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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ChatGPT for mental health support: A cross-sectional survey of university students

Supplementary File

ChatGPT for Mental Health Support Survey

Introduction:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. We are interested in understanding how students like you use platforms like ChatGPT and other AI tools for academic purposes and mental health support. As AI technology continues to evolve, it's important to explore how these tools are impacting student life, particularly in areas such as mental health management, accessibility to support, and academic assistance.

This survey is designed to gather your thoughts on the use of AI platforms for both school-related tasks and personal well-being. Your responses will help us better understand the benefits, challenges, and future potential of AI in educational and mental health settings. In this survey, "mental health support" refers to using ChatGPT for assistance with managing stress, coping strategies, emotional well-being, self-care practices, or guidance on mental health topics. This includes seeking information, advice, or general support related to mental health concerns.

We want to assure you that all your responses will be kept confidential. Your honest feedback is essential, and there are no right or wrong answers—just your experiences and opinions.

Thank you for your time and contribution to this important research!

Consent Form:

Principal Investigator: Michael Krausz MD, PhD, FRCPC, Professor of Psychiatry and Public Health, University of British Columbia

Research Team: Rishika Daswani, Andrea Wong Koo and Marisha Boyd

Contact Information: rishikad@student.ubc.ca and Michael.krausz@ubc.ca

Purpose of the research: You are invited to participate in a research study that aims to explore how university students utilize ChatGPT and its features. This study focuses on understanding students' experiences with ChatGPT, the areas in which they use it, and their perceptions of its appropriateness and usefulness, particularly in addressing mental health concerns. Your

participation will provide valuable insights into the role of AI tools like ChatGPT in student life and mental health management.

Study Procedure: If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey includes questions about your use of ChatGPT, your perceptions of its effectiveness for mental health, and any concerns you may have. The survey is anonymous and should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Eligibility: To participate in this study, you must:

- Be a student currently enrolled at a university,
- Be at least 18 years of age,
- Have used ChatGPT or other AI tools on a regular basis (i.e. at least once a month in the past year) in any capacity

You do not need to have used them specifically for mental health purposes.

Risks to Participating: The survey contains some questions pertaining to your emotional health and experiences around negative emotions/difficult periods. The survey does not ask for personal or sensitive mental health information, and participants are free to skip any question that makes them uncomfortable.

Compensation information: You will have the option to enter a draw for a chance to win a gift card (\$25 value) as a token of appreciation for your time. Participation in the draw is entirely voluntary and not required to complete the survey. If you would like to enter your name, please input your email address at the end of the survey. This information is collected separately from survey responses to maintain anonymity and there will be no link between your email and the survey data. The email addresses will be used solely for the purpose of the draw and will be deleted immediately after winner is contacted.

Benefits to Participating: Your responses will contribute to research that may improve how AI tools like ChatGPT are used to support student mental health in the future. Possible developments from this research insight may include AI tools for mental health (e.g. apps, chatbots), advancing ethical considerations in use of AI with mental health, integration of AI in pre-existing mental health services, and more.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is entirely confidential. No personal identifiers, such as names or contact information, will be collected. Only non-identifiable demographic information (e.g., age, degree program, gender, ethnicity) will be gathered to ensure your responses remain anonymous.

Online Data Collection: The survey is conducted via the Qualtrics platform, which complies with industry standards for data protection and privacy. For more information, you can refer to Qualtrics' privacy policy: <https://www.qualtrics.com/support/survey-platform/getting-started/data-protection-privacy/>.

Data Retention: Survey responses will be downloaded from Qualtrics and securely stored in an encrypted, password-protected UBC OneDrive database for five years, accessible only to the

principal investigator, Dr. Michael Krausz, and designated researchers, Rishika and Andrea. De-identified data will be shared with research team members involved in analysis. All hard data will be kept in a locked cabinet within a secured room, accessible only to the principal investigators. If data must be retained beyond five years for follow-up studies, new ethics approval will be sought.

