

# FROM ADOPTION TO ACCEPTANCE: USER PERSPECTIVES ON TELE-MENTAL HEALTH IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW)

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## ABSTRACT

The development of telemental health has seen significant growth during the COVID-19 pandemic, but its sustainability in the post-pandemic period remains questionable. While these services have increased access to mental health services, challenges such as the quality of therapeutic interactions, trust in technology, and infrastructure readiness continue to influence user acceptance. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how user perspectives influence the transition from adoption to acceptance of telemental health services in Southeast Asia. This study used a systematic review approach, adhering to the PRISMA guidelines. A literature search was conducted through Scopus and Google Scholar databases, with the inclusion criteria being empirical articles published between 2020 and 2026 that addressed the perspectives of patients and healthcare professionals. The selection process yielded 19 articles, which were analyzed using thematic synthesis. The results indicate that acceptance of telemental health services tends to be moderate to high but is strongly influenced by user experience. Key benefits include increased access, efficiency, and flexibility of services. However, barriers such as limited therapeutic relationships, concerns about data privacy, and low digital literacy remain key challenges. Furthermore, use during the pandemic was driven more by situational needs, while in the post-pandemic period there was a shift towards more selective use. The conclusion of this study confirms that the transition from adoption to acceptance of telemental health is dynamic and influenced by technological, individual, and system factors. Therefore, service development needs to be more user-experience oriented to support sustainable use in the future.

**KEYWORDS:** telemental health, user acceptance, digital mental health, Southeast Asia, systematic review

## INTRODUCTION

Recent developments in the use of telemental health highlight a fundamental issue: the gap between high adoption rates during the pandemic and long-term acceptance after the pandemic subsides. Although these services have rapidly expanded as emergency solutions, various studies indicate that user experiences are less than optimal, particularly regarding the quality of therapeutic interactions, trust in digital systems, and concerns about data privacy (Bleyel et al., 2020). Furthermore, user engagement and continued use are also influenced by perceptions of service effectiveness and the convenience of the technology used (Bunnell et al., 2020). Other research highlights that both patients and professionals still face challenges in consistently integrating technology into mental health care practices (Medich et al., 2023). This suggests a limitations gap, as previous research has focused more on initial implementation than on evaluating long-term acceptance.

In addition to the limitations gap, there is also a significant research gap related to the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the transition from adoption to acceptance. Most studies only identify general benefits such as ease of access and efficiency, without delving deeply into the dynamics of long-term user experiences (Mazziotti & Rutigliano, 2021). Other research indicates that user perceptions of telemental health remain ambivalent, with perceived benefits often accompanied by technical and psychological barriers (Naik et al., 2020). Furthermore, increased use during the pandemic was driven more by situational needs than user preferences, thus not reflecting true acceptance (Isaacs et al., 2023). This situation reinforces the urgency of further examining how user acceptance develops after situational stressors subside.

Globally, particularly in Western countries, research on telemental health has grown rapidly. Several studies have shown that these services can improve the accessibility and efficiency of mental health services (Mazziotti & Rutigliano, 2021). However, limitations remain, particularly regarding the quality of the therapeutic relationship and concerns about data security (Bleyel et al., 2020). Furthermore, despite increased acceptance during the pandemic, few studies have evaluated the long-term sustainability of these services after conditions return to normal (Isaacs et al., 2023). Thus, despite a relatively rich global literature, gaps remain in understanding the dynamics of post-pandemic acceptance.

Looking at the Asian level, research indicates more complex challenges due to heterogeneity in social, economic, and technological conditions across countries. Disparities in access to digital technology and differences in digital

literacy levels are major barriers to the implementation of telemental health (Pengput & Schwartz, 2022). Furthermore, efforts to expand access to digital mental health services in Asia still face challenges related to equity of access and health system readiness (Murphy et al., 2024). Other studies have also highlighted that stigma surrounding mental disorders remains a major barrier to the utilization of mental health services, both conventional and digital (Aunjitsakul et al., 2026). However, most research in Asia remains general in nature and has not specifically explored user experiences in narrower local contexts.

