

Information And Communication Technologies (Icts) In Online Psychotherapeutic Service In The Post-Covid-19 Context: A Literature Review

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Abstract:

Background: This study examines the impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on online psychotherapy, crucial for post-COVID-19 adaptation. The results indicate the vital role of ICTs in post-COVID-19 adaptation, highlighting their impact on mental health, especially in Psychology.

Materials and Methods: Aiming to address the main ICTs in psychotherapy, understand their application, analyze the growth of online service post-pandemic, and evaluate their influence on training in Psychology, a fundamental and descriptive approach is reflected, based on a qualitative bibliographic review.

Results: Online support is crucial for continuing emotional support during social distancing. The online transition presents advantages such as accessibility, therapeutic familiarity, reduced hope, and flexibility, and challenges, such as the adaptation of professionals. Online Psychology represents an irreversible migration, offering support through chats, emails, voice calls, video conferences, and software. Service can be synchronous, in real-time, or asynchronous, without immediate interactions. Important regulations govern practice mediated by ICTs, including resolutions nº 10/2005, 11/2012, 11/2018 and 04/2020. The late introduction of online Psychology in Brazil brought challenges to the training and practice of psychologists.

Conclusion: It is concluded that Psychology mediated by ICTs is expanding, requiring continuous updating and research for a scientific basis, making professional updating necessary. More studies are suggested to consolidate evidence-based ICT-mediated practice.

Keywords: ICTs; Online-Psychotherapy; COVID-19; Pandemic; Psychology.

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I. Introduction

In recent years, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have played an increasingly relevant role in various sectors of society, and the mental health field is no exception. ICTs encompass all technologies related to information and communication, including hardware, software, computer networks, the internet, and mobile technologies, deeply impacting areas such as education, health, entertainment, business, government, and scientific research.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the adoption of technological adaptations in the healthcare field, making online care a crucial alternative to ensure continuous access to services amid a scenario of social distancing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare services implemented operational adjustments to meet the growing demand and ensure the continuity of care for other illnesses (Santos et al., 2023, p. 2). Given the limitations imposed by the quarantine period and the rapid need for adaptation, telepsychology emerges as an alternative in the pandemic context (Rotta, 2023). As a result, Almondes and Teodoro (2021, p. 80) state that "[...] adherence took on the contours of seeking support due to the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in a mental health pandemic with increases in anxiety, depression, stress, among others." In Brazil, aiming to promote well-being and guide practicing psychologists, the Federal Council of Psychology (CFP) regulated psychological services conducted through ICTs during the pandemic, through Resolution No. 4, of March 26, 2020, allowing for online psychological consultations in emergencies (CFP, 2020; Viana, 2020, as cited in Correia et al., 2023).

Considering this perspective, the use of technologies in the current global scenario provides psychologists with the opportunity to reconsider their practices, as the internet has become an important tool for connecting people (Bittencourt et al., 2020). According to Santos et al. (2023), one of the main challenges was the need to review and transform an established practice, leading to doubts about the viability of remote psychotherapy, resulting in reluctance regarding its effectiveness and practicability. In line with Almondes and Teodoro's (2021, p. 11) conceptual proposal, "[...] healthcare professionals found themselves faced with the requirement to learn to use new technologies to respond to new demands."

Thus, this research poses the following question: how do Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) support the advancement of online psychotherapeutic care in the post-COVID-19 context? To answer it, the aim is to generally identify ICTs as support for the advancement of online psychotherapeutic care in the post-COVID-19 context. The specific objectives are to present the main ICTs in psychotherapeutic care; understand the use of ICTs in psychotherapeutic care; analyze the advancement of online care in the post-COVID-19 context, and present the implications of using ICTs in the context of psychotherapeutic care in the education of new Psychology professionals, through a narrative literature review.

Factors such as the speed of changes, the use of technologies, the adaptation and assertive use of resources, and the ethical use of psychological science for clinical practice emphasize the relevance of the topic for the present time, considering the multiple challenges. Therefore, the relevance of this research is justified by its ability to stimulate understanding and discussion of changes resulting from COVID-19 and its impact on society's functioning, as well as its contribution to the debate on the challenges and benefits of online psychotherapeutic care, guiding ethical and effective practices. Finally, the research also has implications for the training of new Psychology professionals, who need to be prepared to use ICTs responsibly and effectively in their clinical practice.

