

Review comment-2

The manuscript is highly important. It addresses a critical, timely question regarding the fidelity and efficacy of remote training for an evidence-based practice (Motivational Interviewing, MI). By using randomization to assign participants, the study successfully addresses a major methodological limitation (self-selection bias) in previous comparative research.

The title is suitable and descriptive. A minor suggestion for conciseness: "In-Person Versus Online Synchronous Motivational Interviewing Training: An Evaluation of Skills, Preferences, and Satisfaction.

The abstract is missing a crucial piece of information: the final sample size (N=16 for the primary outcome). The current abstract states "Forty professionals were randomly assigned", which contradicts the final numbers used in the MITI analysis (n=11 in-person, n=5 online). Suggestion: Revise line 14 to clarify that 40 professionals were *initially* assigned, but the final MITI analysis included 16 participants due to attrition. In general, the sample size is too small to reach a reasonable conclusion.

The English quality is high. The tone is appropriate, and the paper is clear and well-structured. Minor editorial suggestions: 1) Consider replacing "gestaltism" with "overall style" or "holistic impression". 2) Review the first sentence of the *Materials and Methods* section for the use of "quasi-experimental", as the inclusion of randomization suggests a true experiment or pilot RCT.

Overall, the sections are appropriate and well-organized. Methods: Excellent description of the instructor and curriculum fidelity. Results: Clear presentation of the data in the tables. Discussion: Strong analysis of the findings and limitations. Suggestion: The Discussion should be expanded to specifically analyze the only statistically significant behavioral count: "giving information" was higher in the online group. This warrants a brief paragraph exploring potential reasons (e.g., non-verbal cues being missed online)

The references are proper, recent, and sufficient. They include foundational MI texts (Miller & Rollnick) and relevant, contemporary literature on virtual training and the MITI

Specific Comments:

The small sample size is a **significant issue and limitation** for this study.

Although the authors specifically address this in the limitations section:

Reduced Power: The small sample size limited the **statistical power** to detect significant differences between the MI skill scores (MITI scores), training modality preference, and satisfaction with the course. This means that, while the core finding is that the groups performed

similarly, the study may have failed to detect a real, smaller difference between the modalities (a Type II error) due to the small number of participants.

16 participants (11 in-person and 5 online) is way too small.