

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61841/4n5jac79>Publication URL: <https://jarmhs.com/index.php/mhs/article/view/599>

# THE STUDY TO ANALYSE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE COUNSELLING PLATFORMS IN ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA

<sup>1</sup>Zhang Shidong, <sup>2</sup>Bilal Ahmad Lone

<sup>1</sup>Lincoln University College Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia, ORCID ID: 0009-0003-4149-289X, Email ID: [z\\_shidong@lincoln.edu.my](mailto:z_shidong@lincoln.edu.my)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Lincoln university College Malaysia, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7163-9168, Email ID: [Lonebilal@lincoln.edu.my](mailto:Lonebilal@lincoln.edu.my)

## Corresponding Authors:

[z\\_shidong@lincoln.edu.my](mailto:z_shidong@lincoln.edu.my)

**To Cite This Article:** Shidong, Z., & Lone, B. A. (2026). THE STUDY TO ANALYSE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE COUNSELLING PLATFORMS IN ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA. *Journal of Advanced Research in Medical and Health Science* (ISSN 2208-2425), 12(2), 17-23. <https://doi.org/10.61841/4n5jac79>

## ABSTRACT

*Affordable, effective, and scalable therapies for mental health illnesses are urgently needed, especially in underserved and faraway places. This study aims to assess the feasibility of using online counselling platforms to enhance mental health care in the Chinese province of Yunnan. There are insufficient mental health services to address the demands of the diverse population in this province. Examining the demographic characteristics of the province can help us better understand how digital counselling services impact accessibility, user delight, and therapeutic benefits. Using quantitative and qualitative study methods, the researchers surveyed mental health specialists, platform users, and community health officials. Results on five of Yunnan's most popular online therapy platforms centred on engagement, mental health tactics, and barriers to use. The statistics show that those in their younger years and those residing in more remote places have easier access to online mental health treatments. Clients who were moderately to extremely delighted mostly praised the product for three things: its simplicity, its anonymity, and the fact that it eliminated stigma. Inadequate platform regulation, low service quality, privacy worries, and a dearth of data on technological developments are only a few of the numerous issues that require fixing. There are other issues that require fixing, and these are only a few of them. Despite mountains of evidence to the contrary, internet therapy has the potential to augment conventional in-person mental health care, especially in underprivileged areas.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Virtual counselling, Mental health in China, Digital health platforms, Yunnan Province, Psychological counselling.*

## INTRODUCTION

In spite of the growing attention that is being paid to mental health concerns on a worldwide scale, there is no assurance that all individuals, particularly those living in rural regions, will have equal access to the therapy that they require. This will be of great significance to those who are in a state of extreme need. Within the Chinese province of Yunnan, which is situated in the southwestern region of the country, conventional methods of providing mental health therapy in person are confronted with substantial challenges. There are a great number of different nationalities and ethnic groups that are represented in this region, which has resulted in a number of issues that are specific to this location (Ahmed & Rahman, 2021). There is a significant selling feature in this province, which is the gorgeous hill farming districts as well. It's possible that those locations are genuinely located within the borders of the province. In order to determine how factors such as computer literacy and internet speed influence the efficiency of online counselling systems, these aspects will be examined in this investigation. The objective of this research is to promote the use of mental health therapy within the province of Yunnan, which is the centre of this examination. Through the course of this research, a comprehensive investigation into the myriad of ways in which these factors influence the effectiveness of online counselling systems is carried out. In China, the prevalence of mental illness has increased dramatically over the past several years, with the most severe effects being seen by the country's younger population and communities with low incomes. The way things have been done in China has been like this. In spite of the fact that the government has made mental health a national priority, there are still disparities in the process of developing and implementing treatments for mental health problems. This is in direct contrast to the proclaimed objective of the government, which is to place mental health above all other concerns without exception. This is due to the fact that the government placed a primary emphasis on mental health as a matter of essential importance. When it comes to gaining access to mental health care, people in Yunnan encounter obstacles that are both cultural and practical in nature (Andersson et al., 2023).

