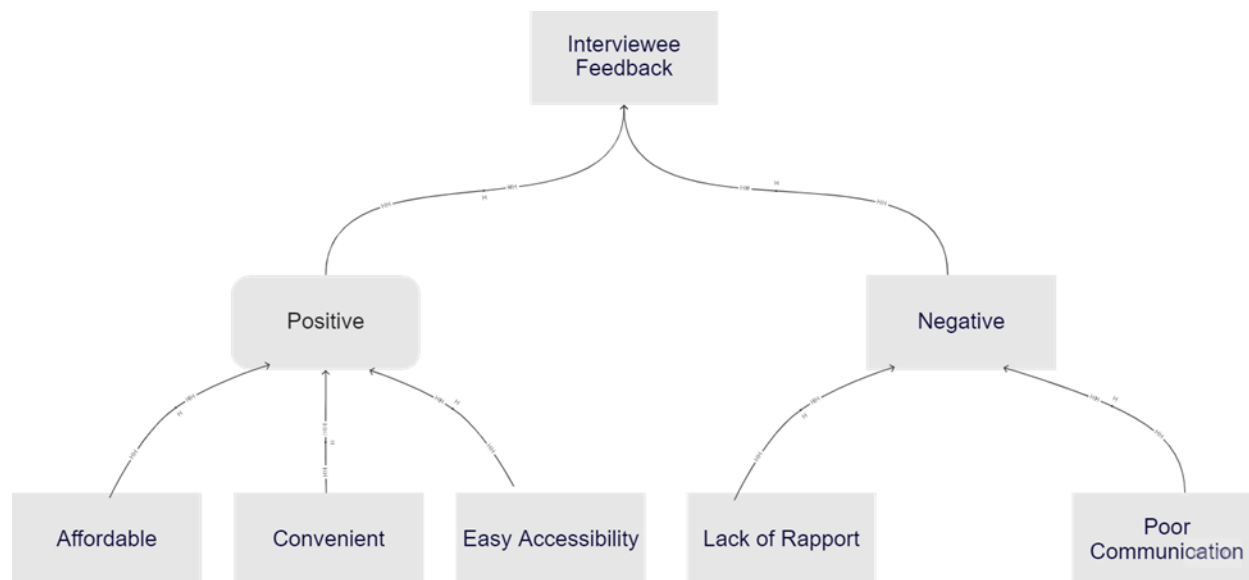
If I were having a personal problem, seeking help with a Face-To-Face counselor would be the last option I would consider>	Female	97	3.4433
I would feel uneasy discussing emotional problems with a Face-To-Face counselor	Male	83	3.0482
I would dread explaining my problems to Face-To-Face counselor	Female	97	3.2474
I think it would take a major effort for me to schedule an appointment with a Face-To-Face counselor	Male	83	2.9036
I would be afraid to discuss stressful events with a Face-To-Face counselor	Female	97	3.0825
	Male	83	2.9036
	Female	97	3.0515
	Male	83	3.1325
	Female	97	3.2062

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### Qualitative findings:

Furthermore, for the qualitative findings after gathering the interviewee feedback and organizing the codes as seen in figure 1, we can conclude that the participants who took part in the focus group, found that easy accessibility, affordability and convenient were the main reason for them to favour online counseling. On the other hand, other participants highlighted on the concerns in establishing rapport and the lack of proper communication with the counselor.

Figure 1:

*Hierarchical Coding Frame:*

Following the coding of the interviewee responses a transaction has been gathered as seen in table 9. In addition to this, participants answered few determined questions before the beginning of the focus group as seen in table 9. The answers shared by the participants were written down by the researcher.

Table 9:

*Participant response to the qualitative questions*

Sections of the transcript (Q= questions by interviewer, A = answers by interview)	Codes generated	Theme
Q: Have you tried online counseling? If the answer is yes to the first question, how was your experience? 2. What are your general thoughts about online counselling? 3. Explain why would you consider using or reuse online counselling	1. Online counseling experience 2. Attitude towards Online counseling 3. Thoughts about using online counseling	1. Participants familiarity with traditional and online counseling 2. Interviewee preference toward online counseling 3. Utilizing online counseling

A: "I haven't used online counseling; it can be a useful source for those who do not feel comfortable speaking out about their personal problems. I would consider using it because of its easy accessibility". - AQ

