

**The Realms of mental health between tradition and
innovation –An analytical study of current professional
practices and future prospects**

**عوامل الصحة النفسية بين التقليد والتجديد
دراسة تحليلية للممارسات المهنية الراهنة والآفاق المستقبلية**

Amel Boutouchent*, Djillali Bounaama Khemis Miliana University.
amel.boutouchent@univ-dbkm.dz
Naouri Elouid, Djillali Bounaama Khemis Miliana University.
n.elouid@univ-dbkm.dz

Received: 2025/10/31

Accepted: 2026/01/29

Abstract:

This paper aims to explore the transformations that the field of mental health is experiencing amid rapid global changes. While traditional approaches have contributed to establishing the foundations of psychotherapy. Innovative trends have emerged through digital technologies, modern waves of cognitive-behavioral therapy, and interdisciplinary perspectives. This study seeks to analyze the limits of both tradition and innovation, compare their effectiveness, and highlight the possibility of constructing a hybrid model that combines classical heritage with the requirements of contemporary innovation. Therefore, through this framework; the study aims to provide a critical and forward-looking perspective that opens new horizons for clinical practice and scientific research in mental health.

Keywords: realms, mental health, digital health, tradition, innovation

* corresponding author

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الورقة إلى استكشاف التحولات التي يشهدها مجال الصحة النفسية في ظل التغيرات العالمية المتسارعة. فعلى الرغم من أن المقاربات التقليدية قد أسهمت في ترسيخ أسس العلاج النفسي، إلا أن اتجاهات مبتكرة برزت من خلال التقنيات الرقمية، الموجات الحديثة للعلاج السلوكي المعرفي، والمقاربات متعددة التخصصات.

وتسعى هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل حدود كل من التقليد والتجديد، ومقارنة فاعليتهما، مع تسليط الضوء على إمكانية بناء نموذج هجين يجمع بين الإرث الكلاسيكي ومتطلبات الابتكار المعاصر.

وبناء على هذا الإطار؛ تهدف الدراسة إلى تقديم رؤية نقدية واستشرافية تفتح آفاقاً جديدة للممارسة العيادية والبحث العلمي في مجال الصحة النفسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: عوالم، الصحة النفسية، الصحة الرقمية، التقليد، التجديد.

Introduction and research questions

Recently, the world has experienced major changes in all aspects of life, especially in health, where we were obliged to use technologies to maintain both our physical and mental well-being. Digital health has become one of the most widely used methods; however, mental health has not received the same level of attention.

Today, many strategies are needed to develop technological tools to be used in psychotherapy, particularly on live.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the dimensions of mental health between traditional and technological approaches, by analyzing both current practices and future prospects. To answer these questions:

- What are main traditional professional practices in mental health?
- How have technological development contributed to renewing these practices?

- What challenges do professionals face in integrating traditional and modern approaches?
- How can a balance be achieved between preserving traditional foundations and embracing renewal?
- What are the possible future trends of professional practices in mental health?

Research hypothesis:

-The study hypothesizes that traditional professional practices in mental health still form a fundamental basis of therapeutic work, despite the emergence of modern and innovative approaches,

-It is expected that technology – driven renewal contributes to expanding therapeutic interventions, yet raises new professional and ethical challenges,

-The integration of tradition and renewal is the optimal path to achieve greater effectiveness in professional mental health practices,

-Achieving balance between traditional foundations and renewal requires a hybrid model that preserves the cultural, relational and ethical depth of traditional therapy while adopting innovative digital tools to expand reach and efficiency.

- The future of mental health depends on professionals' ability to adapt to transformations without compromising established professional and ethical values.

Research objectives

1. Analyzing the traditional foundations of professional practices in mental health.
2. Exploring aspects of renewal and the role of technology in advancing these practices
3. Assessing the challenges professionals face in balancing tradition and renewal
4. Proposing future prospects to strengthen the integration between traditional and modern approaches
5. Contributing to the scientific debate on the limits and ethics of professional practices in mental health.

