

Identifying Indicators of Treatment Satisfaction in Online Therapy Platforms: A Qualitative Study in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to identify the core indicators of treatment satisfaction in online therapy platforms from the perspectives of clients in Taiwan. **Methods and Materials:** A qualitative research design was employed using semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Twenty-two participants (12 women, 10 men), all of whom had engaged in online therapy within the previous year, were purposively recruited. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Interviews were conducted via video call or telephone, lasting between 45 and 70 minutes, and were transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was performed using NVivo 14 software, with iterative coding and regular team discussions to ensure reliability and conceptual clarity.

Findings: Analysis yielded four major categories of satisfaction indicators. The first, Platform Accessibility and Usability, included ease of access, intuitive navigation, reliability, flexible scheduling, transparent cost structures, and privacy protections. The second, Therapist–Client Relationship, encompassed communication quality, professional competence, trust, rapport building, and responsiveness. The third, Perceived Therapeutic Outcomes, reflected emotional support, cognitive reframing, behavioral improvements, goal attainment, symptom reduction, and long-term benefits. The fourth, Overall User Experience and Satisfaction, involved convenience, perceived value, continuity of care, cultural and language fit, peer recommendation, and comparisons with traditional therapy.

Conclusion: The study highlights that treatment satisfaction in online therapy platforms is a multidimensional construct shaped by both digital infrastructure and therapeutic relationships. By integrating technological reliability, therapist empathy, outcome visibility, and cultural resonance, platforms can foster higher satisfaction and sustained engagement.

Keywords: Online therapy; patient satisfaction; telehealth; qualitative research; therapeutic alliance; Taiwan

1. Introduction

In recent years, digital health innovations have reshaped the landscape of healthcare delivery, extending far beyond physical medicine into the realm of mental health. Online therapy platforms, sometimes referred to as internet hospitals or teletherapy services, have become increasingly significant in addressing the demand for accessible, cost-effective, and patient-centered mental healthcare. Understanding treatment satisfaction in these platforms is not merely a matter of evaluating service quality but also a critical determinant of adherence, therapeutic alliance, and long-term outcomes. Patient satisfaction has long been regarded as a multidimensional construct influenced by clinical outcomes, interpersonal dynamics, technological usability, and contextual factors (Ponsignon et al., 2023). Within online therapy, these dimensions are complicated by digital interfaces, remote communication, and the absence of face-to-face interaction, making satisfaction both a therapeutic outcome and a design challenge.

The concept of treatment satisfaction has traditionally been examined in relation to chronic illness management, physical therapy, and pharmacological interventions. For instance, dissatisfaction with medical therapy in patients with irritable bowel syndrome or chronic constipation has been linked to unmet expectations and symptom persistence, underscoring the need for individualized approaches (Basilisco, 2020). Similarly, studies of patient satisfaction with physical therapy have revealed that interpersonal interactions, empathy, and clear communication are as important as clinical effectiveness in shaping overall perceptions of care (Daniela Annanias Gímenes de et al., 2020; Faizan et al., 2022). Extending these insights to online therapy, it becomes evident that digital mental health platforms must account for both technical and human elements in order to foster a satisfying therapeutic experience.

Digital modalities offer unique opportunities and challenges. Asynchronous consultation models, initially piloted in vascular medicine, demonstrated that remote interactions could be both feasible and effective for delivering specialized expertise (Chittle et al., 2015). More recently, in oncology, mobile technologies have been leveraged to improve efficiency in consent-to-treatment processes, highlighting the potential of digital platforms to streamline clinical pathways (Chhin et al., 2017). In mental health contexts, these technological affordances translate into improved accessibility and reduced stigma but may also

introduce new barriers, such as reduced nonverbal communication and concerns over privacy. Research on telemedicine in speech-language pathology has illustrated that patients generally report high levels of satisfaction with remote care, although technological glitches and reduced intimacy remain significant constraints (Little et al., 2022).