At the Southeast Asian level, the challenges faced are more specific and complex. Countries in the region face significant limitations in the number of mental health professionals and uneven distribution of services (Aunjitsakul et al., 2026). While the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of telemental health, this adoption has been largely reactive and has not been supported by system or user readiness (Narvaez, 2022). Furthermore, challenges such as limited digital infrastructure and varying levels of technological literacy further complicate the implementation of these services (Pengput & Schwartz, 2022). This suggests that despite increasing adoption, understanding of user experiences and acceptance remains limited.

When comparing the general Asian context with Southeast Asia, research gaps and limitation gaps are more prominent in Southeast Asia. At the Asian level, research has identified numerous macro issues such as disparities in access and technological readiness (Murphy et al., 2024). However, at the Southeast Asian level, research remains limited to preliminary assessments of benefits and barriers without in-depth exploration of the factors influencing user acceptance (Narvaez, 2022). Furthermore, many studies focus on the perspective of service providers rather than users, thus failing to comprehensively describe user experiences (Medich et al., 2023). This suggests a more pressing need for research in the Southeast Asian context.

This gap becomes even more relevant in light of the current situation, where the continued use of telemental health is largely determined by user acceptance, rather than simply the availability of services. In Southeast Asia, this situation is exacerbated by inequities in digital infrastructure, social stigma, and variations in user experiences that have not been systematically documented (Aunjitsakul et al., 2026). Furthermore, factors such as trust in technology, the quality of therapeutic communication, and perceived service effectiveness are key determinants of continued use of digital services (Bunnell et al., 2020). However, the relationship between these factors has not been widely studied in an integrated manner in the Southeast Asian context (Medich et al., 2023).

Based on this comparison, this study chose to focus on the Southeast Asian region because it has a larger research gap and limitation gap than the Asian context in general. Furthermore, the post-pandemic phenomenon, which has demonstrated uncertainty regarding the acceptance of telemental health services, makes this region a relevant and important context for research. Therefore, this study aims to systematically examine how user perspectives influence the transition from adoption to acceptance of telemental health use in Southeast Asia, thereby contributing to the development of more sustainable and user-oriented digital mental health services.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Global Development of Telemental Health

The use of telemental health has been growing in global literature, particularly in Western countries, even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Services such as telepsychiatry, video consultations, and digital-based mental health monitoring were initially developed to improve access to mental health services, particularly for patients living in remote areas or with limited mobility. Various studies have shown that these services provide benefits such as time efficiency, flexibility in consultation schedules, and reduced transportation costs for patients (Mazziotti & Rutigliano, 2021).

From the perspective of healthcare professionals, telemental health is also considered capable of expanding the reach of clinical services and improving continuity of patient care. However, several challenges have been identified, such as difficulty building emotional closeness between patients and therapists, concerns about data privacy, and dependence on adequate technological infrastructure (Naik et al., 2020; Bleyel et al., 2020).

### 2. Evolution of Telemental Health Use: Pandemic and Post-Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a significant turning point in the use of telemental health in various countries. Social distancing and limited face-to-face interactions have forced healthcare systems to rapidly transition to digital-based services. In this situation, both patients and healthcare professionals have been forced to adapt to technology-mediated clinical interaction models. Research shows that the use and acceptance of telemental health increased significantly during the pandemic due to the need to maintain the continuity of mental health services (Isaacs et al., 2023).

However, as the pandemic subsides and in-person services return, questions arise about the sustainability of these services. Several studies have shown that although patient satisfaction with telemental health was quite high during the pandemic, not all patients or healthcare professionals intended to continue using it long-term. This suggests that acceptance of digital services is dynamic and influenced by user experience, the effectiveness of therapeutic communication, and individual preferences for the healthcare delivery model (Bunnell et al., 2020; Mazziotti & Rutigliano, 2021).