Signification of the study

- ✚ Enriching scientific knowledge by combining the traditional perspective with modern trends in mental health.
- ✚ Providing an analytical framework to help researchers and professionals understand on going transformations in the field.
- ✚ Contributing to the development of policies and interventions by highlighting challenges and opportunities in professional practices.
- ✚ Raising awareness of importance of balancing authenticity and renewal to ensure effective and ethical practices.
- ✚ Opening new horizons for future research on integrating traditional and modern technologies.

Theoretical Concepts

a. Mental health

- **Conceptual definition**

According to world health organization (WHO, 2023),

“Mental health is a state of well – being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stress of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. (WHO, 2023)

- **Operational definition**

In this study, mental health is measured by the individual’s ability to:

- Cope effectively with daily stressors (average score ≥ 4 on a 5 point Likert scale).
- Maintain productivity for at least 20 days per month.
- Report a sense of social contribution (“Yes” response to the item: I contributed positively to my community or work during the past week).

Participants meeting these criteria are categorized as demonstrating a “good level of mental health.”

b. Tradition (traditional approach)

- **Conceptual definition**

As defined in the Psychologie Lexicon (2022),

“Tradition refers to a set of beliefs, customs, and practices that are passed down from generation to generation within a particular group or society.”

- **Operational definition**

Within this research, tradition refers to therapeutic practices characterized by:

- Direct, face-to-face communication accounting for $\geq 80\%$ of therapeutic time.
- Use of cultural, social, or spiritual elements (e/g/, prayer, family mediation, ritual, or community-based healing) as a core component of therapy.
- Limited digital involvement, with $\leq 20\%$ of therapy conducted through technological means.

When these conditions are met across more than half of the sessions or case studies, the practice is classified as a traditional approach.

c. Innovation (contemporary or technological approach)

- **Conceptual definition**

According to Merriam – Webster (2024),

“Innovation is the introduction of something new, such as a new idea, method, or device.”

In mental health, it refers to the implementation of new evidence-based therapeutic tools, digital platforms, and models that enhance accessibility and adaptability beyond conventional face-to-face settings.

- **Operational definition**

In this study, innovation is identified through the following criteria:

- Use of digital or online platforms for $\geq 30\%$ of therapeutic interaction time.
- Inclusion of technology-based components (e.g., teletherapy, self-monitoring apps, digital reports, or automated reminders).
- Flexible and remote access to mental health support at least once per treatment cycle.

If two or more of these indicators are present, the practice is categorized as innovative or contemporary approach.

Mental health and tradition

The concept of tradition in the field of mental health can be viewed from multiple perspectives. It encompasses the adherence to classical theories and therapeutic approaches, as well as the influence of cultural and social norms that shape people's understanding of mental disorders and their treatment.

In many traditional societies, mental illness is often interpreted through religious or spiritual frameworks, such as spirit possession, curses, or divine punishment. This interpretation frequently leads to reliance on traditional healers and delays in seeking professional psychological care.

A qualitative study in Indonesia found that causal beliefs about mental illness were strongly influenced by traditional and religious interpretations, which significantly affected treatment choices and accessibility to modern psychological services. (al L. S., 2022) Similarly, a Nigerian survey showed that nearly half of rural women believed mental health issues should first be treated "traditionally", revealing how cultural beliefs still shape perceptions and practices around psychological care. (al O. e., 2022)

In Baluchistan, Pakistan, researchers observed that many people still relied on spiritual and traditional explanations for mental illness, often viewing them as more legitimate than biomedical psychiatry. (Rumi.et al, 2021)

In the Arab and Algerian context, similar findings have been documented. Boutaani ET Nafida (2021) found that traditional rituals in Algerian communities strongly influence how individuals deal with emotional distress, often delaying formal treatment.

Likewise, Ben Derbal (2019) further noted that Islamic spiritual frameworks can serve as both protective and restrictive factors offering resilience through faith while occasionally reinforcing stigma around professional psychological help.

At a professional level, traditionalism can also manifest through reliance on outdated therapeutic models (e.g., Freudian psychoanalysis) without sufficient cultural adaptation, or resistance to innovation in training.