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has been a significant amount of development in the manner in which mental health care is delivered in China. This shift is the result of a confluence of a lot of different causes coming together. In the mountainous region of Yunnan, it is difficult for people to have access to mental health therapy because there are not enough healthcare facilities available to them (Appleton et al., 2021). It is becoming increasingly challenging to obtain treatment for issues related to mental health as a result of this. Individuals who are already struggling financially face an additional obstacle in the shape of the difficulty of attempting to obtain the assistance they require for their mental health difficulties. Among the factors that contribute to this problem is the stigma that is attached to mental illness, as well as the dearth of easily available professionals who have the right training. Without both of these factors, this sickness would not be happening. Digital health solutions, particularly online counselling systems, are becoming increasingly popular among the Chinese population as a means of addressing the difficulties that they face. This has transpired as a consequence of the issues that have occurred. The organisation's goals in connection to the provision of mental health services to economically disadvantaged areas include a reduction in the stigmatisation of mental health concerns and an improvement in the accessibility of treatment for emotional and mental health disorders. Both of these goals are intended to be achievable. There are a vast number of various factors that might influence the outcomes that customers obtain as well as the quantity of involvement that they have with the product (Arjadi, 2018).

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study's overarching objective is to improve mental health services in Yunnan Province, China, by evaluating online counselling platforms for their efficacy, usability, and situational fit. Traditional mental health services are still undersupplied in Yunnan and similar regions due to the countrywide epidemic of mental illness, which is exacerbated by cultural diversity, geographical barriers, and socioeconomic disparities. The overarching goal of this research is to find out if underprivileged and marginalised communities stand to gain from the increasing use of online counselling platforms as a mental health intervention. The primary goal of this research is to understand the intake, processing, and utilisation of various forms of digital data by the residents of Yunnan Province. Mental health projects in education are initiatives that seek to enhance students' mental well-being, raise public awareness of mental health issues, and link students to necessary services. The term "mental health app" describes a suite of programs designed to improve emotional and psychological health and wellness through the use of mobile devices. Some of these can be utilised to improve health by way of meditation and other kinds of awareness. Some of these might be utilised to aid mental health practitioners in their assessments and treatments. Therapy has several potential benefits, one of which is that it may assist the researcher in better understanding their own mental processes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Mental health care on a global scale was revolutionised by online counselling. Fast internet, increased public awareness of mental health issues, and government support for telemedicine have all contributed to this trend's growth in China. Research conducted by (Aschbacher, 2023) indicated that tele-counselling platforms had a notable impact in alleviating stress and depression among Chinese medical students. Research conducted by (Medicine. Baker & Smith, 2024) in rural areas of western China indicated that smartphone-based counselling helped increase treatment adherence for anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (Li et al., 2020). Their results highlight the need for improved infrastructure by showing that dropout rates were greater in regions with limited internet connection. According to Varghese et al. (2024), there was a significant uptick in user involvement when it came to cultural sensitivity, language compatibility, and interface design. People of Yunnan's many different ethnicities and languages may find it difficult to use interfaces designed only in

Mandarin or to receive advice that is inappropriate for their culture. Mental health stigma is one of the few significant aspects of rural Chinese society. Psychological well-being is less stigmatised when people can consult anonymously online (Ran et al., 2022). As a result, first-time platform users are more likely to ask for assistance. They express concern that digital contacts made once might not be sufficient for sustained recovery. Researchers concluded that digital medications had greater positive effects than traditional pharmaceuticals. These benefits necessitated continuous digital assistance, but the researchers discovered that both groups' worries and discontent decreased equally. Achieving success with online treatment requires that it be consistent, easily available, and integrated with community-based support networks (Barnett et al., 2021).

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

- What is the impact of accessibility of services on mental health services in Yunnan Province?

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**RESEARCH DESIGN**

Quantitative data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25. The researchers utilised the odds ratio and the 95% confidence interval to evaluate the strength and direction of the statistical link. The researchers determined a statistically significant criterion at  $p < 0.05$ . A comprehensive analysis elucidated the fundamental characteristics of the data. Data obtained from surveys, polls, and questionnaires, as well as data examined with computational tools for statistical assessment, are often assessed using quantitative approaches.

