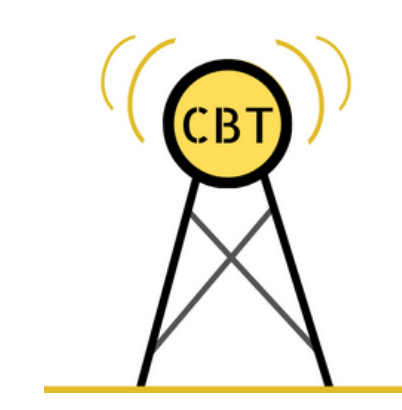


European CBT therapists transitioning to remote CBT during the pandemic



the REMOTEcbt
project

supported by EABCT

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Introduction

- The emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has brought a number of challenges, including transitioning to remote psychotherapeutic services and training (online, via video conferencing programs). This abrupt transition required the adjustment of not only service users, but also therapists around the world, which could have yielded both positive and negative perceptions of this treatment mode, important for future practices during and after the pandemic.
- The aim of this study was to investigate the various facets of attitudes and experiences on the remote provision of psychotherapeutic services and training among CBT therapists and trainees.

Method

Design:

- International project supported by EABCT, initiated by SRABCT: "European therapists' transitioning to remote CBT during the COVID-19 pandemic" (theREMOTECbt);
- Cross-sectional study - data collection started in 2021, still ongoing
- The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Mental Health, Belgrade (No.1060/2097/1)

Participants (N=740):

- CBT therapists and trainees (N=617) contacted through EABCT member associations: Bosnia and Herzegovina - BHACBT, Croatia - CABCT, Germany - DGVT, Georgia - GABCT, Greece - GBA, HSCP, Italy - SITCC, AIAMC, Montenegro - MNACBT, , Netherlands - DABCT/VGCT, Serbia - SRABCT, ACBTS, Slovenia - SABCT, Portugal - APTCCI, , Russia -ACBP, ACBT, Turkey - ACBP, Ukraine - UACBT (joining soon Belgium - AEMTC, Bulgaria - BACBP, Republic of North Macedonia - ACBPRM, Romania - RACBP)
- Therapists and trainees in other psychotherapeutic modalities (psychodynamic, psychoanalytic, integrative, humanistic, systemic, other) from Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Portugal, Russia, Serbia (N=123)

Instruments - online questionnaire:

- Socio-demographic data, data on attitudes and experiences with remote (online) therapy and training (with focus on the pandemic period)
- Attitudes Towards Online Therapy Scale - UTAUT Therapist version (Bekes & Aafjes-van Doorn, 2020)
- The Therapists' Attitudes toward using Modern Technologies in Psychotherapy and Counselling Scale (MTPS) (Bagarić & Jokić-Begić, 2020)

Conclusion

- Online treatment and training were largely represented among the CBT therapists and trainees in the study. About a half of the CBT therapists first started to provide online therapy during the pandemic. This transition was associated with lower anxiety and greater behavioural intention for this type of treatment.
- Both advantages and challenges (general and CBT-based) have been identified in online delivery of treatment and training.
- CBT therapists have shown some differences in their attitudes towards using modern technology, comparing to therapists in other therapeutic modalities.
- The study findings may contribute to better understanding of the needs of CBT therapists and trainees when it comes to working and learning online.
- One of the practical implications may refer to the necessity to include the training on remote (online) CBT into the CBT training standards. This may help therapists and their clients in times of abrupt shift to remote services, such as the pandemic, and beyond.

Step forward

- To address the needs identified by the study, we have organized two international online workshops within the project (with free participation).
- Our distinguished speakers tailored the presented content to the results of this study, providing the colleagues from various countries valuable interactive opportunity to upgrade their skills in working online.
- Both workshops had significant attendance and got excellent feedback.

Online workshop June 2022:
Delivering CBT therapy, supervision and training remotely - approaches, techniques, advantages and challenges
Helen Macdonald, UK



Online workshop March 2022:
Integrating digital tools into psychotherapy
Carmen Schaeuffele, Germany



Results

Among CBT therapists (certified or under supervision):

89.3% Has provided online therapy at least once

65.8% Has increased the number of online sessions during the pandemic

79% Has provided online therapy during the pandemic

45.7% of all sessions are online sessions, on average

53% Has transitioned to online therapy for the first time during the pandemic

35.5% Believes that the quality of online therapy is equal to the therapy live

Transition was more likely among those with:

- lower anxiety due to online therapy ($\exp(B)=0.832$, $p=0.000$), and
- stronger behavioural intent to do online therapy ($\exp(B)=1.276$, $p=0.035$; $\chi^2=84.135$, $p=0.000$, Nagelkerke $R^2=0.381$)

General difficulties:

- unstable internet connection
- difficulties for the client to find the appropriate space
- the risk of the client's attention to be distracted from the therapy
- problems to correctly interpret the client's emotions and to experience psychological connection