A: "I have used online counseling; my experience was pleasant at first but after my second session I decided to shift to face-to-face counseling. my thoughts about online counseling are that not everyone can benefit from it. I will not consider using online counseling as for now because I am seeing a psychologist in person". - MH

A: "I have used online counseling, I had three sessions already, but then I had to stop because I am financially unstable to pay for the sessions, my thoughts about online counseling it is very beneficial due to its easy accessibility and affordable prices. I would consider reusing it because its way cheaper than face-to-face counseling". - LM

A: "I haven't used online counseling, my thoughts about online counseling it is convenient than face-to-face counseling I can have access to counselors who are in the same country/ culture as I am in. currently, I do not attend to use online counseling but if I did it's because of the diversity that online counseling is offering". - SA

A: "I haven't used online counseling; my thoughts of online counseling is neutral compared to face-to-face and counseling they are both useful but online counseling won't restrict you with the location of the session since its conducted online". - MJ

A: "I haven't tried face-to-face counseling, but personally I prefer face-to-face counseling. I do not consider using online counseling". - KI

A: "I have used online counseling, for me online counseling is more convenient, I have tried it and I have already attended 4 sessions online, I would consider reusing it because I benefited from it"- RA

A: "I haven't used online counseling; face-to-face counseling would be better for the counselor and client because they can communicate and counselor can observe the client reaction unlike the online counseling. maybe in the future I might consider online counseling to experience it". - AM

A total of 3 determined questions were addressed to the participants in which ,3 participants who engaged in the focus group have used online counseling, 2 out of 3 benefited from online counseling while 1 participant shifted to face-to-face counseling. The rest of the participants had neutral thoughts about both approaches and two favoured face-to-face counseling.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Discussion**

Results shows preference in attitude in conducting online counseling in comparison to face-to-face counseling According to a study conducted by University of Queensland (Snowswell et al. 2019), it showed that “that telehealth is often equally as effective, if not more, than usual care”. Similarly, Swinburne University published a systematic review of studies in which video telehealth was used to deliver psychological therapies to adults with mental disorders. The studies showed “therapy was found feasible to deliver via videoconferencing, clients were satisfied with therapy and expected improvements in targeted symptoms occurred (Thomas et al. 2021).

In addition, another study was conducted with a total of 409 students from six Malaysian universities took part in the study. Approximately 35% of participants said they would be more likely to use online counseling services over face-to-face counseling.

Another research was conducted in Ghanaian Universities, addressing the advantages of online counseling were mentioned by many of the participants. The majority of the participants stated that they have previously received face-to-face counseling and that receiving counseling online is no different. Mobility; hence, individuals can access counseling in their own space; greater privacy; problems are solved in virtual space; quick access to the

counselor; and anonymity are some of the advantages of online therapy. (Patricia Mawusi Amos P. K. A. Bedu-Addo, 2020).

In a paper written by Thompson, *Psychology at a Distance: Examining the Efficacy of Online Therapy*, Teletherapy appears to have the same therapeutic effects on a client as traditional therapy. Despite the obvious disparities in transmission and communication mediums, this occurs (i.e., speaking directly to a person in the same room versus digitally facilitated communication over a distance). Given the small sample sizes and predominance of convenience sampling, these studies clearly have certain drawbacks. The evidence presented, on the other hand, strongly suggests that online therapy is roughly similar to face-to-face (Thompson, 2016).

Moreover, an extensive testing for Video-based teletherapy has undergone with a study involving almost 100,000 patients getting care from the US Department of Veterans Affairs from 2006 to 2010 indicated that those who used video instead of traditional services had a lower need for hospitalization. The researchers hypothesized that this was due to the ease with which care to prevent them from reaching a breaking point was available (Palus, 2019)

Research was conducted among the users of BetterHelp, a well-known online counseling platform, the result showed a significant reduction in the intensity of depression symptoms after using the platform. After using the multimodal digital psychotherapy intervention, the severity of depression symptoms was dramatically reduced. Individuals who had never received standard psychotherapy showed greater improvement after treatment (Enitan T Marcelle, 2019)

Online counseling can be beneficial for teens and young adults, particularly for those who are dealing with a mental health issue like a phobia or social anxiety, seeing someone in person can be extremely challenging and distressing.

Online platforms are offering clients an option to sign up for weekly or monthly plans with well-known online counseling platforms like BetterHelp, Talkspace, and 7cups, and some platforms accept health insurance. In cases when teenagers seek access to the service, parents must first create an account for their child and, at some point, must attend the session alongside them (Gulnaz Khan, 2022).