The importance of cultural and contextual factors in shaping satisfaction cannot be overlooked. For instance, the Turkish adaptation of the MedRisk instrument for physical therapy demonstrated that satisfaction tools must be culturally validated to capture patients' perceptions accurately (Yeşilyaprak et al., 2018). Similarly, in gastrointestinal cancer patients in Iran, perceived social support was found to be a critical determinant of well-being and treatment adherence, underscoring the interplay between medical care, social context, and patient satisfaction (Shoghli et al., 2020). These findings resonate strongly with online therapy, where cultural congruence and perceived support are vital for engagement, especially in collectivist societies where family and community expectations shape health behaviors.

Beyond physical and social dimensions, patient satisfaction has also been studied in relation to life quality and psychosocial well-being. For example, interventions such as yoga therapy have been shown to improve both perception of illness and life satisfaction in individuals with chronic disease (Telles et al., 2024). These findings underscore that satisfaction is not merely about clinical improvement but also about enhancing the overall sense of coherence, empowerment, and personal growth. In the context of online therapy, this translates into examining whether digital modalities not only reduce symptoms but also promote emotional resilience, connectedness, and perceived meaning in life.

Therapeutic satisfaction in specific medical conditions further highlights the relevance of trust, communication, and outcome perception. Patients with moderate-to-severe plaque psoriasis have expressed varying degrees of satisfaction with treatments, with dissatisfaction often linked to side effects and unmet expectations (Duffin et al., 2014). Similarly, children undergoing growth hormone therapy reported improved satisfaction when tangible growth patterns were observed, suggesting that visible outcomes strongly influence perceptions (Elrifayy et al., 2024). In diabetes management, intensified insulin therapy with analogues has been associated with higher levels of satisfaction compared to older regimens, emphasizing the role of innovation in shaping patient perceptions

(Mahanggoro et al., 2021; Radenković et al., 2021). The parallels with online therapy are clear: technological innovation, visible progress, and therapeutic responsiveness directly contribute to whether clients view their treatment as successful.

The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified the urgency of understanding patient satisfaction in remote care. Research into oxygenation therapies during moderate COVID-19 pneumonia illustrated how treatment perceptions are closely tied to perceived safety and efficacy (Mazumder et al., 2023). Likewise, online hospitals in China demonstrated that physicians' willingness to provide digital counseling was motivated by their professional reputations and patient trust (Xu et al., 2020). These findings suggest that satisfaction in online therapy depends not only on the technological platform but also on the credibility of therapists and the trust they build in digital spaces.

Mental health interventions via digital platforms are uniquely positioned at the intersection of technological functionality and therapeutic relationality. The dual demands of usability and interpersonal connection complicate the evaluation of satisfaction. As studies in home health care have shown, satisfaction is determined by multiple drivers, including accessibility, trust, and perceived value (Ponsignon et al., 2023). When these drivers are applied to therapy, satisfaction indicators may include ease of navigation, flexibility in scheduling, privacy assurance, therapeutic alliance, symptom improvement, and cultural relevance. These are not isolated elements but interact dynamically, shaping overall treatment perceptions.

Recent studies on treatment satisfaction in neurodegenerative diseases such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) highlight the importance of integrating patient voices into evaluation frameworks. Provision of mechanical insufflation–exsufflation devices, for instance, was closely linked to perceptions of treatment satisfaction, particularly when patients felt their needs were acknowledged and outcomes monitored (Maier et al., 2024, 2025). These studies reinforce the need to design satisfaction assessments that are sensitive to subjective experiences, rather than relying solely on clinical or technological measures. In online therapy, this means capturing clients' lived experiences of accessibility, relational depth, and psychological change, rather than focusing narrowly on symptom reduction.

The integration of technology into healthcare has therefore expanded the meaning of satisfaction from a unidimensional measure of service quality to a complex

construct shaped by outcomes, expectations, cultural contexts, and human-technology interactions. For instance, research has shown that even in chronic disease management, patient satisfaction is not exclusively determined by physiological improvement but by broader psychosocial and experiential dimensions (Daniela Annanias Gimenes de et al., 2020; Faizan et al., 2022; Telles et al., 2024). Similarly, satisfaction in online therapy must be understood as a multifaceted construct that reflects both objective outcomes and subjective perceptions, including empowerment, connectedness, and cultural resonance.

