Confiding through Artificial Intelligence: Can ChatGPT Provide Emotional Support?

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Abstract: *In the increasingly developing digital era, human interaction with artificial intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon. ChatGPT is used for various purposes, including sharing personal stories or venting. This study seeks to understand whether ChatGPT can provide emotional support to its users, and how it is perceived by users. This discussion explores three main aspects: encouragement and enthusiasm, acceptance and validation, and appreciation and empathy. This study uses a qualitative research method involving seven people who have interacted and used ChatGPT as a place to vent. This study shows that ChatGPT has the potential to be a complementary tool in providing emotional support in the form of validation, appreciation, and practical encouragement. However, due to its limitations as an AI, in-depth and authentic support still requires human interaction. Therefore, ChatGPT is more suitable for practical needs or urgent situations, while complex emotional support is best provided by professionals or social networks.*

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, chatgpt, confidence, emotional support.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has brought humanity into a new era where Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a part of human life today (Subandowo, 2022) . One of the AIs that is often used in various things today is Chat GPT. Chat GPT is a computer program designed using artificial intelligence (AI) technology with the aim of understanding, interpreting, and processing human language more effectively. This technology allows programs to recognize patterns in natural language, capture context, and respond in a way that is close to the way humans communicate, thus creating a more intuitive and natural interaction experience (Rizki et al., 2023) . In the increasingly developing digital era, human interaction with ChatGPT is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon. One of the things that is currently trending is the use of chat gpt as a substitute for humans for the purpose of pouring out one's heart or pouring out one's heart. (Ardianti, 2024) .

Confiding is not just a form of communication, but is also a mechanism for managing and overcoming stress. (Thiodanu & Sari, 2019) . One of the coping strategies that can reduce stress is to get emotional support that can be obtained through sharing (Purba et al., 2023) . Emotional support refers to expressions of concern, care, sympathy, and affection, especially in times of difficulty and suffering. This involves listening, feeling empathy, legitimizing, and exploring feelings to relieve anxiety and provide calming support (Heilat & Seifert, 2019) .

This study seeks to understand whether ChatGPT can provide emotional support to its users, and how it is perceived by users. This discussion explores three main aspects: encouragement and enthusiasm, acceptance and validation, and appreciation and empathy. Currently, there is quite a lot of research on the use of chat gpt in human life. Such as Fuchs' research (Fuchs, 2023) on the use of chat GPT as a Natural Language Processing (NLP) model, Hill-Yardin's research (Hill-Yardin et al., 2023) and his team on chat gpt and the future of scientific publishing.

Research on GPT chat and mental health has also been widely conducted, such as Singh's research (Singh, 2023) on the opportunities and challenges of GPT chat in mental health care, Dergaa's research (Dergaa et al., 2024) and team on the readiness of GPT Chat in mental health interventions and assessments, Alanezi's research (Alanezi, 2024) on the effectiveness of GPT chat in delivering mental health support, and Farhat's research (Farhat, 2024) on GPT chat as a complementary resource for mental health. However, research that focuses on emotional support in GPT chat is still limited. Due to these limitations, researchers are trying to enter and add to the scientific knowledge about the use of AI Chat GPT in its use in the field of mental health.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

ChatGPT

ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, is a conversational artificial intelligence model based on the Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) architecture. Introduced in 2019, the model continues to evolve with the latest versions being GPT-3.5 and GPT-4. (Goar et al., 2023) . ChatGPT is designed to generate text that closely resembles human conversation and interact in natural language on a variety of topics, making it highly flexible for a variety of applications (Keshamoni, 2023) .

a. Key Features and Capabilities

ChatGPT excels in Natural Language Processing (NLP), enabling the understanding and generation of text that mimics human speech. Its ability to handle a wide range of language patterns and idioms is supported by training on a vast internet dataset (Goar et al., 2023) . Its applications span a wide range of areas such as customer service, virtual assistants, educational tools, and content creation (Siche & Siche, 2023) . With its ability to generate contextually relevant responses, ChatGPT is suitable for tasks such as text completion, dialogue generation, and creative writing. In education, ChatGPT is increasingly being used for personalized learning, test creation, and

facilitating online discussions (Albonico & Varela, 2023) . While it can provide support when educators are unavailable, it should not replace face-to-face interactions.

