

CONSUMER TRUST IN ONLINE COUNSELING PLATFORMS: A DIGITAL MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Tosendra Dwivedi^{*1}, Dr. Rati Khurana², Dr. Saba Farheen³, Ms. Manjari shree⁴, Dr. Shobha Sharma⁵, Nisha Ilyas⁶

¹*Professor of psychology, IILM University, Greater Noida Email Id - tosendra.dwivedi@iilm.edu, Orcid Id: 0000-0002-5766-0363

²Assistant Professor, IILM University, Gurugram Email Id- rati.khurana@iilm.edu ,Orcid Id: 0000-0002-0986-3617

³Assistant Professor Dept of Psychology Raj Narain college, Hajipur Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Bihar University Muzaffarpur (BRABU) Email Id- sabapupatna786@gmail.com

⁴Independent counsellor Email Id: manjareeshree@gmail.com

⁵ Consultant Clinical Psychologist Yashoda superspeciality hospital, Kaushambi, Email Id:shubhi.sharma879@gmail.com

⁶ Research Scholar, Amity University Jaipur, Email Id: nisha.ilyas@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the critical role of consumer trust in shaping the success and adoption of online counseling platforms from a digital marketing perspective. It aims to investigate the factors influencing trust formation, including security, privacy, communication, and cultural considerations, which significantly impact consumer decision-making and engagement in digital mental health services. Against the backdrop of rapid digitalization and growing demand for accessible mental health care, this study provides valuable insights into strategies for building and sustaining consumer trust to ensure long-term success of online counseling platforms. The findings highlight the need for effective trust marketing and ethical digital practices to enhance user confidence and platform credibility in the evolving digital health landscape.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, the rapid proliferation of online counseling platforms has transformed the landscape of mental health services, raising critical questions about how consumers develop trust in these virtual environments. This article investigates the pivotal role of digital marketing strategies in fostering consumer trust on online counseling platforms, emphasizing the significance of trust-building mechanisms for ensuring the long-term success and credibility of digital mental health services.

Background and Significance

The widespread integration of digital technologies into daily life has reshaped numerous sectors, including mental healthcare provision [1]. Online counseling platforms, delivering therapeutic services via the internet, have experienced considerable expansion, particularly accelerated by global events that necessitated remote interactions [2][3][4]. These platforms offer increased accessibility, convenience, and often anonymity, making mental health support available to a broader population, including individuals in remote areas or those facing mobility challenges [5][4]. However, the effectiveness and ethical implications of online counseling continue to be subjects of active scholarly discourse [6][7][8]. Despite the functional advantages of online counseling, the successful adoption and sustained engagement with these services hinge on consumer trust [9]. Trust, an essential element in traditional therapeutic relationships, acquires new dimensions and complexities within digital environments [10]. Consumers must trust the platform's security, the counselor's competence, the confidentiality of their personal information, and the overall efficacy of the remote therapeutic process [11][5]. The absence of physical presence and non-verbal cues inherent in face-to-face interactions introduces unique challenges for establishing rapport and trust in online settings [12][13].

From a digital marketing perspective, understanding and actively cultivating this trust is paramount for the viability and growth of online counseling platforms [14]. Digital marketing encompasses strategies for communicating value, building brand reputation, and fostering engagement in online spaces [15]. For online counseling, these strategies must address the inherent sensitivities of mental health services, moving beyond mere transactional interactions to build enduring relationships based on perceived credibility and reliability [14][16]. The convergence of digital marketing practices with the specific requirements of online mental health provision presents a rich area for investigation. Effective digital marketing can mitigate perceived risks, enhance transparency, and ultimately bolster consumer confidence in these emerging healthcare modalities [9].

Purpose and Research Questions

This paper systematically reviews the literature concerning consumer trust in online counseling platforms, specifically through a digital marketing lens. The primary objective is to synthesize existing knowledge on how trust is conceptualized, formed, maintained, and potentially eroded in the context of digital mental health services. Furthermore, the analysis identifies the various digital marketing strategies that contribute to establishing and strengthening this trust among consumers. The ultimate goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing consumer trust and to offer actionable insights for platform providers and marketing professionals.

The central research questions guiding this investigation are:

1. How is consumer trust in online counseling platforms theoretically conceptualized within digital environments?
2. What specific factors determine consumer trust in online counseling platforms?
3. What barriers impede the formation of trust in these digital mental health contexts?
4. Which digital marketing strategies effectively foster and sustain consumer trust in online counseling platforms?
5. What are the practical and ethical implications of these trust-building strategies for platform providers, counselors, and marketers?

Scope and Structure of the Paper

This paper focuses exclusively on consumer trust in online counseling platforms, examining both the broader theoretical underpinnings of trust in digital environments and its specific manifestations within remote mental health services. The scope encompasses factors influencing trust, challenges to its development, and the digital marketing interventions designed to cultivate it. This analysis draws upon a wide array of academic literature, including studies on e-commerce, digital health, and counseling ethics. Excluded from this review are detailed clinical outcomes of online counseling, which, while related, constitute a separate and extensive field of study.

The document is organized into five main sections. Following this introduction, the methodology section details the research design, source selection criteria, and analytical framework employed for the literature review. The subsequent section presents a comprehensive literature review and thematic analysis, exploring theoretical foundations of trust in digital environments, identifying specific determinants of trust in online counseling platforms, and outlining barriers to trust formation. The analysis and discussion section synthesizes these findings, explores the role of digital marketing strategies in fostering trust, outlines implications for various stakeholders, and identifies research gaps. The paper concludes with a summary of key insights, recommendations for practice and policy, and limitations of the current review, alongside avenues for future research.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This paper adopts a comprehensive literature review methodology, structured as a systematic synthesis of scholarly work relevant to consumer trust in online counseling platforms from a digital marketing perspective. This approach facilitates the identification, evaluation, and interpretation of existing research, allowing for the construction of a cohesive understanding of the subject matter [17]. The design emphasizes a thematic analysis of identified literature, enabling the extraction of key concepts, theoretical models, empirical findings, and practical implications across various studies [18]. The systematic nature of the review aims to ensure rigor and minimizes potential biases by adhering to predefined criteria for source selection and analytical procedures.

The chosen methodology is particularly suitable for a nascent field like consumer trust in online counseling, where fragmented insights exist across disciplines such as psychology, marketing, computer science, and health informatics. By synthesizing diverse perspectives, this review constructs a holistic understanding that would be difficult to achieve through primary empirical research alone. The process involves identifying recurring themes, contrasting different theoretical viewpoints, and integrating disparate empirical evidence to form a consolidated knowledge base [6].

