

Use of Artificial Intelligence by Youth for Emotional Support: Opportunities and Challenges

Ms Ashmita Parida¹, Dr Rajni Nair²

¹Student, Computer Science and Technology, Usha Mittal Institute of Technology

²Professor, General Engineering and Applied Science, Usha Mittal Institute of Technology

Abstract

The fast-rising popularity of social media apps and artificial intelligence (AI) related tools has changed how people express emotion, get validation and take care of their mental health by using tools available in the digital world. The study explores how the use of social media, the expression of emotion, and the increasing reliance on AI natural language processing (NLP) to identify and respond to users' emotional and mental states are all connected. Mixed methods were used in the current study to analyze both qualitative data (from users aged less than 18 to 45) and quantitative data. The results show that while AI tools offer non-evaluative, at times questionably false empathetic outputs, they are available 24 hours a day and provide a short-term solution to emotional distress. There are serious ethical implications associated with using them, such as issues related to privacy, threats to users' well-being, emotional dependency on them, and the postponement of much-needed human or professional mental health services. A need for responsible AI design, privacy-protecting technologies, and a balance between AI and human-delivered mental health care being the need of the hour.

Keywords: Social media, artificial intelligence, emotional expression, mental health, NLP, digital ethics

1. Introduction

The rise of social media has created an environment through which people can express their feelings and receive social validation. Increasingly, individuals are using social platforms like Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), and chat apps to share emotional experiences with others, whether they are happy, stressed and/or anxious and/or depressed. When OpenAI released its language model ChatGPT in 2022, it transformed conversational AI and liberated NLP, ability to hold human-like conversations, answer questions and also predict the next word and interpretation from the context. Likewise, LLMs and generative AI tools have been developed to help analyze language patterns and infer emotional states. With AI technology evolving with an increase of emotional software, such as chat-bots, many questions arise with regard to the effectiveness, ethics, and implications these types of technology will have on our mental health in the future. Many view AI as being "the answer" and as a source of support. Understanding foreseeable use cases of LLM and chatbots recognizes the central importance of "context of use", a term coined by Margaret Mitchell. The LLM apps are so open-ended in possible user prompts, that unlike physical objects, which might have a finite number of intended use cases, most apps are so open-ended in their interactions that we cannot fully predict how end users will ultimately use them. With respect to the chatbot, the flexibility of natural language interaction means that its prompt openness is difficult to anticipate or restrict in terms of context and potential outcomes. It is possible that users will try to

manipulate the responses into harmful outcomes. Some users may choose the outcome to benefit themselves by gaining knowledge regarding a particular subject while some might apply the same to deny mental health symptoms and medical intervention. However, if one understands the difference between an algorithm-generated fake empathy vs human interaction and importance of human empathy and conversation, one can see that the limitations of AI in this context could be very significant. These illusions are made more believable because of our cognitive biases, that is, our tendency to anthropomorphize. Consequently, this study aims to dissect the relationship between social media user activity and emotional well-being, identify how people view AI-based support for their emotional needs, and highlight risks associated with becoming too reliant on AI for validation of one's feelings.

2. Literature Survey

Research on self-presentation and exploration on the web focuses on the extent to which users choose to present themselves digitally in ways that they cannot offline. Goffman's (1959) concept of the presentation of self refers to strategies used to give a desired impression. This concept is often applied to social media contexts, where users selectively convey emotion. Similarly, Boyd (2014) contends that networked publics reconfigure intimacy and visibility. Turkle (2011) reflects that digital media, while promising, can erode intimacy. In the process we "expect more from technology and less from each other". Research has shown that social media has both strengths and weaknesses: it can promote catharsis and social support but may encourage dependence on social validation through likes, comments, and shares. In the Indian and Global South contexts, scholars have noted that social media, while providing voice, visibility, and representation absent offline for marginal and minority communities such as young women, can expose them to heightened surveillance, judgment, and emotional labor. As an extension of language analysis, researchers have attempted to use linguistic cues to reveal psychological states such as depression, anxiety, and stress. According to Pennebaker et al. (2015), pronoun usage, word choice, and emotional tone are all indicators of psychological states. They argue that "language provides a window into psychological experience."

Much work on AI mental health interventions has been focused on the scaling-up potential and low-cost, low-stigma advantages of chatbots or conversational agents. Fitzpatrick et al. (2017) found that people reported less distress from conversational agents than from human providers due to their non-judgemental stance, although critics have questioned the degree to which AI can be expected to identify meaning. Floridi et al. (2018) argue that, despite being based on probabilistic pattern recognition, and lacking understanding, AI systems can encounter ambiguous forms of language or culturally specific expressions such as sarcasm, silence or metaphor, in a manner that prevents them from communicating effectively with human interlocutors, or from soliciting meaningful responses.

Scholars have focused on the idea of "algorithmic empathy", in which an algorithm may simulate affect and empathy, offering a sense of comfort, but may also be confused as truly understanding what it simulates. Turkle (2017) warns: "When we are comforted by machines, we risk forgetting what real empathy requires." Zuboff (2019) describes surveillance capitalism as taking and commodifying emotional data without consent. Zuboff points out that "human experience is claimed as free raw material for translation into behavioral data." In a time when our most intimate talks with machines can be monetized, emotional expression to machines is not a private act. Feminist and critical data scholars stress that every algorithmic system has a political agenda. As Noble (2018) shows, algorithmic bias reproduces existing social inequalities and training AI systems on incomplete, biased data can lead to AI misinterpretation. Although there is literature on the use of social media, AI mental health applications and chatbots, there is sparse research on the authenticity, effectiveness and mental health harm that might be caused by the flexibility and openness of these AI technologies. There are also few studies of how

comfort, privacy and dependency are negotiated by people using AI for emotional support. The findings of this study add to the existing literature on the "Black Box" phenomenon by providing insights into user perspectives on emotional expression, AI-mediated comfort, and the social implications of outsourcing emotional labor to AI systems.

3. Research Methodology

This research combined method approaches by combining qualitative and quantitative techniques.

3.1 Data Collection Tools

- **Google Forms** for structured responses
- Open-ended interview questions for qualitative insights

3.2 Research Design

- **Quantitative Research:** Demographic data of the users and their usage patterns related to social media and AI tools.
- **Qualitative Research:** Extensive analysis of user perceptions, experiences, and concerns.