Furthermore, the shift toward online therapy reflects broader transformations in healthcare systems. Digital modalities not only extend the reach of therapy but also redefine the therapist–patient relationship. As earlier explorations into electronic consultation and mobile technologies demonstrated, digital interactions are not inherently inferior to in-person ones; rather, they require carefully designed structures to maintain efficiency, trust, and intimacy (Chhin et al., 2017; Chittle et al., 2015). In mental health, this necessitates considering how relational warmth, nonverbal cues, and therapist responsiveness can be translated into digital formats.

In summary, the literature demonstrates that treatment satisfaction is a multidimensional construct shaped by clinical efficacy, interpersonal communication, technological usability, cultural context, and psychosocial outcomes. In the domain of online therapy, these factors are amplified by the digital medium, requiring a comprehensive exploration of indicators that matter most to clients. Despite growing recognition of telehealth and online platforms, few studies have systematically identified the indicators of satisfaction specific to digital mental health services. Addressing this gap is crucial for designing user-centered interventions, improving therapeutic adherence, and enhancing the credibility of online therapy as a sustainable alternative to traditional care. The present study aims to identify and categorize the core indicators of treatment satisfaction in online therapy platforms, drawing on qualitative insights from clients in Taiwan.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative research design with an exploratory approach to identify key indicators of treatment satisfaction in online therapy platforms. A purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit participants who had

prior experience with online therapy services in Taiwan. A total of 22 participants were included in the study, consisting of clients who had engaged in therapy via digital platforms within the last 12 months. Participants were diverse in terms of age, gender, and type of psychological concern, ensuring that different perspectives on satisfaction indicators could be captured. Recruitment continued until theoretical saturation was reached, meaning that no new themes emerged from the interviews. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection.

2.2. Measures

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews designed to elicit participants’ experiences and perceptions regarding their satisfaction with online therapy. The interview guide included open-ended questions covering areas such as accessibility, therapist–client communication, platform usability, confidentiality, and perceived therapeutic outcomes. Interviews were conducted either via video call or telephone, depending on participant preference, and each session lasted between 45 and 70 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

2.3. Data analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, supported by NVivo 14 software. The analysis process followed a systematic approach involving several stages: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated

readings of transcripts, (2) initial open coding of meaningful units, (3) grouping of codes into subthemes and higher-order themes, and (4) refinement of the thematic framework to ensure consistency and conceptual clarity. Coding was carried out iteratively, and the research team regularly discussed emerging patterns to enhance reliability and minimize researcher bias. The process continued until theoretical saturation was confirmed, ensuring that the identified indicators comprehensively reflected participants’ perspectives.

3. Findings and Results

A total of 22 participants from Taiwan took part in this study. The sample included 12 females (54.5%) and 10 males (45.5%), with ages ranging from 21 to 48 years ($M = 32.4$). Regarding educational background, 7 participants (31.8%) held a bachelor’s degree, 10 (45.5%) had completed graduate-level education, and 5 (22.7%) reported holding a high school diploma or equivalent. In terms of therapy experience, 14 participants (63.6%) had been in online therapy for more than six months, while 8 (36.4%) reported a shorter engagement period. The primary therapeutic concerns included anxiety disorders ($n = 9$; 40.9%), depressive symptoms ($n = 7$; 31.8%), stress-related concerns ($n = 4$; 18.2%), and relationship issues ($n = 2$; 9.1%). Participants were recruited to represent diverse backgrounds to ensure a wide range of perspectives on satisfaction with online therapy platforms.