### **3. Patient and Healthcare Professional Perspectives in Telemental Health Implementation**

In modern healthcare evaluation, user perspectives are a crucial indicator in assessing the success of a service's implementation. This perspective encompasses not only the patient experience but also the perspectives of healthcare professionals as service providers. From the patient perspective, the use of telemental health is often associated with various benefits such as ease of access, time efficiency, and flexibility in consultations. However, patients also report various challenges such as technological limitations, privacy concerns, and feelings of a lack of emotional closeness compared to face-to-face sessions (Naik et al., 2020; Bleyel et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, from the healthcare professional perspective, the use of digital technology in mental health services requires adaptation to new ways of clinical communication, the use of technological devices, and considerations of ethics and patient data security. Research also shows that the successful implementation of telemental health services is greatly influenced by the alignment between user experience and the readiness of the overall healthcare system (Isaacs et al., 2023). Furthermore, a user-centered approach is considered crucial in the development of mental health technology because it can increase patient trust and engagement in using digital systems (Medich et al., 2023).

### **4. The Context of Telemental Health Implementation in Southeast Asia**

While research on telemental health is growing rapidly in Western countries, its implementation in Southeast Asia presents a different dynamic. Before the pandemic, countries in the region faced various challenges in providing mental health services, such as limited professional staff, concentrated service distribution in urban areas, and social stigma surrounding mental disorders.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital-based mental health services in various countries in the region. Narvaez (2022) shows that several countries, such as Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines, have begun expanding the use of telepsychiatry and online consultations to maintain service continuity during periods of social restrictions. Furthermore, digital technology is also seen as a solution to increase access to mental health services in areas with limited healthcare facilities (Murphy et al., 2024).

However, various contextual challenges still affect the implementation of telemental health in the region. Factors such as digital infrastructure gaps, varying levels of technological literacy, and cultural norms that still prefer face-to-face interactions can impact the acceptance of these services. Furthermore, research indicates that barriers to accessing psychotherapy services in Southeast Asia are not only structural but also related to broader cultural and health system factors (Aunjitsakul et al., 2026).

A systematic review of telemedicine in Southeast Asia also shows that most research focuses on system readiness, regulations, and infrastructure aspects, while analysis of user experiences, both patients and healthcare professionals, remains relatively limited (Pengput & Schwartz, 2022). Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of user perceptions and experiences is crucial to assessing the success of telemental health implementation in the region.

Overall, the literature indicates that telemental health has significant potential to improve access to mental health services, particularly following accelerated adoption during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the success of implementation is determined not only by the level of technology adoption, but also by the extent to which the service is accepted and perceived as beneficial by patients and healthcare professionals, the primary users. Therefore, analysis focusing on user perspectives is crucial to understanding acceptance patterns and emerging challenges in telemental health implementation, particularly in Southeast Asia.

## **METHOD**

This study used a systematic review design to identify, evaluate, and synthesize empirical findings related to user perspectives on telemental health services. The users in this study included patients and healthcare professionals, particularly physicians, psychiatrists, and counselors, who are directly involved in the use of digital-based mental health services. The systematic review approach was chosen because it provides a systematic, transparent, and comprehensive synthesis to understand the dynamics of the transition from adoption to acceptance of telemental health services, particularly in the context of changes in use during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the post-pandemic period.

The research process began with the formulation of research questions focused on: (1) the level of acceptance of telemental health from the perspectives of patients and healthcare professionals, (2) the perceived benefits of using these services, (3) challenges or barriers to their implementation, and (4) changes in perception and use of services from the pandemic to the post-pandemic period. Furthermore, this study also considered important issues such as the quality of online therapeutic relationships, patient data security, and reliance on digital infrastructure.

The literature search was conducted systematically through two primary databases: Scopus and Google Scholar. The search strategy used a combination of keywords such as telemental health, telepsychiatry, digital mental health, user perspectives, patient perspectives, clinician perspectives, acceptance, and Southeast Asia. To obtain a comprehensive overview, the literature search was not limited to the Southeast Asian region but also included global studies for comparison in understanding initial patterns of service adoption and acceptance.