3.3 Sample

- **Age Group:** Below 18 to 45 years
- **Gender:** Diverse
- **Educational Background:** Varied academic and professional backgrounds
- **AI Tools Used:** ChatGPT and other generative AI/chatbot platforms

3.4 Key Questions

The study explored user perspectives on:

- The influence of social media activity on mood and emotions
- AI's ability to understand mental states through language
- Comfort versus intrusiveness of AI-generated suggestions
- Emotional expression to AI chatbots
- AI as a personal diary
- Long-term effects of emotional validation from AI

4. Analysis of Data

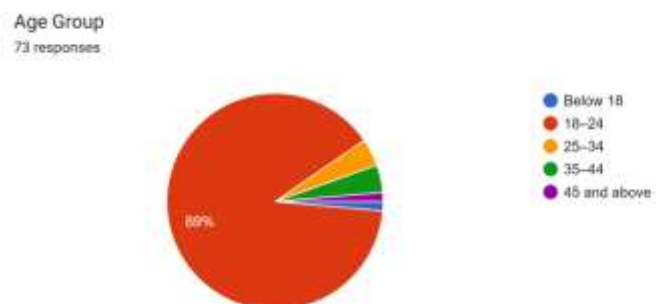
4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Survey Results:

4.1.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

This section of the survey showcases the demographic profile of the 70+ respondents who participated in the Google Form survey. The demographic sample includes gender, age, educational background and occupation.

a). Age



Frequency Table — Age Group :

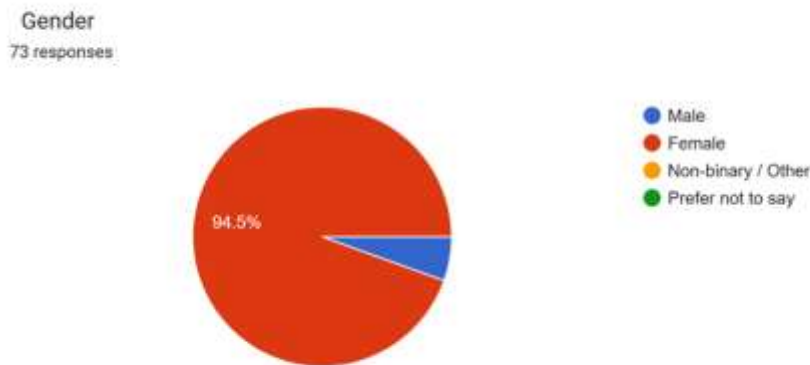
Age Group	Frequency (Approx.)	Percentage
Below 18	1	~1%
18–24	65	~89%
25–34	4	~5%
35–44	2	~3%
45 and above	1	~2%
Total	73	~100%

Table (a). Age Group

The table (a) represents the age distribution of the 70+ respondents. As it can be seen in the data, the majority of respondents of about 89% (n=65), belonged to the 18–24 age group, indicating that the survey predominantly captured the perspectives of young adults. Respondents in the 25–34 age bracket were approximately 5% of the sample, followed by the 35–44 group at approximately 3%. Representation from those below 18 and above 45 was minimal, accounting for roughly 1–2% each.

The strong dominance of the 18–24 age group is consistent with the study's context, as this demographic represents current students and early-career professionals who are among the most frequent users and adopters of AI-powered tools and technologies. This age profile also suggests that the findings will predominantly reflect the perspectives and narratives based on their experiences and usage of Artificial Intelligence in their daily routine.

b). Gender



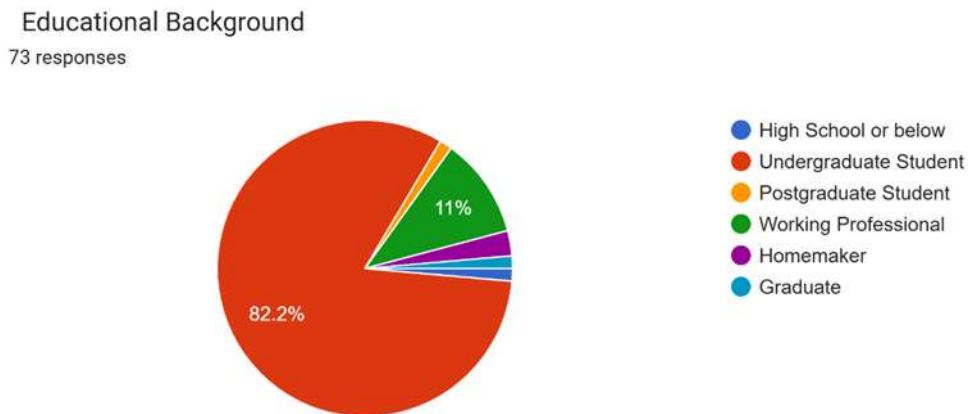
Frequency Table — Gender :

Gender	Frequency (Approx.)	Percentage
Male	4	~5.5%
Female	69	94.5%
Non-binary / Other	0	0%
Prefer not to say	0	0%
Total	73	100%

Table (b). Gender Diversity

The table (b) represents the gender diversity and distribution of the 70+ respondents. The data reveals that the majority of respondents are females, constituting approximately 94.5% of the data sample, while male respondents accounted for approximately 5.5% . No respondents identified as non-binary or preferred not to disclose their gender.

c). Educational Background



Frequency Table - Educational Background

Educational Background	Frequency (Approx.)	Percentage
High School or below	1	~1%
Undergraduate Student	60	82.2%
Postgraduate Student	1	~1%
Working Professional	8	~11%
Homemaker	2	~2.5%
Graduate	1	~1.5%
Total	73	100%

Table (c). Educational Background

Table (c) shows the educational background of the survey respondents. The data reveals that the majority 82.2% were undergraduate students, making them the most dominant group in the sample. Working professionals were the second largest category at approximately 11%. Homemakers accounted for roughly 2.5%, while postgraduate students, graduates, and those with high school or below education each represented approximately 1% of the total respondents.