Source Selection Criteria and Review Process

The selection of sources followed a multi-stage process designed to ensure relevance, academic rigor, and broad coverage of the topic. Initial searches were conducted across prominent academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, and PsycINFO, utilizing a combination of keywords such as "online counseling trust," "e-mental health trust," "digital therapy consumer confidence," "digital marketing trust healthcare," and "online platform credibility." These keywords were employed in various combinations to capture the interdisciplinary nature of the research topic. The search was not restricted by publication date to allow for the inclusion of foundational theories and contemporary developments. Inclusion criteria for selected articles involved:

- 1) peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters;
- 2) content directly addressing consumer trust, perceived credibility, or related constructs (e.g., perceived risk, privacy, security) within online service contexts;
- 3) specific focus on online counseling, tele-mental health, or digital healthcare platforms;
- 4) articles discussing digital marketing strategies or platform features influencing consumer perceptions of trust.

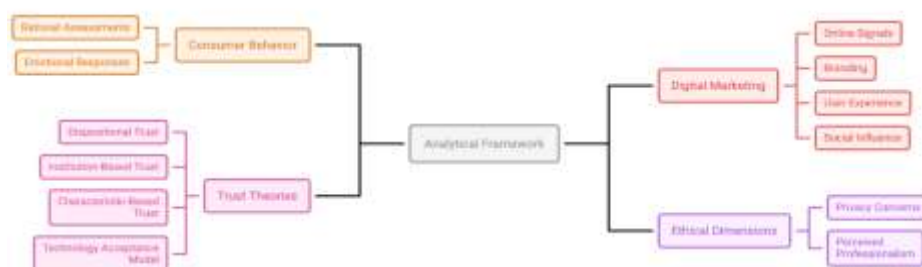
Exclusion criteria included:

- 1) editorial pieces, opinion articles, and non-academic publications;
- 2) studies solely focused on the clinical efficacy of online counseling without addressing consumer perceptions;
- 3) research on general e-commerce trust not transferable to sensitive healthcare contexts.

The review process involved several steps. First, initial search results were screened based on titles and abstracts to identify potentially relevant articles. Second, full texts of selected articles were retrieved and critically appraised for their methodological quality, theoretical contributions, and empirical findings. Data extraction focused on identifying definitions of trust, theoretical models employed, factors influencing trust, digital marketing interventions, and reported challenges. Finally, a thematic analysis approach was used to categorize and synthesize findings, allowing for the identification of overarching themes and patterns across the diverse literature [18]. This iterative process of searching,

screening, and synthesizing ensured a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of consumer trust in online counseling platforms.

Analytical Framework

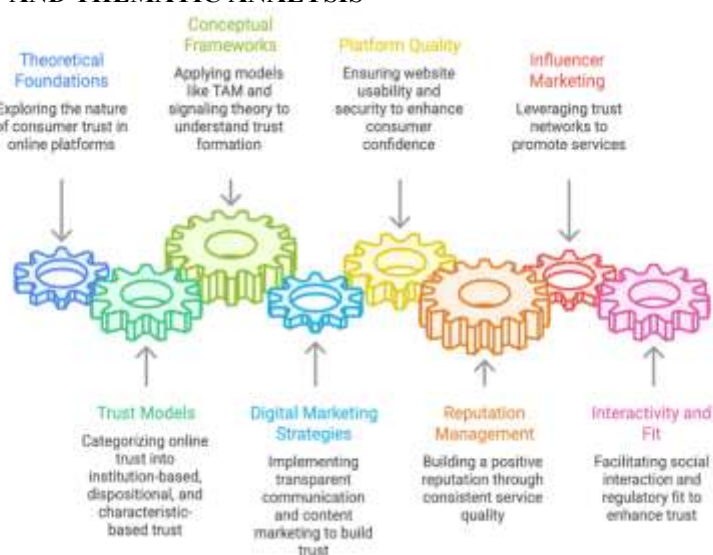


The analytical framework for this review integrates concepts from several theoretical domains: consumer behavior, digital marketing, and trust theories in human-computer interaction and online environments. Central to the framework is the understanding that consumer trust in online counseling platforms is a multi-faceted construct, influenced by both rational assessments and emotional responses [14][19].

The framework incorporates established trust models, such as those distinguishing between dispositional trust (a general propensity to trust), institution-based trust (trust in regulations, laws, and guarantees), and characteristic-based trust (trust in specific attributes of the trustee or platform) [10]. It further integrates insights from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and its extensions, which consider perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as drivers of behavioral intention, with trust often acting as a significant antecedent [9][20][21].

From a digital marketing perspective, the framework considers how online signals, branding, user experience (UX) design, and social influence mechanisms contribute to trust formation [14][15]. This involves examining how elements like website quality, security assurances, reputation, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and community building are leveraged to instill confidence [22][23][24]. The analytical process involves identifying how these elements interrelate and collectively shape a consumer's decision to engage with and continue using online counseling services. Special attention is given to the ethical dimensions of trust, including privacy concerns and the perceived professionalism of online practitioners [1][11][8].

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS



Theoretical Foundations of Consumer Trust in Digital Environments

This study explores the multifaceted nature of consumer trust in online counseling platforms, emphasizing the critical influence of cultural contexts on trust formation and perception. It highlights that factors such as perceived security, privacy, and institutional assurances vary significantly across different cultural environments, affecting consumer confidence and engagement. Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of tailored digital marketing strategies

that address these cultural nuances to effectively build and sustain trust. These insights provide valuable guidance for platform providers aiming to enhance credibility and user loyalty in diverse global markets [25][26][27].

Trust Models and Conceptual Frameworks

Trust in digital environments is a complex, multi-dimensional construct, distinct from its offline counterpart due to the absence of physical cues and the inherent uncertainty of online interactions [10][14]. Traditional trust models, which often emphasize repeated interactions and personal relationships, require adaptation for internet-mediated contexts. Scholars frequently categorize online trust into several facets, typically including institution-based trust, dispositional trust, and characteristic-based trust [10]. Institution-based trust refers to the belief in the protective power of legal and technological structures, such as privacy policies, security measures, and regulatory oversight [19][28]. Dispositional trust represents an individual's general propensity to trust others, a psychological trait that influences initial engagement with online services [11]. Characteristic-based trust, conversely, derives from perceptions of the specific attributes of the online entity, such as its reputation, competence, integrity, and benevolence [10].