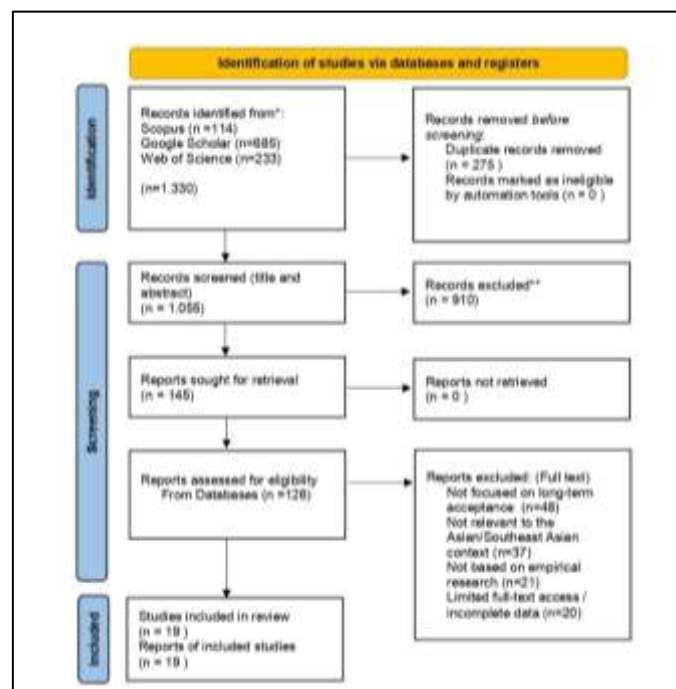
Inclusion criteria for this study included: (1) empirical research articles discussing telemental health or digital mental health, (2) studies exploring user perspectives (patients or healthcare professionals), (3) publications between 2020 and 2026 to capture dynamics during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, (4) articles available in

full-text, and (5) studies relevant to the Southeast Asian context or with comparable implications for the region. Meanwhile, exclusion criteria included: (1) non-empirical articles such as opinion pieces, editorials, or commentaries; (2) studies that did not specifically address mental health; (3) research that focused solely on technical aspects without including user perspectives; and (4) articles with incomplete or inaccessible data.

The literature selection process followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) process, which includes identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The literature selection process was conducted using the PRISMA guidelines through several major databases, namely Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. Of the 1,330 identified articles, 275 were removed due to duplication. Next, 1,055 articles were screened based on title and abstract, resulting in 145 relevant articles for further review. During the eligibility evaluation stage, 126 articles were eliminated for not meeting the inclusion criteria, leaving 19 articles for use in the final analysis.

Based on this process, 19 articles met all inclusion criteria and were used in the final analysis. These articles came from various contexts in Southeast Asia, such as Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Vietnam, as well as several supporting studies from other relevant Asian regions to enrich the comparative analysis. Next, data from the 19 selected studies was analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach to identify key patterns related to user acceptance, perceived benefits, and barriers to using telemental health services. This approach enabled researchers to more deeply understand how the transition from adoption to acceptance occurs within the diverse social, cultural, and technological contexts of Southeast Asia.

## RESULT



**Figure 1. PRISMA Flow**

Based on 19 selected studies, it was found that the use of telemental health in Southeast Asia and related contexts shows a clear transition pattern from situational adoption (during the pandemic) to more selective acceptance in the post-pandemic period. In general, research results indicate that user acceptance tends to be moderate to high, but is highly dependent on several key factors. From a patient perspective, the main benefits perceived are ease of access, time efficiency, and flexibility of services, especially for geographically constrained groups such as Filipino migrant workers and communities in areas with limited mental health services. This is evident in studies such as Garabiles et al. (2020), Liem et al. (2022), and Candelario et al. (2024), which emphasize increased access to services through digital platforms. However, almost all studies also highlight significant challenges that impact long-term acceptance. Key challenges include:

1. Decreased quality of therapeutic relationships in online interactions compared to face-to-face interactions (Seow et al., 2023; Salamanca-Sanabria et al., 2023).
2. Concerns about data privacy and security, especially for app-based services and digital platforms.
3. Limited digital infrastructure and technological literacy remain major barriers in several Southeast Asian countries (Murphy et al., 2025; Chau et al., 2026).
4. User ambivalence, where services are perceived as practical but less than ideal for complex or emotionally demanding cases.