In summary, tradition in mental health remains a double – edged sword: it preserves moral continuity and cultural identity but can also hinder scientific progress if not re-evaluated through modern, evidence- based frameworks.

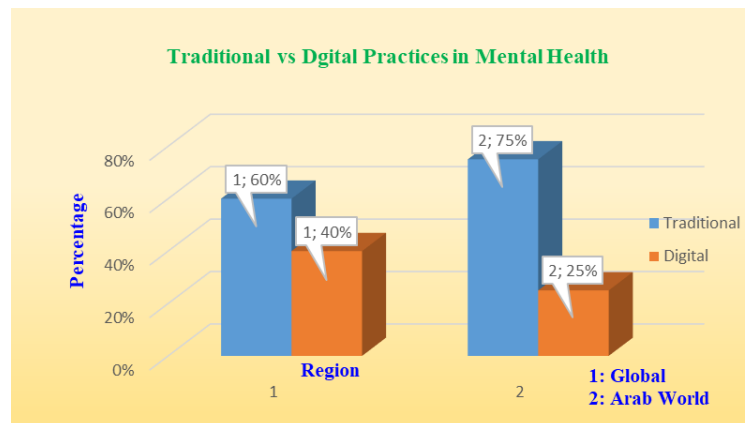


Figure N°1: Comparison between tradition and digital practices in mental health

(Author's compilation, 2025).

The figure demonstrates the predominance of traditional practices, especially within Arab contexts, where digital and evidence-based interventions remain less adopted compared to global trends.

Mental health and innovation

In contrast, innovation in mental health reflects the integration of evidence – based, technology – driven and culturally adapted approaches that challenge older paradigms.

The growing accessibility of digital mental health tools, psychoeducation programs, and culturally sensitive therapies has marked a shift toward modernization in Arab mental – health systems.

For example, Househ et al. (2019) developed an Arabic digital mental – health platform emphasizing accessibility and cultural adaptation, demonstrating how technological innovation can overcome geographical and stigma – related barriers.

Additionally, Hassib et al. (2023) reviewed Arab mobile mental – health applications, confirming an upward trend in digital self – care tools that align with modern therapeutic frameworks. Such initiatives show that renewal in Arab mental health practice involves bridging traditional cultural values with contemporary evidence – based methods, ensuring interventions remain both effective and culturally relevant.



Figure N°2: Steps of integration
(Author's compilation, 2025). "Adapted from WHO, 2022"

This figure illustrates the progressive stages toward achieving integrated and modernized mental health services, aligning with the renewal trends discussed above.

Method

This study adapts a literature based analytical approach rather than empirical experimentation

* Sources of data:

Peer reviewed studies and reports.

e.g.: Smith, 2021, El khouli, 2019.

* Analytical strategy:

Comparative analysis of traditional versus modern practices, with attention to their relevance in Arab contexts.

* Focus:

Identifying complementarities, challenges, effective and opportunities that may lead to a more effective and culturally sensitive model of mental health care.

Results and Discussion

Results/ Finding

A substantial body of scholarly literature has addressed this intricate and multidimensional topic from a variety of theoretical and empirical perspectives. For the purpose of this

study, the most salient contributions have been critically reviewed and are systematically summarized in the subsequent table:

Author/year	
G.Castelnuovo, 2003	Title: From psychotherapy to –therapy: the integration of traditional techniques and new communication tools in clinical settings Objectives: review of the concept of e therapy and the possibilities of integrating digital tools with traditional therapeutic techniques Finding: Conclude that computerized communication techniques do not replace traditional approaches but can be integrated to support therapeutic phases and enhance access and flexibility.
P. Richards. 2018	Title: The impact of technology on therapeutic alliance and engagement in psychotherapy: the Therapist's perspective. Objectives: Experimental/ qualitative study on therapists' perspectives regarding the use of a technological tool (go ACT) as a complement face-to-face therapy and its impact on the therapeutic alliance. Finding: Digital adjunct technologies may improve between session communication and support commitment, but raise concerns about relationship boundaries, privacy, and technical issues.

