

A STUDY TO EVALUATE THE EFFICACY OF ONLINE COUNSELLING PLATFORMS IN IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA

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ABSTRACT

To address mental health concerns, there is a growing desire for therapies that are easily accessible, scalable, and cost-effective. This demand is especially prevalent in rural and underserved areas. The primary purpose of this research is to determine whether or not online counselling platforms have the potential to contribute to the improvement of mental health care in the province of Yunnan in China. Despite the fact that this province is home to a diverse population, the demand for mental health treatments is currently exceeding the provision of those services. By conducting a demographic analysis of the province, one can gain insight into the ways in which digital counselling services influence accessibility, user happiness, and the therapeutic benefits they offer. The researcher's surveyed individuals working in the field of mental health, as well as users of the platform and officials for the community health department, using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The results of the five online counselling platforms that are utilised the most in Yunnan were presented, with an emphasis placed on participation, mental health strategies, and hurdles to usage. When it comes to mental health treatments that can be accessed online, the figures indicate that younger generations and people living in more rural areas have a better chance of success. Customers who were satisfied with the product to varied degrees frequently commended it for three reasons: the ease with which it could be used, the fact that it allowed them to remain anonymous, and the amelioration of social humiliation. Among the many issues that need to be addressed, there is a lack of information regarding technical advancements, insufficient platform regulation, low-quality services, concerns over privacy, and a lack of information. These are only a few of the numerous problems that need to be solved, but there are many more others.

KEYWORDS: *Mental health policy in China, Enhancement of health systems, Online counselling, mental health professionals.*

INTRODUCTION

Even though there is a growing awareness of these challenges on a worldwide scale, there is still no assurance that everyone, particularly those living in rural regions, will have equal access to the therapy they require for their mental health issues. For those who are in a precarious situation, this will be of the utmost impact. The traditional methods of providing in-person mental health care in the province of Yunnan, which is located in southern China, are confronted with substantial challenges. The enormous number of different cultures and ethnic groups that make this region their home contribute to the fact that it is plagued with its own distinct set of challenges (Cao et al., 2020). With its attractive hill farming districts, the province is one of the most appealing places to visit. When everything is taken into consideration, certain locations can be right on the border of the province. The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which individual factors, such as the level of computer skill and the speed of the internet, influence the effectiveness of online counselling platforms. Increasing access to treatment for mental health conditions is the primary objective of this research project, which is being carried out in the province of Yunnan. The researchers behind this study set out to learn more about the numerous ways these factors affect how well online counselling systems work. A significant proportion of China's younger population as well as low-income communities have been hit particularly hard by the recent increase in the number of cases of mental illness that have been reported in the country. This has always been the way that China has handled things. Despite the fact that the government places a strong priority on mental health, there are still gaps in the research, development, and implementation of treatments for individuals suffering from these diseases. This goes against the concept that the government has established as its goal, which is to put mental health at the top of the priority list above all else. This awareness is largely attributable to the fact that the government places a particularly high priority on mental health. When individuals in Yunnan attempt to receive therapy for their mental health, they are met with a number of obstacles, both cultural and practical in nature (Chan, 2020).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since the turn of the century, there has been a significant step forward in the manner in which mental health therapy is administered in China. The occurrence of this transformation is the result of the interaction of a great number of separate causes. People who live in the mountainous region of Yunnan frequently face difficulties in obtaining the necessary therapy for their mental health because there are not enough healthcare facilities that are easily accessible (Chen & Sun, 2025). The process of obtaining assistance for issues related to mental health is becoming increasingly challenging as a result of this. When people who are already struggling to make ends meet attempt to seek the assistance they want for their mental health difficulties, they face an additional obstacle that makes receiving assistance even more difficult. A number of factors contribute to this issue, including the stigma that is connected to mental illness and the scarcity of easily available experts who possess the requisite competence. In the absence of either of these substances, this sickness would not be taking place. In order to assist them in coping with their issues, the Chinese people are increasingly turning to digital health solutions, particularly online counselling services. This is something that has transpired as a consequence of the obstacles that have surfaced. Clients are able to contact with licensed mental health professionals for virtual consultations whenever it is convenient for them to do so through the use of online platforms such as Jiandanxinli and HaoXinLai. Within the context of their purpose to provide mental health services to communities with low incomes, the organisation works towards the reduction of the societal stigma that is associated with mental health difficulties and the expansion of treatment options for emotional and mental illnesses. It is the intention of this strategy that both of these goals will be attainable. Both the results that purchasers obtain and the amount of involvement that they have with the goods are susceptible to being influenced by a fantastic number of various factors (Chen et al., 2024).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Through a comprehensive evaluation of online counselling platforms in terms of their effectiveness, usability, and situational appropriateness, this study aims to enhance mental health services in Yunnan Province, China. Yunnan and similar places suffer from a lack of traditional mental health care, which is exacerbated by the national epidemic of mental illness, which is fuelled by cultural diversity, geographical difficulties, and social imbalances. The fundamental goal of this research is to find out if underprivileged and marginalised communities' mental health has improved as a result of the increasing use of online counselling platforms. 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. Educational mental health projects aim to improve students' mental health, bring attention to mental health concerns in the public eye, and connect them to the resources they need. A "mental health app" is any one of several apps that aim to boost users' mental and emotional well-being by way of their mobile devices. Meditation and other forms of self-awareness can make use of some of these to enhance health. Mental health professionals may find some of these useful in their evaluations and interventions. The researcher may gain a better grasp of their own mental processes—one of the many possible benefits of therapy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The advent of online counselling completely altered the landscape of mental health care worldwide. This trend has been growing in China for a number of reasons, including the country's supportive government policies, widespread public awareness of mental health issues, and the country's fast internet. According to studies done by (Chen & Zhang, 2021), tele-counselling platforms significantly reduced stress and depression among Chinese medical students. Anxiety and PTSD patients in rural western China were more likely to stick with their treatment plans when they were coached using smartphone apps, according to research. Their findings demonstrate that areas with less internet access had higher dropout