**SAMPLING**

Research participants completed questionnaires to furnish data for the study. Utilising the Rao-soft tool, researchers ascertained that the study comprised 657 individuals. Researchers disseminated 896 questionnaires to the public. The researchers obtained 823 replies, eliminating 45 due to incompleteness, yielding a final sample size of 778.

**DATA AND MEASUREMENT**

The study mostly utilised data acquired from a questionnaire survey. The participant's essential demographic information was requested first. Participants were subsequently given a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate the online and offline channels. The researchers rigorously analysed several resources, especially internet databases, for this secondary data acquisition.

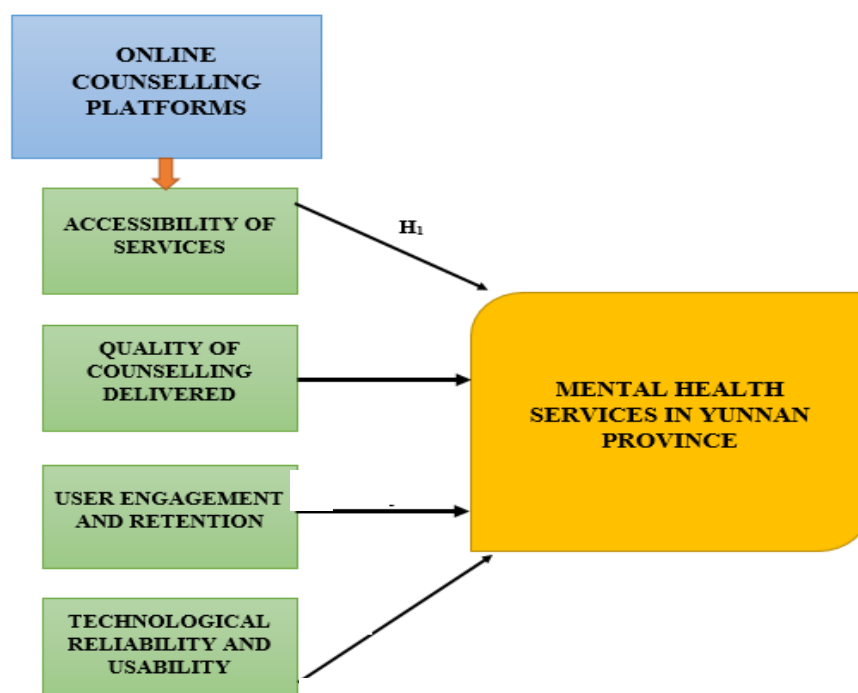
**STATISTICAL SOFTWARE**

The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 25 and MS Excel.

**STATISTICAL TOOLS**

Descriptive analysis was utilised to comprehend the essential attributes of the data. The researcher must analyse the data utilising ANOVA.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



**RESULTS**

**• FACTOR ANALYSIS**

A common application of Factor Analysis (FA) is to ascertain the presence of latent variables within observable data. In the absence of readily discernible visual or diagnostic indicators, it is customary to employ regression coefficients to provide ratings. In FA, models are crucial for success. Finding mistakes, intrusions, and obvious connections are the aims of modelling. One way to assess datasets produced by multiple regression studies is with the use of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test. They verify that the model and sample variables are representative. According to the numbers, there is data duplication. When the proportions are less, the data is easier to understand. For KMO, the output is a number between zero and one. If the KMO value is between 0.8 and 1, then the sample size should be enough. These are the permissible boundaries, according to Kaiser: The following are the acceptance criteria set by Kaiser:

A pitiful 0.050 to 0.059, below average 0.60 to 0.69

Middle grades often fall within the range of 0.70-0.79.

With a quality point score ranging from 0.80 to 0.89.

They marvel at the range of 0.90 to 1.00.