From the perspective of healthcare professionals, research indicates that acceptance is influenced by levels of self-efficacy and technological readiness. Studies by Lee et al. (2025) and Ng et al. (2024) indicate that professionals with high confidence in using technology tend to be more receptive to telemental health. Conversely, a lack of training and experience is a barrier to integrating services into clinical practice. Furthermore, several studies have shown that acceptance is influenced not only by individual factors but also by system support, such as health policies, digital platform integration, and institutional readiness. Studies such as Lemon et al. (2024) and Narvaez (2022) emphasized that the development of telemental health in Southeast Asia still requires systemic strengthening. Overall, the synthesis results indicate that:

1. Adoption during the pandemic does not automatically translate into long-term acceptance.
2. Acceptance is strongly influenced by user experience, interaction quality, and trust in the technology.
3. The Southeast Asian region faces more complex challenges than the global context, particularly related to infrastructure, digital literacy, and mental health stigma.
4. Thus, the transition from adoption to acceptance is dynamic and influenced by a combination of technological, psychological, and contextual factors.

This is further explained in the table below:

**Table 1. Included Studies**

No	Author (Year)	Country	Design	Subjects	Research Focus	Key Findings
1	Lemon et al. (2024)	Southeast Asia	Review	General	Research Priorities	Need to strengthen mental health systems
2	Lee et al. (2025)	Malaysia	Quantitative	Counselors	Self-efficacy & Attitudes	Self-efficacy → increasing acceptance
3	Muhammad & Achadi (2024)	Global	Review	General	Usage Factors	Access and convenience are key factors
4	Asad et al. (2024)	Pakistan	Quantitative	Patients	User Experience	Practical but not personal
5	Samsudin et al. (2025)	Malaysia	Quantitative	Users	Use Intention	Technology and perceived benefits are important
6	Ng et al. (2024)	Malaysia	Quantitative	Healthcare Professionals	Provider Perspective	Training and system support are needed
7	Tan et al. (2022)	Asia	Quantitative	Digital Workers	eHealth Acceptance	Acceptance is influenced by technological convenience
8	Sampa et al. (2025)	Malaysia	Review	General	Adoption & Acceptance	Individual and system factors are influential
9	Lee et al. (2025)	Singapore	Case study	Adolescents	WebCHAT Services	Easy access, suitable for youth
10	Weng et al. (2024)	Singapore	Descriptive	Users	Digital Platforms	Supports mental self-care
11	Seow et al. (2023)	Singapore	Quantitative	Therapists	Professional Perspectives	Therapeutic relationships are a challenge
12	Salamanca-Sanabria et al. (2023)	Asia	Qualitative	Students	mHealth Perceptions	Benefits exist but also technical barriers
13	Sana & Dissanayake (2025)	Philippines	Conceptual	General	AI-CBT	Great potential, but requires adaptation
14	Candelario et al. (2024)	Philippines	Mixed methods	Patients	Telepsychiatry	Increasing access to services
15	Garabiles et al. (2020)	Southeast Asia	RCT (protocol)	Migrant Workers	Digital Interventions	Potential to reduce depression
16	Liem et al. (2022)	Vietnam	Mixed methods	Stakeholders	App Implementation	Implementation and acceptance challenges
17	Narvaez (2022)	Vietnam	Review	General	Benefits & Barriers	High adoption, but many obstacles
18	Murphy et al. (2025)	Country	Quasi-experimental	Students	Y-MIND App	Supports well-being

19	Chau et al. (2026)	Southeast Asia	RCT	Community	VMood App	Effective and cost-efficient
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## DISCUSSION

### 1. Telemental Health Acceptance from a User Perspective

A synthesis of 19 studies indicates that telemental health acceptance in Southeast Asia and related contexts tends to be moderate to high but is uneven and strongly influenced by both individual and system factors. From the perspective of professional users, such as counselors and healthcare workers, acceptance is strongly influenced by self-efficacy toward technology. A study by Lee et al. (2025) found that confidence in using digital technology plays an important mediator in shaping positive attitudes toward telemental health services. This finding is supported by Ng et al. (2024), who showed that healthcare workers with technology experience and training tend to be more receptive to the integration of digital services into their practice.

