Using Artificial Chatbots as Academic Counselors; When Chatgpt Becomes an Academic Counselor (A Case Study of Chatgpt)

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Article Info	Abstract
Article type: *Original Research* **How to cite this article:** Saeidi, A., & Ghorbani, A. (2026). Using Artificial Chatbots as Academic Counselors; When Chatgpt Becomes an Academic Counselor (A Case Study of Chatgpt). *Journal of Assessment and Research in Applied Counseling, 8*(2), 1-8. http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.jarac.2987	**Objective:** This research aimed to investigate the use of artificial intelligence chatbots, particularly ChatGPT, as academic counselors. **Methods and Materials:** A qualitative case study design was employed, involving 10 unstructured interview sessions with ChatGPT across three iterative rounds of analysis. Comparative coding with a deductive approach was used to analyze ChatGPT's responses to academic counseling scenarios. **Findings:** The findings revealed thirteen subthemes organized under two main themes: strengths and weaknesses. Strengths included providing multifaceted perspectives, suggesting resources, and generating effective study strategies, while weaknesses included a lack of empathy, personal opinion, and foresight. **Conclusion:** Although ChatGPT cannot replace professional counselors, results suggest it may function as a semi-professional academic counselor capable of delivering effective guidance in logical, non-emotional contexts. Validity was ensured by comparing ChatGPT's responses with other AI chatbots, namely Perplexity, Gemini, and Copilot, and ensuring consistency across coding iterations. *Keywords:* ChatGPT, artificial intelligence, case study, academic consultation

1. Introduction

When artificial intelligence appeared, the world was expected to change with its progress. These developments continue with the advancement of artificial intelligence technologies. Artificial intelligence is a new technology that gives the power to think and act more humanly (Fitria, 2023). This feature of artificial intelligence makes it able to interact more humanly with people and

distance itself a little from its machine nature, although it is still like a machine. It should be noted that in recent years, artificial intelligence has entered applications in various fields (Singh Gill, 2023) and has somehow established itself in human life.

Today, the evolution of artificial intelligence and its effects have intensified with the emergence of artificial intelligence chatbots and the interest in understanding the applications of artificial intelligence in various fields (Firat, 2023), especially in the fields of education, mental health, and science. Counseling and psychology have increased. Since chatbots have recently found more human characteristics, it seems that they can be fruitful to some extent in the mentioned fields and sciences. If we want to talk more precisely about chatbots, we should say that they are software programs based on artificial intelligence that imitate human conversations. By evaluating the context of a conversation and the questions that are asked, they provide appropriate answers and give feedback to the audience (Singh Gill, 2023). It is this feedback and interactions that predict their application in various fields, especially sciences such as counseling, which is mainly based on interactions between counselors and clients.

In today's age, chatbots have increased a lot, but we can attribute the birth and beginning of chatbots to ChatGPT. Some believe that ChatGPT is the most advanced chatbot in the world, which can create remarkable prose within a few seconds (Rudolph et al., 2023). A chatbot with unique and extraordinary features in the production of human speech, which was expected to affect various fields and jobs in the future since its birth. What made ChatGPT seem amazing was the similarity of its answers to human answers and the logic of its answers. ChatGPT uses the natural language processing model (Gilson et al, 2023) in response to user input questions, and this makes it produce answers similar to those of a human. It makes the responses of ChatGPT natural (Singh Gill, 2023). When talking about ChatGPT and its extraordinary success, the company that created it, OpenAI, unveiled more advanced models of this chatbot, which were both more creative and could implement more subtle instructions (OpenAi, 2023). According to chatbots such as ChatGPT, due to their progress, they will have a bright future ahead and will change various fields.

The progress made in chatbots such as ChatGPT in recent years has made their use in various fields inevitable. One of the fields that is affected by these chatbots is the science of counseling, especially academic counseling, because chatbots such as ChatGPT can communicate with students.