The predominance of undergraduate students in the sample is consistent with the age distribution observed earlier, where 89% of respondents belonged to the 18–24 age group. This alignment confirms that the survey largely focuses on the views of young people, who are currently studying and simultaneously exploring and integrating AI in education and daily life. Their perspective is particularly valuable for this study as they represent a generation that has grown up alongside rapid AI advancement.

4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics

This section shows the descriptive analysis derived from the Google Form Survey consisting of 73 respondents. The survey included a series of Likert scale statements ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), designed to know about respondent’s awareness, usage, experiences, and concerns regarding AI tools in the context of emotional well-being and social media behaviour.

Table 1: Daily Usage of AI Tools

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	2	2.7%
Disagree	2	2.7%
Neutral	7	9.6%
Agree	34	46.6%
Strongly Agree	28	38.4%
Total	73	100%

Table 1 shows the responses to the statement ‘I use AI tools (like ChatGPT, Gemini, or Copilot) in my daily routine.’ The findings direct us to a strong indication that the largest group with 46.6% and second largest group with 38.4% selected ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ respectively. These findings convey that the majority of the surveyed individuals actively uses AI tools into their daily routines, which is also consistent with their demographic profile as young, digitally aligned students.

Table 2 — "I use AI tools for academic and work purpose"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	1	1.4%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	7	9.6%
Agree	42	57.5%
Strongly Agree	23	31.5%
Total	73	100%

Table 2 analyzes the measures to which respondents use AI tools for academic and work purposes. The data shows an overwhelmingly positive response, with a combined response rate of 89% of total respondents choosing ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’, achieving the highest record so far considering the survey. These findings show that AI tools have become an integral part of academics and professional workflows of the respondents which directs to the fact that dependence on AI tools is growing among young students and working professionals.

Table 3 — "I use AI platforms for creative or personal expression"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	5	6.8%
Disagree	5	6.8%
Neutral	17	23.3%
Agree	33	45.2%
Strongly Agree	13	17.8%
Total	73	100%

Table 3 represents responses to the statement 'I use AI platforms for creative or personal expression (e.g., writing, journaling, or reflection).' The findings show a moderately positive response reflecting a combined positive response rate of 63%. Notably, 23.3% of the total respondents remained neutral and the disagreement was comparatively low. This indicates that while individuals use AI tools widely for academic and work purposes, its adoption for creative and personal expression is also growing and cannot be neglected, redirecting us to a spectrum of comfort levels respondents have while using AI tools for their personal use.

Table 4 — "I sometimes use AI tools when I feel stressed or emotionally low"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	12	16.4%
Disagree	18	24.7%
Neutral	20	27.4%
Agree	18	24.7%
Strongly Agree	5	6.8%
Total	73	100%

Table 4 explores whether respondents depend on AI tools during their moments of stress and emotionally vulnerable state. Breaking the previous patterns, this question results in a divided response. The largest group consisting of 27.4% remained neutral followed by individuals choosing 'Disagree' with 24.7% respondents of the total sample and a combined positive response of only 31.5%. These results revealed that the majority of respondents do not depend on AI tools for emotional support during moments of distress, which is a key finding in the context of this study.

Table 5 — "I feel AI understands my emotions, sometimes even better than humans"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	11	15.1%

Disagree	21	28.8%
Neutral	23	31.5%
Agree	17	23.3%
Strongly Agree	1	1.4%
Total	73	100%

Table 5 analyzes responses of the respondents and their views on the ability of AI to empathize and understand human emotions. The findings show a combined negative response rate of 43.9% which is the highest negative responses recorded so far. The neutral category consisted of 31.5% , indicating significant uncertainty on this topic. The positive combined response was 24.7% of the total responses. These findings are particularly important for this study, as they showcase that the majority of respondents do not believe AI is capable of understanding human emotions. This aligns with the qualitative interview findings where participants stated that AI 'lacks the human touch' and its empathy is artificial and biased.

Table 6 — "I feel emotionally relieved after talking to an AI tool"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	12	16.4%
Disagree	19	26.0%
Neutral	22	30.1%
Agree	14	19.2%
Strongly Agree	6	8.2%
Total	73	100%

Table 6 shows responses to the statement 'I feel emotionally relieved after talking to an AI tool because I believe it is a judgement free, safe and unbiased space.' The data reveals a majority of neutral and negative opinions. The combined negative response rate is 42.4% , whereas the neutral category is the largest group with 30.1% of the total responses, pointing towards the fact that a significant portion of respondents are uncertain whether AI provides genuine emotional relief. The combined positive response rate stands at 27.4%. The findings reveal that the idea of AI as a judgement free space is not widely accepted among respondents. These results are consistent with Table 5, where respondents doubted AI's ability to understand human emotions.

Table 7 — "I use more emotionally expressive language while talking to AI"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	13	17.8%
Disagree	16	21.9%
Neutral	23	31.5%

Agree	17	23.3%
Strongly Agree	4	5.5%
Total	73	100%

Table 7 observes if the respondents use more emotionally expressive language such as 'I feel,' 'I'm hurt,' or 'I'm happy' when interacting with AI tools. The responses follow a pattern consistent with the previous tables, reflecting a majority neutral responses category and suggesting that individuals follow the uncertainty pattern when it comes to using AI as a medium of emotional and personal expression. The neutral category is the largest group consisting 31.5% of the total responses. Followed by combined negative response rate at 39.7% and a combined positive response of 28.8%. These findings convey that a majority of respondents do not consciously use more expressive tone when communicating with AI.

Table 8 — "I notice changes in my mood as I continue chatting with AI"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	15	20.5%
Disagree	17	23.3%
Neutral	25	34.2%
Agree	15	20.5%
Strongly Agree	1	1.4%
Total	73	100%

Table 8 shows responses to the statement 'I notice changes in my mood as I continue chatting with AI.' The data follows the trend of predominantly neutral to negative response. The largest single group remained neutral with 34.2% of the total responses which showcases uncertainty about AI's influence on the mood. The combined negative response rate was 43.8% and on the contrary, the combined positive response was 21.9%, which was the lowest observed positive response rate so far. These findings significantly suggest that most respondents do not think AI interactions can have a direct or noticeable influence on their mood or emotional state. This challenges the assumption that AI interaction significantly shapes users' emotional experiences, and points to a largely transactional rather than emotionally dependent relationship between this demographic and AI tools.