While online counseling appears to be effective for some people, other research demonstrate that it is not always the best option. Counselors experienced difficulty guiding interactions and a restricted ability to generate replies from clients during online sessions, according to a study conducted in Singapore (Kit et al., 2014).

With that being said, online counseling can be utilized to act as a useful source for individuals who have limited adequate access to resources as well as for those who prefer online solutions. The aim of the study was to understand the attitude and the preference of online solution and the results indicated there is a preference toward seeking online counseling.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **Conclusion**

In closing, both approaches act as a useful source for the general populace. Despite the results in this study, which endorsed online counseling, some people still prefer the traditional medium. People see digital solution more favorable source, due to its easy accessibility, convenience, low cost. In which, anyone by anytime, can book a session and avoid any hustle.



Along with the factors mentioned earlier, online counseling will necessitate a standard regulation that can be followed globally by various platforms in order to avoid any ethical concerns that may arise and derail this newly developed solution.

After all, regardless of which approach you, your family, or your friends prefer, as long as the symptoms are interfering with your everyday life, you should reach out to a therapist to begin your recovery process.

### **Recommendations**

In this research paper, there are significant benefit to the use of both approaches, online and face-to-face counseling. Without a question, online counseling and face- to-face counseling they both offer a prospective benefits and drawbacks. And more investigation is needed to address them. In addition to this, for future research studies, more research is needed to explore blending both approaches face-to-face and online counseling, measuring the outcomes will help us to understand the benefit of each approach.

Another factor to consider, in which the majority of available studies has been addressing ethical concern of online counseling leaving behind the potential ethical concerns of face-to-face counseling which can be addressed in future studies.

Further research could also focus on a longitudinal study, to assess the impact of online and face-to-face counseling, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of both.

Lastly, future research needs to be conducted to address implementing online counseling for clients with disorders such as, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. since the previous researches mainly covered depression, anxiety and PTSD. This future studied will help to emphasize if online counseling can also be beneficial for critical cases.

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## Appendices

### Appendix- A: Sociodemographic Form

1. What is your name?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your gender?

- a) Male
- b) Female
- c) Prefer not to say

3. What is your age?

- a) 18-24
- b) 25-34
- c) 35-44
- d) 45-54
- e) 55-64

4. What is your Job Title?

- a) Sales
- b) Full time student
- c) Administration
- d) Medical
- e) IT
- f) Finance
- g) HR
- h) Production

- i) R&D
- j) Marketing
- k) Other

5. Where are you currently based?

- a) Dubai
- b) Abu Dhabi
- c) Ajman
- d) Sharjah
- e) Ras Al-Khaimah
- f) Fujirah
- g) Oum Al Quwain

### **Appendix -B: The Online Counseling Attitude Scale (OCAS) and Face-To-Face Counseling Attitude Scale**

The below are few questions extracted from The Online Counseling Attitude Scale (OCAS) and Face-To-Face Counseling Attitude Scale:

1. Using online counseling would help me learn about myself.
  - (a) Very much
  - (b) Rather much
  - (c) To some extent
  - (d) Only a little
  - (e) Not at all
  
2. If a friend had personal problems, I might encourage him or her to consider online counseling.
  - (a) Very much
  - (b) Rather much
  - (c) To some extent
  - (d) Only a little
  - (e) Not at all
  
3. I would confide my personal problems in an online counselor.
  - (a) Very much
  - (b) Rather much
  - (c) To some extent
  - (d) Only a little
  - (e) Not at all

4. Using Face-To-Face counseling would help me learn about myself.

- (a) Very much
- (b) Rather much
- (c) To some extent
- (d) Only a little
- (e) Not at all

5. If a friend had personal problems, I might encourage him or her to consider Face-To-Face counseling.

- (a) Very much
- (b) Rather much
- (c) To some extent
- (d) Only a little
- (e) Not at all

6. I would confide my personal problems in a Face-To-Face counseling session.

- (a) Very much
- (b) Rather much
- (c) To some extent
- (d) Only a little
- (e) Not at all

## APPENDIX C: Scientific Research Ethic Committee Letter



### BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMALAR ETİK KURULU

10.05.2022

Dear Reem Aqeel Mohammed

Your application titled **“The Attitude Towards Online Counseling in Comparison to Face-To-Face Counselling Among United Arab Emirates Citizens”** with the application number NEU/SS/2022/1295 has been evaluated by the Scientific Research Ethics Committee and granted approval. You can start your research on the condition that you will abide by the information provided in your application form.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Direnç Kanol

Rapporteur of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee

*Direnç Kanol*



**Note:** If you need to provide an official letter to an institution with the signature of the Head of NEU Scientific Research Ethics Committee, please apply to the secretariat of the ethics committee by showing this document.