Talk to them, give them feedback, and support them (Fuchs, 2023). Some researchers believe that ChatGPT and other chatbots can have the potential to be warm, sympathetic in academic counseling situations (Yong & Cao, 2025). On the other hand, chatbots are interesting for them because they give reasonable answers most of the time. Also, the performance of these chatbots will be better in academic fields where logical relationships are the rule and emotional issues attract less attention. It should be emphasized that artificial intelligence technologies, such as ChatGPT with their significant potential for interaction with students (Fitria, 2023), can be widely used in universities and educational centers and play a role perform In fact, the importance of using counseling services is especially evident in times when we cannot access counselors easily, such as during the outbreak of Covid-19 (Majjate et al., 2023). In this case, it is either possible to attend counseling centers without any difficulty or to use telephone and online consultations, which are mostly costly for users and take a lot of time to find a suitable consultant who covers all parts of a subject. If he has sufficient mastery, he spends time with the clients. It seems that chatbots such as ChatGPT or other chatbots can cover these problems or at least provide some information for clients, especially students, who need academic counseling in the field. Different needs need to be provided.

Several studies have been conducted on the use of ChatGPT in the fields of mental health and counseling. Each of these studies in some way promotes the use and application of large language models such as ChatGPT. As an example, Liu et al (2023) propose a chatbot that is based on GPT-4 chat and can be effective in the field of mental health and counseling (C. Liu et al., 2023). This chatbot, which the authors call Chat-Canceller, is evaluated based on all the questions of the real consulting world and provides the background for a real conversation between the consultant and the clients. In another study conducted by Inaba et al (2024), the authors emphasized the use of technologies such as ChatGPT in the space of counseling conversations (Inaba et al., 2024). They designed consulting scenarios and implemented them with ChatGPT and compared them with real consultants and finally found that the answers provided by ChatGPT compete with the answers of human consultants. However, they emphasize that the use of large language models such as ChatGPT needs more investigation. In another study conducted by Moel (2024), the author admitted that the use of large linguistic models has caused the transformation of the field of mental health

and counseling (Moell, 2024). In his study, he evaluates and compares two models of ChatGPT and ChatGPT-4. The author says that the GPT-4 model, which is a newer model of this chatbot, can provide more effective and empathetic clinical responses. In another study conducted by Liu et al (2023), the basic principles and features of the chat were analyzed (J. M. Liu et al., 2023). Then, the application of ChatGPT in psychological counseling was discussed, including as an auxiliary tool for counselors, a self-help psychological treatment platform, and a mental health education tool. In other studies about this chatbot, its effects on the learning performance and motivation of students have been emphasized as an educational support tool, for example, Kevin Caratiquit and his colleague Jean Caratiquit (2023) investigate this issue (Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2023). In another study conducted by Raile (2024), it was found that ChatGPT can be a very useful tool in the counseling process and can be used as a supplement (Raile, 2023). Rail acknowledges that ChatGPT is available and free and can be useful for people who have not had counseling and psychotherapy experience before, but on the other hand, the information is one-sided and maybe It does not mention or use other methods that may be effective for people.

According to previous research, while several studies have examined ChatGPT's application in mental health and educational counseling, little is known about its specific role and effectiveness in academic counseling. Most prior works have focused on general psychological support or learning assistance, leaving a clear gap regarding how ChatGPT performs as an academic counselor compared to human counselors. Therefore, this study addresses the gap by examining ChatGPT's capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses in this role. Rather than asking the broad question 'Can ChatGPT serve as an academic counselor?', the present study focuses on the more specific and measurable research question: 'How effective is ChatGPT in academic counseling compared to human counselors, and what are its limitations?' (Kim & Park, 2025)

In the next section, we will discuss more about the current research methodology and explain how we used the case study method to achieve the research objectives and answer the questions of this research. After that, we will review the research findings and share the research results.