Table 9 — "I consider my AI chats to be my personal diary or memory log"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	16	21.9%
Disagree	22	30.1%
Neutral	15	20.5%
Agree	16	21.9%

Strongly Agree	4	5.5%
Total	73	100%

Table 9 analyzes whether respondents use their AI conversations as a personal diary or memory log. The data reveals a majority of negative responses with 30.1% disagreeing and 21.9% strongly disagreeing with the above statement and having a combined negative response rate of 52% which is the highest negative response recorded across all scenarios so far. The neutral category had a response rate of 20.5% followed by a combined positive response rate of 27.4%. These findings significantly show that the majority of respondents do not view AI as a personal journaling or dairy. This is a key finding as it directs us towards the fact that despite the increasing use of AI for academic and creative purposes, respondents maintain a clear boundary between AI and its usage as a personal confidant or personal diary.

Table 10 — "I feel sharing things with AI is more comfortable than discussing with close ones"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	22	30.1%
Disagree	22	30.1%
Neutral	14	19.2%
Agree	11	15.1%
Strongly Agree	4	5.5%
Total	73	100%

Table 10 shows whether respondents find it more comfortable to share personal issues and information with AI rather than with close ones. The data reveals a clear negative perspective with a combined response rate of 60.2% which is highest across all the statements so far. The neutral category consisted of 19.2% of the total respondents followed by a positive combined response rate of only 20.6%. These findings hold key implications in accordance with this study, as they clearly show that the majority of respondents still prefer human interaction over AI when it comes to emotional expression and sharing of personal distress. This explains that despite of AI being an integral part of our daily lives, human relationships and interaction are still prioritized and trusted for interaction in this predominantly young, female demographic.

Table 11 — "I sometimes do not feel the need to express myself to my close ones after chatting with AI"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	22	30.1%
Disagree	23	31.5%
Neutral	17	23.3%
Agree	8	11.0%

Strongly Agree	3	4.1%
Total	73	100%

Table 11 shows whether AI interaction reduces respondent’s need to express themselves to close ones after interaction with AI tools. The data follows the trend of negative response patterns with a combined negative response rate of 61.6% which is the highest recorded across all nineteen statements. The neutral category consisted of 23.3% while the combined positive response rate was the lowest with 15.1% of the total responses. These findings are important and meaningful as they challenge the assumption AI usage may displace or weaken human emotional bonds. The majority of respondents disagreed with the idea that chatting with AI reduces their need to interact with close ones, conveying that AI and human relationships are complementary to each other rather than a competing medium of emotional expression within this sample.

Table 12 — "Sharing updates with AI has gradually become a habitual part of my daily routine"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	18	24.7%
Disagree	16	21.9%
Neutral	22	30.1%
Agree	14	19.2%
Strongly Agree	3	4.1%
Total	73	100%

Table 12 observes whether interacting with AI and sharing updates with AI tools has become a part of respondent’s daily routine. The data reflects a predominantly neutral to negative trend. The neutral category constituted the highest single response at 30.1%, highlighting considerable uncertainty among respondents on this matter. The combined negative response rate was 46.6% whereas the combined positive response rate was 23.3%. These findings show an interesting deflection to Tables 1 and 2, where respondents highly acknowledged using AI tools daily for academic and routine purposes. The change of opinion shows that while respondents use AI for task based purposes every day, they do not consider sharing of personal information or emotional expression with AI and maintain a clear boundary between functional and personal AI engagement identified throughout this section.

Table 13 — "AI responses make me feel rewarded, satisfied and motivated even for minor efforts"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	7	9.6%
Disagree	12	16.4%
Neutral	22	30.1%
Agree	28	38.4%

Strongly Agree	4	5.5%
Total	73	100%

Table 13 examines whether AI responses make respondents feel rewarded, satisfied, and motivated even for minor efforts and tasks. The data pattern makes a significant shift in trend compared to the earlier tables, recording a more positive response pattern. The largest group with a positive response of 38.4% selected 'Agree', while 5.5% selected 'Strongly Agree' with a combined positive response rate of 43.9%. The neutral category constituted 30.1% of the total responses, reflecting continuous ambiguity and uncertainty among a significant section of respondents. The combined negative response rate was 26%. These findings reveal that a major portion of respondents do experience a sense of reward and motivation from AI feedback, which is an important observation with respect to this study. It directs the study to the fact that AI's affirming and encouraging responses may have a psychological impact on users, potentially influencing their sense of accomplishment and self-worth, particularly among young students who consistently seek reassurance and academic validation.

Table 14 — "I rely on AI approval rather than my own judgment to feel accomplished"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	15	20.5%
Disagree	19	26.0%
Neutral	23	31.5%
Agree	10	13.7%
Strongly Agree	6	8.2%
Total	73	100%

Table 14 shows whether respondents rely on AI approval rather than their own judgment to feel accomplished and satisfied. The data reveals a predominantly negative to neutral response. The neutral category was the single largest group at 31.5%, indicating that a major section of respondents remain uncertain about this aspect of their AI interaction. The combined negative response rate was 46.5% whereas the combined positive response rate was 21.9%. These findings align with the fact that the majority of respondents are not dependent on AI for validation or sense of achievement. However, the 21.9% who do rely on AI approval, if combined with the majority group, which is the neutral group, indicates that a significant minority may be at risk of developing an unhealthy dependence on AI feedback, redirecting our attention in the discussion and recommendations sections of this paper.

Table 15 — "AI feedback makes me feel over-confident and gives a sense of achievement without major effort"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	5	6.8%
Disagree	17	23.3%

Neutral	28	38.4%
Agree	19	26.0%
Strongly Agree	4	5.5%
Total	73	100%

Table 15 explores whether AI feedback makes respondents experience a sense of overconfidence and undeserved achievement. The neutral category dominated at 38.4% with the highest neutral response recorded yet in the entire survey, highlighting the fact that a large portion of respondents are highly uncertain on this issue. The combined positive response rate was 31.5% whereas the combined negative response was 30.1%. The split between positive and negative responses, with the dominant neutral category, makes this response one of the most evenly proportionated statements in the survey. These findings reveal that the relationship between AI feedback and overconfidence is completely unambiguous among respondents. While nearly one third of the respondents experience confidence from AI's feedback, an almost equal proportion disagree with this idea, highlighting individual differences in how respondents process and interpret AI generated feedback.