rates, highlighting the need for better infrastructure. The level of user participation in matters of cultural awareness, language compatibility, and interface design increased significantly. Interfaces created solely in Mandarin may be difficult to use for people of Yunnan's many diverse races and languages, and they may also receive culturally inappropriate advice. One notable feature of rural Chinese society is the prevalence of stigma surrounding mental health. The ability to seek help anonymously online reduces the stigma associated with mental health issues. This means that new users of the site are more inclined to seek help when they need it. They are worried that one-time digital connections won't be enough for long-term healing. Digital drugs were found to have more beneficial benefits than traditional pharmaceuticals, according to the researchers. These advantages required constant digital support, but the researchers found that anxiety and dissatisfaction fell equally in both groups. For online treatment to be effective, it needs to be reliable, accessible, and linked to community resources (Chen et al., 2023).

RESEARCH QUESTION

- How does the quality of counselling delivered improve mental health services in Yunnan Province?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

Quantitative data analysis was conducted with SPSS version 25. The researchers utilised the odds ratio and the 95% confidence interval to evaluate the strength and direction of the statistical association. The researchers established a statistically significant threshold at $p < 0.05$. An in-depth examination clarified the essential features of the data. Data collected via surveys, polls, and questionnaires, along with data analysed through computational statistical methods, are often evaluated using quantitative approaches.

SAMPLING

Research participants completed questionnaires to furnish information 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 research mostly utilised data obtained from a questionnaire survey. The participant's fundamental demographic information was solicited first. Participants were thereafter provided with a 5-point Likert scale to assess the online and offline channels. The researchers meticulously examined several resources, particularly online databases, for this secondary data collection.

