

## A Qualitative Study on Overcoming Problems and Limitations of Telepsychological Support (Online Counseling): Through Interviews with Practitioners

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**Abstract :** The epidemic of the coronavirus (COVID-19), first reported in Wuhan at the end of 2019, has drastically changed our daily lives. Under these circumstances, counseling, which provides psychological support to people, was also greatly affected. The structure of counseling, which had generally been implicitly common practice to be conducted in person, was greatly shaken. The author wondered how counseling can be conducted in situations where it is impossible to meet face-to-face. This is where telepsychological support (online counseling) came into use. The authors found that there were the following problems in telepsychological support: (1) anxiety about whether the communication is appropriate, (2) difficulty in understanding the client's situation and condition, (3) inability to perceive what was normally perceived in person, (4) difficulty in adjusting to severely ill clients, (5) difficulty in dealing with emergency situations, etc. In this study, we interviewed psychologists who had been accustomed to telepsychological support for more than two years after the Corona disaster began to clarify how they had or had not overcome the problems of telepsychological support identified in the above studies. We also aim to consider the unique possibilities of how telepsychological support, a new technique of psychological support, can be implemented to provide more effective and meaningful support in society after the end of the Corona disaster (post-Corona society). Thirteen psychologists who are currently providing telepsychological support in the Corona Disaster will be interviewed, and semi-structured interviews will be conducted for one hour per person. In order to empirically examine how the problems in telepsychological support had been overcome or not through the interview survey, the authors asked (1) how they overcame their anxiety about whether they were able to communicate appropriately, (2) how they devised ways to overcome it, (3) how they overcame the difficulty in adapting to heavy clients in terms of the level of the disease, (4) how they overcame the difficulty in dealing with emergency situations. The interviews were analyzed using Thematic Analysis, a qualitative analysis method commonly used in qualitative research overseas. The authors found that some devices and perspectives were newly discovered as a result of two years of practice of telepsychological support and that psychologists in this study considered face-to-face interviews and telepsychological support to be separate and were flexible enough to use them when available and to move to face-to-face interviews when not appropriate.

**Keywords :** telepsychology, COVID-19, Corona, psychologist

**Conference Title :** ICP 2023 : International Conference on Psychology

**Conference Location :** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**Conference Dates :** August 17-18, 2023