II. Material And Methods

The present study adopted a narrative literature review approach to critically analyze the extensive range of studies related to the subject at hand. The research was conducted following the guidelines established by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) to ensure transparency and methodological quality in the review process. Relevant articles were searched for in electronic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science, using a combination of specific search terms and Boolean operators. Studies published up to November 2023 were included, focusing on peer-reviewed articles, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses.

The selection of studies was independently conducted by two reviewers, with discrepancies resolved through consensus or arbitration by a third reviewer when necessary. Inclusion criteria were predefined based on the relevance of the content to the review objectives, while exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the quality and relevance of the selected studies. Data extraction was performed using a standardized form, covering information on study characteristics, methodology, results, and conclusions. Data analysis and synthesis were systematically conducted, employing an inductive approach to identify patterns, gaps, and trends in the reviewed literature.

III. Results

Information and Communication Technologies

One of the main implications of the rise of ICTs as a characteristic trait of contemporary times is the widespread adoption of innovations in all aspects of life, as emphasized by Zeferino and Vecili (2020). Recognizing that technological transformation has brought new tools and intervention methods that can be beneficial for individuals and society's development, it is crucial also to discuss the impacts of this change in professional practice and seek ways to mitigate potential risks (OPP, 2020).

ICTs are defined as instruments employed in the creation, manipulation, and distribution of information for individuals and organizations through digital technologies (Stoque, 1999, as cited in Carvalho & Silveira, 2020). These technologies permeate all aspects of society, and as a result, their adoption and utilization introduce new phenomena that intertwine with the reality of social and physical mediation, where individuals interact physically, subjectively, and symbolically with objects, people, and natural, chemical, and physical phenomena (Santana et al., 2016, as cited in Santana et al., 2020).

According to Vidal, Brito, and Castro (2023), a part of the population has grown up alongside technological advances and internet usage, altering the means of communication and interaction. Communication using internet tools is now considered natural for most people, and over time, services provided through it have also become an integral part of daily life (Rodrigues & Tavares, 2016, as cited in Vidal et al., 2023).

Technological advances, coupled with the dissemination and accessibility of ICTs, have opened up new areas of practice for psychologists, including online psychotherapy (Castro et al., 2022). The introduction of ICTs into clinical practices, especially in online psychotherapy, has brought about significant changes in the interaction process between psychologists and clients, in clinical settings, service delivery, and patient demands, presenting both opportunities and challenges (Cruz & Labiak, 2021).

Despite harsh criticism regarding the online modality, Almondes and Teodoro's research (2021) found no significant differences between face-to-face and online formats of care, highlighting the advantages of agility and automation in adopting online assessment. Moreover, there has been an increase in the variety of therapeutic tools available to psychologists, a notion also expressed by OPP (2020), stating that technological innovation

has the potential to make access to healthcare services, including Psychology, more efficient, especially for clients facing geographical or physical barriers. However, the advantages of these technologies are not limited solely to geographical convenience or instrumental solutions; the use of ICTs goes beyond, contributing to a wide range of benefits.

Technology, Information Velocity, and the Transformation of Professions

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, postmodernity emerged as a result of the influence of technological advancement on knowledge, accelerated globalization, and the introduction of the cybernetic era (Dockhorn & Macedo, 2008, as cited in Bittencourt et al., 2020). With the evolution of these transformations, communication among people has progressed continuously, transitioning from the phases of typography and telegraphy to unfolding through a broad and dynamic network of information, known as the internet (Neto, 2020, as cited in Bittencourt et al., 2020; Witt & Rostirola, 2020, as cited in Bittencourt et al., 2020).

Due to significant changes in the dynamics of TIC-mediated relationships, where physical presence is no longer a determining criterion for connection between people, culture undergoes transformations, and new modes of interaction emerge, not directly linked to the concept of time, but rather to communication transmission (Rosa et al., 2016, as cited in Bittencourt et al., 2020).

The individual in modernity is almost constantly connected to the virtual environment and, thus, manages to establish presence even when physically distant. This occurs because the criterion for evaluating the quality of relationships lies in the person's ability to create interpersonal bonds and adapt, surpassing the restrictions imposed by digital access (Ceroni, 2017, as cited in Bittencourt et al., 2020). Still regarding digital access constraints, it is known that the reality of access to ICTs is still not satisfactory for the Brazilian population. However, there is a clear increase in the number of people who have cell phones with internet access (IBGE, 2010, as cited in Carvalho & Silveira, 2020).

Santos (2019) elucidates that in this context, various business opportunities arise with the use of resources and capabilities offered by the Internet. These opportunities range from distance education to virtual public services, including specialized and personalized services through chat, emails, applications, and other tools.