CBT-specific difficulties:

- difficulties in applying behavioural techniques
- establishing interpersonal effectiveness and collaboration
- reviewing homework
- choosing a correct strategy for change

Advantages of online therapy:

- accessibility, mobility, time-efficient, space comfort
- prevents discontinuation of therapeutic process in difficult circumstances
- seeing the person in natural surroundings
- adherence to treatment in certain conditions (avoidance)
- exposure in real environment

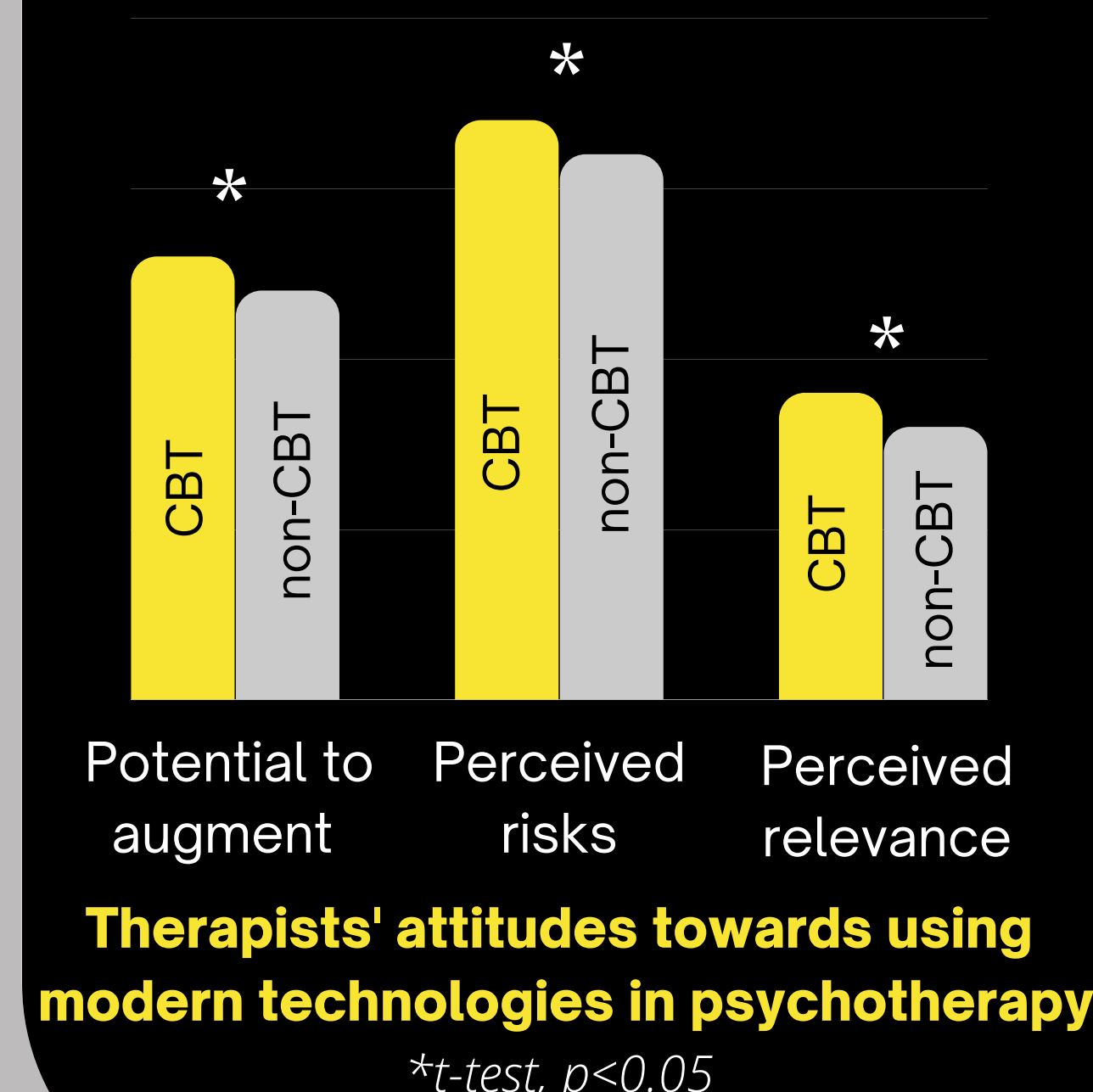
Self-perceived knowledge on how to provide online therapy:



Need for training and supervision in online therapy:

87.3%

Believes that the standard CBT training curriculum should include a module on providing online therapy



Online CBT training

- 86.71% of CBT participants attended some form of online training
- Training live was perceived as slightly more effective than online training (1.7/5)
- 21.1% of the CBT participants had direct supervision via online programs
- There were mixed findings regarding the positive and negative aspects of the online training on the quality of knowledge, motivation to learn, pleasure in learning, and different elements of training