Several conceptual frameworks elucidate the formation of online trust. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), for instance, suggests that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use predict the acceptance of technology, with trust often serving as a critical antecedent or mediator [9][20][21]. In online medical consultations, trust significantly influences behavioral intention, mediated by attitude, and is itself influenced by perceived risk, privacy protection, network externalities, cognitive reputation, and interactivity [9]. Another relevant framework is signaling theory, which posits that in situations of information asymmetry, online entities provide credible signals to reduce consumer uncertainty and engender trust [22][29]. These signals can include website quality, security assurances, and verifiable certifications [22]. Furthermore, a "trust paradox" has been observed, where relational strategies grounded in emotional attachment prove more effective for loyalty than transactional trust-based approaches in certain digital contexts [30]. Such observations highlight the necessity of considering both cognitive and affective dimensions of trust in digital interactions.

Digital Marketing Perspectives on Trust-Building

Digital marketing strategies play a critical role in cultivating consumer trust in online environments, particularly for sensitive services like counseling. These strategies focus on shaping consumer perceptions and experiences to mitigate perceived risks and enhance credibility [14][15]. One primary approach involves establishing transparent communication and clear value propositions, which can significantly influence consumer decision-making [31]. For instance, content marketing can foster trust and loyalty by providing high-quality, relevant information, while social media marketing builds brand awareness and engagement through tailored, interactive campaigns [15].

The quality of the online platform itself serves as a direct marketing signal. Website usability, security, privacy assurance, and the quality of product information directly influence consumer trust [22][23]. Positive Facebook reaction icons, for example, have been shown to influence brand attitude, trust, and purchase intention for health brands [32]. Reputation also emerges as a central factor, with a platform's perceived standing correlating positively with trust [33]. This reputation can be built through consistent service quality, professional conduct, and positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) [24][23]. Influencer marketing, by leveraging pre-existing trust networks, also presents a genuine way to promote services and build consumer trust [15][16].

Moreover, perceived interactivity and regulatory fit in e-health marketing within virtual environments can enhance brand satisfaction and brand trust [34]. The ability of a platform to facilitate social interaction and provide system support also influences perceived usefulness and ease of use, which in turn affect behavioral intention and attitude towards using online services [20]. Ultimately, digital marketing in this context moves beyond simple promotion, focusing on establishing authentic connections and demonstrating a commitment to user well-being and data security to cultivate lasting trust [14].

Determinants of Consumer Trust in Online Counseling Platforms

Platform Features and Technological Mediators

The design and functionality of online counseling platforms are central to cultivating consumer trust. Robust website quality, encompassing usability, security, and privacy assurance, directly influences user perceptions of trustworthiness [22][23]. Consumers are more likely to trust platforms that appear professional, operate smoothly, and clearly articulate their data protection policies [19]. For instance, a study on online medical consultation found that perceived privacy protection and interactivity directly influenced trust [9]. The presence of secure communication channels, encryption protocols, and transparent terms of service are tangible signals of a platform's commitment to user safety [11].

Technological mediators, such as the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the platform, also significantly affect trust and behavioral intention [20][21]. If a platform is difficult to navigate or its utility is unclear, consumer confidence diminishes. Conversely, intuitive interfaces and clear presentation of relevant information enhance the user experience and contribute to a sense of reliability. System support, alongside user interface design and navigation, has been shown to affect perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, thereby impacting behavioral intention to use online social networking sites [20]. Moreover, the availability of comprehensive information about counselors, their credentials, and therapeutic approaches fosters transparency, which is a foundational element of trust [5]. The technological infrastructure enabling smooth, uninterrupted sessions also plays a role; technical barriers like connectivity issues can disrupt the therapeutic process and erode trust [12][2].

Social Influence, Online Communities, and eWOM

Social influence mechanisms, including online communities and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), are powerful determinants of consumer trust in online counseling platforms. In the absence of direct personal recommendations, consumers frequently rely on the experiences and opinions of others shared online [24][23]. Positive eWOM, such as favorable reviews, testimonials, and endorsements on social media or dedicated forums, significantly enhances perceived trustworthiness and influences purchasing decisions [24][32][16]. Conversely, negative eWOM can rapidly diminish trust and deter potential users.

Online communities centered around mental health support or specific counseling platforms can also foster trust by creating a sense of shared experience and collective endorsement [35]. These communities allow prospective users to observe interactions, ask questions, and gauge the perceived effectiveness and reliability of services from peers. Influencer marketing, a subset of social influence, leverages individuals with established online credibility to promote services, thereby transferring trust from the influencer to the platform [15][16]. Research suggests that consumer trust mediates the relationship between influencer marketing and brand loyalty [16].

The transparency of online reviews and the mechanisms for dispute resolution further impact trust. Platforms that provide authentic, uncensored reviews and clear avenues for addressing concerns tend to be viewed as more credible [28]. The perceived reliability of online health information sources, often influenced by their presentation and consistency, correlates with consumer trust, which in turn influences health self-efficacy [36][37]. This dynamic underscores the importance of managing social proof and user-generated content in digital marketing strategies for online counseling platforms.

Psychological and Demographic Factors Affecting Trust

Consumer trust in online counseling platforms is also shaped by various psychological and demographic factors. Psychological aspects include an individual's general disposition to trust (dispositional trust), their prior experiences with online services, and their perceived risk tolerance [11][38]. Individuals with higher levels of online interpersonal trust are more likely to engage with online counseling [11]. Conversely, self-stigma associated with seeking mental health help can negatively predict the willingness to receive online counseling [11]. The "fear of being caught" while conducting online sessions and concerns about privacy and security are significant psychological barriers for e-clients [5]. Demographic characteristics also exhibit associations with online counseling engagement and trust perceptions. Early research indicated that Caucasian, middle-aged males with higher educational attainment were more likely to use online counseling, often prioritizing anonymity and convenience [5]. More recent studies have examined university students' attitudes, finding that gender and GPA can influence attitudes towards online counseling [39]. Age, for example, appears to be a key factor in understanding the correlates of trust in online health information [37]. Older adults, for instance, might perceive online social networks as less friendly environments, impacting their intention and attitude towards using social networking sites, although user interface design can mitigate these perceptions [20]. Cultural background also influences the perception of online trust, as evidenced by cross-cultural studies on e-commerce [14][33]. These psychological and demographic nuances necessitate tailored digital marketing approaches that resonate with diverse consumer segments and address their specific concerns and preferences.

Barriers and Challenges to Trust Formation

Perceived Risks, Privacy, and Ethical Concerns

The formation of trust in online counseling platforms faces significant barriers related to perceived risks, privacy, and ethical concerns. Unlike traditional face-to-face therapy, the digital environment introduces heightened anxieties about data security and the confidentiality of sensitive personal health information [5][11]. Consumers frequently express concerns about the potential for breaches, unauthorized access to their records, and the broader misuse of their data by platforms [38]. These perceived risks are a direct deterrent to engaging with online mental health services [9][19].

