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Psychotherapy

Online psychodynamic psychotherapies: a scoping review. The case of bereavement support

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Abstract

Background: In order to comply with the 2020 health restrictions, many psychotherapeutic approaches have begun to hold online sessions, including psychodynamic psychotherapy, for which this modality marked a new procedure.

The authors are psychologists with a psychoanalytic background, who mostly work with bereaved people. They considered it essential to initiate research, not only on online psychodynamic psychotherapy, but also on the scientific results regarding this practice used explicitly in cases of bereavement.

For these reasons, two literature reviews were conducted according to the PRISMA protocol concerning: the use of online psychodynamic therapy in general (1), and its use in cases of bereavement (2).

Methods: The databases used were PubMed, Cochrane Library, and Google Scholar, Eric and Web of Science. Inclusion criteria contains peer-reviewed scientific articles published in English from 2010 to 2022, with a focus on online psychodynamic psychotherapy and bereavement cases. Exclusion criteria included non-peer-reviewed studies, non-English articles, systematic reviews, quantitative scale validation studies, research protocols, and studies primarily focused on training.

Compared with the research on the effectiveness of psychodynamic psychotherapy conducted online with all the different types of patients (1), only 5 research papers were selected from 842,103 articles. Out of 431,372 articles on the use of psychodynamic teletherapy with bereaved patients (2), in the end no articles were selected.

Results: The results suggest that online psychotherapy involves a dynamic process very similar to face-to-face therapies. The small number of articles selected for both reviews underscores the need for further research on this topic.

Conclusions: Since psychodynamic psychotherapy is based on concepts that are difficult to standardize (such as countertransference or free association), it is possible that clinicians and researchers have not yet found specific ways to validate it online.

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1. Introduction

Psychotherapy engages mental health professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, or psychotherapists. It seeks to alleviate psychological distress and foster emotional, mental, and behavioral well-being through open dialogue and collaboration between therapists and patients (Lindley, 2019). From the profound exploration of the unconscious in psychoanalytic therapy to the strategic alteration of negative thought patterns in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) (Wenzel, 2017), the field encompasses diverse methodologies. For example, Gestalt Therapy directs attention to the present moment (Yontef & Fairfiend, 2007), Family Systems Therapy delves into family dynamics (Gurman & Kniskern, 2014), and Interpersonal Therapy targets discomfort within human connections (Lipsitz & Markowitz, 2013). Dialectical Behavior Therapy integrates cognitive-behavioral techniques with mindfulness, reflecting the dynamic evolution of tailored therapeutic methodologies (Kaufman et al., 2021).

Furthermore, psychodynamic psychotherapy, rooted in Freudian principles, adds an additional dimension to the therapeutic landscape. This form of therapy focuses on the in-depth analysis of unconscious dynamics, repressed emotional processes, and childhood experiences that influence current behavior and relationships. The goal is to bring awareness to unconscious thought patterns, facilitating the understanding and resolution of internal conflicts (Fonagy & Target, 2008).

Regarding their effectiveness, a variety of research has been conducted on various disorders and approaches. For example, cognitive-behavioral therapy can be effective in the management of anxiety manifestations (Hofmann et al., 2012), in the treatment of borderline personality (Linehan et al., 2006), psychotic (Wykes et al., 2008), and for eating disorders, such as mentalization-focused therapy (Fairburn et al., 2003; Fonagy et al., 2010).

Concerning the psychodynamic therapy, recent research conducted by Leichsenring et al. (2023) highlighted how psychodynamic therapy is effective and highly recommended in cases of depressive, anxiety and somatic symptom disorders (Leichsenring et al., 2023).

It can be also efficacy in personality disorders, particularly borderline personality (Clarkin et al., 2007) and posttraumatic stress (Mello et al., 2013), sleep disorders, in case of relationship difficulties (Hofmann et al., 2012), and bereavement (Kealy et al., 2017; Leichsenring & Klein, 2014; Tonkins & Lambert, 1996). Shedler (2010) emphasizes the long-term effectiveness of psychodynamic therapy in mood disorders (Shedler, 2010).

