Thank you for your review and the opportunity to revise and resubmit this manuscript. The comments from each reviewer and my responses are below.

Reviewer 1

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.

Response 1: Thank you for the recognition of the manuscript's usefulness.

Comment 2: 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."

Response 2: I agree with your suggestion and will change the title to: "Comparing online synchronous and in-person motivational interviewing instruction: Learning outcomes, preferences, and satisfaction among public health professionals."

Comment 3: 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.

Response 3: Information about sample size was added to the abstract as suggested. A statement about the high proportion of participants, especially in the online group was added to the abstract. A final statement related to feasibility was added to the abstract.

Comment 4: 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.

Response 4: Thank you. No changes were made.

Comment 5: 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.

Response 5: Thank you.

Comment 6: 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.

Response 6: Thank you for this comment. The participant attrition is explained in detail in the methods section and identified as a major limitation in the discussion. We added more to the discussion about the impact of attrition on the strength of the results.

Comment 7: 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.

Response 7: Thank you for your comment. The primary aim of this study was to see if a statistically significant effect existed not to measure the magnitude of a difference.

Comment 8: 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.

Response 8: Thank you for your comment. In addition to the discussion about learning styles and instructional methods, we added a paragraph describing considerations for the length and spacing of online synchronous training.

Comment 9: Limitations: Appropriately discussed, particularly sample size and dropout. Adding a brief mention of generalizability constraints (limited to public health professionals) would be useful.

Response 9: Thank you for the comment. We added a sentence about generalizability.

Comment 10: Conclusion: Succinct and aligned with findings; emphasizes access and feasibility.

Response 10: Thank you. No revisions were made.

Comment 11: 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.

Response 11: Thank you for the comment. We added this article: Chaker, R., Hajj-Hassan, M. & Ozanne, S. (2024). The Effects of Online Continuing Education for Healthcare Professionals: A Systematic Scoping Review. *Open Education Studies*, *6*(1), 20220226. https://doi.org/10.1515/edu-2022-0226

Reviewer 2

Comment 1: 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.

Response 1: Thank you for your comment.

Comment 2: 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.

Response 2: Thank you for the suggestion. The title was changed to "Comparing online synchronous and in-person motivational interviewing instruction: Learning outcomes, preferences, and satisfaction among public health professionals."

Comment 3: 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.

Response 3: Thank you for the recommendation. The abstract was revised to increase clarity—"Due to attrition following randomization, 16 participants submitted recorded…"

Comment 4: 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.

Response 4: Agreed. The word gestaltism was changed to "style" and quasi-experimental was changed to "experimental." We did use randomization, but we did not have a control group.

Comment 5: 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)

Response 5: Several sentences were added to the discussion exploring this difference.

Comment 6: The references are proper, recent, and sufficient. They include foundational MI texts (Miller & Rollnick) and relevant, contemporary literature on virtual training and the MITI

Response 6: No revision.

Thank you for your time in reviewing this manuscript.