Ethical considerations also present substantial challenges to trust. The lack of clear, universally accepted ethical guidelines for online counseling has been a point of contention among practitioners and regulators [1][8]. Issues include maintaining professional boundaries, ensuring informed consent in a digital context, managing emergency situations across geographical distances, and verifying counselor credentials [1][40]. Studies reveal that a significant proportion of online counselors may not adhere to established ethical standards, further eroding public trust [40]. Ethical concerns related to online counseling negatively predict the willingness to receive such services [11]. Moreover, the anonymity and disinhibition afforded by online communication, while sometimes perceived as beneficial by clients, can also complicate the therapeutic process and raise ethical dilemmas for counselors [6][5]. The absence of robust regulatory frameworks or clear accountability mechanisms can amplify these concerns, making it difficult for consumers to fully trust the service provider or the platform itself [28].

Emotional Distance and Perceived Effectiveness

A notable barrier to trust formation in online counseling stems from the perception of emotional distance and uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of remote therapeutic interventions. The mediated nature of online communication, whether via chat, video, or asynchronous messaging, inherently reduces the richness of nonverbal cues that are fundamental to building rapport and empathy in face-to-face interactions [12][4]. Therapists themselves have reported experiencing less nonverbal communication in online sessions, which can complicate therapeutic work [4]. This perceived emotional distance can make it more challenging for clients to feel understood, connected, and ultimately, to trust the counselor and the therapeutic process [13].

Skepticism about the effectiveness of online counseling, particularly when compared to traditional in-person therapy, also undermines trust [3][13]. While a growing body of evidence supports the efficacy of online counseling for various psychological disorders, public and even professional perceptions still lag [6][41]. Psychologists have expressed uncertainties about online counseling's efficacy and their competence in using it, contributing to a broader hesitancy [3]. Concerns about the inability to employ certain therapeutic tools or to adequately respond to crisis situations in a remote setting also factor into perceived effectiveness [4]. For many consumers, the perceived credibility of the intervention is intrinsically linked to their willingness to trust the platform and its providers. An established trust relationship can enhance the perceived efficacy of online psychological support [13].

Cultural and Contextual Variations

Trust in online counseling platforms is not uniformly experienced across different cultural and contextual settings. Cultural norms and societal attitudes towards mental health, technology, and privacy significantly modulate how individuals perceive and engage with digital therapeutic services. For instance, research conducted with Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking internet users reveals specific socio-cultural dynamics influencing consumer confidence in digital environments [14]. These variations underscore that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to building trust in online counseling may not be effective globally. Contextual factors, such as the stage of a country's technological development and its e-commerce maturity, also play a role. Comparative studies between countries like Spain and Japan, which possess different levels of e-commerce development, indicate that while some trust determinants are universal (e.g., customer service quality), others, such as the importance of reputation, can vary. In particular, reputation may hold greater weight in contexts where digital platforms are still gaining widespread acceptance. The specific circumstances under which online counseling is sought also matter. During crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid shift to online modalities can temporarily lower typical barriers to adoption, but underlying trust issues may resurface as conditions stabilize [2][9]. The acceptance rate of online medical consultation, for example, has been observed to decline over time after initial pandemic-driven adoption [9]. These cultural and contextual variations highlight the necessity for culturally sensitive interventions and localized digital marketing strategies that acknowledge specific societal values, technological readiness, and mental health stigmas to effectively build and maintain consumer trust.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Synthesis of Key Findings from the Literature

The synthesis of literature reveals that consumer trust in online counseling platforms is a multifaceted construct, shaped by a confluence of technological, social, psychological, and ethical considerations. A central finding is that trust in digital environments differs from traditional interpersonal trust, largely due to reduced physical cues and increased information asymmetry [10][14]. This trust is typically conceptualized across institutional, dispositional, and characteristic dimensions, with all playing a role in a consumer's decision to engage with online mental health services [10]. Platform features, including website quality, security protocols, and perceived ease of use, directly influence user perceptions of reliability and professionalism [22][23][20]. The quality of information presented, particularly regarding counselor credentials and privacy policies, serves as a significant trust signal [5]. Beyond technical aspects, social influence mechanisms, predominantly electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and community dynamics, exert considerable sway. Positive peer evaluations and influencer endorsements significantly bolster trust and behavioral intentions [24][16]. This underscores the collective nature of trust formation in online spaces, where individual perceptions are often reinforced or challenged by the experiences of others. However, substantial barriers impede trust development. Perceived risks related to privacy, data security, and ethical conduct are primary deterrents [11][38]. Consumers express anxiety about the confidentiality of their sensitive health information and the potential for technological failures to compromise their privacy [5]. Ethical concerns regarding counselor competence, professional boundaries, and the handling of emergencies in a remote context further complicate trust formation [1][40]. The inherent emotional distance in online interactions and lingering skepticism about the effectiveness of remote therapy also contribute to consumer hesitancy [12][4]. Finally, cultural and contextual variations mean that trust-building strategies must be adaptable and sensitive to local norms and technological readiness [14].

The Role of Digital Marketing Strategies in Fostering Trust

Digital marketing strategies are instrumental in proactively addressing the challenges of trust formation in online counseling. These strategies move beyond simple promotion to actively build credibility and assure consumers of the safety and efficacy of the services. By leveraging various online channels and tools, platforms can strategically communicate value and foster confidence [15].

Trust Signals, Branding, and Platform Reputation

Digital marketing effectively uses trust signals to convey reliability and security. These signals include transparent privacy policies, clear terms of service, and visible security certifications, which assure users that their sensitive data is protected [22]. Professional website design and intuitive user interfaces also serve as powerful non-verbal trust signals, suggesting competence and attention to detail [23]. Branding plays a crucial role by establishing a consistent and credible identity for the online counseling platform. A strong brand image, reinforced through professional communication and consistent messaging across all digital touchpoints, can significantly enhance perceived trustworthiness [14]. Platform reputation, cultivated through sustained positive user experiences and public perception, is a cornerstone of trust. Digital marketing efforts can actively manage and enhance this reputation through strategic content creation, public relations, and proactive

engagement with feedback. Online reviews, ratings, and testimonials, when authentically managed, serve as powerful social proof, signaling reliability to potential users [24][32]. In some contexts, reputation holds particular importance for cultivating trust, especially when combined with other website signals like customer service. The strategic display of counselor credentials, certifications, and professional affiliations further reinforces perceived competence and ethical adherence, directly addressing common user anxieties [5].