However, the landscape of psychotherapy underwent significant transformations starting from 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This global upheaval prompted psychologists

to adapt various elements of therapeutic settings. Traditionally, the therapeutic setting, characterized by the physical space where therapist and patient meet at a specific time, played a crucial role in establishing boundaries and creating a secure space for interaction and emotional containment (Pennella & Bignami, 2021).

The advent of online therapy introduced a different dynamic, compelling patients to navigate potential interruptions and technological challenges in their own environments. Despite potential disruptions, online therapy enhances accessibility, especially for those in rural areas, reducing social stigma, and facilitating a sense of safety for seeking professional help (Pennella & Bignami, 2021). While some therapeutic approaches like CBT had embraced teletherapy, it marked a new beginning for psychodynamic psychotherapy.

Psychodynamic psychotherapies traditionally adhere to specific rules of the setting, influencing the therapeutic relationship and treatment dynamics (Gilliéron, 1995). The integration of teletherapy raised questions about its performance and effectiveness in the psychodynamic realm, particularly concerning the correlation between screen use and nonverbal interaction (Gordon et al., 2021a).

Contrary to initial reservations, various studies (Ahlquist & Yarns, 2022; Backhaus et al., 2012; Pennella & Bignami, 2021) suggest that online psychodynamic psychotherapy is comparable to traditional therapy in terms of therapeutic alliance and effectiveness. Humer et al.'s (2020) research found that psychodynamic and humanistic psychotherapists reported positive experiences with distance psychotherapy, with web-based sessions resembling in-person psychotherapy more closely than telephone sessions (Humer et al., 2020).

Despite these findings, the debate continues, with some professionals expressing concerns about potential challenges in responding to online questionnaires or tests due to fears of making irreparable errors (Di Nuovo & Narzisi, 2021). Yet, studies by Ren et al. (2021) and Ehrlich (2019) propose that the physical distance and the home environment may encourage patients to open more during online sessions (Ehrlich, 2019; Ren et al., 2021).

Furthermore, while online therapy is often considered optimal for anxiety and depression (Ahlquist et al., 2022), for some serious clinical situations, such as suicide risk, severe personality disorders, and experiences of violence and/or rights violations, it is considered contraindicated (Ahlquist et al., 2022).

Amidst these considerations, this study aims to reflect on the effectiveness of the encounter between online practice and psychodynamic treatment. The introduction of teletherapy and its intersection with psychodynamics, once considered disparate techniques, represents a

significant change triggered by the pandemic. As psychologists with a psychoanalytic background, the authors work with bereaved individuals and have experienced distance work during the pandemic. Thus, the current study seeks to explore not only online psychodynamic psychotherapy in general but also its application in cases of mourning.

Motivated by their experience and exposure to both traditional and online settings, the current study centers around two research questions:

Q1: Does online psychodynamic psychotherapy yield equivalent effects to traditional therapy?

Q2: Given the effectiveness of psychodynamic psychotherapy in cases of bereavement, is online psychodynamic psychotherapy equally effective in accompanying patients after the loss of a loved one?

The authors are therefore committed to exploring empirical evidence that supports the effectiveness of online psychodynamic psychotherapy in general and in dealing with grief. This involves rigorous examination of existing research studies that provide empirical support for the effectiveness of this therapeutic approach in the digital realm.

2. Methods

2.1 Search Strategy

To achieve the research objectives, two comprehensive literature reviews were conducted following the PRISMA protocol (Page et al., 2021).

The search strategy employed multiple databases, including PubMed, Cochrane Library, Google scholar and Web of Science, to ensure a thorough examination of relevant literature. The search period was limited from 2010 to 2022, and the keywords used for each search were as follows:

1. For the first search on the effectiveness of psychodynamic psychotherapy carried out online: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online.
2. For the second search on online psychodynamic psychotherapy focused on bereavement cases: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online AND grief OR bereavement OR loss.