Future use of Data: De-identified data from this study may be shared in open-access research repositories and published in academic journals. No personal information will be included. Data cannot be withdrawn once submitted because it is collected anonymously. By participating, you consent to the future use of your anonymous data for academic purposes.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to skip any question or withdraw from the survey without providing a reason. If you decide to withdraw, no data you have provided will be included in the analysis. However, once you have submitted the questionnaire, the responses cannot be withdrawn.

Risks and Support Resources: If you feel distressed or uncomfortable while answering the survey, below are support services available without cost:

- UBC Counselling Services: 604-822-3811 (workshops, mental health resources, counselling)
- Here2Talk: 1-877-857-3397 (24/7 mental health support for BC students)
- Crisis Centre BC: 604-872-3311 (24/7 crisis support for anyone in BC)

Questions about the study: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Rishika Daswani at rishikad@student.ubc.ca, or the principal investigator, Dr. Michael Krausz, at Michael.krausz@ubc.ca

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598

Do you consent to participate in this study? (*Participants will choose one option*)

I consent to participate in the study being conducted by Rishika Daswani and Dr. Michael Krausz at the University of British Columbia. I have read and understood the information presented above. I have had sufficient time to consider the information presented above. I understand the purpose of the study, the potential risks and benefits, that my participation is voluntary, that my responses are confidential and anonymous. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw at any time before I submit my responses. By selecting this, I understand that I have given my consent to participate in this study.

I do not consent to participate in this study

Part 1: Demographics

1. How old are you?

Text box answer

2. Are you a UBC Student?

Options: Yes/No

3. If applicable, what undergraduate faculty are you in? (NA if not applicable)

Text box answer

4. If applicable, what graduate school faculty are you in?

Text box answer

5. What is your Gender:

Options: Male, Female, Non-binary/third gender, not listed, prefer not to answer

6. What is your cultural background?

Options:

- African
- European
- East Asian
- South Asian
- Southeast Asian
- First Nations or Indigenous (please specify) _____
- Hispanic or Latino/Latina
- Middle Eastern
- Other:
- Prefer not to answer

7. What is your immigration or citizenship status?

Options: Canadian Resident, temporary resident (e.g. study permit, work permit etc.), Canadian Citizen, Other: ____

Part 2: General awareness and usage

1. Have you ever used ChatGPT on a regular basis (ie. at least once a month) for any period since 2020? (This question is to ensure that you have used ChatGPT). Note: If you have never used ChatGPT, you do not need to fill out this survey)

Options: Yes, No

2. Are you currently using ChatGPT (or similar AI platforms) for your school work/academic projects? (Yes means “Often or sometimes”, No means “Never or rarely”)

Options: yes, no

3. How are you using ChatGPT (or similar AI platforms) for your school work/academic projects?

Options: Research, Writing assistance, Idea generation, Problem-solving, Other: _____

4.. How familiar are you with AI platforms like ChatGPT for use in providing mental health support (e.g. mental health app chatbots, etc.)?

Options: very familiar, somewhat familiar, not familiar

4. Have you ever used ChatGPT or similar AI platforms for mental health support?

Options: yes, no

**if participant answers no to above question, they are directed to:*

Why do you refrain from using ChatGPT or similar AI platforms for mental health support?

Options:

- *Reduces your likelihood to seek support*
- *Worsens negative thoughts or moods*
- *Overthinking difficulties as symptoms of a mental health condition*
- *Misinformation/inaccurate insights*
- *Lack of human-like support/Would rather seek human support*
- *Privacy and/or confidentiality concerns*
- *I do not need/seek mental health support*
- *Other: ____*

5. How often do you use ChatGPT or similar AI platforms for mental health support?

Options: daily, weekly, monthly, rare, never

6. Are you using the paid or free version of ChatGPT as mental health support for yourself (e.g. self-diagnosis exploration, seeking advice/strategies) ?