Table 16 — "AI feedback may create barriers in my personal or emotional development"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	8	11.0%
Disagree	12	16.4%
Neutral	24	32.9%
Agree	23	31.5%
Strongly Agree	6	8.2%
Total	73	100%

Table 16 examines whether respondents think AI feedback may create barriers in their personal or emotional development due to its overpraise and fake encouragement. The data reveals an equal proportion yet slightly positive inclined response. The neutral category was the largest single group at 32.9%, reflecting uncertainty among respondents on this self reflective topic. The combined positive response rate was 39.7%, making this one of the higher positive response rates in the latter half of the survey. The combined negative response constituted about 27.4% of the total responses. These findings are important as they suggest that a considerable proportion of respondents are highly aware of the possible developmental risks associated with AI feedback. The fact that nearly 40% think that AI's overpraise could be a possible barrier to personal growth, points towards a level of digital literacy and self-reflection that is a realistic and practical approach in this technical space among the young undergraduate demographic.

Table 17 — "AI praises can limit my internal motivation by giving a sense of fake pleasure and validation"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	5	6.8%
Disagree	15	20.5%
Neutral	18	24.7%
Agree	24	32.9%
Strongly Agree	11	15.1%
Total	73	100%

Table 17 checks whether respondents feel that AI fake praise can be an obstacle to the genuine internal motivation by providing a sense of fake pleasure and validation. The data reveals that this is one of the most positively skewed responses in the second half of the survey. The combined positive response rate was 48% , making this the highest positive response rate since Tables 1 and 2. The neutral category contributed to 24.7% of the total population, while the combined negative response was 27.3%. These findings show a key pattern that nearly half of all respondents recognise the risk of AI validation can be an obstacle to genuine internal motivation. Relating it with the findings of Table 16, where 39.7% acknowledged AI feedback as a potential barrier to personal development, a consistent pattern can be observed here as well, respondents are highly aware that while AI praise feels rewarding in the moment, it may be replacing genuine effort and self-driven motivation with fake and superficial encouragement.

Table 18 — "I am aware of potential privacy risks when sharing personal information with AI"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	2	2.7%
Disagree	2	2.7%
Neutral	12	16.4%
Agree	31	42.5%
Strongly Agree	26	35.6%
Total	73	100%

Table 18 examines whether respondents are aware of the potential risks and threats that exist when sharing personal information with AI. The data reveals one of the strongest positive response patterns in the entire survey, second only to Tables 1 and 2. The combined positive response rate was an impressive 78.1%, while the combined negative response rate was only 5.4% which is the lowest negative response record in the entire survey. These findings are very important as they convey that the majority of respondents has a strong awareness of the privacy risks associated with AI usage. This level of digital awareness and technical literacy is impressive given that the sample consists of predominantly young undergraduate

profiles, pointing out that despite being heavy users of AI tools, respondents are not naive about the vulnerabilities and risks involved when using AI.

Table 19 — "I think users should be educated about the potential emotional and practical impacts of AI feedback"

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	2	2.7%
Disagree	0	0%
Neutral	8	11.0%
Agree	18	24.7%
Strongly Agree	45	61.6%
Total	73	100%

Table 19 presents responses to the final statement 'I think users should be educated about the potential emotional and practical impacts of AI feedback.' The data captures the single strongest positive response in the entire survey. A majority of 61.6% selected 'Strongly Agree' and the highest 'Strongly Agree' count across all nineteen statements, while 24.7% agreed, resulting to a combined positive response rate of 86.3%. The neutral category constituted 11.0%, while only 2.7% strongly disagreed and noticeably, not a single respondent selected 'Disagree'. These findings result in an impactful closing statement for the quantitative phase of this study. The near-unanimous perspective for AI literacy and education among respondents reflects a mature and self-aware understanding of AI's growing influence on emotional well-being and daily behaviour. This finding directly supports the recommendations of this research and highlights the urgent need for structured programmes to spread awareness on how to use AI in a responsible manner and take emotionally informed decisions while using AI.

4.1.3 Key Statistical Patterns

After examination of the entire survey there are various key statistical patterns that follow a trend and collectively direct us to shape the findings of this study. Firstly, AI and its usage for functional and task based purposes is high. Tables 1 and 2 recorded the highest combined positive response rates of 85% and 89% respectively, indicating that respondents widely use AI tools in their day to day lives and academic or work purposes. This points us towards the fact that AI and its tools have become an integral part of our routines and a highly used productivity tool among this demographic.

Secondly, emotional interaction with AI is not yet widely accepted and largely rejected. Tables 4 to 12 consistently recorded the lowest positive response rates in the survey, ranging between 15% and 31%. Respondents predominantly disagreed with using AI during heightened emotional states, using AI as a diary, or finding AI more comforting than human bonding. Table 11 recorded the highest negative response rate of 61.6%, pointing towards the fact that AI has not replaced the need for human connection among respondents.

Third, awareness of AI's psychological risks is significantly high. Tables 16 and 17 recorded combined positive responses of 39.7% and 48% respectively, reflecting that respondents are aware of how AI overpraising feedback and superficial validation could be an obstacle in their personal growth and internal motivation.

Fourth, ethical and privacy risks of AI and digital literacy while using AI are the most significant and key findings in this study. Table 18 recorded a 78.1% positive response rate on how self-aware respondents are regarding the privacy risks and threats while using AI and Table 19 the predominantly almost unanimous decision with a positive response rate of 86.3% where respondents strongly believe that users should educate themselves about the emotional and practical impacts of AI feedback, for this particular statement there were not a single respondent disagreeing.

Overall, this study shows that the respondents are digitally active while using AI but are emotionally grounded as they prefer using AI for their daily tasks and work purposes and not easily believing its emotional and empathizing capabilities and they are also highly aware of its psychological and privacy implications.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

This section of the study represents the qualitative findings interpreted from detailed and structured interviews conducted with 25 participants. The interview was designed to understand and know more about participant's experiences, perspectives and attitudes with usage of AI tools and its emotional impacts that Google Form survey could not record alone in detail. The data was examined using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis framework, which helped it identify 5 key themes. Each theme is stated below alongside supporting evidence derived from participant responses.