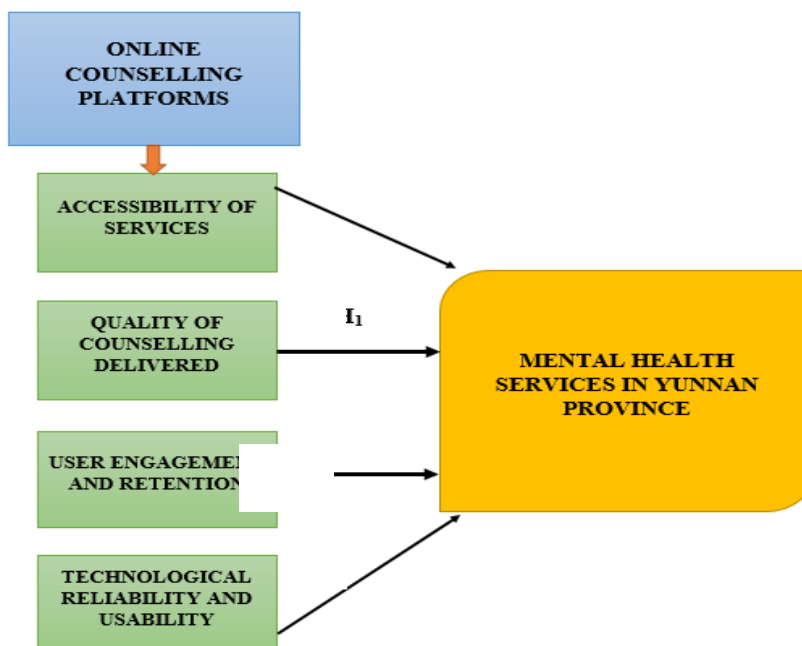
STATISTICAL SOFTWARE

The statistical study was performed utilising SPSS 25 and Microsoft Excel.

STATISTICAL TOOLS

Descriptive analysis was utilised to understand the fundamental characteristics of the data. The researcher must analyse the data using ANOVA.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



RESULTS

• FACTOR ANALYSIS

One typical use of Factor Analysis (FA) is to verify the existence of latent components in observable data. When there are not easily observable visual or diagnostic markers, it is It is a prevalent practice to employ regression coefficients to generate ratings. In FA, models are crucial for success. The objectives of modelling are to identify errors, intrusions, and evident correlations. A method to evaluate datasets generated by multiple regression analyses is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test. They confirm that the model and sample variables are representative. The data exhibits duplication, as indicated by the figures. Reduced proportions facilitate comprehension of the data. The output for KMO is a numerical value ranging from zero to one. A KMO value between 0.8 and 1 indicates that the sample size is adequate. 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 of 0.957 signifies that the sample is sufficient. 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

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

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity further confirmed the general relevance of the correlation matrices. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy is 0.957. The researchers computed a p-value of 0.00 using Bartlett's sphericity test. The correlation matrix was deemed invalid due to a significant result from Bartlett's sphericity test.

❖ INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

• ONLINE COUNSELLING PLATFORMS

The term "online counsellor" is one of many that describe the same profession. Online mental health aid, cyber-counselling, e-therapy, teletherapy, and therapy are just a few of the many names given to these alternatives to conventional counselling. There are a number of electronic methods that can be used to help with service supply. Sure, the researcher can make that happen. Here are a few examples of these approaches: online conferencing, voice calls, texting, instant messaging, internet phones, etc. However, it should be noted that this list is not exhaustive. Online counselling has the same positive impact on mental health as more conventional forms of therapy that take place in person. Online counselling and traditional therapy address comparable concerns (Chen et al., 2022). The procedure is carried out

by means of digitally transmitted information, which may include mobile applications, video conferencing, texting, email, or any other medium. As society's perspective on mental health evolves, researchers are assisting individuals in adjusting to life's obstacles by creating and disseminating anonymous, low-cost, conveniently available, and secure online therapy options. The organisation is providing this assistance to members of the general public. Internet therapy, e-therapy, cyber therapy, teletherapy, and online counselling are all interchangeable phrases. Online therapy is another name for this concept. Common methods of providing services include email, live chat, and video conferencing. This list is far from complete. It may be beneficial for certain individuals. A hybrid approach describes this method. The term "online counselling" refers to a specific kind of online treatment within the framework of cognitive behavioural counselling (CMC) technology. During online therapy, a licenced counsellor may converse with a client or clients via the internet (Chen & Xu, 2020).