Table1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Testing for KMO and Bartlett's

Sampling Adequacy Measured by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin .957

The results of Bartlett's test of sphericity are as follows: approx. chi-square

df=190

sig.=.000

This confirms the legitimacy of claims made just for sampling purposes. Researchers employed Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to ascertain the relevance of the correlation matrices. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure indicates that a value of 0.957 signifies the sample's adequacy. The p-value is 0.00 according to Bartlett's sphericity test. A positive outcome from Bartlett's sphericity test signifies that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix.

**Table: KMO and Bartlett's**

<b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</b>		.957
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>Approx. Chi-Square</b>	3252.968
	<b>df</b>	190
	<b>Sig.</b>	.000

Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity validated the extensive application of correlation matrices. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy is 0.957. The researchers employed Bartlett's sphericity test, yielding a p-value of 0.00. The correlation matrix was proven ineffective by a significant outcome of Bartlett's sphericity test.

**❖ INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**

**• ONLINE COUNSELLING PLATFORMS**

Many other names are also used to describe the same occupation as online counsellors. Many names have been given to these non-traditional counselling methods, including cyber-counselling, e-therapy, teletherapy, online therapy, and online assistance for mental health issues. To aid in the provision of services, a variety of electronic methods may be employed. Certainly, this is doable (Barnett, 2022). A few instances of these approaches are as follows: electronic mail, short message service, voice call, web conferencing, messaging, internet phone, etc. But this is by no means an all-inclusive list. When it comes to mental health, online counselling is just as effective as traditional in-person therapy. Traditional therapy and online counselling both deal with similar issues. Researchers are helping people adapt to the challenges life throws at them by developing and delivering low-cost, easily accessible, safe, and anonymous internet treatment as people's views on mental health shift. Members of the public are receiving this aid from the group. Online counselling, cyber therapy,

teletherapy, e-therapy, and internet therapy are various terms that describe the same thing. Counselling through the internet is another term for this idea. Video conferencing, live chat, and email are just a few examples of widely used strategies in service delivery. This is by no means an exhaustive list. For certain people, this could work out well. This strategy is known as a hybrid approach. In the context of cognitive behavioural counselling (CMC) technology, the phrase "online counselling" describes a model of online treatment. A qualified counsellor may have a discussion with a client or clients through the internet during online therapy (Batterham et al., 2023).

❖ **FACTOR**

● **ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES**

The term "accessible" will be used in this context to mean that people with disabilities should have the same opportunities as everyone else to access all resources, including information, interactions, and services. Additionally, these resources should be as efficient, integrated, and easy to use as any other resource. The term "accessibility of services" describes how easy it is for any certain population to find, utilise, and benefit from a service, regardless of their location, socioeconomic status, cultural background, or level of technological expertise. Whether the service is provided in a public or private setting, this remains true. Providing mental health care is a part of this. Therapy for people with mental health issues is one example of this type of service. To those in economically disadvantaged and rural parts of Yunnan Province, "accessibility of services" means how easy it is to use online counselling services to treat mental health issues that are affecting their families and themselves. All information, interactions, and services should be accessible to people with disabilities in the same way, with the same level of efficiency, integration capabilities, and ease of use. In this way, the word "accessible" might be explained. Here, the researchers intend to define the word "accessible." If the researcher is serious about making their service available, they should work towards making it usable by as many people as possible. If the researcher were to do this, their website would be more accessible. Keeping this in mind from the start will ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute to the discussion. Prompt notification is required in the case that the researcher service is down in any way; fixing issues as soon as they arise usually leads in lower repair expenses (Browne & Roberts, 2022).

❖ **DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

● **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YUNNAN PROVINCE:**

The Chinese community mental health system was on the brink of extinction soon after China's capitalist economy was set up. Hospitals have risen to prominence as key locations for mental health treatment due to this direct and immediate effect. Tertiary mental institutions may admit patients directly, bypassing the need for primary and secondary care. This might happen. One could argue that this really did happen. The capacity to handle day-to-day stresses and deliver on lifelong promises is one indicator of a person's mental health. The researchers may take this into consideration. Treatments that are both more general and more specific are required to achieve the aim of enhancing mental health. Good mental health, sometimes called mental health in some sectors, allows people to accomplish a lot of goals. Some examples of these goals include being able to enjoy life to the fullest, overcoming the challenges that are common in everyday life, being successful in one's chosen profession, and making a positive impact on one's local community. With the use of several various ingredients, the famous Banxia houpu decoction is made. As an example, consider the pinellia tuber, ginger root, perilla leaf, hoelen, and magnolia bark. Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) practitioners generally agree that, under the supervision of a medical professional, the use of herbs can help alleviate the symptoms of anxiety disorders and severe anxiety. The goal is to alleviate the symptoms as much as possible (Cao et al., 2024).