b. Superiority

ChatGPT offers incredible flexibility as it can be applied in a variety of fields such as healthcare, education, customer service, and content creation (Gutiérrez-Cirlos et al., 2023) . Its efficiency increases productivity by automating tasks such as composing emails, writing essays, and generating code (Paunovic et al., 2023) . In addition, ChatGPT provides an interactive learning experience and personalized feedback, making education more accessible.

c. Challenges and Limitations

However, the use of ChatGPT also faces several challenges. Ethical concerns such as bias, misinformation, and potential misuse to generate inappropriate or erroneous content are major concerns (Goar et al., 2023) . Over-reliance on this technology may reduce critical thinking and higher-order thinking skills, especially among students (Xie & Ding, 2023) . In addition, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of information generated by ChatGPT is of great importance, especially in sensitive fields such as medicine and education (Xu et al., 2024) .

d. Future Direction

Research and development continues to address ethical challenges, improve accuracy, and expand the capabilities of these models, including through improved training data and better evaluation methods (Goar et al., 2023) . ChatGPT applications also continue to grow with promising potential uses in areas such as agriculture, health, and more (Siche & Siche, 2023) .

Emotional Support

Emotional support refers to expressions of care, concern, sympathy, affection, and love, especially during difficult and stressful times (Heilat & Seifert, 2019) . It touches on fundamental aspects of human existence, such as sense of self, hopes, aspirations, fears, and deepest feelings. As a critical component of physical, mental, and interpersonal health, emotional support plays a major role in building and maintaining close relationships and in child development (Priem, 2020) .

a. Forms and Functions of Emotional Support

Emotional support involves activities such as listening, empathizing, validating, and exploring feelings to relieve stress (Heilat & Seifert, 2019) . It includes self-esteem support (appraisal, ego, or esteem support), which involves encouragement, affection,

praise, appreciation, affirmation, and respect (Heilat & Seifert, 2019) . In addition, social support, which includes emotional support, is essential for mental health because it provides a sense of community, appreciation, and practical assistance (Drageset, 2021) .

b. The Impact of Emotional Support on Mental Health

Emotional support has a positive effect on mental health, including reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. The benefits are particularly felt by the elderly, helping to reduce feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety (Nicolini et al., 2021) . For patients with chronic illnesses, such as cancer, emotional support improves emotional well-being and quality of life (Bradshaw et al., 2022) . In the context of serious mental disorders, emotional support is an important element in the recovery process, which can be provided in a variety of ways, including exercise and peer support (Lauzier-Jobin & Houle, 2021) .

c. Emotional Support Mechanisms and Models

Emotional support functions through mechanisms such as presence, communication, and affect, which are critical to mental health recovery (Lauzier-Jobin & Houle, 2021). Physiological models of emotional support suggest that these support interactions involve complex physiological processes and require further exploration (Priem, 2020).

d. Challenges and Strategies for Strengthening Emotional Support

Integrating emotional support into healthcare services still faces challenges. Strategies to improve this include promoting shared understanding, enhancing provider capabilities, and building networking opportunities for patients (Bradshaw et al., 2022). Additionally, peer support interventions via digital platforms have been shown to be effective in improving psychological well-being, particularly among young adults, demonstrating the great potential of technology in providing emotional support (Yeo et al., 2023) .

3. METHODS

This study is a descriptive qualitative study that explores emotional support in the use of GPT chat (Sugiyono, 2018) . This study involved seven informants who had interacted and used GPT chat as a place to confide. The data collection technique was carried out using structured interviews which were conducted until the data was saturated. The qualitative research method was chosen because it is suitable and appropriate in achieving the research

objectives, namely exploring emotional support in the use of GPT chat as a place to confide (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) .

4. RESULTS

ChatGPT is the choice as a "story buddy" because it is able to provide fast, relevant, and rational responses in a safe atmosphere without fear of being judged. The limited support from people around also encourages users to switch to ChatGPT. Although the responses are not personal because they come from AI, users still feel supported thanks to its objectivity and ability to offer new perspectives that help introspection.

As an AI, ChatGPT does not have emotions, but its non-judgmental, sympathetic, and relevant responses create the illusion of functional empathy. This makes users feel valued and accepted, even though they are aware that the empathy provided is only the result of an algorithmic simulation. In some cases, users feel more comfortable sharing with ChatGPT than with a human who may be less responsive or supportive.