The search strategy details, including the list of terms entered in each search engine, the search period, and specific search practices (e.g., title abstract and keywords), are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Search Strategy Details

Search Engine	Keywords	Search Period	Search Practice	Search Filters	Combination of Keywords
PubMed	For the first search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online. For the second search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online AND grief OR bereavement OR loss.	2010-2022	Title, Abstract, Keywords	English	Boolean operators (AND, OR)
Cochrane	For the first search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online. For the second search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online AND grief OR bereavement OR loss.	2010-2022	Title, Abstract, Keywords	None	Boolean operators (AND, OR)
Google Scholar	For the first search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online. For the second search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online AND grief OR bereavement OR loss.	2010-2022	Title, Abstract, Keywords	Scientific articles	Inclusive search
Eric	For the first search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online. For the second search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online AND grief OR bereavement OR loss.	2010-2022	Title, Abstract, Keywords	Peer reviewed only	Boolean operators (AND, OR)
Web of Science	For the first search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online. For the second search: psychodynamic AND psychotherapy AND teletherapy OR online AND grief OR bereavement OR loss.	2010-2022	Title, Abstract, Keywords	Scientific articles published in English, Psychological studies	Boolean operators (AND, OR)

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

2.2.1 Inclusion Criteria

- Publication Type: Limited to scientific articles published in peer-reviewed journals.
- Language: Articles must be in the English language to ensure consistency and accessibility for the research team.
- Publication Date: Articles published between 2010 and 2022 were included to focus on contemporary literature while allowing for an adequate temporal scope. The decision to restrict

the literature review to studies published from 2010 onward was driven by a deliberate effort to ensure the relevance and applicability of the findings to contemporary research. By excluding studies conducted before 2010, the authors aimed to focus on recent advancements, recognizing that the rapid evolution of technology and therapeutic approaches in the past decade could render some earlier findings less applicable to the present context.

- Study Focus: Articles that exclusively investigated psychodynamic psychotherapy, either conducted online or addressing bereavement cases, were included.

2.2.2 Exclusion Criteria

- Non-Peer Reviewed: Studies that were not published in peer-reviewed journals were excluded to maintain a high standard of research quality.

- Non-English Language: Articles not in the English language were excluded to facilitate uniform understanding and interpretation among the research team.

- Systematic Reviews: Systematic reviews were excluded to focus on original research studies and prevent redundancy in the data.

- Quantitative Scale Validation: Studies validating quantitative scales and tests were excluded to maintain the specificity of the review on psychodynamic psychotherapy.

- Research Protocols: Articles that were research protocols rather than completed studies were excluded to ensure the inclusion of fully developed research.

- Training Focus: Studies primarily concerned with training rather than the effectiveness of psychodynamic psychotherapy were excluded to maintain the relevance of the review.

2.3 Data Extraction and Screening

The identification of relevant literature commenced with a comprehensive search strategy employing keywords across multiple databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, Eric and Web of Science.

Initial screening involved the authors, as independent coders, who randomly assigned titles to ensure unbiased selection. Abstracts and full texts were subsequently reviewed for eligibility according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, with any discrepancies resolved through discussion and consensus.

Systematic data extraction was performed using a predefined form to capture relevant information, including study design, participant characteristics, interventions, and key outcomes. This process was conducted independently by the two coders/authors to enhance reliability.

2.4 Data Collection Process and Quality Assessment

The data extraction process involved creating an Excel file for each included article, extracting pre-specified information, such as authors, year of publication, title, sample, aim, methods, and results. This method facilitated the exclusion and counting of duplicates.

Additionally, a quality assessment of the included studies was conducted to ensure the robustness of the selected evidence. Studies were appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (O’Cathain, 2010), a valid tool for appraising quantitative, qualitative and mixed studies.

The tool includes five types of studies: qualitative research, randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies, quantitative descriptive studies and mixed methods studies.

For each item, the response categories were “yes”, “no” or “I can't say” followed by comments.

The degree of quality is indicated by the number of stars (*).

Before the analysis, the researchers extracted descriptive data from the selected articles (see Table 2).

These covered the authors, country of origin, number and gender of participants, purpose, methodology, results and the MMAT appraisal.

Quality assessment was conducted by the authors independently. Inconsistency in the appraisal scores was resolved through discussion.

Inter-rater agreement on the risk of bias assessment was calculated by means of Cohen’s Kappa (Cohen, 1960) using Jamovi software (The jamovi project, 2022).

No studies were excluded based on quality assessment, as all were of acceptable quality.

3. Results

3.1 Results of the quality assessment

The methodological quality of the studies on online psychodynamic treatment averaged 44%, with a range between 20% and 80%. The results of the MMAT are reported in Table 2.