● **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YUNNAN PROVINCE**

The availability of mental health therapies in Yunnan, a province in China, significantly affects the efficacy and equality of therapy, among other aspects. Yunnan is famous for its rural areas, diverse ethnic population, and hilly terrain, yet its citizens have long struggled to get the mental health treatment they need when they need it. Despite the province's reputation for its rural areas, this remains true (Arjadi, 2018). Pervasive social stigma towards people with mental illness, an insufficient number of facilities to treat patients in rural areas, and a shortage of trained medical professionals are just a few of the present difficulties. There are a lot of factors that could affect a person's capacity to secure the help they require. Factors that come under this category include the accessibility of mental health therapies, the affordability of such treatments, the ease of accessing them online, and the degree of difficulty involved in using them. Although there is a great opportunity to overcome provider shortages and geographical limitations with the rise of online counselling platforms, these platforms can only make a difference if they guarantee equal access to people from all income levels and ethnic backgrounds. The advantages of digital accessibility may have been severely curbed due to Yunnan's ongoing problems with unreliable internet connections, low levels of digital literacy, and an absence of platforms that are available in the local language. The researcher can see how this could work. Provided services are more likely to be accessible, culturally competent, and technologically inclusive if individuals are more likely to seek therapy, complete treatment, and notice improvements in their mental health. Reason being, more individuals are likely to seek out therapy. Building a service framework that is more inclusive and successful for Yunnan's diverse population requires the development of accessibility, whether it's digital or physical. Furthermore, increasing accessibility is crucial to reducing mental health disparities. A key component in deciding the utilisation of mental health treatments is the accessibility of such services, especially in economically disadvantaged and geographically difficult places like China's Yunnan Province (Aschbacher, 2023).

On the basis of the above discussion, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis, which was analyse the relationship between Accessibility of Services and Mental Health Services in Yunnan Province.

*“H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between Accessibility of Services and Mental Health Services in Yunnan Province.”*

*“H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between Accessibility of Services and Mental Health Services in Yunnan Province.”*

**Table 2: H<sub>1</sub> ANOVA Test**

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	39588.620	287	5655.517	1055.922	.000
Within Groups	492.770	490	5.356		
Total	40081.390	777			

The outcome is substantial in this research. Statistical significance is achieved with a p-value of .000 (below the .05 alpha level), and the F value is 1055.922. This suggests that researchers might support the alternative view, *“H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between Accessibility of Services and Mental Health Services in Yunnan Province”* is accepted and reject the null hypothesis.

**DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings of the inquiry, it appears that certain therapists have occasionally utilised the internet to offer counselling services. The client may have been required to leave the treatment facility for reasons like employment or school, or they may have been required to leave for training. These factors could be contributing factors. Unfortunately, most therapists began seeing patients more frequently through online treatment during COVID-19. Though many were hesitant at first, most of them now see it as a worthwhile endeavour. This was so even though they had been sceptical of the concept at first. A large percentage of therapists had good experiences with online therapy sessions even before the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the study's authors, most therapists who began offering online counselling services during the pandemic lacked the appropriate training and knowledge. This result agrees with what other studies have found. The research suggests that two factors—the organization's level of preparedness and the challenges related to knowledge—may determine the success or failure of an online consultation. Therapists' primary focus was on the organization's function as a provider of public service. The fact that therapists in the private sector have greater freedom and access to tools (such training and experience) that enable them to provide online therapy services could be a contributing factor to this trend. One of the likely consequences of this occurrence is this. The study found that the therapist is an important part of the process. A lot of factors come together to make the treatment effective. Among these considerations are the therapist's competence, expertise, understanding, and experience, as well as their approach to dealing with challenges and unexpected events that may develop throughout treatment. Furthermore, it is highly advised to evaluate the therapist's previous experience with online treatment as a crucial piece of information. Many clients may feel unsafe utilising the internet during therapy sessions if the therapists involved in the sessions aren't comfortable using it themselves.