Table 1

Categories, Subcategories, and Concepts Derived from Thematic Analysis

Category (Main Theme)	Subcategory	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Platform Accessibility and Usability	Ease of Access	Simple login process; Compatibility with devices; Stable connection; Quick loading speed
	Navigation and Interface	User-friendly menus; Clear layout; Mobile app convenience; Intuitive icons
	Technical Reliability	Few disruptions; Rare glitches; Effective troubleshooting; Consistent performance
	Scheduling Flexibility	Flexible appointment booking; Reminder notifications; Time zone adaptation; Rescheduling options
	Cost and Payment Options	Affordable pricing; Transparent billing; Multiple payment methods; Subscription packages
2. Therapist–Client Relationship	Privacy Features	Password protection; Encrypted communication; Private chatrooms
	Communication Quality	Clear expression; Active listening; Non-judgmental tone; Empathetic responses; Timely replies
	Professional Competence	Evidence-based guidance; Tailored strategies; Therapist expertise; Problem-solving skills
	Trust and Confidentiality Rapport Building	Honesty; Reliability; Safe disclosure; Respect for boundaries Warmth; Encouragement; Respectful tone; Personal connection; Sense of being valued

	Responsiveness	Quick message response; Flexibility in session length; Willingness to clarify doubts
3. Perceived Therapeutic Outcomes	Emotional Support	Feeling understood; Validation; Reduction of loneliness; Stress relief
	Cognitive Change	New perspectives; Restructuring negative thoughts; Enhanced clarity
	Behavioral Improvement	Improved daily routines; Healthier coping strategies; Enhanced motivation
	Goal Attainment	Progress toward therapy goals; Sense of achievement; Personal growth
	Symptom Reduction	Lower anxiety levels; Reduced depressive symptoms; Better sleep quality; Increased concentration
4. Overall User Experience and Satisfaction	Long-Term Benefits	Sustained progress; Preventing relapse; Self-monitoring skills
	Convenience and Comfort	Therapy from home; Flexible environment; Reduced travel burden; Time saving
	Perceived Value	Value for money; Fair pricing vs. benefit; Cost–benefit balance
	Continuity of Care	Smooth follow-up sessions; Consistency in therapist assignment; Ongoing availability
	Cultural and Language Fit	Use of native language; Sensitivity to cultural values; Local examples
	Peer Recommendations	Willingness to recommend to others; Sharing positive experiences; Advocacy for platform use
	Comparison with Traditional Therapy	Greater accessibility; Less stigma; Similar effectiveness; More adaptable to lifestyle

1. Platform Accessibility and Usability

Ease of Access. Participants emphasized that uncomplicated access to therapy platforms was an essential satisfaction indicator. They highlighted features such as smooth login procedures, device compatibility, and fast-loading sessions. One participant remarked, *“I liked that I could log in from my phone without needing extra steps. It made me feel the therapy was part of my routine.”*

Navigation and Interface. The interface design was repeatedly cited as an important factor. Clients valued clear menus and intuitive layouts, noting that the design should not distract from the therapy itself. As one interviewee explained, *“The app was simple, with clear icons. I never felt lost or confused about where to click.”*

Technical Reliability. A stable platform was considered crucial to maintaining trust in the service. Participants disliked interruptions during sessions and praised platforms with minimal glitches. A client stated, *“If the video froze too often, I felt disconnected. On good days, when it worked smoothly, I was much more satisfied.”*

Scheduling Flexibility. Flexibility in arranging appointments was also seen as a central feature. Participants appreciated reminders and the ability to reschedule easily. One participant noted, *“My therapist and I were in different time zones, but the system adapted perfectly. That was very convenient.”*

Cost and Payment Options. Affordability and transparent billing strongly influenced satisfaction. Clients favored platforms with multiple payment methods and subscription choices. For example, a participant shared, *“I could pay monthly without hidden fees. That transparency gave me confidence.”*

Privacy Features. Several participants expressed that privacy protections such as encryption and password security reassured them. As one client put it, *“I felt safe knowing that my sessions were encrypted. Without that, I wouldn’t have opened up.”*

2. Therapist–Client Relationship

Communication Quality. The way therapists communicated was a decisive factor in participants’ experiences. Empathy, clarity, and active listening were frequently praised. One participant commented, *“She listened without interrupting and summarized my feelings. That made me trust the process.”*

