



I4 Predictors of E-Therapy and Face-to-Face Therapy Use for Internet Users: Personality, Attitude, Gender, and Ethnicity

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be provided information about how personality and dysfunctional thinking relate to an individual's attitude about seeking assistance for psychological distress. Further, the presentation will provide new knowledge about what types of individuals would be more inclined to seek professional assistance online versus those who prefer traditional face-to-face therapy arrangements. The study's findings hold important implications in terms of addressing the problem of underutilization of mental health services among neurotic individuals despite there being an increase in the provision of these services. Exacerbation of symptoms as a result of not receiving professional help can result in suicide attempts and violence directed at others. This presentation will help to inform professionals about how e-therapy services are perceived and the types of clients that may be well suited for e-therapy services.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing how the findings potentially provide prospective research that focuses on the wide-spread problem of underutilization of mental health services by those who need help the most and how personality and attitude variables play a role in this problem. E-therapy is proposed to offer a viable alternative for individuals who find face-to-face therapy arrangements too uncomfortable due to the symptoms of their mental disorder and may provide a way to reduce suicide attempts as well as violence toward others among those who are psychologically distressed.

Hypothesis: This study explored whether attitudes toward seeking professional help in face-to-face therapy (Attitude Toward Seeking Professional Psychological Help; ATSPPH, Face-to-Face Counseling Attitudes Scale; FCAS) and e-therapy formats (Online Counseling Attitudes Scale; OCAS, Pratt Survey Instrument) could be predicted by personality traits (NEO Personality Inventory-Revised; NEO PI-R), dysfunctional attitudes (Dysfunctional Attitude Scale; DAS), gender, and race.

Methods: This study utilized a non-experimental study design to examine attitudes toward seeking professional help in traditional face-to-face format and with various forms of e-therapy. Personality and dysfunctional attitudes were also measured. The design employed self-report measures to assess these areas of interest. The participants for this study were recruited exclusively from an online research panel maintained by United Sample, Inc. drawn from a pool of adult internet users who were recruited using a controlled by invitation only method to comprise a sample that closely parallels the U.S. population proportions on all key profile characteristics ($n = 199$).

Results: Data were analyzed utilizing hierarchical multiple regression. Results revealed that gender (male) and the dysfunctional attitude, cognitive imperatives (DAS) were inversely related to recognition of need for professional help (ATSPPH). Analysis of the data also revealed that race (Latino), the dysfunctional attitude, avoidance of appearing weak (DAS) were inversely related, and the personality trait, openness to experience (NEO PI-R) was positively related to interpersonal openness regarding one's problems (ATSPPH). Further, results showed that openness to experience and self-consciousness (NEO PI-R) were positively related to online counseling attitude (OCAS) and extraversion (NEO PI-R) was positively related to face-to-face counseling attitude (FCAS). Standard discriminate analysis revealed that those who prefer some form of e-therapy are likely to be low in extraversion and high in openness to experience and self-consciousness.

Conclusion: This study adds clarification about what personality and dysfunctional attitude variables relate to attitudes toward seeking professional help in e-therapy and face-to-face formats. This study sets forth a direction for future research to parallel the explosion of the online universe in a necessary effort to reach countless individuals in need of professional assistance.

Help-Seeking Attitudes, E-Therapy, Online Psychotherapy