**CONCLUSION**

This study's results could shed insight on how online counselling platforms might enhance mental health treatment in China's Yunnan Province, which is one of the most sincere hopes. Accessibility, stigma, and resource constraints are some of the challenges that digital mental health treatments may assist alleviate in this culturally and linguistically diverse area. These challenges may be easier to bear with the help of online mental health therapies. This research integrated qualitative investigations of provider and user experiences with quantitative assessments of the outcomes of mental health treatment in order to provide a comprehensive comparison of various therapies. Researchers think that by sharing their findings with policymakers, medical professionals, and programmers, online mental health services might be improved. The researcher’s want to increase fair access to mental healthcare in Yunnan and promote better mental health. This can only happen if the researchers make their results public. Through the creation of scalable, culturally sensitive, and user-centred solutions, this study highlights the potential of digital innovation to enhance mental health care in underserved and rural areas. Finding out how MHPSS systems in China have changed over the past 20 years in reaction to the psychological and social impacts of public health crises and natural catastrophes is the primary goal of this scoping study. Prior to the

2008 Wenchuan earthquake, China lacked the necessary experience to effectively provide psychological support to individuals impacted by catastrophes. There is an urgent requirement for more extensive, coordinated, and evidence-based MHPSS initiatives, as the Wenchuan earthquake clearly demonstrated. The federal government entities that were in charge of giving the funds and the orders needed to boost the supply of mental and social health services after disasters also provided the recommendations. A number of additional methods for preventing or mitigating the emotional fallout of disasters have emerged since then. The goal of developing new treatments in recent times has been to increase the variety of psychological outcomes.

## REFERENCES

1. Ahmed, S., & Rahman, K. (2021). Digital mental health uptake in rural Pakistan: mixed-methods study. *Global Mental Health*.
2. Andersson, G., Titov, N., Dear, B. F., et al. (2023). Internet-based CBT for depression and anxiety: 10-year follow-up in Europe. *Journal of Affective Disorders*.
3. Appleton, R., Williams, J., Vera San Juan, N., Needle, J. J., & Schlieff, M. (2021). Implementation, adoption, and perceptions of telemental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: systematic review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 12 Dec 2021.
4. Arjadi, R., et al. (2018). Internet-based behavioral activation with lay counsellor support vs online minimal psychoeducation for depression: randomized controlled trial in Indonesia. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 5(10), 820–829.
5. Aschbacher, K., et al. (2023). Longitudinal patterns of engagement and clinical outcomes: results from a therapist-supported digital mental health intervention. *Psychosomatic Medicine*. Baker, P., & Smith, G. (2024). AI sentiment analysis for mood tracking in teletherapy: US trial. *JMIR Mental Health*.
6. Barnett, P., Goulding, L., Casetta, C., Jordan, H., & Sheridan-Rains, L. (2021). Implementation of telemental health before COVID-19: A rapid umbrella review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 23(7), e26492.
7. Barnett, P., Goulding, L., Casetta, C., Jordan, H., & Sheridan-Rains, L. (2022). Implementation of telemental health services before COVID-19: rapid umbrella review. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 20 Jul 2021.
8. Batterham, P. J., Sunderland, M., & CEAR, A. L. (2023). Digital mental health interventions in primary care: meta-analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.
9. Browne, V., & Roberts, P. (2022). Feasibility of telehealth for indigenous populations in Australia. *Health & Social Care in the Community*.
10. Cao, J., Gao, W., Pai, Y. S., Hoermann, S., Li, C., Baghaei, N., & Billingham, M. (2024). Virtual environments for remote counselling. *arXiv*.