Professional Competence. Clients placed value on the therapists’ expertise and tailored interventions. They expected evidence-based strategies. As one participant noted, *“He gave me practical steps, not just general advice. It felt professional.”*

Trust and Confidentiality. Establishing a secure environment for disclosure was essential. Participants reported greater satisfaction when therapists respected their boundaries. One client explained, *“I could tell my therapist anything, knowing it stayed between us. That trust was everything.”*

Rapport Building. Many highlighted the relational aspect of therapy, appreciating warmth and encouragement. For instance, a participant shared, *“Even online, I felt like she genuinely cared. That connection made me return each week.”*

Responsiveness. Timely replies to messages and flexibility during sessions were strong contributors to satisfaction. As one interviewee stated, *“Sometimes I messaged outside sessions, and she responded quickly. That support made me feel valued.”*

3. Perceived Therapeutic Outcomes

Emotional Support. Participants emphasized the relief of being understood and validated. One person noted, *“I didn’t feel so alone anymore. Just knowing someone was listening reduced my anxiety.”*

Cognitive Change. Satisfaction was also tied to gaining new perspectives and reframing negative thoughts. As one participant described, *“After sessions, I started seeing my problems differently. That shift gave me hope.”*

Behavioral Improvement. Clients mentioned positive lifestyle adjustments, such as improved routines and healthier coping skills. For example, a participant shared, *“I started exercising again and kept a better schedule because of therapy.”*

Goal Attainment. Many participants evaluated satisfaction through their progress toward personal goals. One explained, *“We set small goals, and I could see myself achieving them. That was motivating.”*

Symptom Reduction. A recurring indicator of satisfaction was noticeable relief from symptoms such as anxiety or insomnia. As one interviewee expressed, *“My panic attacks decreased after a few weeks. That made me feel the therapy was working.”*

Long-Term Benefits. Some participants highlighted sustained outcomes, such as preventing relapse or learning self-monitoring skills. One stated, *“Even after finishing sessions, I still use what I learned. That’s real satisfaction.”*

4. Overall User Experience and Satisfaction

Convenience and Comfort. Being able to attend therapy from home was seen as highly beneficial. A participant noted, *“I could talk in my pajamas. It felt more natural and less stressful than going to a clinic.”*

Perceived Value. Clients judged satisfaction based on the balance between cost and benefit. As one person explained, *“For what I paid, the improvement I felt was worth it. That’s why I stayed.”*

Continuity of Care. Consistency in therapist assignment and availability was emphasized. A participant said, *“I liked that I always had the same therapist. It gave me a sense of stability.”*

Cultural and Language Fit. Participants valued platforms where therapists understood local culture and could communicate in their native language. One client shared, *“Speaking in Mandarin made a big difference. I didn’t need to translate my feelings.”*

Peer Recommendations. Satisfaction was also reflected in clients’ willingness to recommend platforms. One

participant remarked, *“I told my friends to try it too because my experience was so positive.”*

Comparison with Traditional Therapy. Finally, several clients compared online and offline therapy, often appreciating the reduced stigma and greater accessibility of online sessions. A participant concluded, *“It felt just as effective as in-person therapy, but much easier to fit into my life.”*

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify and interpret the core indicators of treatment satisfaction in online therapy platforms from the perspectives of clients in Taiwan. Thematic analysis yielded four main categories: Platform Accessibility and Usability, Therapist–Client Relationship, Perceived Therapeutic Outcomes, and Overall User Experience and Satisfaction. These findings highlight both the technological and interpersonal dimensions that jointly shape how clients evaluate the success of their online therapy experiences. In this section, the results are discussed in relation to prior studies on treatment satisfaction, patient experience, and telehealth service delivery.