Options: Paid, Free

87. If you are using the paid version, please select reasons for why or write a couple of sentences on why? (please select only options that most apply to you)

Options (Multi-select):

- *Higher-level insights*
- *More emotionally-attuned*
- *More personalized-conversation style*
- *Other: _____*
-

8. Have you ever accessed both ChatGPT and traditional mental health support (e.g., a therapist, counselor) at the same time?

Options: Yes, No,

9. Have you spoken to anyone about your mental health concerns in the past (e.g., peers, family members) **also have this question available if did not seek mental health support from ChatGPT

Options: Yes, No,

10. Have you spoken to a trained professional about your mental health concerns in the past? (e.g. counsellors, psychotherapists, psychiatrists)

Options: Yes, No

11. Have you ever been in a situation where you needed mental health support but didn't get it? **also have this question available if did not seek mental health support from ChatGPT

Options: Yes, No,

If yes, select reasons and/or briefly describe the situation and what prevented you from getting help?

Options (Multi-select):

- *Financial barriers (e.g. not enough personal/family funding, not enough health insurance coverage)*
- *Stigmatization from others (e.g. from parents, peers, etc.)*
- *Personal barriers (e.g. discomfort to seek support, etc.)*
- *Logistical barriers (e.g. too difficult to access or find)*
- *Transportation or delivery barriers (e.g. too far to travel, hard to find virtual options)*
- *Other: _____*

Part 3: Perceived benefits

1. What do you believe are the main general benefits to using AI platforms for your mental health compared to traditional mental health services ? (Please rank the following options)

Options: anonymity, accessibility, instant support, non-judgemental response, 24/7 availability, early 'self-diagnostic' tool, other: _____

2. What are the main general disadvantages you see in using ChatGPT for mental health support compared to traditional mental health services? (Please rank the following options)

Options:

- *Reduces your likelihood to seek support*
- *Worsens negative thoughts or moods*
- *Overthinking difficulties as symptoms of a mental health condition*
- *Misinformation/inaccurate insights*
- *Lack of human-like support*
- *Other: ____*
-

2. In what ways, if any, has ChatGPT positively impacted your mental health and emotional wellbeing?

Options: helped me express my feelings, gave me helpful advice, made me feel understood, explained key concepts and ideas about mental health, provided me resources, provided initial insight for future diagnosis, I have not noticed any impact, other _____

3. How do you feel about the responses you receive from ChatGPT regarding your mental health questions?

Options: Very helpful, Somewhat helpful, Neutral, Not very helpful, Not helpful at all

4. Have you implemented or used any strategies suggested by ChatGPT for managing your mental health?

Options: Yes, often; Yes, occasionally; No, but I considered it; No, I haven't used any strategies suggested

Part 4: Trust and credibility

1. How much do you trust the advice on support provided by platforms such as ChatGPT for mental health?

Options: completely, somewhat, neutral, not much, not at all

2. Do you believe AI platforms like ChatGPT can offer useful insights for mental health challenges?

Options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree

Part 5: Privacy and confidentiality

1. How concerned are you about privacy when using ChatGPT or another AI platforms for mental health?

Options: very concerned, somewhat concerned, neutral, not concerned, not at all concerned

2. Would you feel comfortable sharing personal or sensitive information with ChatGPT or another AI platform for mental health support?

Options: yes, no, unsure

Part 6: Comparison to traditional support

1. How does the experience of using ChatGPT compare to speaking with a mental health professional (e.g. psychotherapist/psychiatrist/counsellor)

Options: Better, similar, worse, not sure, never used either traditional support

2. In what situations would you prefer using ChatGPT over traditional mental health services?

Options: when I need immediate support, if I feel embarrassed to talk to a person, general advice, when traditional help is not available, I would never prefer ChatGPT/AI platforms over a person

Part 7: Challenges and limitations

1. What specific challenges or limitations have you faced when using platforms like ChatGPT for mental health support?

Options: lack of human empathy, inaccurate responses, not helpful for complex issues, technical difficulties, other _____

Additional options to add:

- *Lacking emotional tone*
- *Lacking personalized tone or contextual knowledge of personal background*
- *Lack of reader-friendly, or difficult language*
- *Cannot relay you to specific resources*
- *Other: _____*

2. What would make you less likely to use an AI platform like ChatGPT for support?

Options: concerns about accuracy, feeling misunderstood, privacy concerns, prefer human interactions, other _____

Part 8: Future use and suggestions : ***this whole section will also be available if participants did not seek mental health support from ChatGPT

1. How do you see the role of AI, such as ChatGPT, evolving in universities and schools in the future? (Select only options that most apply)

Options:

- *Integrated with university/school mental health services*
- *Developing an app with a similar chat function as ChatGPT*
- *I do not see it as something that should be used in universities/schools*
- *Other: _____*

2. How should AI tools like ChatGPT be integrated into mental health services at universities or schools?

Options: As an emergency support tool, To assist students with self-management, For educational purposes about mental health, To bridge gaps in availability of human counselors, I do not see it as something that should be used in universities/schools

, Other: _____

3. What features or improvements would make you more likely to use ChatGPT or other AI platforms for mental health support?

Open ended question (text box answer)

4. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to add about ChatGPT in the context of mental health?

Open-ended question (text box answer)

5. Have you come across or used any AI platforms particularly for mental health that you would like to share?

Open-ended question (text box answer)

6. Do you have any feedback, suggestions, or questions you think should be added to this survey?

Open-ended question (text box answer)

Table S1. Proportions of surveyed population who discussed mental health concerns with others

Spoken to Anyone About Mental Health	Spoke to a mental Healthcare Professional n(%)	Did not speak to a mental Healthcare Professional n(%)
No	46(19.49)	56(35.90)
Yes	190(80.51)	100(64.10)
Total	236	156