4.2.1 Theme 1 — AI as a Judgement free and Safe space.

The first theme that was derived from the qualitative data focuses on AI being a judgement free, safe, and overly available space for emotional expression. In various interviews, participants highlighted that one of the most significant reasons behind people using ChatGPT is they do not need to be scared of being misjudged or criticized or misunderstood which is a common concern while interacting with humans.

This perception was directly derived by P3, a participant who shared a personal experience of a friend who was processing a heartbreak: "She started talking to ChatGPT and from whatever she has told me, it helped her a lot because you are in a judgement free space. ChatGPT is not judging you at all. But if you tell these things to a person, they might judge you."

P4 shared their personal experience while using AI: "When I express my feelings to an AI chatbot, it's usually comforting because the feedback feels reassuring and validates my feelings, which we cannot expect from people because maybe they don't tell us what we want to hear."

P10 further said that: "I can freely talk with AI about the things that I have not shared with my friends or family I can share with AI."

However, participants conveyed their understanding with respect to the safety concerns. P1 stated: "AI is not a safe space for sharing personal information because this data is used to train future models." P25 acknowledged AI as a "non-judgmental person" while also stating that "real people can give you emotional support, the warmth which is much more when compared to AI."

Overall, this theme reveals that AI's non-judgmental nature is a key factor of emotional expression, specifically for young individuals who are scared of judgment. This study also highlights the awareness regarding data and privacy risks and the known limitations of AI's fake empathy in comparison with human connection."

4.2.2 Theme 2 — Human Connection is Preferred Over AI for Emotional Support

The second theme that has been following a trend across the interviews is the dominance of preferring human connection for sharing complex emotions rather than depending upon AI. The participants also stated that AI's can be used as a temporary medium for sharing emotions but it cannot replace the warmth and genuineness of human relationships.

P16 expressed that: "I am that believer that humans are enough for getting expressed. You don't need some software to put out your emotions." Similarly, P8 stated clearly that "in the context of replacing human connection, it can't be replaced by human connection."

P10 had a different view which stated: "The comfort which humans give, the AI can't help it in that sense. But yeah AI can help in giving mental peace and they can give us suggestions that might help." This reflects an important view where AI is seen as supplementary rather than replacement.

P18 gave a very insightful view regarding long-term impacts of AI emotional support: "In the long term without actual human conversations, it will not work. It is only sufficient for instant validation of the heavy emotions. For the long term to improve mental health, we definitely need human-based therapy."

P11 related it with the social dimension stating: "Long term is not good because as a human you should have a social circle to interact with people and share your emotions."

P22 addressed a changing behavioural trend among peers: "I've seen people doing that, when people are there in front of you and they prefer talking to AI tools rather than talking to humans. They don't want to connect."

Hence, this theme gives us insights of strong awareness among participants that even though AI provides accessible and instant emotional relief, it still lacks the empathy and genuine human warmth that are essential for long-term emotional well-being and social development."

4.2.3 Theme 3 — AI's Constant Positivity Masks Real Mental Health Issues

The third theme reveals a significant risk of how AI's positive biases could result in dangerous consequences associated with mental health conditions and create a fake sense of optimism and this may delay the identification and treatment of critical mental health issues. Participants pointed towards the fact that AI tools like ChatGPT are overly dependent on algorithms and rule based programmed to give feedback in an encouraging and cheering manner, even when the user is going through mental or emotional distress and this highlights a serious concern.

P5 stated this risk clearly: "If someone is sharing their thoughts and AI is always giving a positive response, it might make you unable to get to the real cause of the problem." Similarly, P10 highlighted the fake and instant relief: "Even if the situation is negative, it always has a positive approach. If I'm stressed and AI gives me a positive response, I'm relieved. But it is temporary and I do still have that stress but it creates a temporary sense of satisfaction."

P8 suggested a critical observation about the psychological impacts of this pattern: "Due to its constantly positive messages, we rely on that and we can't face reality. We depend on such hope which can sometimes be hopeless."

P16 explained the fake nature of AI-empathized comfort: "It will say some positive thing and for the moment you'll feel good, you'll feel happy, and then after two or three hours you will have the same feeling." This was also said by P23, who observed that AI's temporary positivity may cause a person to ignore a genuine problem: "As AI gives positive responses on a temporary basis, the person might feel relieved and that person might feel that okay, maybe it is not a mental health issue."

P4 also mentioned a clinical concern: "When you are suffering from depression, you need some medical aid, not a positive response from an AI."

Collectively, this theme reveals a critical and very serious issue that AI's feedback to always be encouraging may create an obstacle to detect early mental health issues. By giving instant but fake emotional relief, AI tools may result in normalising distress, delaying professional help, and masking the critical emerging psychological conditions among young users."

4.2.4 Theme 4 — Privacy Concerns Limit Emotional Openness with AI

The fourth theme that derived from the interviews focuses on privacy concerns as a noticeable obstacle to freely express emotions with AI tools. While many participants stated AI to be a non-judgmental space,

a significant number of participants raised concerns about the safety regarding sharing personal information with AI.

P1 was the one who directly pointed towards the concern: "AI is not a safe space for sharing personal information because this data is used to train future models. Sharing personal information is not safe." This reveals awareness that AI is not developed to share emotions and the shared personal information may be used as datasets used to develop future systems.

P13 highlighted the sensitivity of the topic : "It is a very sensitive topic because in today's world there is a very thin line between confidentiality and AI." This recorded a concern that participants had regarding the negligible boundaries between personal expression and data allocation in AI interactions.

P6 spoke about privacy concerns and risks : "I personally don't do such things because we know today's situation where data breaches and all those things are going on." P8 acknowledged that : "Revealing everything comes with the concern of data privacy."

Surprisingly, P11 suggested a conditional view: "If AI provides security purposes assuring that your data is safe and no third party can access that data , then it's okay to share your feelings." This highlights that the obstacle is not AI but the transparency constraints and data safety mechanisms.