Alhuwail.D. et al (2020)	Title: The state of mental Digi-therapeutics: A systematic assessment of depression and anxiety apps available for Arabic speakers. Objectives: To systematically review mobile apps for depression and anxiety among Arabic – speaking users. Finding: Revealed that despite high prevalence of mental disorders, Arabic digital therapy apps remain limited in evidence – based design and professional supervision.
Benali, H. (2022)	Title: Psychological counseling in the digital era: Towards an integrative Arab Model Objectives: To propose a Hybrid Arab counseling model combining traditional human contact with digital tools. Finding: Suggested that digital transformation can complement, not replace, traditional counseling by enhancing access and continuity of care.
Atta Allah, M. K et Abu Bakr, A. S. (2024)	Title: The rational for online counseling and psychotherapy for mental health care and its challenges: A cyber-psychology perspective. Objectives: To explore the logic, tools and challenges of online psychotherapy in Arab contexts. Finding: Identified major barriers such as lack of emotional depth, ethical concerns, and practitioner readiness in Arab societies.

Table 1: Table (01): Summary of previous studies on the integration of technology in psychotherapy

(Author's compilation from original studies (*Castelnuovo, 2003; Richards, 2018; Alhuwail et al., 2020; Atta Allah & Abu Bakr, 2024; Benali, 2022*), 2025).

The analysis of selected studies and professional observations led to the following key findings:

➤ Strengths of traditional approaches

- * Deep cultural resonance and longstanding community.
- * Emphasis on holistic well-being, family ties, and social support.

➤ Strengths of modern/technological approaches:

* Wider accessibility through online platforms and mobile applications.

* Enhanced efficiency with tools such as digital cognitive behavioral therapy and tele psychiatry.

➤ Challenges in the Arab context

- * Limited availability of digital mental health applications.
- * Lack of awareness and acceptance of digital interventions.
- * Insufficient training of professionals in digital competencies.

➤ Integrative potential

- * Combining traditional cultural sensitivity with technological accessibility could result in interventions that are more effective.

5.1. Discussion

Through this section, we aim to analyze the scientific evidence regarding the differences between the traditional and contemporary approaches in professional practices of mental health. We also seek to highlight the possible areas of integration that can lead to more effective psychological care.

The discussion will address the following axes:

- Theoretical and methodological foundations
- Implementation mechanisms
- Effectiveness and outcomes

- Therapeutic alliance and professional challenges
- Cultural and local context

This will be achieved by focusing on selected theoretical and empirical studies, as well as examining how these contributions have helped shape a hybrid model that combines traditional and modern practices in the field of mental health.

a. Theoretical and methodological foundations:

Traditional approaches rest on well-established theoretical frameworks (psychoanalytic, classical CBT), prioritizing direct therapeutic relationship and structured session techniques. Contemporary work focuses on renewing mechanisms of intervention (apps, tele therapy, and tech-supported programs) emphasizing access and flexibility. The literature often frames digital innovation as an adjunct to, rather than a replacement for, traditional practice (Castel nuovo, 2003)

b. Implementation mechanisms:

Traditional: in-person sessions, in-depth clinical assessments, standardized diagnostic/therapeutic tools. Contemporary: digital interventions offering between-session support, modular online programs, and apps used either standalone or adjunctively. Nelson et al. report distinctions in effectiveness between standalone DMHIs and those used alongside traditional treatment, with blended use benefiting certain patient groups

c. Effectiveness and outcomes:

Evidence indicates that e CBT and digital programs can reach effectiveness comparable to in-person therapy for certain conditions (notably mild-to-moderate anxiety and depression), and blended approaches often improve adherence and continuity. However, findings vary by sample and method; qualitative client studies (Vizza et al. 2021) emphasize that personal preference and privacy conditions modify real-world effectiveness

d. Therapeutic alliance and professional challenges:

Practitioners report clear benefits (continuous follow-up, improved access) but raise concerns about diminished emotional bonding or loss of fine non-verbal cues, alongside technical and ethical risks (privacy, confidentiality). Richards' study of the go ACT adjunct highlights therapists' calls for specific professional training and ethical frameworks

e. Cultural and local context:

In the Arab context, traditional healing practices (spiritual rituals, folk remedies) significantly shape help-seeking behavior. Khoury et al. argue that designing innovative interventions requires cultural sensitivity to ensure uptake and effectiveness — supporting culturally adapted hybrid models

These results highlight that neither tradition nor innovation alone can meet the complex needs of contemporary mental health care. While traditional approaches provide depth and cultural alignment, modern technologies expand reach and efficiency.

In the Arab and Algerian contexts, digital mental health remains underdeveloped. However, the potential for growth is significant, provided that awareness campaigns, professional training, and local technological initiatives are promoted.

The following table explain the complementarity between tradition and innovation in mental health:

Dimension	Traditional Approach	Contemporary (Technological) Approach	Integrative Approach
Nature of the therapeutic relationship	Direct face-to-face interaction relying on verbal and non-verbal	Virtual relationship that may lack human depth and direct	Combining in-person depth with virtual follow-up to support continuity

	communication and trust-building	emotional connection	
Access to services	Limited by place and time (clinics, hospitals)	Wide and easy access via apps and digital platforms	Combining physical clinics with virtual support to increase coverage
Cost and flexibility	Often costly, time- and effort-consuming	Lower cost and more flexible scheduling	Mixed solutions: core face-to-face sessions with low-cost online follow-up
Therapeutic effectiveness	High effectiveness for complex cases (trauma, personality disorders)	Good effectiveness for mild-to-moderate disorders (anxiety, depression)	Tailoring interventions based on case severity: traditional for complex cases, digital for support and follow-up
Professional training	Classical training focused on clinical interviewing and psychotherapy techniques	Need for new digital training (platform use, ethics of online therapy)	Dual training: traditional therapeutic skills + digital competencies
Challenges	Limited access, long waiting lists	Lack of emotional resonance, privacy concerns	Addressing weaknesses through integration: reduce waiting via digitalization + preserve the human dimension in person
Future prospects	Developing traditional therapeutic methods supported by scientific research	Expansion of AI and digital therapy	Hybrid system combining tradition and innovation to achieve optimal psychological care

Table (02): Tradition vs innovation in mental health
Source: synthesized by the author based on literature review

(e.g., Castelnuevo, 2003; Richards, 2018; Norcross & Wampold, 2019; APA, 2023

(Author's compilation from original studies, 2025).

We can say that traditional approaches in mental health is based on psychotherapy face to face and community rituals therefore modern approaches uses digital therapy. Apps and tele-mental health:

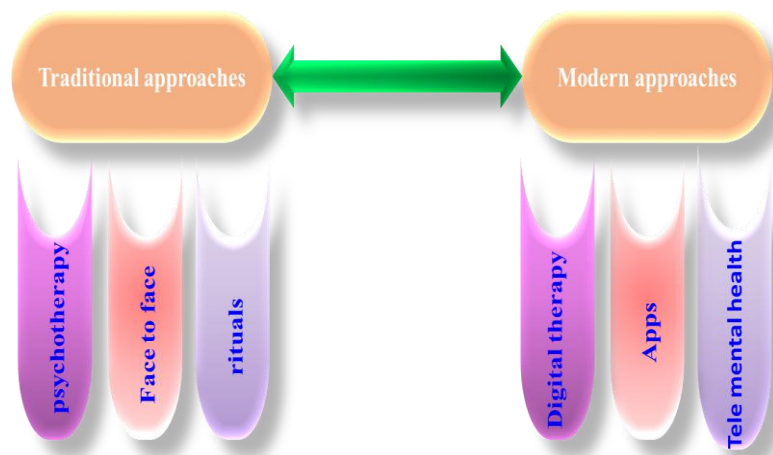


Figure N°3: Traditional and modern approaches in mental health

(Author's compilation, 2025).