Amidst the significant transformations of this digital era, Psychology needs to remain attentive to the new dynamics in human interactions and adapt to a renewed psychological approach when entering a field with its language and expressions (Siegmond & Lisboa, 2015, as cited in Zeferino & Viecili, 2020). In the last twenty years, legal changes have resulted in significant advancements in research in this area. There has been improvement in both the methodologies employed in psychological treatments and the research designs used to assess the effectiveness of these techniques. Previously, up until the early 2000s, most research in the area focused mainly on patient satisfaction regarding the use of ICTs (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021).

Almondes and Teodoro (2021) propose that very shortly, perhaps even in the present, therapists will be increasingly concerned with choosing the appropriate therapeutic modality, as well as the means of communication (such as chat, email, video conferencing, etc.), the communication modality (synchronous or asynchronous), and specific applications for tasks and problems, considering the possibilities of combined treatments. This occurs in response to current challenges. This highlights that the success of a therapeutic process is not intrinsically linked to the technological medium facilitating the treatments, but rather to the competence of the psychologist and the engagement and motivation of the patient in their treatment (Magalhães et al., 2019, as cited in Bittencourt et al., 2020).

The Use of ICTs in Psychotherapeutic Services

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced widespread adoption of technologies due to isolation, digital technologies have become more widely accessible to the population, reducing distrust regarding their use (Zeferino & Viecili, 2020). Such technological advancement has played a fundamental role in many countries, where it has become the only viable alternative for promoting psychotherapeutic interventions. This resulted in a shift from in-person to online practice, with video conferencing emerging as an equivalent form of "face-to-face" therapy (Álvarez & Álvarez, 2021, as cited in Rocha et al., 2021).

Online psychotherapy, in turn, offers a variety of formats, including chats, emails, voice calls, video conferencing, and the use of software (Berger, 2017, as cited in Castro, Guerin, & Pimentel, 2022). It is worth noting that various real-time communication tools are available, such as Google Meet, Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, and Facetime. These accessories can provide diagnostic information for the therapist and support the patient in self-care (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021).

Remote psychological care can also be divided into modalities, namely supportive, guided, and automated. Supportive therapy is a compact approach that combines online and in-person sessions, where a therapist provides therapy in face-to-face meetings interspersed with specific digital elements. On the other

hand, the guided modality blends an automated program with clinical support, offering psychoeducational information on various mental health topics and a step-by-step guide to treatment through multiple sessions (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021).

Lastly, the automated modality does not involve support from an in-person therapist, but some programs may offer additional support. It uses text content and interactive features such as videos, diaries, and online questionnaires to aid in adaptation, and some programs may simulate therapeutic interactions, include patient testimonials, live therapy sessions, or forums for users (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021).

In addition to the modalities, care can be provided in two other niches: synchronous, where the psychologist and client/patient schedule a time to interact in real-time, which can be done through video conferencing, chats, or instant messaging apps. And asynchronous care, where various contact modalities are employed, not involving real-time interactions. This includes providing systematized therapies in video format, audio homework tasks, texts for reading and subsequent discussion via email (such as bibliotherapy), sending podcasts with relevant guidance, and scales for completion over a period (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021).

Many essential processes of in-person therapy can be replicated in online therapy, one example of this is the Therapeutic Alliance (TA), which is a concept adopted by various theoretical approaches and is essential for therapeutic success, contributing approximately 8% of the explanatory variance (Horvath et al., 2011, as cited in Almondes & Teodoro, 2021). Bearing this in mind, Klasen, Knaevelsrud, and Böttche (2013, as cited in Almondes & Teodoro, 2021) conducted a systematic review that included various forms of information technology, such as video conferencing, chats, and email, and observed the formation of Therapeutic Alliance (TA) regardless of the modality used, with similar satisfaction with TA in online and in-person approaches.

Another modality that has been studied is online psychotherapeutic services for children, however, despite their increased contact with the digital world, there is no evidence that children and adolescents prefer online to in-person care (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021). This shows that even with the adaptation and rapid expansion of the virtual medium, not all groups can adapt to the modality, thus making online therapy an additional resource rather than a substitute for in-person therapy.

Legal Guidelines and Ethical Aspects

Given the previously outlined context and the increasing availability of online therapy in our country, a crucial question emerges concerning the legal framework that should support the ethical and technical practice of Psychology, adapted to the nuances of our sociocultural scenario (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021).