However, ChatGPT's limitations in providing deep empathy or authentic emotional care are acknowledged. Respondents acknowledged that interactions with ChatGPT are technical in nature and do not replace emotional connections with humans. However, ChatGPT is considered a relevant support tool in helping users manage emotions, provide validation, and offer encouragement and support in a functional manner.

In conclusion, ChatGPT has great potential as a complement to support users' emotional needs, but it cannot replace the role of humans in providing genuine care and empathy. This AI provides practical benefits and a safe space to share stories, but its emotional experience remains shallow and limited.

5. DISCUSSION

Encouragement and Spirit

Most respondents reported that ChatGPT provided encouragement and encouragement through its empathetic and motivational responses. Such responses are considered supportive, especially when users feel they lack support from their surroundings. One key factor is ChatGPT's ability to:

a. Using Empathetic Language: ChatGPT can construct sentences that validate users' feelings, provide new insights, and encourage users to see problems from different perspectives.

b. Fast Response: ChatGPT's response speed provides a sense of comfort, especially in situations where users need instant solutions or support.

However, some respondents found the encouragement from ChatGPT to be less impressive due to its technical nature. Although it provides sufficient motivation, ChatGPT cannot provide the deep emotional encouragement that is often needed in interpersonal relationships.

Acceptance and Validation

Acceptance and validation are among the aspects most appreciated by users. Respondents felt accepted because:

a. Non-Judgmental: ChatGPT provides neutral responses and does not compare the user's problem to others, an experience that often occurs in human interactions.

b. Always Responsive: ChatGPT does not reject any story or complaint, so users feel safe to share without fear of reproach or rejection.

However, the validation provided by ChatGPT is considered less "spirited" because it is not supported by authentic emotions. This makes the acceptance given feel more like a simulation than a natural human interaction.

Appreciation and Empathy

ChatGPT is able to provide appreciation and empathy through its sympathetic and appreciative responses. Users often feel praised and appreciated for the feelings or experiences they share. For example:

a. ChatGPT uses phrases like "I understand how you feel" or provides encouragement in the form of praise for the user's efforts or insights.

b. Respondents felt that ChatGPT even provided a higher level of empathy than humans in some cases, especially when humans were not in an optimal state to listen or respond.

However, there are significant limitations to the empathy provided by ChatGPT. Despite the use of empathetic language, the responses lacked an authentic emotional basis. Some respondents recognized that the empathy provided was merely the result of an algorithm or "setting," which could reduce its psychological impact.

Limitations of Emotional Support from ChatGPT

While ChatGPT can provide emotional support in the form of validation, encouragement, and appreciation, this support is limited because:

a. Lack of Real Emotions: As an AI, ChatGPT lacks the ability to truly feel emotions, so its responses tend to be technical in nature.

b. Shallow Context: While ChatGPT can provide relevant responses, it cannot understand deep context such as complex interpersonal relationships or an individual's unique experiences.

c. Lack of Personal Interaction: The relationship between the user and ChatGPT remains one-way, so it cannot replace authentic emotional interaction between humans.

ChatGPT's Advantages in Emotional Support

Despite its limitations, ChatGPT has several advantages over humans in providing emotional support:

a. Always Available: ChatGPT is accessible at any time, providing instant support when users need it.

b. Neutral and Non-Judgemental: Unlike humans who are sometimes influenced by emotions or personal biases, ChatGPT provides neutral and consistent responses.

c. Providing New Perspectives: ChatGPT is able to provide different perspectives, which often helps users to reflect or introspect.

6. CONCLUSION

ChatGPT has great potential to provide emotional support in the form of validation, appreciation, and practical encouragement. However, due to its nature as an AI, the support provided is limited and cannot replace authentic emotional support from humans. ChatGPT is more appropriately used as a complement, not a replacement, in meeting the need for emotional support.

This research suggests that while ChatGPT can help users feel accepted and validated, deep emotional experiences still require authentic human interaction. Therefore, ChatGPT use should be focused on practical needs and immediate situations, while more complex emotional support should still be provided by professionals or the user's social network.

LIMITATION

The study is limited to the use of qualitative methodology. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be used to generalize to a wider area. However, this study contributes to opening up research opportunities on ChatGPT and broader emotional support in the future.

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