User Experience Design and Personalization

Effective user experience (UX) design is integral to building trust in online counseling platforms. A seamless, intuitive, and reassuring user journey minimizes frustration and enhances perceived professionalism, directly contributing to trust and perceived ease of use [20]. This includes clear navigation, responsive interfaces, and accessible features that cater to diverse user needs. The design of the user interface directly affects older people's intention and attitude related to using social networking sites, emphasizing the need for thoughtful design across user demographics [20]. Personalization, tailored through digital marketing techniques, strengthens the user-platform relationship. By offering customized content, relevant counselor matches, and adaptive support based on user preferences and needs, platforms can create a more engaging and trustworthy environment. This goes beyond mere technical functionality, fostering a sense of care and understanding. For example, systems that adapt to user feedback and provide individualized pathways can enhance perceived usefulness and, by extension, trust [20]. Interactive elements within the platform that offer a sense of "regulatory fit" can also lead to greater brand satisfaction and trust [34]. The ability for users to customize their experience, from choosing communication modalities to selecting specific therapeutic approaches, empowers them and increases their comfort with the service. This personalized approach directly addresses the emotional distance often associated with online interactions, making the experience feel more human-centered despite its digital nature [13].

Community Building and Social Capital Mobilization

Digital marketing strategies frequently leverage community building and the mobilization of social capital to foster trust in online counseling platforms. Creating dedicated online communities, forums, or support groups allows users to connect, share experiences, and provide peer support, which can indirectly validate the platform's services [35]. These spaces generate a sense of belonging and collective endorsement, where trust in the community translates into trust for the platform hosting it. Studies show that successful peer-to-peer counseling conversations can correlate positively with users evaluating counselors more highly [42]. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is a critical component of social capital mobilization. Digital marketing facilitates positive eWOM through encouraging user reviews, testimonials, and social media sharing. Influencer marketing, by engaging credible individuals with established online followings, extends the reach of positive eWOM and transfers existing trust from the influencer to the online counseling service [15][16]. This form of marketing can be particularly effective in overcoming initial skepticism by providing authentic-seeming endorsements. For instance, influencer marketing and digital content campaigns have been shown to boost consumer trust, which then significantly affects brand loyalty [16]. Furthermore, platforms can actively engage in content marketing that features user stories, success testimonials (with appropriate consent and anonymity), and expert-led discussions. This content, distributed through social media, blogs, and email campaigns, builds a narrative of reliability and effectiveness. The overall strategy moves beyond traditional advertising to cultivate an ecosystem where users feel supported, informed, and confident in the shared experiences of others, thereby solidifying trust in the platform and its offerings [14].

Implications for Platform Providers, Counselors, and Marketers

The findings carry significant implications for various stakeholders involved in online counseling. For platform providers, the imperative is to prioritize robust technological infrastructure and transparent operational policies. Counselors must adapt their therapeutic approaches to the digital medium while upholding ethical standards. Marketers face the challenge of communicating trustworthiness in a sensitive sector, moving beyond conventional promotional tactics.

Best Practices for Enhancing Consumer Trust

For platform providers, implementing robust security measures and transparent privacy policies is fundamental. This includes using advanced encryption, clearly communicating data handling practices, and adhering to relevant data protection regulations [22]. An intuitive and reliable user interface, combined with responsive customer support, enhances perceived ease of use and professionalism [20]. Verifiable credentials for all counselors must be prominently displayed, along with detailed profiles outlining their specializations and therapeutic approaches [5].

Counselors delivering online services should receive specialized training in tele-counseling ethics and best practices [43][44]. This training should cover managing non-verbal cues in a digital environment, ethical considerations for online presence, and protocols for handling crises remotely [1][8]. Maintaining professional boundaries and ensuring informed consent are critical. Active listening and adaptability are also highly correlated with effective online counseling [2].

Digital marketers must focus on building an authentic brand narrative that emphasizes empathy, expertise, and confidentiality. Content marketing should provide valuable information about mental health, demystify online counseling, and feature testimonials (with consent) that highlight positive user experiences [15]. Engaging with online communities and facilitating positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) through ethical means are also crucial [24][16]. Regularly updated and transparent communication about service quality and improvements can help manage expectations and rebuild trust when issues arise.

A quick-start checklist for enhancing consumer trust:

1. **Technical Security:** Implement end-to-end encryption, regular security audits, and clear data protection policies.

2. **Transparency:** Clearly display counselor credentials, privacy policies, and terms of service.
3. **User Experience:** Ensure an intuitive, accessible, and responsive platform design.
4. **Ethical Adherence:** Provide mandatory specialized training for counselors on online ethics and best practices.
5. **Reputation Management:** Actively solicit and manage authentic user reviews and testimonials.
6. **Content Strategy:** Develop informative content that addresses common concerns about online therapy.
7. **Community Engagement:** Foster online spaces for peer support and information exchange.
8. **Crisis Protocols:** Clearly communicate emergency procedures for online sessions.
9. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish easy-to-use channels for user feedback and complaint resolution.

Ethical Considerations and Trust Recovery Mechanisms

Ethical considerations permeate every aspect of trust in online counseling. Platform providers must ensure that their technological infrastructure supports the ethical delivery of services, particularly regarding data privacy and confidentiality [8]. This includes robust mechanisms for informed consent in a digital context, addressing the complexities of client identity verification, and safeguarding against unauthorized access to sensitive therapeutic content [1]. The "trust paradox" suggests that relational strategies based on emotional attachment might be more effective for loyalty than transactional trust, indicating a need for ethical marketing that builds genuine connection rather than just transactional confidence [30]. Counselors must be acutely aware of their ethical obligations in a virtual setting, including competence boundaries for online practice and the ethical handling of technological limitations [45]. Ethical concerns negatively influence willingness to receive online counseling, underscoring the importance of adherence to professional standards [11]. Professional organizations, such as CACREP, are increasingly accrediting online counseling programs, suggesting a growing standardization of ethical practices in digital instruction [43]. Trust recovery mechanisms are essential for mitigating the impact of inevitable technical glitches or service failures. These include transparent communication during outages, swift and effective problem resolution, and clear avenues for redress [28]. Post-failure communication should be empathetic and demonstrate accountability. Digital marketing can facilitate trust recovery by proactively addressing concerns through public statements, dedicated support channels, and offering compensatory measures where appropriate. Research in general online trust highlights areas such as "trust recovery" as understudied, suggesting a need for more focused attention on strategies to rebuild confidence after adverse events [10]. Implementing robust internal auditing and external regulatory compliance can also bolster trust, reassuring users that ethical standards are continuously monitored and enforced.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