Regarding legal guidelines, Almondes and Teodoro (2021) discuss the most significant and recent resolutions that have been established to regulate psychologists' practice by the CFP. However, the provision of various psychological services through ICTs has been the subject of discussion within the Psychology Council System since the 1990s. Resolution CFP No. 10/2005 brought important guidelines to regulate the provision of psychological services through the Professional Code of Ethics for Psychologists, emphasizing the importance of professionals maintaining the adequacy and relevance of the methods and techniques used in providing these services, as well as the need to select appropriate technologies from both technical and ethical perspectives (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021).

Furthermore, Resolution No. 11/2012 of the CFP established the requirement that psychotherapeutic services provided through ICTs be linked to a website registered with the CFP. Moreover, this resolution allowed for this type of service on an exclusively experimental basis, provided it complied with specific criteria defined in the resolution itself (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021).

However, in 2018, the CFP enacted Resolution No. 11/2018, which reorganized the forms of online psychological care and other services performed through ICTs. One of the main changes was the elimination of the requirement for affiliation with a specific website to offer this type of care (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021). The new resolution paved the way for greater flexibility and diversity in the provision of psychological services through digital means, while still emphasizing the importance of ethics and quality in professional practice.

Resolution No. 4, dated March 26, 2020, issued by the CFP (2020), establishes guidelines for the provision of psychological services through ICTs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This resolution was motivated by the declaration of a pandemic made by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020. According to the resolution, psychologists wishing to offer psychological services through ICTs during the pandemic must register on the e-Psi platform, linked to their respective Regional Psychology Council (CRP). If the registration is denied by the CRP, it is possible to appeal to the CFP. It is worth noting that during the pandemic period, due to the high demand for mental health cases, approval by the CRP was postponed, and professionals could act directly even before the CRP's opinion (CFP, 2020b as cited in Bittencourt et al., 2020).

Regarding ethical aspects, following the general principles established by the OPP (2020), it is fundamental that psychologists rely on ethical guidelines and the Professional Code of Ethics in all professional interventions, regardless of whether they are conducted in person or remotely. The nature of the interaction context does not change the obligation to fully comply with the ethical principles of the profession.

In summary, the use of ICTs in the provision of Psychology services must be carefully considered for each specific case, considering its suitability, potential benefits, clinical validity, and complementarity or integration with in-person interventions. Furthermore, the widespread availability of digital tools such as mobile applications, websites, and virtual reality for psychological intervention must be supported by solid scientific evidence proving their effectiveness. The safety and validity of digital practices in Psychology must be ensured for the benefit of people's well-being and community development (OPP, 2020). In this evolving scenario, the ability to adapt and innovate becomes crucial to meet the growing needs of the population.

The Advancement of Online Counseling in the Post-COVID-19 Context

Epidemics and pandemics have the potential to trigger a review of cultural and scientific practices, with significant implications for social changes (Enumero & Linhares, 2020, as cited in Cavalcanti, Rocha, & Morais, 2021). In a crisis context, attention to mental health intensifies, prioritizing emotional health and psychological well-being, particularly due to transformations in daily routines, interpersonal relationships, and family structures (Schmidt et al., 2020, as cited in Correia et al., 2023). These changes, accelerated by the spread of the pandemic, underscore the importance of psychological support.

In recent years, there has been a rapid increase in the use of internet-based interventions to address mental disorders and issues. This growth can be attributed to several reasons: a growing demand for psychosocial support; a shortage of qualified professionals to meet certain needs, many of whom are concentrated in large urban centers, making access difficult for a large portion of the population due to travel and accommodation costs; technological advancements that have made the advancement and dissemination of internet-based interventions more accessible; a growing variety of remotely offered psychotherapeutic methods; widespread acceptance and widespread use of the internet across the country, regardless of socioeconomic level, education, or age; the social connection provided by the internet; scientific research demonstrating the effectiveness of these online interventions, resulting in funding for new research projects; and the development of online applications to monitor biopsychosocial health (Almondes & Teodoro, 2021). However, for some professionals who are not familiar with new technologies, the application of telehealth can be challenging, and there is a constant concern that virtual intervention may eventually replace in-person care in the future (Pereira et al., 2020, as cited in Rocha et al., 2021). However, Cook and Doyle (2002, as cited in Correia et al., 2023) argue that online psychological counseling does not differ significantly from face-to-face contact, countering this concern.

Regarding therapists' reluctance to adopt technology for psychotherapy, it is important to note that this reluctance may be related to uninformed attitudes rather than fundamental issues related to this modality (Daele et al., 2020, as cited in Torres et al., 2022). Furthermore, therapists' attitudes and beliefs regarding online psychological counseling play a significant role in their experiences during online sessions (Suler, 2004, as cited in Torres et al., 2022).