2. Method and Materials

The current research was of the qualitative research type and was implemented with the case study method. A case study is a method in which a case or a phenomenon is studied deeply and from different aspects. When the researcher intends to comprehensively examine a case or phenomenon in a particular field, this method can be very useful (Tlili et al., 2023). In this research, the researchers intend to investigate ChatGPT as an academic counselor. And they are trying to determine what features ChatGPT has in this position and what strengths and weaknesses it shows. The object of study in this research is the main ChatGPT bot itself, which was selected through targeted sampling. Targeted sampling is a method of sampling in which the samples that can bring the richest information to the research are selected and included in the research. Since ChatGPT was the first and most famous chatbot in the field of artificial intelligence and developed earlier than other chatbots and was used, it is naturally the richest example among competitors and other chatbots for The case study was the present.

To collect data, ten unstructured interviews were conducted with ChatGPT across three iterative rounds. Each interview simulated real academic counseling scenarios, where the researchers acted as clients seeking guidance. Although unstructured interviews were selected to allow natural dialogue, they followed a general framework to ensure consistency across sessions. A deductive comparative coding method was applied, derived from predefined categories of counseling competence (e.g., empathy, feedback, decision support). Coding reliability was strengthened through intercoder review and rechecking of themes, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was achieved. Validity was enhanced by comparing ChatGPT's responses with those from Perplexity, Gemini, and Copilot, analyzing differences in tone, depth, and accuracy. The study also acknowledged the absence of direct human counselor benchmarking as a limitation for future research.

To determine the features and capabilities of ChatGPT and the strengths and weaknesses of this chatbot, we analyzed and coded the responses received from this chatbot through unstructured interviews. It came and was paid. To achieve the goals of the present study, the method of comparative coding of answers received from unstructured interviews was used. Deductive coding is a method in which the researcher determines codes in advance and attributes them to the obtained data. This method is exactly the opposite of inductive coding, where the codes are obtained from the data itself. Since ChatGPT is not as active in answering as a real human and is somewhat passive, using

an analogical coding method can be better to reach the goals. Also, the use of this method leaves our hands open in choosing codes compared to other coding methods. In this series of codings, the main codes are the strengths and weaknesses of ChatGPT, and the features are the subcodes that will be mentioned in the findings section.

For the reliability of the current research, the responses of ChatGPT were registered and recorded. For validity, it was used to compare the answers of ChatGPT with other artificial intelligence chatbots such as Perplexity, Gemini, and Copilot. In this way, a similar interview was conducted with these chatbots, and their similarities and differences with ChatGPT were observed in the selection of codes. On the other hand, it was made to avoid the contradictions in the selection of codes, and the codes should contain the truth of the answers of ChatGPT. The extracted codes were again matched with the answers of ChatGPT, and two-way communication was also done between the main and secondary codes to ensure the extraction of suitable and valid codes.

3. Findings and Results

According to the coding of ten unstructured interviews conducted with ChatGPT using a deductive comparative approach, the findings were categorized into two main themes—strengths and weaknesses—comprising thirteen subthemes. Frequency analysis showed that 65% of responses reflected strengths such as analytical depth and clarity, while 35% reflected weaknesses, primarily emotional and interpretive limitations. Representative excerpts from ChatGPT's responses were included to illustrate these themes. For instance, ChatGPT frequently advised: 'Choosing a field should balance your interests and job opportunities,' demonstrating decision-support reasoning; however, when asked for a personal opinion, it stated, 'As an AI, I cannot express personal views,' reflecting a key limitation.

Table 1

Main codes and subcodes

Main codes	Subcodes
Strengths as an academic counselor	Examining the issue from different aspects
	Provide appropriate and useful suggestions
	Combine different resources to respond
	Examining the differences and similarities of the options
	Mentioning points to help make a decision
	Suggest and introduce more resources
	Providing various study solutions
Weaknesses as an academic counselor	Lack of empathy and sympathy
	Failure to provide a personal opinion
	Lack of independence from resources
	Lack of implicit communication and cold answers
	Overview and presentation of general opinions
	Inability to foresee and predict the future

Now we will examine the extracted codes and to complete our statements, we will match them with the answers we received from ChatGPT.