Despite the growing body of literature, several research gaps remain concerning consumer trust in online counseling platforms from a digital marketing perspective. A significant gap exists in understanding the longitudinal dynamics of trust. Most studies capture trust at a specific point in time, yet trust is a fluid construct that evolves with repeated interactions and changing perceptions. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to observe how trust is built, maintained, and potentially eroded over extended periods of online counseling engagement, potentially using mixed-methods approaches to capture both quantitative changes and qualitative shifts in perception. Another area requiring further investigation concerns the impact of specific digital marketing tactics on trust across diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts. While some studies touch upon cultural variations [14], a more granular analysis of how culturally-tailored messaging, visual design, and social media engagement strategies influence trust among different demographic groups is needed. This includes exploring the effectiveness of influencer marketing in mental health contexts, considering the ethical implications of endorsements for sensitive services. The "trust paradox" identified in other digital contexts warrants further exploration within online counseling, examining whether emotional engagement or cognitive assessments of trust drive long-term loyalty. The role of artificial intelligence (AI) and automated tools within online counseling platforms also presents an emerging research avenue. How do AI-powered chatbots, personalized content recommendations, or diagnostic support tools affect consumer trust in the overall platform and the human counselors operating within it? Research on user perceptions of algorithmic transparency and fairness in these systems is crucial. Furthermore, detailed studies on trust recovery mechanisms following data breaches, service failures, or negative public sentiment are limited [10]. Empirical investigations into the most effective communication strategies and compensatory actions for rebuilding trust after adverse events are essential. Finally, research on the effectiveness of interdisciplinary approaches, combining insights from counseling psychology, digital ethics, and marketing science, could yield more robust models for understanding and enhancing consumer trust.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Key Insights

This paper systematically examined consumer trust in online counseling platforms through a digital marketing lens, synthesizing insights from a diverse body of academic literature. The analysis established that trust in this domain is a complex, multi-dimensional construct, influenced by institutional assurances, individual predispositions, and perceived characteristics of the platform and its providers. Key determinants of trust include robust platform features such as website quality, security, privacy protection, and user-friendly design. Social influence, particularly positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and community engagement, also significantly shapes consumer confidence, with influencer marketing demonstrating a capacity to transfer trust to the platform.

However, significant barriers persist. Consumers harbor concerns about data privacy, ethical conduct, and the perceived emotional distance inherent in remote interactions. Skepticism regarding the effectiveness of online therapy and variations

across cultural and contextual settings further complicate trust formation. Digital marketing strategies, therefore, are not merely promotional tools but essential mechanisms for building and sustaining trust. These strategies encompass the strategic deployment of trust signals, consistent branding, reputation management, user-centric design, personalization, and the cultivation of online communities. By addressing these factors proactively, digital marketing can mitigate perceived risks and foster a sense of credibility and reliability among potential users.

Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Based on the synthesized findings, several recommendations emerge for platform providers, counselors, and policymakers:

1. For Platform Providers:

- Invest in state-of-the-art cybersecurity and transparent data privacy protocols, clearly communicating these to users.
- Prioritize intuitive and accessible user experience (UX) design, ensuring ease of use and responsive technical support.
- Implement robust verification processes for counselors, prominently displaying their credentials and professional affiliations.
- Actively manage online reputation through transparent feedback mechanisms, encouraging authentic reviews, and addressing concerns promptly.

2. For Counselors:

- Seek specialized training in online counseling ethics and best practices, including managing virtual rapport and crisis interventions.
- Maintain clear professional boundaries and ensure comprehensive informed consent processes adapted for digital delivery.
- Cultivate technological competence to minimize technical disruptions during sessions and enhance the client experience.

3. For Marketers:

- Develop content marketing strategies that educate potential clients about online counseling, demystify the process, and highlight success stories (with consent).
- Leverage ethical influencer marketing and cultivate positive eWOM by fostering genuine user experiences and community engagement.
- Tailor messaging and platform features to account for cultural nuances and specific demographic needs, recognizing that trust is not universally perceived.

4. For Policymakers and Regulatory Bodies:

- Develop clear and enforceable ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks specifically for online mental health services.
- Establish accreditation standards for online counseling platforms and training programs to ensure quality and accountability.
- Promote public awareness campaigns to educate consumers about the benefits and limitations of online counseling, helping to manage expectations and reduce stigma.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This review, while comprehensive, possesses certain limitations. Its reliance on existing published literature means that it is bounded by the scope and methodologies of prior studies. The focus on a digital marketing perspective, while shedding light on crucial aspects of trust formation, may have implicitly de-emphasized other dimensions of trust, such as the direct therapeutic relationship dynamics, which fall more squarely within counseling psychology. The rapid evolution of technology and digital marketing practices means that some findings, particularly those from older studies, may require re-evaluation in the context of contemporary platforms and user behaviors. Furthermore, the global diversity of online counseling adoption and trust perceptions suggests that a review primarily based on Western academic literature might not fully capture the complexities in non-Western contexts, although some studies from Asia were included [14][16].

Future research should address these limitations by pursuing several avenues. Longitudinal studies are necessary to understand the dynamic nature of trust development and erosion over time in online counseling relationships. Comparative studies across diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts would further elucidate how specific digital marketing strategies resonate with different populations. Investigations into the ethical dimensions of emerging technologies, such as AI-driven chatbots and virtual reality in therapy, and their impact on consumer trust, are also critical. Empirical research specifically focused on trust recovery mechanisms in online counseling following service disruptions or ethical breaches would provide valuable practical guidance. Finally, interdisciplinary studies that rigorously integrate psychological, technological, and marketing perspectives are encouraged to build more holistic and predictive models of consumer trust in this evolving digital healthcare landscape.

REFERENCES

- [1] Z. Ardi, M. R. M. Putra, and I. Ifdil, "Ethics And Legal Issues In Online Counseling Services: Counseling Principles Analysis," *Jurnal Psikologi Pendidikan dan Konseling: Jurnal Kajian Psikologi Pendidikan dan Bimbingan Konseling*. Universitas Negeri Makassar, p. 15, Dec. 27, 2017. doi: 10.26858/jpkk.v0i0.3657.