❖ **FACTOR**

• **QUALITY OF COUNSELLING DELIVERED**

The objective of professional and ethical therapeutic interactions is to assist clients in developing more self-awareness, abilities in emotional control, and resourcefulness throughout the course of treatment. It is possible to accomplish this with the therapeutic alliance because of the way it is structured. When therapists listen attentively and empathise without passing judgement, they are able to establish a secure environment in which their clients feel comfortable opening up to them (Chen & Li, 2023). This makes it possible for clients to feel at ease while they are conversing with the therapist. A significant number of people are of the opinion that the person-centred approach developed by Carl Rogers is the foundation of therapy. As a result of the group's efforts, the researcher's have reached a consensus. If this is the case, then it is necessary for clients and therapists to work together in order to establish a therapeutic relationship established on the principles of empathy and positive, unconditional regard, which will be to the mutual advantage of both parties. The job of the counsellor in counselling is comparable to that of a talk therapist; they listen attentively while also providing suggestions on how to exercise control over one's emotions. One of the more common names for this method is "talk therapy." The term "counselling" is sometimes used to cover all of the many types of treatment, despite the fact that speech therapy is comprised of a vast diversity of components (Chen & Feng, 2024).

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

• **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YUNNAN PROVINCE**

The establishment of China's capitalist economy nearly led to the demise of the country's communal mental health system. This quick and direct consequence has led to hospitals being more prominent as centres for mental health care. Patients with tertiary mental illness may be admitted straight to these facilities, skipping the intermediate steps of primary and secondary care. This is a possibility. It could be argued that this actually occurred. One sign of mental health is the ability to deal with the pressures of daily life and fulfil commitments made during one's life. The researcher's might think about this. Aiming to improve mental health calls for treatments that are both broad and targeted (Connolly et al., 2022). A person can achieve much more when they are in good mental health, which is sometimes referred to as mental health in certain fields. These aspirations can take many forms, but some examples include: living life to the fullest, conquering ordinary obstacles, achieving professional achievement, and making a positive difference in one's community. Herbal treatments for anxiety disorders and severe anxiety, when administered under the guidance of a medical expert, are largely accepted by practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Reducing the severity of the symptoms is the primary objective (Connolly et al., 2020).

• **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN QUALITY OF COUNSELLING DELIVERED AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN YUNNAN PROVINCE**

Mental health services in underserved and difficult areas, like China's Yunnan Province, are only as good as the therapy they provide in terms of legitimacy, efficacy, and lasting influence. Be aware that numerous situation-related structural and contextual concerns impact Yunnan's mental health system. A lack of educated specialists, inadequate funding, and widespread social stigma all contribute to this problem. A few of the issues include these. How well mental health services work in a certain setting may have a direct correlation to how much people trust and utilise them (Cui & Jiang, 2020). The researchers may take this into consideration. A professional therapist possesses many qualities, such as knowledge, empathy, communication skills, consistency in therapy, and ethical behaviour. Clinical benefits, including reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, are associated with improved user assessments of emotional safety, perceived support, and readiness to remain in long-term therapy following high-quality counselling. A correlation between these variables is what makes this connection possible. Dissatisfaction with treatment, early treatment termination, and increased individual mistrust of mental health institutions can arise from inadequately executed therapy, which can be characterised by a lack of empathy, cultural alienation, or poor intervention methods. Due to a lack of services and the inaccessibility of these platforms geographically, online counselling platforms are becoming increasingly popular in Yunnan. Because of this, making sure digital material is handled with care is more vital than ever before. Even if digital platforms increase access to knowledge, the most important factor in determining their efficacy is the therapeutic value of interactions (Deng et al., 2024). Even though information may be more accessible through digital media, this remains true. It includes the ability to build relationships with clients through the use of digital interfaces, as well as competence in evidence-based practice, culturally and linguistically relevant individualisation, and ethics. There is a diverse range of perspectives on mental illness among the large ethnic minority community in the province of Yunnan. This highlights the critical need for culturally

appropriate and relevant platform activities for the target audience. A lack of established norms, irregular training of counsellors, and variable session quality are just a few of the problems plaguing numerous Chinese internet platforms.