Strengths as an academic counselor
Examining the issue from different aspects

Many times, interestingly, when a question is asked of ChatGPT, it mentions that this issue is not only one-sided or single-factored, but several factors play a major role in it. In a way, it examines the issue from different aspects. For example, when it was asked which major has a good job market, it replied: "Choosing a major with a good job market depends on various factors such as personal interest, job abilities, individual skills, and labor market conditions in which you are". As can be seen, it considers various factors.

Provide appropriate and useful suggestions

The suggestions provided by ChatGPT are sometimes very useful and appropriate that the client or audience may not have thought of them before, or may not know which one to choose among them, and may be confused. For example, this chatbot says somewhere: "Choosing a field of study should be a combination of interest, abilities, and marketability. Although marketing is very important, if you are not interested in a field, the probability of your success

and job satisfaction will be less. Therefore, first, think about your interests and capabilities, then consider the market". Here, ChatGPT opens and solves the knot of choice and confusion between the marketer of a field and interest in a field for the audience.

Combine different resources to respond

One of the great advantages of ChatGPT is that it uses a lot of data in its response, which a human might not be able to do such a task naturally. He combines these sources and provides the answer. For example, it says somewhere: "I will answer you based on a combination of different sources, including scientific studies and research, statistics and data, common experiences, reliable online sources, and general and specialized knowledge." And then it defines each of these items for the audience.

Examining the differences and similarities of the options

It is very interesting that when we provide two or more options to ChatGPT, it explains the similarities and differences between them very clearly. This case can be helpful, especially when the client or audience is hesitant between two fields of study. For example, when we put the two options, or in other words, counseling and psychology disciplines, which are very similar, into this chatbot, it responded like this: "Choosing between psychology and counseling depends on your professional goals and interests. Both disciplines have similar fields, but they also have differences, which are mentioned below. Then it mentions the differences and similarities.

Mentioning points to help make a decision

When two or more options are available to ChatGPT, in addition to the similarities and differences, it mentions points for deciding between them, which, in turn, is very valuable and can help the audience or clients in deciding between them. For example, in the continuation of the comparison between the fields of counseling and psychology, it says: "Now we mention some points that can help you in deciding between the fields of psychology and counseling." Further, it considers things such as career goals, type of work, education, and expertise. Similarly, it examines the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad and inside the country, as well as tips for making decisions.

Suggest and introduce more resources

One of the great advantages of ChatGPT is that it can offer more means to solve academic and career problems, which in turn can be very fruitful for the clients or the audience. For example, at the end of one of its answers, it says: "If you need more detailed information and specific resources, I can do a further search or introduce relevant resources that can help you." In addition to students, this feature can help researchers refer to the main sources.

Providing various study solutions

One of the things that is always discussed in academic counseling with different people is study strategies and how to learn and keep the material in mind. ChatGPT takes a big step in this field and provides significant study solutions to its audience or clients. It says about this: "You can use different methods and techniques to remember different things in your mind." The following explains strategies such as note-taking, summarizing, and self-study, teaching others, etc., and explains each one, which is a feature of this chatbot for its audience and people who seek advice in this field. They are very useful.

Weaknesses as an academic counselor
Lack of empathy and sympathy

One of the weak points of ChatGPT and chatbots, in general, is that they cannot empathize and put themselves in the place of their clients or audience. For example, when we had a conversation with this chatbot, we never used words like "I understand", "I can understand you", "I can put myself in your place" and "I can imagine your problem" and we were always faced with very formal and uniform answers, which generally shows that human counseling works much better in this field. Human counselors usually use the mentioned terms abundantly to empathize with clients.