- [2] J. Ochoa, A. Crisostomo, Ma. A. Tigno, and E. Ranas, "Volunteer Online Counseling during COVID-19: Insights, Practices, and Future Directions," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, vol. 2, no. 12. TWR Book Publishing Services, 2024. doi: 10.69569/jip.2024.0417.
- [3] P. Srijundaree, P. Yurayat, and P. Nipanan, "Factors Influencing Acceptance and Use of Online Counseling Technology among Thai Psychologists and Mental Health Counsellors," *Islamic Guidance and Counseling Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1. Institut Agama Islam Ma arif NU (IAIMNU) Metro Lampung, Apr. 01, 2024. doi: 10.25217/0020247451200.
- [4] M. Moudatsou, A. Stavropoulou, M. Rovithis, and S. Koukouli, "Evaluation of Online Counseling through the Working Experiences of Mental Health Therapists Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Healthcare*, vol. 12, no. 4. MDPI AG, p. 495, Feb. 19, 2024. doi: 10.3390/healthcare12040495.
- [5] K. S. Young, "An Empirical Examination of Client Attitudes Towards Online Counseling," *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, vol. 8, no. 2. SAGE Publications, pp. 172–177, Apr. 2005. doi: 10.1089/cpb.2005.8.172.
- [6] D. Richards and N. Viganó, "Online Counseling: A Narrative and Critical Review of the Literature," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, vol. 69, no. 9. Wiley, pp. 994–1011, Apr. 29, 2013. doi: 10.1002/jclp.21974.
- [7] K. D. Baker and M. Ray, "Online counseling: The good, the bad, and the possibilities," *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 4. Informa UK Limited, pp. 341–346, Dec. 2011. doi: 10.1080/09515070.2011.632875.
- [8] C. M. Rummell and N. R. Joyce, "'So wat do u want to wrk on 2day?': The Ethical Implications of Online Counseling," *Ethics & Behavior*, vol. 20, no. 6. Informa UK Limited, pp. 482–496, Dec. 13, 2010. doi: 10.1080/10508422.2010.521450.
- [9] M. Yan, M. Zhang, A. P. K. Kwok, H. Zeng, and Y. Li, "The Roles of Trust and Its Antecedent Variables in Healthcare Consumers' Acceptance of Online Medical Consultation during the COVID-19 Pandemic in China," *Healthcare*, vol. 11, no. 9. MDPI AG, p. 1232, Apr. 26, 2023. doi: 10.3390/healthcare11091232.
- [10] A. Bauman and R. Bachmann, "Online Consumer Trust: Trends in Research," *Journal of technology management & innovation*, vol. 12, no. 2. SciELO Agencia Nacional de Investigacion y Desarrollo (ANID), pp. 68–79, 2017. doi: 10.4067/s0718-27242017000200008.
- [11] X. Chen, A. Du, and R. Qi, "Factors Affecting Willingness to Receive Online Counseling: The Mediating Role of Ethical Concerns," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 19, no. 24. MDPI AG, p. 16462, Dec. 08, 2022. doi: 10.3390/ijerph192416462.
- [12] S. Haberstroh, T. Duffey, M. Evans, R. Gee, and H. Trepal, "The Experience of Online Counseling," *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, vol. 29, no. 3. American Mental Health Counselors Association, pp. 269–282, Jul. 01, 2007. doi: 10.17744/mehc.29.3.j344651261w357v2.
- [13] E. Coli, L. Gavrilu, D. Cozzo, and R. Falcone, "Online psychological support in the COVID-19 era: Social representations, trust and perceived effectiveness from the perspectives of clients and professionals," *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, vol. 24, no. 4. Wiley, pp. 1415–1431, Jun. 02, 2024. doi: 10.1002/capr.12779.
- [14] "Development of trust marketing in the digital society," *Economic Annals-XXI*, vol. 176, no. 3–4. Institute of Society Transformation sp. z o.o., pp. 13–25, Aug. 20, 2019. doi: 10.21003/ea.v176-02.
- [15] Dr. Sanjeev Kumar, "Digital Marketing Strategies and their Impact on Consumer Behavior," *International Journal for Multidimensional Research Perspectives*, vol. 2, no. 9. Chandigarh Philosophers, pp. 27–44, Sep. 09, 2024. doi: 10.61877/ijmrp.v2i9.179.
- [16] M. Aldi and W. Adisaputra, "Optimizing Brand Loyalty: The Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing and Digital Content Campaigns Mediated By Consumer Trust," *Inspiration: Jurnal Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi*, vol. 14, no. 1. STMIK AKBA, pp. 63–73, Jun. 30, 2024. doi: 10.35585/inspir.v14i1.80.
- [17] G. Roy, B. Datta, and R. Basu, "Trends and Future Directions in Online Marketing Research," *Journal of Internet Commerce*, vol. 16, no. 1. Informa UK Limited, pp. 1–31, Dec. 23, 2016. doi: 10.1080/15332861.2016.1258929.
- [18] K. Davis, M. Anderson, C.-C. Yang, S. Choukas-Bradley, B. T. Bell, and P. Slovak, "Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Youth Digital Well-Being Research: Identifying Notable Developments, Persistent Gaps, and Future Directions," *Journal of Adolescent Research*, vol. 40, no. 2. SAGE Publications, pp. 259–295, Oct. 29, 2024. doi: 10.1177/07435584241291163.
- [19] Z. Hong, Z. Deng, and W. Zhang, "Examining factors affecting patients trust in online healthcare services in China: The moderating role of the purpose of use," *Health Informatics Journal*, vol. 25, no. 4. SAGE Publications, pp. 1647–1660, Sep. 07, 2018. doi: 10.1177/1460458218796660.
- [20] T.-H. Tsai, H.-T. Chang, Y.-J. Chen, and Y.-S. Chang, "Determinants of user acceptance of a specific social platform for older adults: An empirical examination of user interface characteristics and behavioral intention," *PLOS ONE*, vol. 12, no. 8. Public Library of Science (PLoS), p. e0180102, Aug. 24, 2017. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0180102.
- [21] A. Hammad, A. Q. Bataineh, M. T. Alshurideh, and H. A. Salhab, "Factors affecting healthcare providers to accept digital marketing: The moderating role of subjective norms," *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, vol. 6, no. 4. Growing Science, pp. 1085–1098, 2022. doi: 10.5267/j.ijdns.2022.7.011.
- [22] J. Chen and S. Dibb, "Consumer trust in the online retail context: Exploring the antecedents and consequences," *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 27, no. 4. Wiley, pp. 323–346, Mar. 10, 2010. doi: 10.1002/mar.20334.
- [23] H. N. K. Giao, B. N. Vuong, and T. N. Quan, "The influence of website quality on consumer's e-loyalty through the mediating role of e-trust and e-satisfaction: An evidence from online shopping in Vietnam," *Uncertain Supply Chain Management*. Growing Science, pp. 351–370, 2020. doi: 10.5267/j.uscm.2019.11.004.
- [24] D. Munandar, "The Role of Digital Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), on Online Purchase Decisions for Consumers of Private University Students in Bandung West Java," *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research*, vol. 6, no. 1. STMIK Dharma Wacana, Jun. 23, 2021. doi: 10.29099/ijair.v6i1.298.

