

**CORRELATION BETWEEN AI THERAPY CHATBOTS AND ACADEMIC
STRESS REDUCTION AMONG PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS
AT BESTLINK COLLEGE OF THE PHILIPPINES**

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Abstract

In the Philippines, access to mental health services remains limited due to high therapy costs and a shortage of professionals. Therapy sessions can cost between ₱1,000 and ₱4,500 (Isla, 2023), while there are only three mental health professionals available per 100,000 people (De Villa, 2022). Consequently, AI therapy chatbots have emerged as accessible alternatives for stress management. This study is grounded in Digital Cognitive Behavioral Theory (dCBT), which supports the use of digital tools for stress management, and Self-Monitoring Theory, which highlights the role of self-awareness in emotional regulation. This study employed a correlational quantitative design to examine the relationship between AI therapy chatbot use and academic stress levels among 200 purposively selected psychology students (50 from each year level). Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire and a modified Academic Stress Scale (ASS), focusing on chatbot usage patterns, perceived effectiveness, and challenges encountered. The study revealed that most respondents—predominantly females aged 21–23 from middle-income backgrounds—frequently used AI therapy chatbots. These tools were generally rated as effective (mean = 3.27) and reliable (mean = 3.12), though their responses were perceived as somewhat generic (mean = 3.09). Respondents also reported high levels of academic stress, primarily attributed to poor teacher communication (mean = 2.42) and limited social support (mean = 2.31). Pearson correlation analysis indicated a weak but statistically significant negative correlation ($r = -0.31$, $p = 0.03$) between increased chatbot use and reduced stress levels. Based on the findings, it is recommended that AI therapy chatbots be enhanced to provide more personalized and emotionally responsive support. A student-friendly chatbot platform was developed on Facebook to offer online counseling and stress management, accompanied by a framework to guide further improvements in chatbot design. Educational institutions are encouraged to adopt such tools as supplementary mental health support, particularly in contexts where professional resources are limited.

Keywords: ai therapy chatbots, academic stress, mental health, digital cognitive behavioral therapy, self-monitoring theory