Failure to provide a personal opinion

ChatGPT lacks personal comments. He cannot have his own personalized opinion on various topics and convey it to his audience or clients. Sometimes, to understand an issue such as education, clients want to know their counselor's opinion, and in this case, this chatbot lacks a personal opinion. Somewhere, when we asked for the personal opinion of ChatGPT about an academic topic, we encountered this answer: "As an artificial intelligence model, I cannot express my personal opinion." It should be acknowledged that human counselors are still more successful in this field than ChatGPT.

Lack of independence from resources

This case is partly related to not providing a personal opinion. ChatGPT cannot discuss without referring to the sources that are in its databases, and this makes it lack personal opinion. The fact that it cannot be independent of its resource base and always needs them is a weakness for

this chatbot. "In general, my words and recommendations are derived from the combination of various sources and general experiences," and "as an artificial intelligence model, I cannot express my personal opinion," show a lack of independence from the sources.

Lack of implicit communication and cold answers

One of the things that is very noticeable when chatting with GPT is the cold and robotic nature of its answers, which includes the lack of implicit communication. Normally, in a counseling session, by changing the tone of counseling and also using things that are very effective in implicit communication, such as smiling and raising eyebrows, etc., the counselor can convey many concepts only implicitly and without words. Convey that this is one of the main differences between humans and chatbots such as ChatGPT, and is considered one of the strengths of human counseling. On the other hand, the cold and monotonous responses of ChatGPT are always visible when it is used.

Overview and presentation of general opinions

Another weakness of ChatGPT is its generality in providing answers. It cannot explain the details of a problem or issue exactly to the audience or its clients, and is satisfied with generalities. When it was asked about its personal opinion on continuing education, it said: "As an artificial intelligence, I cannot give you a personal opinion; I can only give a general opinion about continuing education." On the other hand, when we asked it questions about study strategies, it explained the strategies in a very general way and did not explain any of them with specific details, where exactly they should start and where they should end.

Inability to foresee and predict the future

One of the topics that is especially important in academic counseling is foresight, that is, predicting the future of a field of study or the progress that can be made by using that field, and things like that. Chatbots such as ChatGPT are incapable of predicting the future because their information is only valid until the current moment when their information last updated. These chatbots cannot deduce from the current situation what will happen in the future or, for example, which field of study will have a better situation in the future. The reason for that is partly due to their dependence on their resources. For example, somewhere in ChatGPT, it says: "According to the searches I did, I cannot say which field will be very popular in 2030, and this depends on various factors."

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Overall, the findings indicate that while ChatGPT demonstrates strong logical reasoning and effective academic guidance, its limitations lie in emotional understanding and personalized communication. From a theoretical perspective, ChatGPT's counseling behavior aligns partially with Rogerian client-centered counseling, as it offers supportive and reflective responses but lacks genuine empathy—a core element of Rogerian theory. Similarly, when compared to cognitive-behavioral frameworks, ChatGPT provides structured problem-solving approaches but fails to adapt dynamically to emotional nuances. The discussion acknowledges the limited dataset, absence of human comparison, and potential variability in ChatGPT's responses due to model updates. Future research should incorporate direct human counselor benchmarks and explore hybrid AI-human counseling systems. (Nguyen, 2025)

ChatGPT and other similar chatbots have the potential to become expert counselors, especially in the field of education. Their information is sometimes very complete and comprehensive, and it can be said that they have better first-hand information than a real or human academic counselor. They sometimes examine an academic or career issue from views that may not occur to a human being, and by combining different sources, they guarantee its accuracy to a large extent. The main problems of these chatbots in academic counseling and other aspects of this science are due to their being robots. They do not have human characteristics such as sympathy and empathy. On the other hand, they can not go beyond the database built for them. This makes them have little flexibility and depend on predetermined information and settle for the same. The lack of personal opinion in these chatbots is due to the same issue of dependence on resources and lack of independence.