The average methodological quality of the quantitative studies is 26.6%, while that of the qualitative studies is 70%. The average methodological quality of the quantitative studies is 26.6%, while that of the qualitative studies is 70%.", we added: "Cohen’s Kappa for inter-rater agreement was 0.75, indicating “substantial agreement” between raters (range 0.61–0.80) (Landis & Koch, 1977).

First scoping review: Psychodynamic psychotherapy carried out online

In relation to the first research question, i.e. on the effectiveness of psychodynamic psychotherapy conducted online, 842,103 papers were reviewed after the removal of duplicates, and a final sample of 5 full text articles underwent qualitative synthesis (see Figure 1).

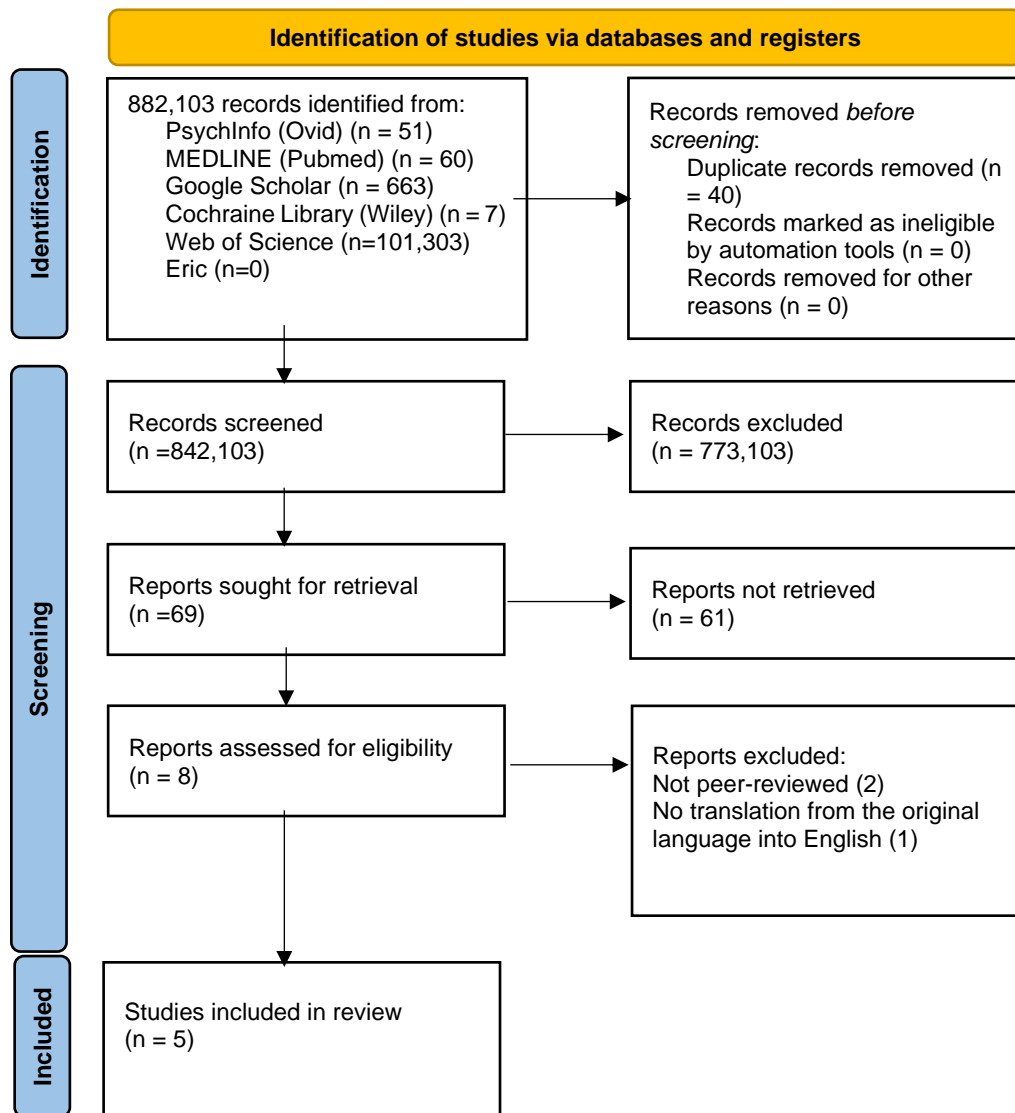


Figure 1. Studies selection flow diagram about tele-therapy and psychodynamic approach (PRISMA flow chart).