6. CONCLUSION

Mental health care stands at a critical junction where tradition and renewal must be integrated rather than opposed. By leveraging the wisdom of traditional practices alongside the opportunities of digital technology, societies can develop more holistic, accessible, and culturally relevant models of care.

Future research should focus on evaluating the Impact of digital tools in Arab societies, identifying barriers to their Implementation, and proposing context sensitive solutions.

The following figure summarizes the findings of this study, showing a comparison between tradition and innovation in the field of practices in mental health.

4. Practical recommendations :

- a. Raising awareness about digital mental health among the general population,
- b. Encouraging the development of culturally adapted mobile apps and digital platforms,
- c. Incorporating digital training into professional curricula,
- d. Building collaborations between universities, mental health institutions, and tech developers.

Bibliography List:

1. Alhuwail, D., ET Abdul Salam, Y. (2020). The state of mental Digi-therapeutics: A systematic assessment of depression and anxiety apps available for Arabic speakers. *Frontiers in Digital health*, 2, Article 18.
2. American Psychological Association (APA). (2023). (2023). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.
3. Atta Allah, M., ET Abu Bakr, A. S. (2024). The rationale for online counselling and psychotherapy for mental health care and its challenges: A cyber – psychology perspective. *Middle East journal of Family Education and Studies*, 9(2), 45-63.
4. Ben Derbal, M. (2019). Mental health from an Islamic Psychological Perspective. *Journal of humanities*, University of Oran.
5. Benali, H. (2022). Psychological counselling in the digital era: Towards an Integrative Arab model. *Arab journal of psychology and Human Development*, 15(3), 99 – 118.
6. Boutaani, F., et Nafida, F. (2021). Traditional culture and its impact on psychosocial disorders: The case of Algerian rituals. *Journal of social and human sciences*, University of Algiers.
7. Castelnovo, G., Gaggioli, A., Mantovani, F., and Riva, G. (2003). From psychotherapy to e-therapy: The integration of traditional techniques and new communication tools in clinical settings. *Cyber Psychology and Behavior*, 6(4), 375-382.

-
8. Hassib, M., et al. (2023). Features and quality of Arabic mobile mental health applications: A systematic review. *BMC Digital Health*, 2, Article 112.
 9. Househ, M., Borycki, E., ET Kushniruk, A. (2019). Developing a digital mental health platform for the Arab World: From research to action. *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 257, 167, 171.
 10. Merriam-Webster. (2024). Merriam Webster's dictionary of psychology. Webster, Incorporated.
 11. Norocross, J. C., ET Wampold, B. E. (2019). A new therapy for each patient: Evidence-based relationships and responsiveness. Oxford University Press.
 12. Okafor, I. P., Oyewale, D.V., Ohazurike, C., ET Ogunyemi, A. O. (2022). Role of traditional beliefs in the knowledge and perceptions of mental health and illness amongst rural – dwelling woman in western Nigeria. *Primary Health Care Research and Development*. PHCFM.
 13. Psychology Lexicon. (2022). Comprehensive Psychology terminology and definitions.
 14. Richards, P., Simpson, S., Bastiampillai, T., Pietrabissa, G., and Castelnovo, G. (2018). The impact of technology on therapeutic alliance and engagement in psychotherapy: The therapist's perspective. *Clinical Psychologist*, 22 (2), 171- 181.
 15. Rumi, J. (2024). Traditional beliefs vs. modern psychiatry: A study of mental illness perception in Baluchistan. *Journal of Psychiatry and clinical practice*.
 16. Suryani, L. Lesmana, C. B.J., Tilliopoulos, N., and Wulandari, I.G.A.A. (2022). Traditional, religious, and cultural perspectives on mental illness: A qualitative study on causal beliefs and treatment use in Indonesia. *BMC Psychiatry*, 22(1), 217.
 17. Vizza, D., Fontanesi, L., Di Giacomo, D, et De Stasio, S. (2021). Digital mental health interventions: From traditional therapy to e-therapy models. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 705934.
 18. World Health Organization (WHO). (2023). Mental health: Strengthening our response. World Health Organization.