Overall, this theme reveals that privacy anxiety is a constant pattern that participants are facing which is pointing towards the fact how deeply young users are willing to engage emotionally with AI. These findings align with the quantitative statistics from Table 18, where 78.1% of respondents highlighted their concerns regarding privacy and threats , making this the key decisive theme across both phases of the study."

4.2.5 Theme 5 — Long-Term Reliance on AI for Emotional Validation is Harmful

The fifth and final theme that was derived from the qualitative data addresses the long-term repercussions of emotional dependence on AI. While participants suggested AI as a useful short-term coping tool, there was a consistent trend that highlighted dependence on AI for emotional validation which possess serious risks to social development, mental health, and genuine human connection.

P4 had an emotional and empathized view: "For long term it is not good because having a social life is very important. Understanding people, talking to people is important. But in the long term it is very harmful because you need a social life." This clearly draws a line between AI as a temporary coping mechanism and AI as a long-term replacement for human connection.

P8 stated : "Total consumption of AI in your system should not be done and you should not be totally dependent on it." Similarly, P22 expressed personal view on this topic: "I don't think it's a good idea because no matter how helpful it may seem, even over a year it is not a sustainable solution."

Perhaps the most important statement came from P18, who shared a personal experience of psychological harm caused due to dependence on AI : "Emotionally depending upon generative AI specifically, it does put your mind and body into psychosis, and I did experience it a lot." This first-hand experience puts a significant weight to the theme and points towards the potential risks of AI dependency is not just theoretical.

P25 raised the concern of reducing human interaction: "It can reduce the connections with humans obviously ,when people start finding the level of comfort in AI responses, it can replace real emotional connections." This was stated by P24, who observed that: "People are going to AI because they maybe don't have that many people to socialise with, that may also be the reason."

Collectively, this theme represents an evidence backed argument that while AI can help in instant relief, its long-term use as a primary medium of emotional expression can risk a sense of social life denial, weak interpersonal skills, psychological harm, and eventually a significant reduction in human connections that are rudimentary to emotional and societal wellbeing.

4.3 Cultural Reflections — Human Fascination with AI Relationships in Popular Media

The findings of this study is not just dependent on the current situations. Earlier, before ChatGPT became a part of our daily routine, human beings were already imaginative and emotionally invested in the idea of AI companionship, emotional connections with machines, and the elimination of boundaries between human and artificial intelligence. This interest is deeply rooted in popular culture and entertainment sectors across Indian and global cinema and digital media. It highlights the emotional and psychological patterns observed in this research.

4.3.1 Bollywood and Indian Cinema — Imagining AI Emotions

India's cinematic imagination has suggested the emotional possibilities of artificial intelligence. The most iconic example is *Enthiran* (Robot, 2010), directed by S. Shankar and starring Rajinikanth and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan which was produced at a budget of ₹132–150 crore, the film became the hit movie during Indian films of 2010, crossing over ₹290 crore worldwide which makes it one of the blockbuster hit movies of Indian films of all time. The film's core storyline was a robot Chitti that falls in love with Aishwarya Rai after being programmed with human-like emotions. The film's commercial success is not just a box office hit but it is an evidence that huge numbers of Indian audiences could emotionally relate to the concept of AI experiencing human feelings.

Fourteen years later, Bollywood recreated a similar story with *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya* (2024), directed by Amit Joshi and Aradhana Sah. The film consists of Aryan Agnihotri who is a robotics engineer and meets SIFRA (Super Intelligent Female Robot Automation) and he believes it to be human and falls in love with her. The film collection was ₹146.25 crore worldwide which became the third highest box office collection in Bollywood films of 2024, the film received a strong thumbs up from young audiences. The fact that a film in which a human man romantically falls for an AI robot connected so strongly with young Indian audiences in 2024 and in the same year the usage of ChatGPT increased significantly globally which cannot be a mere coincidental event. It represents a generation being emotionally negotiating their relationship with AI in real life.

Both films are a representation of a cultural arc extending across almost a decade and a half, from the idea of Chitti the robot forming feelings for a human woman in 2010, to a human man in 2024 falling for a robot. This reflects the trend in real-world development of emotional relationships between AI and humans: from AI as a tool to AI as an intimate, non-differentiable presence in human life.

4.3.2 Hollywood — The Global Imagination of AI Emotional Bonding

The fascination with humans and AI emotional connectivity is not only limited to India but globally as well. Films like *Her* (2013), in which a man falls in love with an AI operating system, and *Ex Machina* (2014), which suggests a robot with programmed human emotions and complexities, this reflects the same concern the study is addressing and also raises a question: Can AI understand human emotion? Can it show empathy? And what are the psychological risks of emotional interaction with a machine? These films were worldwide appreciated by young audiences and points towards the fact that human beings are not just end users of AI but they also have a high imagination of an emotional connectivity between humans and AI.

4.3.3 The Doraemon–Nobita–ChatGPT Meme Phenomenon

One of the most relatable and highlighted illustrations of AI's emotional adaptation into our daily lives is the viral meme trend that shows an emotional connectivity and a strong friendship between the cartoon character Nobita and a robot Doraemon from a cartoon named *Doraemon* and current AI users. Doraemon, the robot cat which was one of the most popular and loved cartoon characters from the 22nd century which was renowned in Asia, specifically in India for decades. In the original series, Nobita is always mocked by his peers for his dependence on Doraemon for every problem, be it a minor or a major problem. The joke was always at Nobita's expense: how could someone talk to a robot for everything?

Then a wave of viral social media posts and videos that changed the interpretation and meaning of the joke completely. A Medium essay also highlighted the similarities and parallels between the cartoon and our daily lives, "Whenever we don't know something, we open ChatGPT. Whenever we feel confused, we type a question. Whenever we need help in writing, thinking, studying, or even making small decisions, we look for an answer from AI instead of trying first on our own. Slowly, this has become normal. We don't even realize how often we depend on it." The title of the essay is "We All Became Nobita, and ChatGPT Is Our Doraemon Now" this captures the meme's tagline seamlessly.