As shown in Table 1, all the research papers were published between 2020 and 2022. They concern the practices and experiences of psychotherapists with psychodynamic training during the pandemic.

Two research groups wrote two articles on the topic, namely Jesser et al. (Jesser et al., 2021, 2022) and Gordon et al. (Gordon et al., 2021a, 2021b), and all four articles were selected as they met the inclusion criteria.

Two studies analyzed the data using qualitative analysis (Jesser et al., 2022; Machado et al., 2020). Three studies used a quantitative methodology, through the distribution of an online survey in which participants had to answer questions about pre- and post-pandemic psychotherapy treatment (Gordon et al., 2021a, 2021b; Jesser et al., 2021).

Specifically, both studies by Gordon et al. (2021a, 2021b) report the results of a survey of 1,490 therapists from 56 countries and regions who remotely treated patients during the initial phase of home hospitalization and physical distancing due to COVID-19.

The first article (Gordon et al., 2021a) concerns the responses obtained with respect to the request to rank 6 factors deemed necessary for psychodynamic treatment, namely: use of the couch during sessions, sessions in the office or through teletherapy, cultural similarity between therapist and patient, number of sessions per week, patient factors (motivation, insight, and high functioning) and therapist factors (empathy, friendliness, wisdom, and skill). The results highlighted that for therapists, therapist and patient factors are the most important aspects to consider, ahead of any other variable, including whether therapy is delivered online or in-person.

In their second study, Gordon and his collaborators (2021b) analyzed therapists' responses and divided them into two groups: negative and positive reactions to teletherapy during the pandemic. For most therapists, remote treatment was valuable when the patient was housebound or had difficulty getting to the therapist's office. Seventeen percent did not believe online treatment was effective and had more difficulty with the technology.

The research of Jesser et al. (2021) concerns the quantitative analysis of an online survey administered to 161 psychotherapists. Specifically, the questionnaire covered attitudes towards distance psychotherapy, changes experienced in remote settings, perceived limitations and difficulties, benefits of distance psychotherapy, and gave respondents the opportunity to add comments on their experiences or share additional information.

Results showed that most therapists rated the distance experience positively, although in-person therapy remained the first choice. The main changes experienced in transitioning from in-person to remote therapy concerned transference/countertransference, the therapeutic process and the intensity of the session. Furthermore, therapists were less willing to conduct online therapy with certain specific patients, in particular those diagnosed with a delusional disorder.

In addition, free-text comments from the same survey were subsequently analyzed through content analysis and published in the second article (Jesser et al., 2022). The analysis noted the following six categories: access to psychotherapy; characteristics of the remote setting;

therapeutic relationship; therapeutic process; therapists' experiences with remote psychotherapy; and patient-specific observations. Despite the generally positive opinions, the results highlighted the doubts and questions that therapists have about distance psychotherapy. They concern the maintenance of the therapeutic alliance, the development of the analytic process, sensitivity to unconscious communication, and the indication for certain types of patients who need further investigations.

Finally, Machado et al. (2020) explored the practice of online psychotherapy through a qualitative study with an exploratory approach. The instruments were (a) sociodemographic and clinical experience questionnaires; (b) semi-structured interviews with questions designed to investigate psychotherapists' clinical experience and their perceptions of the online psychotherapy process, including technical and relational aspects, compared with to face-to-face practice. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis (Machado et al., 2020). The results were organized into two thematic categories, namely: online psychotherapy practice and technique, and the psychodynamic process in online psychotherapy. The data revealed that for psychotherapists, online psychodynamic psychotherapy has many distinctive characteristics that require adaptation on the part of the therapist. These factors concern the quality of the Internet connection, the focal process, vulnerable settings, and different communication patterns.