- [25] R. Greenberg, B. Wong-On-Wing, and G. Lui, "Culture and Consumer Trust in Online Businesses," *Journal of Global Information Management*, vol. 16, no. 3. IGI Global, pp. 26–44, Jul. 01, 2008. doi: 10.4018/jgim.2008070102.
- [26] F. B. Tan and P. Sutherland, "Online Consumer Trust," *Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organizations*, vol. 2, no. 3. IGI Global, pp. 40–58, Jul. 01, 2004. doi: 10.4018/jeco.2004070103.
- [27] C. Bianchi and L. Andrews, "Risk, trust, and consumer online purchasing behaviour: a Chilean perspective," *International Marketing Review*, vol. 29, no. 3. Emerald, pp. 253–275, May 25, 2012. doi: 10.1108/02651331211229750.
- [28] D. López Jiménez, E. C. Dittmar, and J. P. Vargas Portillo, "Consumer Trust in the Digital Environment," *Law, State and Telecommunications Review*, vol. 14, no. 1. Biblioteca Central da UNB, pp. 113–138, May 20, 2022. doi: 10.26512/lstr.v14i1.37820.
- [29] S. Tan and W. Chen, "Building consumer trust in online food marketplaces: the role of WeChat marketing," *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*, vol. 24, no. 5. Walter de Gruyter GmbH, pp. 845–862, Jul. 12, 2021. doi: 10.22434/ifaamr2020.0159.
- [30] E. R. Supatman, R. H. Walean, and D. W. Mandagi, "The Trust Paradox: A Dual-Pathway Analysis of Digital Marketing's Impacts on Consumer Loyalty and Consumer Decision," *Paradoks : Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi*, vol. 9, no. 1. Universitas Muslim Indonesia, pp. 67–79, Nov. 13, 2025. doi: 10.57178/paradoks.v9i1.1985.
- [31] H. T. Manuere, L. Chikazhe, and J. Manyeruke, "THEORETICAL MODELS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: A LITERATURE REVIEW," *International Journal of Education Humanities and Social Science*, vol. 05, no. 02. Alpinus Publication, pp. 105–112, 2022. doi: 10.54922/ijehss.2022.0368.
- [32] Y.-I. Lee, J. Phua, and T.-Y. Wu, "Marketing a health Brand on Facebook: Effects of reaction icons and user comments on brand attitude, trust, purchase intention, and eWOM intention," *Health Marketing Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 2. Informa UK Limited, pp. 138–154, Apr. 02, 2020. doi: 10.1080/07359683.2020.1754049.
- [33] S. San-Martin and C. Camarero, "A Cross-National Study on Online Consumer Perceptions, Trust, and Loyalty," *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*, vol. 22, no. 1. Informa UK Limited, pp. 64–86, Jan. 2012. doi: 10.1080/10919392.2012.642763.
- [34] S.-A. A. Jin and K. M. Lee, "The Influence of Regulatory Fit and Interactivity on Brand Satisfaction and Trust in E-Health Marketing Inside 3D Virtual Worlds (*Second Life*)," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, vol. 13, no. 6. SAGE Publications, pp. 673–680, May 03, 2010. doi: 10.1089/cyber.2009.0292.
- [35]
- [36] Y. Ye, "A Path Analysis on Correlates of Consumer Trust in Online Health Information: Evidence from the Health Information National Trends Survey," *Journal of Health Communication*, vol. 15, no. sup3. Informa UK Limited, pp. 200–215, Dec. 10, 2010. doi: 10.1080/10810730.2010.522687.
- [37] Y. Ye, "Correlates of Consumer Trust in Online Health Information: Findings From the Health Information National Trends Survey," *Journal of Health Communication*, vol. 16, no. 1. Informa UK Limited, pp. 34–49, Nov. 17, 2010. doi: 10.1080/10810730.2010.529491.
- [38] Y. Liebermann and S. Stashevsky, "Perceived risks as barriers to Internet and e-commerce usage," *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, vol. 5, no. 4. Emerald, pp. 291–300, Dec. 01, 2002. doi: 10.1108/13522750210443245.
- [39] P. Yurayat and T. Seechaliao, "Undergraduate Students' Attitudes towards Online Counseling since the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Higher Education Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1. Canadian Center of Science and Education, p. 72, Jan. 12, 2022. doi: 10.5539/hes.v12n1p72.
- [40] H. E. Shaw and S. F. Shaw, "Critical Ethical Issues in Online Counseling: Assessing Current Practices With an Ethical Intent Checklist," *Journal of Counseling & Development*, vol. 84, no. 1. Wiley, pp. 41–53, Jan. 2006. doi: 10.1002/j.1556-6678.2006.tb00378.x.
- [41] J.-A. M. Abbott, B. Klein, and L. Ciechomski, "Best Practices in Online Therapy," *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, vol. 26, no. 2–4. Informa UK Limited, pp. 360–375, Jul. 03, 2008. doi: 10.1080/15228830802097257.
- [42] T. Wang, H. K. Shah, R. S. Shah, Y.-C. Wang, R. E. Kraut, and D. Yang, "Metrics for Peer Counseling: Triangulating Success Outcomes for Online Therapy Platforms," *Proceedings of the 2023 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*. ACM, pp. 1–17, Apr. 19, 2023. doi: 10.1145/3544548.3581372.
- [43] W. H. Snow, M. R. Lamar, J. S. Hinkle, and M. Speciale, "Current Practices in Online Counselor Education," *The Professional Counselor*, vol. 8, no. 2. The Professional Counselor at the National Board for Certified Counselors, pp. 131–145, Jun. 2018. doi: 10.15241/whs.8.2.131.
- [44] A. A. Manis, A. Banks-Johnson, and D. G. Hays, "A 27-year scoping review of practice and research in online counselor education," *Counselor Education and Supervision*, vol. 64, no. 1. Wiley, pp. 114–135, Sep. 25, 2024. doi: 10.1002/ceas.12324.
- [45] S. B. Özgülük Üçok, M. Uğurel Kamlı, Ö. Erden-başaran, H. S. Yıldız, and Z. Yeler, "NAVIGATING ONLINE PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING: INSIGHTS FROM PROSPECTIVE COUNSELORS ON CHALLENGES, BENEFITS, AND TRAINING GAPS," *Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, vol. 34, no. 2. Cukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, pp. 1305–1321, Oct. 24, 2025. doi: 10.35379/cusosbil.1613702.