The results demonstrated that ease of access, intuitive navigation, technical reliability, scheduling flexibility, affordability, and privacy protections were crucial factors influencing satisfaction. Clients valued seamless login procedures, mobile compatibility, and stability of video sessions, which mirrors earlier findings in telemedicine. For example, research on asynchronous vascular consultations demonstrated the feasibility of electronic interactions when platforms were efficient and reliable (Chittle et al., 2015). Similarly, studies leveraging mobile technologies in oncology have shown that streamlined digital processes improve not only patient trust but also efficiency in clinical procedures (Chhin et al., 2017). These parallels suggest that the technological backbone of an online therapy platform is a fundamental driver of perceived quality and satisfaction.

Participants in the present study also emphasized the importance of transparent billing and multiple payment methods. This observation aligns with evidence from home health care services, where affordability and clarity in service structures were identified as major determinants of satisfaction (Ponsignon et al., 2023). In addition, concerns about privacy and encrypted communications reflected broader anxieties about confidentiality in digital health. Similar to findings on internet hospitals in China, where physicians’ reputation and trust-building were vital for

uptake (Xu et al., 2020), our results indicate that clients judge satisfaction not only on therapeutic outcomes but also on how safe and private they feel in the digital environment.

Despite the digital format, participants strongly emphasized communication quality, trust, rapport, and responsiveness as central indicators of satisfaction. This finding resonates with longstanding literature showing that interpersonal interactions, empathy, and warmth are critical in shaping patient satisfaction in physical therapy (Daniela Annanias Gimenes de et al., 2020; Faizan et al., 2022). Even when technology mediates therapy, clients seek authentic connections, highlighting the irreplaceable human component of satisfaction.

Trust and confidentiality emerged as particularly salient themes. Similar observations have been made in patients with gastrointestinal cancers in Iran, where social support and trust were central to perceived well-being and satisfaction (Shoghli et al., 2020). These results extend that insight into the digital realm, underscoring that online therapy platforms must integrate mechanisms for trust-building despite the physical distance. Rapport-building online was often associated with therapist empathy, encouragement, and attentiveness—qualities shown in dermatology and endocrinology studies to predict patient satisfaction when treatment outcomes alone were not sufficient (Duffin et al., 2014; Elrifayy et al., 2024).

Furthermore, participants highlighted the importance of therapist responsiveness, especially in asynchronous communication formats. These findings support previous evidence that flexibility in therapist availability increases treatment adherence and client retention, consistent with patterns seen in intensified insulin therapy where responsiveness to patient needs contributed to higher satisfaction (Mahanggoro et al., 2021; Radenković et al., 2021). Taken together, our findings illustrate that the therapist–client relationship in online therapy is as critical as in traditional formats, if not more so, given the need to overcome the limitations of digital communication.

Another major category identified in the study was the perception of therapeutic outcomes. Participants linked satisfaction to emotional support, cognitive reframing, behavioral change, goal attainment, symptom reduction, and sustained benefits. These dimensions extend beyond immediate clinical relief to encompass holistic improvements in well-being.

The salience of emotional support in our data echoes earlier findings that social connectedness and validation are strong predictors of satisfaction in medical contexts (Shoghli

et al., 2020). Similarly, the importance of cognitive and behavioral changes as markers of progress aligns with evidence from yoga therapy, where psychosocial benefits such as improved life satisfaction and illness perception contributed substantially to treatment evaluation (Telles et al., 2024). Online therapy appears to provide not only symptom management but also a sense of personal growth and empowerment, paralleling studies in chronic disease where satisfaction was tied to improved quality of life rather than symptom eradication alone (Daniela Annanias Gimenes de et al., 2020).

Goal attainment and visible outcomes were repeatedly highlighted as central to satisfaction. This finding is consistent with evidence in pediatric endocrinology, where satisfaction with growth hormone therapy was closely tied to observable physical improvements (Elrifayy et al., 2024). Similarly, patients with psoriasis and diabetes often reported greater satisfaction when tangible improvements were noted (Duffin et al., 2014; Radenković et al., 2021). In online therapy, participants' accounts demonstrated that symptom relief (e.g., reduced anxiety, improved sleep) was deeply intertwined with their overall evaluation of treatment.