Table 2. Main characteristic of study included

Authors	Country	Sample	Aim	Methods	Results	Quality of Studies Using MMAT
Jesser et al. (2021)	Austria	161 therapists (131 females; 28 males; 2 others)	Investigate the therapists' experience of online therapy following the COVID-19 spread.	Quantitative analysis – Online survey	Many therapists are in favor of online therapy. Others prefer to see patients in person. The strongest changes were experienced with regard to transference/countertransference, the therapeutic process and the intensity of session.	**
Gordon et al. (2021a)	Survey conducted in 56 countries: United States (59%), China (11%), Europe (8%), United Kingdom (4%), Latin America	1490 therapists (1013 females; 462 males; 15 NA*)	Understanding how therapists experience online sessions and what factors are the most important for the effectiveness of psychodynamic treatment.	Quantitative analysis – Online survey	Psychodynamic practitioners worldwide confirmed that it is the empathy, warmth, wisdom, and skillfulness of the therapist, and the motivation, insightfulness and level of functioning of the patient that is most important to treatment effectiveness regardless	*

	(4%), Canada (3%), Australia/New Zealand region (2%), Indian Subcontinent (1%), South Africa (1%) and Other (7%).				of the treatment is remote or embodied.	
Gordon et al. (2021b)	Survey conducted in 56 countries: United States (59%), China (11%), Europe (8%), United Kingdom (4%), Latin America (4%), Canada (3%), Australia/New Zealand region (2%), Indian Subcontinent (1%), South Africa (1%) and Other (7%).	1490 therapists (1013 females; 462 males; 15 NA*)	Better understand the aspects considered positive and negative by therapists compared to teletherapy.	Quantitative analysis – Online survey	The majority of respondents who have mainly positive opinions feel that they can work effectively with transference, resistance and relational problems in distance analytic treatment.	*
Machado et al. (2021)	Brazil	8 therapists (5 females; 3 males)	Explore how psychodynamic/psychoanalytical psychotherapists perceive their own practice in online settings, including technical and relational aspects of the therapeutic process, in comparison to their experience in face-to-face treatments.	Qualitative study with an exploratory approach	Online psychodynamic psychotherapy has many distinctive features (e.g. relying on the quality of internet connection, fostering focal process, occurring in a more vulnerable setting, and eliciting a different pattern of communication) that require adaptation from therapist	***
Jesser et al. (2022)	Austria	161 therapists (131 females; 28 males; 2 others)	This study focused on psychodynamic therapists and their subjective experiences with psychotherapy via telephone and videoconferencing during the first COVID-19 related lockdown period in March 2020 in Austria.	Qualitative analysis – Content analysis of free text comments of an online questionnaire	Telephone and videoconferencing are considered valuable treatment formats to deliver psychodynamic psychotherapy. The findings raise questions concerning the maintenance of the therapeutic alliance, the development of the analytic process, the sensitivity to unconscious communication, and the indication for certain types of patients that still need further investigation.	****

Second scoping review: Online psychodynamics centered on cases of bereavement

The second scoping review, which focused not only on the use of teletherapy by psychodynamic psychotherapists, but also on its use and effectiveness with respect to bereaved patients, produced no results.

As can be seen from Figure 2, starting from the keywords, 431,372 articles published from 2010 to 2022 emerged.

Of these, only 5 were selected after reading the titles of the various studies, and after reading the articles, the final number evaluated was 0.

None of them met the objectives and inclusion criteria for the study.