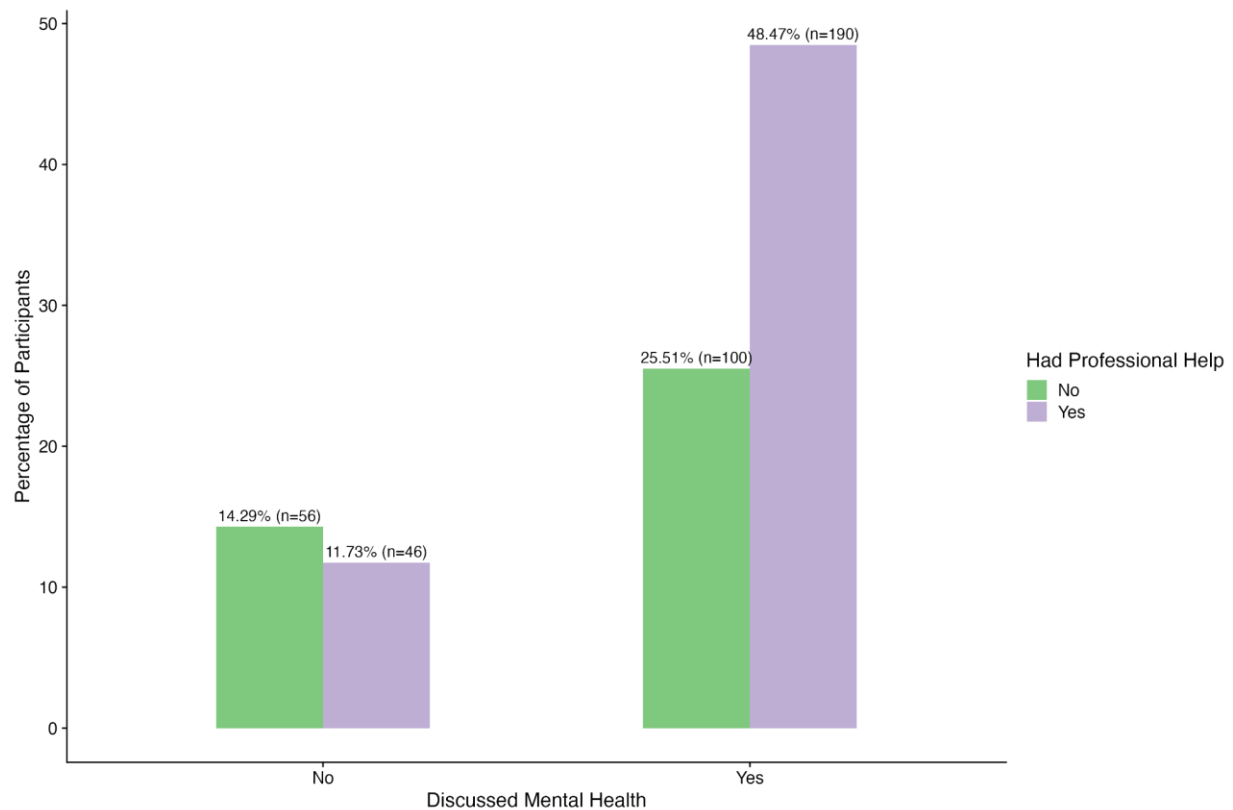


Figure S1. Distribution of students who discussed mental health concerns with other people, categorized by if they had professional help or not (n=392)