#### **APPENDIX –D: Plagiarism Report**

## Reem Reem

### ORJİNALLIK RAPORU

% <b>15</b>	% <b>10</b>	% <b>8</b>	% <b>9</b>
BENZERLİK ENDEKSİ	İNTERNET KAYNAKLARI	YAYINLAR	ÖĞRENCİ ÖDEVLERİ

### BİRİNCİL KAYNAKLAR

<b>1</b>	<a href="http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov">www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov</a> İnternet Kaynağı	% <b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<a href="http://www.frontiersin.org">www.frontiersin.org</a> İnternet Kaynağı	% <b>1</b>
<b>3</b>	Submitted to Distance Learning Centre Öğrenci Ödevi	% <b>1</b>
<b>4</b>	Submitted to Colorado Technical University Öğrenci Ödevi	% <b>1</b>
<b>5</b>	<a href="http://docplayer.net">docplayer.net</a> İnternet Kaynağı	% <b>1</b>
<b>6</b>	Patricia Mawusi Amos, P. K. A. Bedu-Addo, Theresa Antwi. "Experiences of Online Counseling Among Undergraduates in Some Ghanaian Universities", SAGE Open, 2020 Yayın	% <b>1</b>
<b>7</b>	<a href="http://www.psychologytoday.com">www.psychologytoday.com</a> İnternet Kaynağı	% <b>1</b>
<b>8</b>	<a href="http://mental.jmir.org">mental.jmir.org</a> İnternet Kaynağı	<% <b>1</b>

## APPENDIX –E: Author Resume

# Reem Al Muntaser

Bachelors of Psychology/  
Counseling Graduate

An Iraq/ Emirate enthusiastic, highly motivated Psychology graduate with knowledge in a wide range of psychological theories who is a professional hardworking team player.



reem.akeel.mohammed@gmail.com

+971503223665

Dubai , UAE

linkedin.com/in/reem-mohammed-31340a181

@reemakeel

## EDUCATION

### Bachelors of Psychology and Counseling United Arab Emirates University

08/2013 – 12/2018 3.54

#### Courses

- Research Methods in Psychology
- Sensation and Perception
- Biopsychology
- Cognitive Psychology
- Abnormal Psychology
- Introduction to Human Rights Theory
- Psychological Statistics
- Developmental Psychology
- Psych.Tests& Measurements
- Experimental Psychology

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### Internship

Dubai Police

01/2019 – 04/2019

Department of Human Rights

#### Achievements/Tasks

- Contacted several sponsors regarding sponsorship
- Translated required materials
- Assisted with organizing a course on the Enforcement of Wadeem's Law
- Educated students on the psychological effect of Bullying
- Minute Taking

### Internship

Dubai Foundation for Women and Children

09/2018 – 11/2018

#### Achievements/Tasks

- Arranged Workshops for Inpatients
- Attended phone Interview with the Cases
- Helped Human Trafficking cases with activities
- Demonstrated good Mental Status Examination

## REFERENCES

Fatma Al Bloushi - Head of Awareness and Education  
Department in Dubai Police

Contact: 0508400058

## SKILLS

Team Player Time Management

Ability to work under pressure

Professional Personal Presentation

Speak fluent Arabic & English

SPSS advanced statistical analysis

Microsoft Office

## VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

### Cooperated with the Department of Human Rights in the "Safety Ambassador Project".

Dubai Police

04/2019

Dubai

### Cooperated with the Department of Human Rights in the Humanities Cases

Dubai Police

04/2019

Dubai

### Attended a training course under the title "Arena Injuries".

United Arab Emirates University

05/2015

Al Ain

### Peer mentor for new students with the Student Academic Success Program (SASP)

United Arab Emirates University

05/2014

Al Ain

### Completed a workshop held by UAE Deaf Association.

United Arab Emirates University

12/2014

Al Ain

### Environmental Volunteer

Takatof

08/2017

RAK

## INTERESTS

Sports (Basketball, Football, Handball)

Volunteer work

Visiting Museums & Galleries