Importantly, several participants emphasized long-term benefits, such as sustained resilience and prevention of relapse. This reflects findings in ALS treatment satisfaction studies, where satisfaction was not limited to immediate effects of interventions but extended to ongoing perceptions of care quality (Maier et al., 2024, 2025). These parallels highlight that in both chronic physical conditions and psychological care, satisfaction must be conceptualized longitudinally, encompassing both immediate and enduring outcomes.

The final category encompassed broader judgments of satisfaction, including convenience, perceived value, continuity of care, cultural fit, peer recommendation, and comparisons with traditional therapy. Participants frequently mentioned the convenience of receiving therapy from home, reducing travel burden, and saving time. This finding reflects long-standing evidence that digital health technologies enhance accessibility and efficiency (Chhin et al., 2017; Chittle et al., 2015).

Perceived value was also an important dimension, with participants assessing whether improvements justified the financial and time investments. This resonates with research in COVID-19 treatments, where satisfaction was tied to patients' perception of efficacy relative to the intensity and cost of care (Mazumder et al., 2023). Similarly, cultural and language fit emerged as important indicators, reflecting the

broader literature on the necessity of culturally adapted satisfaction instruments (Yeşilyaprak et al., 2018). Our findings confirm that clients feel more engaged and satisfied when therapy resonates with their linguistic and cultural identities.

Finally, participants often compared online therapy with traditional in-person modalities, frequently reporting similar effectiveness but greater accessibility and less stigma. These observations mirror evidence from speech-language telemedicine, where patients generally perceived remote care as equivalent in quality to in-person services while enjoying additional conveniences (Little et al., 2022). Likewise, in home health care, satisfaction drivers included continuity, accessibility, and perceived value (Ponsignon et al., 2023), all of which were echoed in our participants' evaluations of online therapy.

Overall, the findings suggest that treatment satisfaction in online therapy is a multidimensional construct shaped by the interaction of technological infrastructure, therapist–client dynamics, therapeutic outcomes, and broader user experiences. These results align with the extensive body of evidence on satisfaction in chronic illness, physical therapy, telemedicine, and chronic disease management (Basilisco, 2020; Duffin et al., 2014; Ponsignon et al., 2023; Telles et al., 2024). However, our study extends the literature by systematically identifying indicators specific to online therapy, demonstrating that digital environments demand simultaneous attention to platform usability, relational trust, outcome visibility, and cultural resonance.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

This study is not without limitations. First, the sample size of 22 participants, while adequate for qualitative saturation, limits the generalizability of findings to broader populations or different cultural contexts. Second, the study was conducted exclusively in Taiwan, which may constrain the transferability of results to societies with different technological infrastructures, cultural values, or healthcare systems. Third, reliance on self-reported experiences raises the possibility of recall bias or socially desirable responses. Finally, while thematic analysis provided rich insights, the absence of triangulation with quantitative satisfaction measures may limit the ability to compare findings with larger-scale surveys.

Future research should explore satisfaction indicators in more diverse cultural contexts to evaluate the universality of the themes identified. Comparative studies between different

countries and therapy modalities could illuminate variations in satisfaction drivers. Additionally, integrating quantitative instruments, such as validated patient satisfaction scales, alongside qualitative approaches would enhance methodological robustness. Longitudinal studies could further clarify how satisfaction evolves over time and whether early perceptions predict long-term adherence and therapeutic outcomes. Finally, future work should investigate the perspectives of therapists, platform developers, and policymakers to provide a holistic understanding of satisfaction in digital mental health care.

Practically, the results of this study underscore the need for online therapy platforms to integrate both technological and relational design elements. Ensuring seamless navigation, reliable performance, and privacy protections is essential to fostering trust. At the same time, training therapists in digital communication strategies can enhance empathy, responsiveness, and rapport even in remote contexts. Platforms should also incorporate cultural and linguistic adaptability to better serve diverse populations. Importantly, online therapy services must focus on outcome tracking and feedback mechanisms that allow clients to see tangible progress, thereby reinforcing satisfaction and adherence.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed in this article.

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