Conversely, from the patient perspective, acceptance is more influenced by direct user experience. A study by Asad et al. (2024) showed that patients found these services practical and helpful, especially in situations of limited mobility. A similar finding was found in a study by Candelario et al. (2024) in the Philippines, which emphasized that telepsychiatry can increase access to mental health services, especially in areas with limited facilities. However, this acceptance is not entirely without obstacles. Seow et al. (2023) and Salamanca-Sanabria et al. (2023) highlight that the quality of the therapeutic relationship in online formats is still considered less optimal than face-to-face interactions.

Furthermore, several studies indicate that acceptance is also influenced by the context of use. Tan et al. (2022) and Samsudin et al. (2025) found that users with high levels of digital literacy tend to be more receptive to these services. Meanwhile, studies in Vietnam by Murphy et al. (2025) and Chau et al. (2026) indicate that acceptance can increase if services are tailored to local needs and supported by adequate infrastructure.

Overall, the level of acceptance of telemental health is not absolute, but rather dynamic and dependent on the interaction between technological factors, user experience, and system support. This suggests that even if adoption increases, long-term acceptance still requires a more adaptive and user-centered approach.

### 2. Perceived Benefits of Using Tele-Mental Health

Most of the studies analyzed indicate that the primary benefits of tele-mental health lie in the accessibility, efficiency, and flexibility of the service. Studies by Garabiles et al. (2020) and Liem et al. (2022) show that digital-based services are able to reach groups who previously had difficulty accessing mental health services, such as Filipino migrant workers. This confirms that tele-mental health plays a crucial role in reducing the gap in access to mental health services, especially in areas with limited professional staff.

Furthermore, time and cost efficiency are also key advantages. Studies by Muhammad and Achadi (2024) and Sampa et al. (2025) identified that users do not need to travel long distances to access services, thus saving time and money. In Singapore, platform developments, as described by Weng et al. (2024) and Lee et al. (2025), indicate that digital services can also support self-care and early intervention, particularly among adolescents and young workers.

Another significant benefit is the flexibility of service use. A study by Salamanca-Sanabria et al. (2023) showed that students are more comfortable using digital-based services because they can be accessed anytime and anywhere. This finding is further supported by a study by Tan et al. (2022), which found that flexibility is a key factor in increasing the acceptance of digital services among digital workers.

On the other hand, several studies also demonstrate the potential for broader innovation, such as the use of AI-based technology in cognitive behavioral therapy (Sana & Dissanayake, 2025). Furthermore, app-based interventions such as Y-MIND (Murphy et al., 2025) and VMood (Chau et al., 2026) have demonstrated effectiveness in improving mental well-being and reducing depressive symptoms.

Overall, the benefits of telemental health extend beyond increased access to services, encompassing efficiency, flexibility, and the potential for innovation in mental health services. However, these benefits need to be balanced with efforts to address the various challenges that remain to support long-term acceptance.

### 3. Challenges and Barriers to Telemental Health Implementation

Despite its numerous benefits, the synthesis of results indicates that telemental health implementation still faces significant challenges. One major barrier is the quality of the therapeutic relationship. A study by Seow et al. (2023) showed that many therapists felt that online interactions could not fully replace the depth of communication in face-to-face sessions. This finding is also supported by Salamanca-Sanabria et al. (2023), who found that users often experience limitations in optimally expressing emotions through digital media.

Furthermore, concerns about data privacy and security are significant issues. Several studies, such as Narvaez (2022), highlight that users remain uncertain about the security of personal information shared through digital platforms. These concerns can hinder user trust and ultimately affect service acceptance.

Another significant barrier is limited infrastructure and digital literacy. Studies by Murphy et al. (2025) and Chau et al. (2026) indicate that in several Southeast Asian countries, access to stable internet and digital devices remains a challenge. Furthermore, users with low digital literacy levels tend to experience difficulties in optimally utilizing these services.