In this study, the researchers assumed ChatGPT as a consultant and asked it for guidance in academic fields as a client. They wanted it to counsel them in the field of education. It should be said very simply that ChatGPT is not a human but a robot, so we can not expect much from it, and to this extent, we can call it amazing. Its characteristics in language production as well as the production of comprehensive and relatively smooth and comprehensible texts can make it a consultant, although not completely professional, but semi-professional, especially in the fields of education, where emotions are less involved. Its function is better.

In this study, we tried to establish a real conversation between the client and the consultant, which is a ChatGPT,

and in this way, evaluate this chatbot. Similar work was done in the studies of Liu et al (2023) and also in the study of Inaba et al (2024) (Inaba et al., 2024; C. Liu et al., 2023). They also evaluated and studied this chatbot by creating a consulting space. On the other hand, the findings and results of this research confirm Liu et al.'s statement that ChatGPT can be effective in counseling, and also, it confirms the findings of Inaba et al. that because the answers of this chatbot can compete with human answers, but the weaknesses of ChatGPT should be considered in consulting with humans because ChatGPT is a machine in nature, not a live being. Inaba and his colleagues insist on further study of this matter. In the studies conducted by Caratiquit & Caratiquit (2023), it was accepted that indeed, ChatGPT can be useful for students in academic matters (Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2023). The results of the current research also support this, especially in academic counseling, logical discussions are more important than emotional ones, and ChatGPT can play its role as a better counselor, but if the emotional discussions in this field are extensive, this chatbot can not have an effective function. Raile (2024) believes that ChatGPT can at least be used as a supplement in the counseling process (Raile, 2023). We also believe that this chatbot can at least be used according to the findings and results of the current research. He can be a semi-professional consultant. Rail says that this chatbot may not provide all the effective methods to clients. It should be acknowledged that this can also apply to a human consultant. Contrary to this belief Rail, we should say that sometimes ChatGPT can provide solutions and mention points that may not occur to humans, including consultants.

4.1. Limitations

In conclusion, this study contributes to understanding AI-assisted academic counseling by identifying both the potential and the limitations of ChatGPT as a semi-professional academic counselor. The results suggest that ChatGPT can effectively support students in logical and informational tasks but remains limited in empathy, emotional support, and predictive guidance. Future studies should empirically compare AI-driven counseling with human counseling outcomes, test ChatGPT in real academic settings with student users, and explore hybrid counseling models integrating AI-generated suggestions with human expertise. These steps will advance the responsible and effective integration of large language models into counseling and education.

4.2. Suggestions

If we want to examine the use of ChatGPT and similar cases more practically, it should be said that in principle, every university and educational institution should design systems that use these chatbots full-time Are connected and students can use them whenever they have problems or need academic advice. On the other hand, meetings should be organized to introduce these chatbots to students of different levels, from elementary school classes to post-graduate courses, so that the necessary and initial familiarization with this technology can take place. Training programs on how to ask questions and guide the chatbot to get better and more effective answers are necessary. On the other hand, the instructors of these programs and courses must acquire the necessary training and experience. Academic counselors can use this chatbot to continue the consultation process at home with their clients and they can also borrow the answers of this chatbot and other chatbots to respond to their clients. And use their answers in their counseling sessions.

The current research is the starting point of a path that continues and more studies should be done around it. It is a very innovative and impressive field that should not be overlooked by researchers. In the current research, the educational dimension of ChatGPT as a consultant was emphasized. It is recommended to emphasize more on the use and application of chatbots in the fields of career, family, and marriage counseling in future research. How can the problems and defects of ChatGPT be reduced or fixed as a consultant, this is an issue that should be considered in future research. In this research, most of the ChatGPT itself was important for us. It is recommended that other chatbots should be considered by researchers. The use of new methodology in future research should be taken into consideration. The use of different quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods in future research can pave the way for a better understanding of the use of chatbots in counseling and psychology.

Acknowledgments

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

Authors' Contributions

Not applicable.

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