

## **Review comment-1**

This manuscript makes a timely and meaningful contribution to the literature on health professions education, particularly in the context of Motivational Interviewing (MI) training for public health professionals. With the rise of online learning modalities following the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the study's comparison of online synchronous and in-person pedagogies provides valuable evidence regarding the feasibility, fidelity, and learner outcomes of virtual MI instruction. The randomization approach and use of the MITI 4.2.1 instrument strengthen its methodological rigor. The findings—showing comparable learning outcomes but differing satisfaction levels—have direct implications for educators designing MI curricula in health systems, workforce training, and continuing professional education.

The current title is accurate and descriptive, clearly indicating the focus on learning outcomes, preferences, and satisfaction across two pedagogical formats for MI training. It communicates the study design and target population effectively.

An alternative, slightly more concise version could be: “Comparing Online Synchronous and In-Person Motivational Interviewing Instruction: Learning Outcomes, Preferences, and Satisfaction among Public Health Professionals.”

Yes, the abstract is clear, well-structured, and comprehensive. It summarizes the background, objectives, methods, results, and conclusions. The inclusion of statistical findings enhances transparency. Minor suggestion: Consider explicitly mentioning the sample size analyzed ( $n = 18$ ) and the dropout rate to clarify study limitations. A final sentence noting implications for practice (e.g., “Findings support the feasibility of synchronous online MI training for geographically dispersed professionals”) would further strengthen the abstract.

The manuscript is written in professional, scholarly English with clear organization and precise academic tone. Minor stylistic edits could improve conciseness in some sections (e.g., reducing redundancy in the Introduction and Discussion), but overall, it meets publication standards.

Introduction: Comprehensive, with a solid literature review and rationale. It effectively establishes the gap in research comparing online synchronous and in-person MI instruction and justifies the study's aims.

Methods: Well-detailed, describing recruitment, randomization, instruments, and analytic procedures. The inclusion of MITI 4.2.1 adds credibility. However, the attrition rate (high dropout) should be more explicitly addressed as a limitation in the Methods and Discussion.

Results: Clear presentation of quantitative data through tables. Interpretation aligns with the research questions. A brief narrative emphasizing effect sizes or practical significance (in addition to p-values) would strengthen this section.

Discussion: Thoughtful interpretation, connecting findings to previous literature. The reflection on non-verbal communication challenges in online MI training is insightful. Consider tightening some paragraphs for flow and adding more discussion on educational design implications.

Limitations: Appropriately discussed, particularly sample size and dropout. Adding a brief mention of generalizability constraints (limited to public health professionals) would be useful.

Conclusion: Succinct and aligned with findings; emphasizes access and feasibility.

The references are relevant, recent, and comprehensive, drawing on key MI sources (Miller & Rollnick, 2023), pandemic-era educational research, and validation studies of MITI instruments.

Minor suggestion: Include at least one or two additional studies published in 2022–2024 addressing virtual health professions education or telehealth skill training, to reinforce the timeliness of the topic.

**Recommendation: Minor Revision**

The manuscript is strong in originality, design, and contribution to practice. Revisions should focus on:

- Expanding discussion of dropout implications and generalizability.
- Adding implications for educational practice and policy.
- Streamlining prose for clarity.
- Optionally including more recent references.
- Strengths: Randomized design; use of validated instrument (MITI 4.2.1); rigorous analysis; alignment with current trends in online learning.
- Weaknesses: Small sample size; high attrition; minor redundancies in narrative.
- Recommendation: Accept with minor revisions after addressing noted points.