Despite concerns and initial skepticism about tele counseling, the use of internet-based interventions for mental disorders and issues has experienced remarkable growth in recent years. This is due to several reasons, including the need for psychosocial support that cannot be fully met by traditional services available. Additionally, the lack of qualified professionals to meet certain demands, often concentrated in large urban centers, has left a significant portion of the population without access to these services due to financial limitations to cover travel and accommodation expenses, as highlighted by Almondes and Teodoro (2021).

It is equally essential to highlight that online psychological counseling has proven to be an effective alternative, allowing psychological interventions in times of crisis, and confirming the possibility of establishing therapeutic relationships even in a virtual environment. This finding points to the need for further research and in-depth studies in this area (Correia et al., 2023). Such a trend has been further driven by the pandemic, leading to more frequent use of online counseling services.

Advantages and Challenges of Online Psychotherapeutic Services

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online psychological services emerged as the most recommended modality for treatments (Schmidt et al., 2020, cited in Correia et al., 2023), establishing a crucial support network for both patients and professionals (Barbosa et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020, cited in Correia et al., 2023). However, the transition to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in professional practice faced challenges, especially due to the high degree of community transmission of COVID-19. Professionals had to develop strategies to deal with ICTs, despite their limited popularity among them (Ferreira et al., 2021, cited in Torres et al., 2022).

One of the first challenges faced was the transition from in-person therapeutic environment to the online format. This transition required deep reflection to ensure a practice that respected the ethical precepts of the profession (Torres et al., 2022). Issues such as the difficulty in establishing professional boundaries regarding the time and frequency of sessions, the lack of spontaneity in meetings, and the sense of reduced

presence due to the lack of simultaneity in therapeutic interactions were also highlighted (Suler, 2004, cited in Torres et al., 2022).

Having said that, it was necessary to reassess the margin for restructuring clinical practice, as Santos et al. (2023, p. 2) state, "[...] the emergency nature of the transition to the remote environment produced abrupt changes, often based on improvisation and trial and error." On the other hand, observing the benefits, technology has proven to be a valuable tool for reducing geographical distances and overcoming mobility limitations. This enables access to healthcare services, including psychotherapy, even in remote areas or for people with restricted mobility, as mentioned by Almondes and Teodoro (2021). From this perspective, the online modality offers additional benefits, such as reduced waiting time for appointments, schedule flexibility, and reduced costs (Proudfoot et al., 2011, cited in Bittencourt et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the social conception of online psychotherapy seems to be predominantly associated with positive or neutral aspects, which include ethical considerations, the maintenance of therapeutic bonds, accessibility, and the facilities offered to conduct remote sessions (Vidal; Brito; Castro, 2023).

However, it is important to note that the difficulties related to the use of ICTs have shown a tendency to decrease as professionals become trained to deal with this mode of service. There is a constant concern about the need for specific training of psychologists to effectively work online, encompassing not only the mastery of ICTs but also the elements that compose this technology-mediated scenario. This highlights the importance of continuous professional development to address the challenges and provide quality care in this modality (Santos, 2019)..

IV. Discussion

Under the perspective of the advancement of the modality addressed in previous topics, Correia et al. (2023, p. 12) suggest that "[...] crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic should foster questioning regarding both the training and the professional practice of psychologists, to be attentive to the psychological demands that these changes bring to society." In line with this idea, Torres et al. (2022) address online psychological counseling and present the potential for integration into the psychologist's professional practice, demanding, however, further discussion and curricular inclusion in professional training throughout Brazil.

Especially when considering the difficulties in accessing psychotherapeutic care and the frequent waiting lists, the need for educational institutions to adopt new clinical practices aligned with contemporary demands becomes evident. These practices should allow for a true transformation in the automatic, accelerated, and reflexive approach that characterizes many aspects of our lives (Rebouças; Dutra, 2010, cited in Bezerra; Moura; Dutra, 2021).

These ideas are reinforced by those who argue that psychology education should empower students to build creative approaches to challenges and new situations. Technical education, which often focuses on "how" and "when" to act, may not adequately prepare future professionals to deal with the unknown and the unexpected (Bock, 1997, cited in Cavalcanti; Rocha; Morais, 2021). Moreover, it is important to note that historically, psychology curricula rarely include studies and guidance on the use of ICTs for psychological counseling contexts (Carvalho; Silveira, 2020).