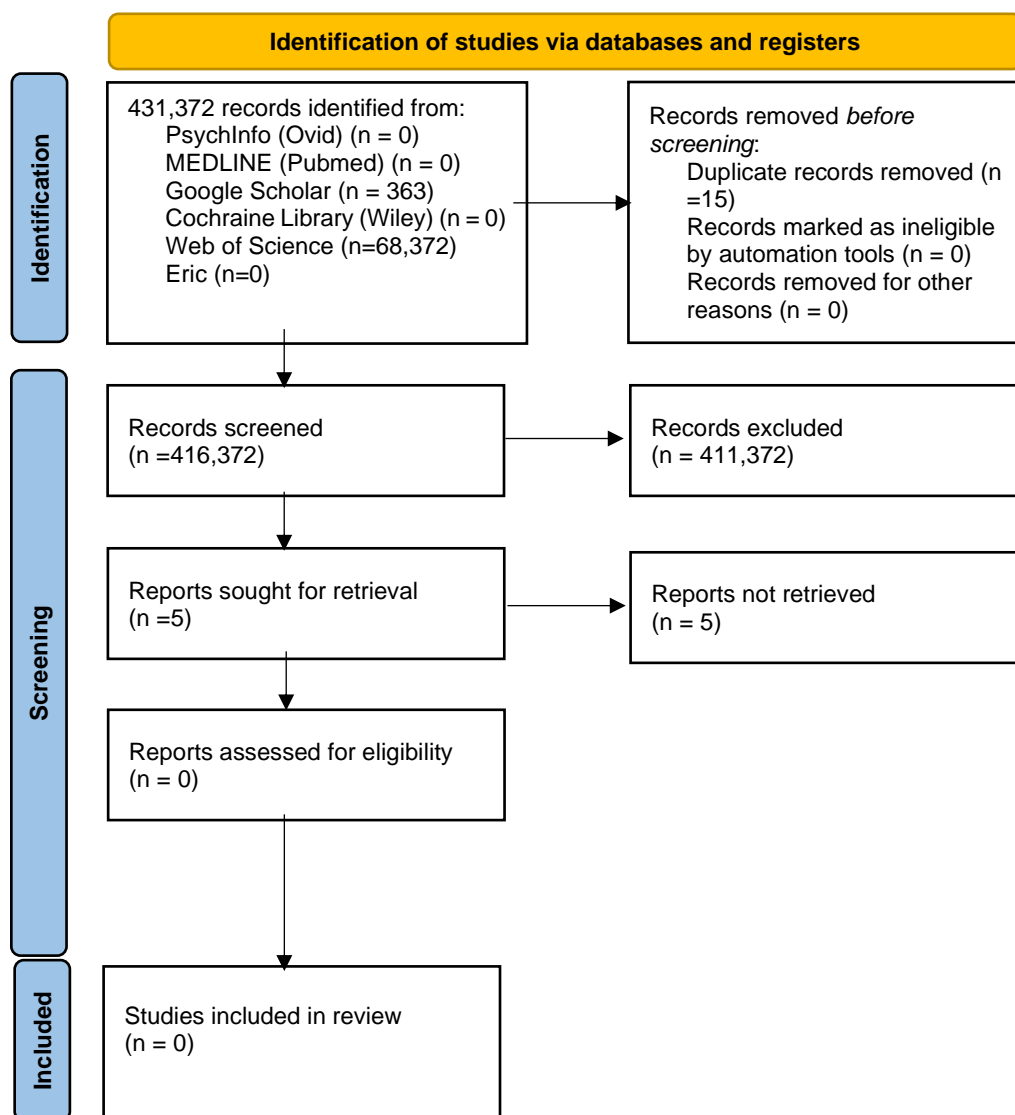


Figure 2. Studies selection flow diagram about tele-therapy and psychodynamic approach with respect to situations of mourning (PRISMA flow chart).

4. Discussion

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 initiated significant transformations in psychotherapeutic practices, prompting psychologists to adapt therapeutic settings to the digital realm. This has been an innovation, particularly for psychodynamic therapists, for whom this was a new modality, introducing new challenges and opportunities (Pennella & Bignami, 2021).

The selected studies in the current review suggest that online psychotherapy promotes a dynamic process comparable to face-to-face therapies, aligning with recent literature that emphasizes the adaptability of psychotherapeutic practices (Ahlquist & Yarns, 2022; Backhaus et al., 2012; Pennella & Bignami, 2021). These findings underscore the resilience of psychodynamic psychotherapy in navigating the complexities introduced by online platforms.

Jesser et al.'s (2021, 2022) research highlights a positive shift in psychodynamic therapists' attitudes toward teletherapy. Interestingly, the success of treatment, as indicated by practitioners, was not heavily influenced by the mode of therapy delivery (online or in-person) but rather by therapeutic factors such as empathy, warmth, wisdom, and skill of the practitioner (Gordon et al., 2021a). These findings echo early work by Lester Luborsky in 1984, emphasizing the enduring importance of core therapeutic elements (Luborsky, 2000).

Machado et al. (2020) contribute insights into the challenges of establishing a stable therapeutic relationship through teletherapy. Despite positive experiences reported by psychodynamic and humanistic psychotherapists (Humer et al., 2020), concerns about the time required for relationship establishment persist. This aligns with the broader debate regarding the impact of online settings on the depth and quality of the therapeutic alliance (Gordon et al., 2021b).