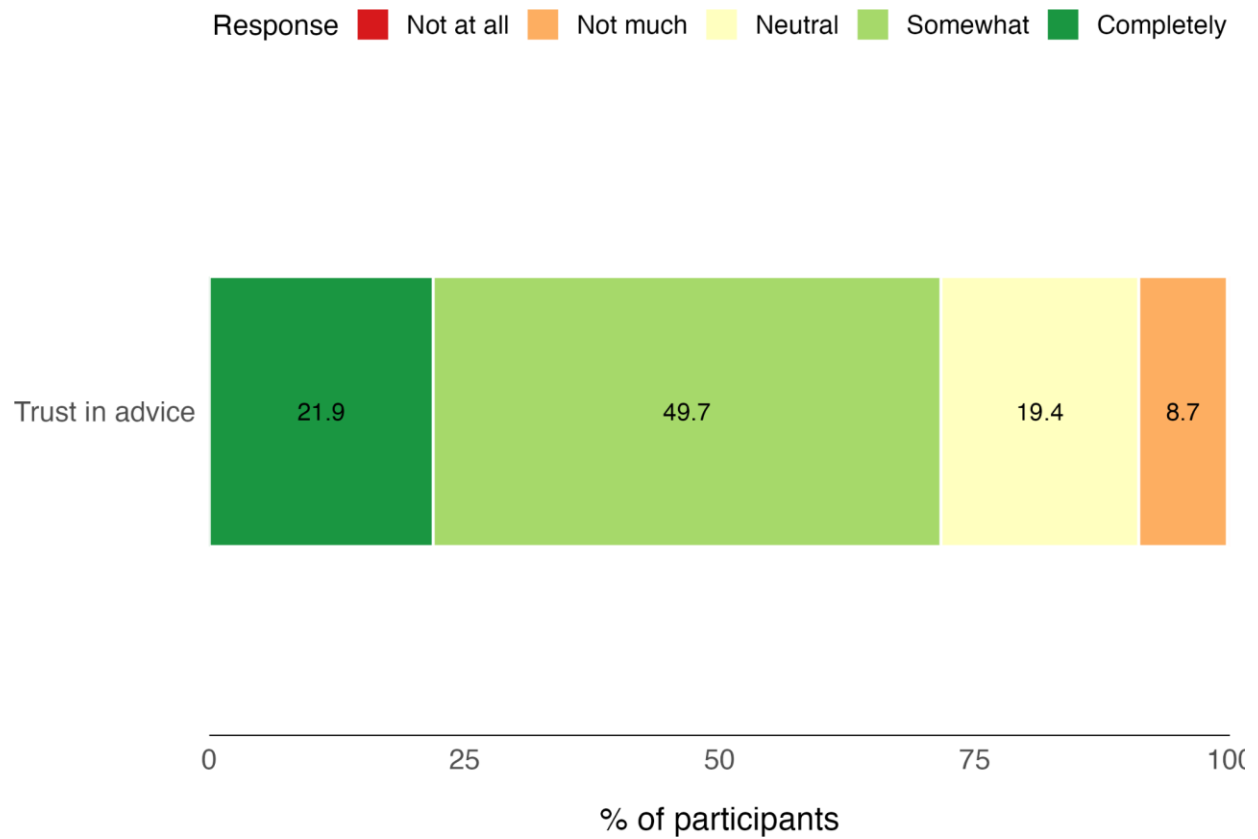


Figure S2. Perceived level of trust for ChatGPT responses to mental-health related and academic questions (Likert scale) (n = 392)

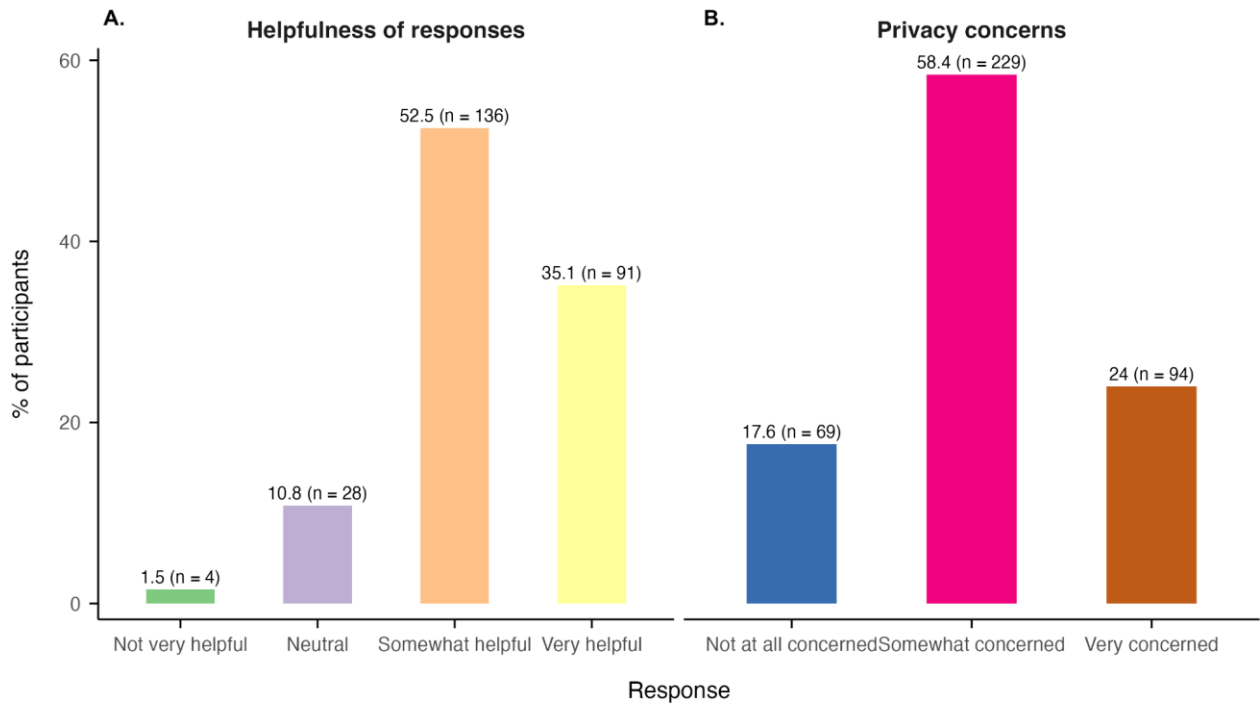


Figure S3. (A) Perceived levels of helpfulness of ChatGPT responses for mental health among those who have used ChatGPT for mental health (n=259). **(B)** Perceived level of privacy concerns for ChatGPT responses to mental-health related questions (n = 392)