From the perspective of healthcare workers, challenges also arise in terms of professional readiness and training. Ng et al. (2024) showed that many healthcare workers lack adequate training in the use of digital technology, impacting the quality of services provided. This finding is further supported by Lemon et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of strengthening the capacity of mental health systems in the Asian region. Thus, it can be concluded that the challenges in implementing telemental health are multidimensional, encompassing technological, psychological, and systemic aspects. Therefore, a comprehensive approach is needed to address these barriers to achieve wider acceptance of these services.

#### **4. Changes in Perception and Usage from Pandemic to Post-Pandemic**

The results of 19 studies indicate that telemental health use during the COVID-19 pandemic was driven primarily by situational needs, while in the post-pandemic period there was a shift toward more selective use. Narvaez's (2022) study showed that the surge in use during the pandemic was due to limited access to in-person services. However, after conditions returned to normal, not all users continued using these digital services.

This shift is also reflected in the study by Liem et al. (2022), which showed that although users initially accepted digital services out of necessity, continued use was highly dependent on the perceived experience. A positive experience increases the likelihood of continued use. Conversely, a less than satisfactory experience will lead users to return to conventional services.

Other studies, such as Tan et al. (2022) and Samsudin et al. (2025), indicate that perceived usefulness and ease of use are important factors in determining continued use. Furthermore, technological developments and service innovations, as demonstrated in the study by Murphy et al. (2025) and Chau et al. (2026) also play a role in increasing the appeal of services in the post-pandemic period.

However, several studies also indicate user ambivalence. Asad et al. (2024) found that although digital services are considered convenient, many users still prefer face-to-face interactions for more complex needs. This suggests that telemental health has not completely replaced conventional services but rather plays a complementary role.

Overall, the shift from the pandemic to the post-pandemic period indicates that the sustainability of telemental health use is highly dependent on the quality of the user experience, the effectiveness of the service, and the system's ability to overcome existing barriers. This confirms that the transition from adoption to acceptance is a dynamic process and requires a sustainable approach.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of a systematic review of 19 studies, it can be concluded that the use of telemental health in Southeast Asia shows a clear transition from adoption to acceptance, but this process is not linear or automatic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, adoption of these services increased significantly, driven by situational needs and the limitations of in-person services. However, in the post-pandemic period, continued use is more determined by user experience, both from the patient and healthcare provider perspective. Acceptance tends to increase even though services can provide tangible benefits such as ease of access, time efficiency, and flexibility, but remains limited by various factors such as the quality of the therapeutic relationship, trust in data security, and technological and infrastructure readiness. Thus, it is understood that telemental health acceptance is the result of a complex interaction between individual, technological, and system factors, not simply a function of service availability.

While this study provides a comprehensive overview, several limitations warrant consideration. First, the limited use of literature sources within two major databases potentially excluded some other relevant studies. Second, variations in methodology and research context within the articles analyzed may impact the consistency of the synthesis results. Third, most research still focuses on specific countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines, so generalizations to the entire Southeast Asian region should be approached with caution. Furthermore, the limited number of longitudinal studies hinders understanding the long-term dynamics of adoption.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to expand the database and include more studies from various Southeast Asian countries to provide a more representative picture. Future research should also develop a longitudinal approach to more deeply observe changes in user perceptions and behaviors over time. Furthermore, it is important to explore the integration of digital and conventional services to create a more hybrid mental health service model that adapts to user needs.

In terms of implications, this study makes important contributions both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the findings enhance understanding of the dynamics of the transition from adoption to acceptance in the context of health technology, particularly by emphasizing the role of user experience as a key factor. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a basis for policymakers and healthcare providers to design more user-centric telemental health systems, taking into account aspects of the quality of therapeutic interactions, data security, and increasing digital literacy. With a more comprehensive and contextual approach, tele-mental health services are expected to not only be a temporary solution but also become an integral part of a sustainable mental health system in the future.

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