In light of the prior discourse, the researcher developed the subsequent hypothesis to investigate the correlation between Quality of Counselling Delivered and Mental Health Services in Yunnan Province (Davis & Thompson, 2023).

“H₀: There is no significant relationship between Quality of Counselling Delivered and Mental Health Services in Yunnan Province.”

“H₁: There is a significant relationship between Quality of Counselling Delivered and Mental Health Services in Yunnan Province.”

Table 2: H₁ ANOVA Test

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	39588.620	319	5435.418	1016.916	.000
Within Groups	492.770	458	5.345		
Total	40081.390	777			

This study produces significant findings. The value of F is 1016.916, demonstrating significance with a p-value of .000, which is below the .05 alpha level. This signifies the **“H₁: There is a significant relationship between Quality of Counselling Delivered and Mental Health Services in Yunnan Province”** is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings, some therapists have occasionally dabbled in offering counselling services through the medium of the internet. This might be because the client had to leave the treatment facility for reasons like employment or school, or because they needed to depart for training. But most therapists began seeing patients more frequently through online therapy during COVID-19. Although they were hesitant at first, most of them later realised it was a good undertaking. This occurred despite their initial reluctance to the concept. The majority of therapists already reported good outcomes from online therapy sessions before the COVID-19 pandemic. Many therapists began offering online counselling services during the epidemic, but the researchers discovered that most of them lacked the appropriate training and knowledge. The results of additional researchers corroborate these conclusions. According to the study's findings, two things might determine whether an online consultation is successful or not: the organization's degree of preparedness and the challenges related to knowledge. A major focus for the therapists was the organization's function in meeting public service needs. 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 problem. This is a possible consequence of this occurrence. According to the study's findings, the therapist has a crucial role. To what extent the treatment is effective depends on many factors. Many things come into play here, such as the therapist's competence, expertise, understanding, and experience, and how they handle challenges and unexpected events that crop up throughout therapy. Also, it's a good idea to think about the therapist's background in online therapy as additional relevant information. If the therapists taking part in the therapy aren't confident online, their clients probably won't feel safe enough to use it too during treatment. Yunnan Province hold a lot of potential, particularly for economically disadvantaged people living in rural areas. These platforms have a lot of promise. Access to licensed therapists or research-based digital tools can be flexible and on-demand through these platforms, allowing users to circumvent geographical limitations and the stigmatisation of traditional in-person therapy. Anxiety, sadness, and stress can be treated online with tools that are similar to traditional therapy, such as chatbots, teletherapy, and self-help modules.

CONCLUSION

One of the most sincere goals is that this research would shed some light on how online counselling platforms could enhance mental health care in China's Yunnan Province. In this linguistically and culturally diverse area, digital mental health therapy may help with challenges including stigma, limited resources, and accessibility. Possible relief from these difficulties might come from online mental health therapies. By integrating qualitative research on provider and user experiences with quantitative assessments of mental health care outcomes, this study aimed to give a thorough evaluation of different therapies. It is the intention of the researchers that these findings will lead to better online mental health services, therefore they plan to share them with policymakers, medical professionals, and programmers. Increasing access to mental healthcare and fostering better mental health are the goals in Yunnan. Researchers want to publish findings in order to achieve this. This study's results highlight the opportunity for digital innovation to increase access to scalable,

culturally sensitive, and user-centred mental health services in rural and underserved areas. Looking back at how MHPSS systems in China have changed over the past 20 years, the researcher's can see how they've grown to deal with the emotional and social fallout of public health crises and natural catastrophes. Natural disaster victims in China lacked access to professional psychological support prior to the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake. More thorough, coordinated, and evidence-based MHPSS interventions are urgently required, as the Wenchuan earthquake demonstrated clearly. The guidelines were provided by the federal government entities that were in charge of providing the necessary resources and direction to enhance the delivery of psychosocial and mental health services following emergencies. Numerous additional methods have been developed since then to forestall or mitigate the emotional fallout of disasters. There have been a number of new treatments developed recently with the goal of increasing the variety of psychological outcomes.

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