However, the articles selected in response to the first research question are too limited to truly succeed in evaluating and confirming the effectiveness of online psychodynamic psychotherapy. This result, however, raises questions about the broader scientific discourse around this specific intersection, as well as the use of this approach with respect to grief cases. In fact, considering this second literature review focused on online sessions and bereaved patients, zero results have emerged.

The recognition of these shortcomings invites reflection on its place within the broader scientific discourse. Considering the hesitation observed in exploring this topic, especially compared to more widely studied therapeutic approaches such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (Leichsenring & Klein, 2014), the discussion underscores the need for future research. The call

to address this critical gap becomes an essential component of our discourse, inviting scholars to explore the unique challenges and potential of psychodynamic therapy in the digital age.

Comparisons with the work of Shedler (2010) and recent research by Leichsenring et al. (2023) emphasizing the long-term effectiveness of psychodynamic therapy indeed raise crucial questions about the unique elements of psychodynamic psychotherapies and their potential challenges in an online format. Although psychodynamic therapies boast significant effect sizes, reaching 1.46, the success of psychodynamic therapies relies on complex elements such as exploration of the past, dreams, imagination, resilience, repetition, and transfer of attention (Simpson et al., 2021). Because psychodynamic psychotherapy is based on concepts that are difficult to standardize (such as countertransference, free association, and uncertain temporality), it is possible that psychodynamic psychologists/researchers themselves have not yet found specific ways in which they can validate the psychodynamic approach used online.

Moreover, a notable aspect arising from this exploration is the temporal scope of the included studies, which predominantly spans the early years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the results offer valuable insights into the immediate adaptations and experiences of psychodynamic therapists during the promo period of the pandemic a natural question emerges: why do we observe a gap in research beyond this early period?

The early years saw a sudden and forced shift to teletherapy, prompting psychologists to face unprecedented challenges in real time. However, with the passage of time, it is conceivable that the rapid adaptation observed in the early years may have evolved into a more nuanced and refined integration of online practices in conjunction with the possible restoration of the traditional setting.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the seismic shift induced by the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled many psychodynamic therapists, traditionally skeptical of online practice, to reconsider its validity. The pandemic forced therapists to revise their visions and rules of the setting, opening up to new perspectives and treatment methods. However, the study's limitations, including the reliance on only five studies and the absence of research on online psychodynamic therapy for bereaved cases, underscore the need for extensive future research.

Future investigations should consider not only the therapist's experience but also that of the patient, delving into perceptions of the online setting and evaluating the quality of interactions. The positive views on teletherapy, even at the countertransference level, suggest the necessity

of more recent studies to provide nuanced scientific reflections on the modernization of dynamic psychotherapy. Further research in this area is suggested, considering difficulties and priorities for patients and employing generalizable evaluation methods.

6. Strengths and Limitations

Delving into the landscape of online psychodynamic psychotherapy, our review highlights several notable strengths and acknowledges some limitations.

First, the discussion integrates our findings with the established state of the art, providing perspective on current and potential future trajectories of online psychodynamic psychotherapy.

The study highlights the resilience and adaptability of psychodynamic psychotherapy in the face of the challenges posed by online platforms contributes valuable information for practitioners and highlights the potential of psychodynamic approaches in different therapeutic settings.

Following the selected articles, the review focuses mainly on the initial years of the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting the exploration of potential adaptations and long-term changes in psychodynamic practices.

In addition, the inability to access resources such as Scopus and PsychInfo through the University of Strasbourg may have determined limited the breadth of sources, potentially affecting the number of articles available for review.

Finally, the study primarily reproduces the therapists' perspective, without the patient's perspective, which could provide a more holistic understanding of the online psychodynamic psychotherapy experience.

Addressing these limitations in future research efforts will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of online psychodynamic psychotherapy that includes diverse perspectives and extends beyond the early years of the pandemic.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors have stated explicitly that there are no conflicts of interest in connection with this article.

Authors' contribution

Both authors contributed to the conception and design of this article, collected, screened all papers and interpreted the data, drafted the article and revised it critically for important intellectual content. Both authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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