It is crucial, therefore, to develop specific therapeutic skills for conducting online sessions, and this can be achieved through adequate training and supervision. Additionally, knowledge of the technological resources used plays an important role in the effectiveness of the service (Bossi; Sehaparini, 2021). In this context, clinical supervision and continuous education play a significant role in the clinical process, allowing the supervisee to take on a leading role and create conditions to integrate theory into practice in the field of psychology. The space of supervision is fundamental for the psychologist's training, as it facilitates the discussion on how to apply theoretical knowledge in clinical practice (Silva; Neto; Lima, 2019, cited in Correia et al., 2023).

As noted by Almondes and Teodoro (2021), to provide online counseling, not many resources are needed. A smartphone, a program allowing internet access, and a high-speed connection are sufficient to interact with the patient. However, it is important to note that the minimum required is not necessarily ideal. As technology continues to update, new opportunities arise. Mobile applications (apps) are being developed for symptom monitoring, psychoeducation, treatment progress assessment, skill training, and communication purposes (Luxton et al., 2011, cited in OPP, 2020).

It is fundamental to emphasize that the urgency in training professionals is supported by the Psychologist's Code of Ethics itself (Resolution 010/2005), which emphasizes the responsibility of psychologists to seek continuous professional improvement, thus contributing to the development of psychology (Zeferino; Viecili, 2020). The relevance of the ethical and technical aspects that permeate the actions of these professionals in this context is highlighted. Furthermore, as emphasized by Bossi and Sehaparini (2021), the need to enhance psychologists' skills in online clinical care is becoming increasingly pressing, as well as the obligation to address this intervention context in undergraduate and graduate programs in psychology.

V. Conclusion

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) play a significant role in the evolution of psychology and online psychotherapeutic services in the post-COVID-19 context. ICTs have emerged as facilitative tools in this transition to online modalities. This technological adaptation has not only allowed for the continuity of therapeutic services but also brought the possibility of reaching a larger and more diverse audience, removing geographical barriers, and increasing accessibility to psychological support, offering greater flexibility in scheduling, and the ability to reach individuals in remote locations. Thus, ICTs have the potential to democratize access to mental health care, making it more accessible and inclusive.

However, the migration to online modalities has also brought challenges, such as the need for mental health professionals to adapt to new technologies, ensuring patient confidentiality and security, and technological uncertainties, such as internet failures, software, and hardware problems, which can affect the quality of care and represent a challenge to be addressed.

The Brazilian Federal Council of Psychology (CFP) and Regional Psychology Councils (CRPs) have established regulatory legislation to guide the practice of psychology in the online modality, ensuring compliance with regulatory standards and the quality and safety of services provided online. These regulations highlight the importance of professional ethics, continuous education, and the psychologist's responsibility to stay updated on current guidelines. Much of the therapy process, such as establishing the therapeutic setting, building the therapeutic alliance, and defining the therapeutic contract, can be adapted, and effectively applied in the online modality, often with results like in-person therapy. This underscores that fundamental therapeutic skills are transferable between the two contexts, reinforcing the effectiveness of online psychotherapy, although there is no specific evidence of skills to be considered in the context of online psychotherapy.

The advancement of online psychotherapy is notable, even though it is considered a relatively new approach in Brazil that has been evolving gradually as psychology professionals adapt to new technologies and the demands of a constantly changing world. These changes also have implications for new psychology students or graduates who wish to enter the online modality. Transitioning to this approach requires a specific set of knowledge to ensure quality and ethics in client care. Specific training in the field of online psychology is essential to ensure the quality and ethics of care. Guidance and support from experienced professionals are crucial for developing competencies in this modality.

The limitations of research are inherent like online psychotherapy, which is considered a relatively new modality in Brazil, with little validated scientific material on the subject. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered a significant increase in interest in online psychotherapy, is still a recent event, with only three years since its onset and less than a year since the World Health Organization declared its end. This means that the field of online psychotherapy is constantly evolving, and many of the issues and gaps related to this modality are yet to be explored and fully understood.

Despite the limitations of research, the results suggest that online psychotherapy can be an effective and accessible modality of psychological care. Further research is needed to explore the potential of online psychotherapy, which can significantly contribute to the development of the field, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness, challenges, and benefits of this care modality. It is suggested that future research fill existing gaps and contribute to the training of professionals better prepared to face the challenges and opportunities offered by online psychotherapy. Thus, the field of mental health can continue to evolve and adapt to the constantly changing demands of contemporary society.

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