

Digital Interactive Agents for SFU Counselling Services



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BACKGROUND


- There is an increasing need for accessible mental health resources among Gen Z undergraduate students.
- “What are the undergraduate students’ issues in accessing SFU Counselling Services, including: receiving mental health counselling, scheduling an appointment, and obtaining self-help resources and information on counselling services?”
- “In what way the digital interactive agents can be helpful in completing the tasks?”

METHODS

- Online survey with 61 SFU undergrad students, aged $M=22$ ($SD = 2.2$). 49% (30/ 61) were international students. For 64% (39/61), English is not their first (mother-tongue) language. 21% (13/61) reported their English proficiency level as “Basic” or “Below Basic”.
- In-person interviews with 2 undergrad students.
- The survey & interviews asked their perception on the common factors influencing the use of interactive agents:

 Anthropomorphism
(Ability of digital agents to mimic human behaviours)

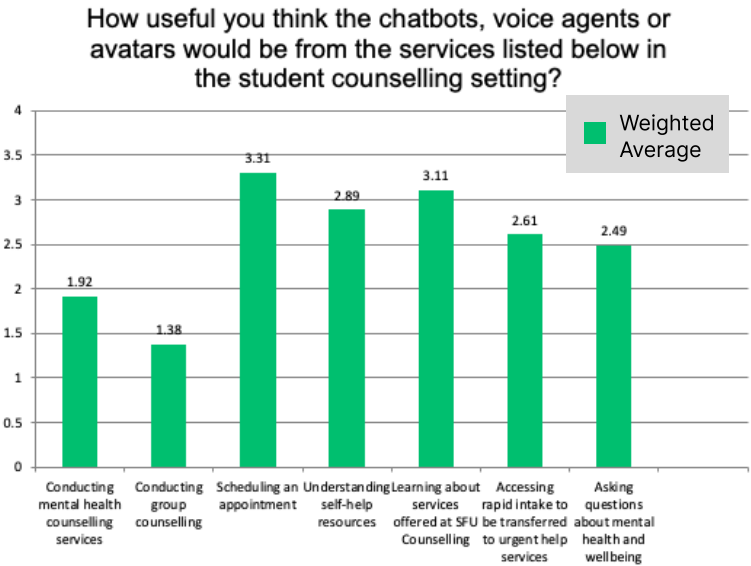
 Input/output modalities
(i.e., text, voice, video)

 Functionality
(i.e., user control, privacy, personalization).

RESULTS

64% (39/61) thought a chatbot could improve SFU Counselling Services.

This graph illustrates how they perceive it to be useful for administrative tasks.



Gen Z undergraduate students prefer face-to-face counselling sessions over online ones.



Contrary to the stereotypes of being digital natives, Gen Z undergraduate students still find value in face-to-face in-person services for its genuine emotional connection.

This suggests that the SFU Counselling web experience can be modified to increase accessibility to in-person services.

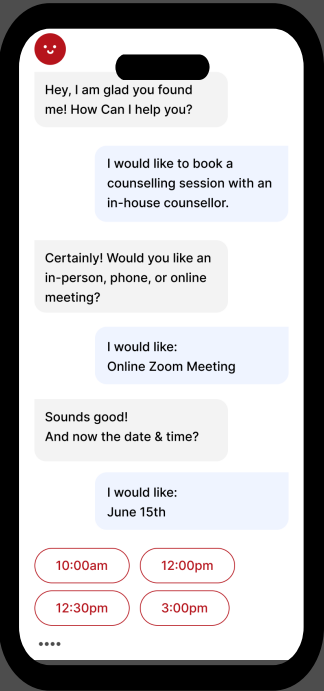
However, they recognize potential benefits of digital interactive agents for difficult administrative tasks, such as booking an appointment and accessing to relevant information.

“[A chatbot] tells me, “okay these are the people available or this is how you can contact us”...general information being out [from the chatbot] would be really helpful.”

Interviewed Participant #2



Scan to access the website with more details.



SFU Counselling Website Experience

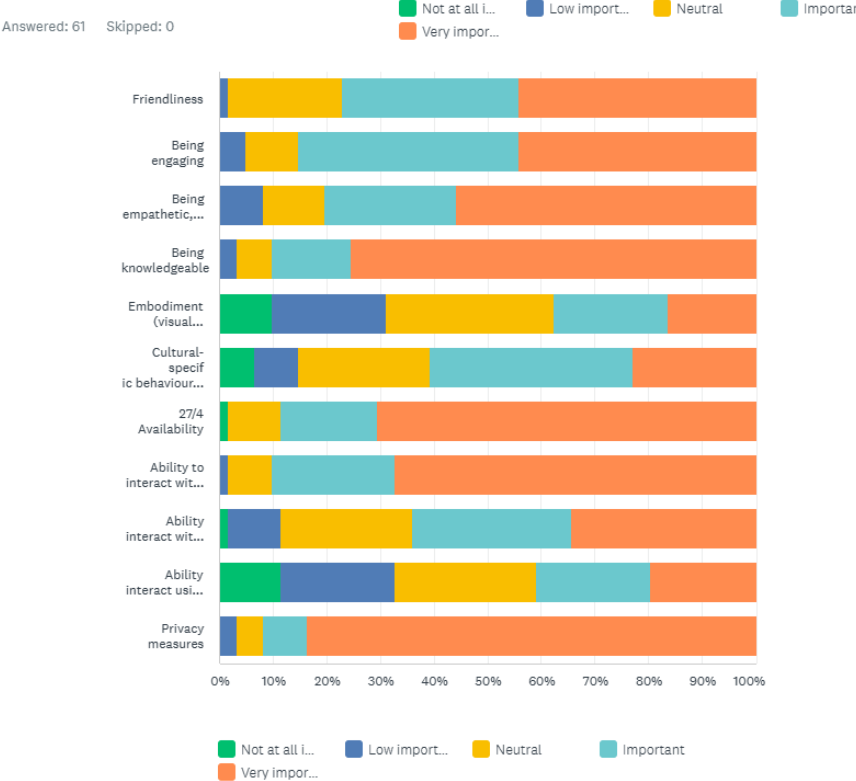
- 43% (20/61) previously used counselling services.
- Out of 20 students who received services:
- 20% (4/20) mentioned difficulty navigating website information (unsure what to look for initially).
- 25% (5/20) suggested more organized information on website/ registration system to improve SFU Counselling.

SFU Counselling Service Experience

- 43% (20/61) thought Face-to-face in-person mental health counselling SFU services is extremely important for students’ health and wellbeing.

Students’ Perception of Digital Interactive Agents

Please rate the importance of each of these qualities in such a digital interactive system.



- Students thought chatbots, voice agents, or avatars are helpful due to:
- 20% (12/61) Help with booking appointments
 - 18% (11/61) Help with resource navigation
- However, most expressed concerns were re:
- 38% (23/61) Lack of emotional connection/empathy/sensitivity

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