Studies suggest that Asian audiences tend to view robots and figures like Doraemon more positively which is backed by research published in the International Journal of Social Robotics resulting that participants with such exposure were more likely to associate human traits to robots. The Doraemon meme trend, which was widely spread through Instagram reels, YouTube shorts, and WhatsApp groups specifically among Indian youth within an age bracket of 18–24 from 2023 onwards relates to both the parts of the meme: the first half shows people laughing at Nobita for talking to a robot and the second half shows the same people realising that they exactly doing the same thing with ChatGPT. One of the viral comments was: "Fast forward to 2025. We're living Nobita's dream. Have a paper due? ChatGPT."

This cultural experience is directly relevant to this study's findings. The 89% of respondents who validated daily AI tool usage (Table 1) and the 86.3% who used AI for education (Table 19) are, in many ways, the same generation that grew up watching Nobita and who currently use ChatGPT before they open their textbooks. The meme is not just humour but it is a sociological mirror revealing how fast and unconsciously a generation has normalised its emotional and intellectual dependence on AI.

4.3.4 From Fiction to Reality

The most fascinating revelation about this cultural arc is the speed at which fiction has become a reality. In 2010, Chitti falling in love was a science fiction story. In 2024, a film about a man emotionally bonding with a robot was a Valentine's week romantic comedy. And in 2025, young generations are writing essays about feeling understood by ChatGPT. The emotional dynamics that this study's qualitative participants explained about feeling safe, unjudged, and comforted by AI are the same emotional dynamics that Indian and global cinema has been enacting for over a decade. This study highlights that the rehearsal is now becoming reality and the shift in psychological, ethical, and social implications demands urgent attention."

5. Challenges

While AI has proven to be one of the best innovations in the technology sector, it is essential to recognize and address the limitations and considerations associated with the use of AI in this domain.

1. **Lack of Emotional Understanding:** AI models may struggle to truly understand and process complex human emotions. Emotional nuances, personal experiences and distress are challenging for algorithms to grasp accurately.
2. **Risk of Misdiagnosis and Delay:** AI's overpraise and optimistic biases may invalidate or surpass the sense of early signs of critical and serious mental health conditions.
3. **Privacy and Data Security and Threats :** The individuals almost unanimously mentioned their concern regarding their personal and shared information being used to train the AI models as it is heavily dependent on the data it is trained upon.
4. **Constraints of NLP models:** AI and Machine Learning systems overly rely on the trend and pattern recognition so lack of information or misinterpretation, lack of context and misinformation can lead to biased or incorrect output or feedback.

5. **Emotional Dependency:** Over-dependence on AI may result in weakening of human interactions and processing of emotional state. It may develop a sense of comfort between humans and AI which would be difficult to rescind.
6. **The challenge of Explainability and Transparency in AI:** Explainability and Transparency are not only a technical challenge but also an ethical imperative. There are various complexities and constraints in explaining the decision making process of AI and NLP models. It points towards the issues of accountability, bias, user privacy and interpretability challenges emerging from the inherent complexity of these models could result in misleading and negative impact on user trust and adoption of AI for emotional expression.
7. **The Hallucination Problem:** One of the most critical risks of using AI for emotional support is AI hallucination where AI systems confidently generate false or incorrect information. When a user seeks emotional advice from an AI, a hallucinated response may not merely be incorrect but might also be harmful.
8. **The Black Box Problem:** It is the fundamental inability of users, and often developers, to understand how an AI arrives at a particular response. When a person shares emotional distress with an AI chatbot, they have no traceability into the reasoning, the training data, or the biases that resulted in the output. This study's findings reveal that 43.9% of respondents doubted AI's ability to understand emotions (Table 5) suggests awareness of this limitation, even if the technical term remains unfamiliar to most users.

6. Conclusion

The data analysis results indicate that social media is increasingly being used by the youth as a primary platform for emotional expression. While AI one must accept, is understood as a useful, non-judgmental support tool provisioning the necessary comfort to the youth in dire needs, especially with the anonymity it provides, the core findings reveal significant risks that must be addressed by the designers of AI models:

1. **Risk of Misdiagnosis/Delay:** The positive bias of AI can result in ethical risk by masking and making it difficult to notice, early serious issues like depression, making them "harder to notice". AI must be engineered to give unbiased and honest responses and opinions.
2. **Privacy vs. Comfort Trade-off:** Users experience emotional comfort from AI but acknowledge the "risky" practice of sharing data used to "train future models". Privacy-preserving techniques are critical and must be explored as the intimate experiences of the youth who seek support from AI cannot be used to train AI without their explicit consent, and if used it must be used judiciously, ensuring no risk will encountered by the youth sharing the information.
3. **Limitations of NLP/ML:** Current AI capability is limited to pattern recognition and lacks the "human touch" required to fully interpret complex emotional states and contextual language. Its inability to understand without detailed textual prompt providing detailed context of a situation as "human touch" as body language analysis is not present.

References

1. **boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. Yale University Press.**
2. Floridi, L., Cowls, J., Beltrametti, M., et al. (2018). AI4People—An ethical framework for a good AI society. *Minds and Machines*, 28(4), 689–707. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-018-9482-5>
3. Pennebaker, J. W., Boyd, R. L., Jordan, K., & Blackburn, K. (2015). *The development and psychometric properties of LIWC2015*. University of Texas at Austin.
4. Turkle, S. (2011). *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Basic Books.

5. Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism*. PublicAffairs.
6. 2023, <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/chatgpt-experiments-autoregressive-large-language-models-ai-llms-and-the-limits-of-reasoning-as-structured-summarization>
7. Karan Singhal, et al., “Toward expert-level medical question answering with large language models.”
8. Ethical AI Isn't to Blame for Google's Gemini Debacle by **Margaret Mitchell**
9. QuickStart Generative AI by Lightup Technologies
10. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enthiran>
11. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teri_Baaton_Mein_Aisa_Uljha_Jiya
12. <https://medium.com/@ssaumya334/we-all-became-nobita-and-chatgpt-is-our-doraemon-now-7c929c299eca>
13. <https://medium.com/@dirsyamuddin29/tracing-doraemons-influence-on-pop-culture-s-most-iconic-ai-personal-assistant-f85410dd3f9a>
14. <https://medium.com/@bhattacharjee.s.ej/leave-chatgpt-alone-death-of-effort-in-the-ai-generation-b59f5db43201>