WONKHE

LAST NIGHT A CHATBOT EASED MY STRIFE

Exploring the role of technology in building student agency in wellbeing

In partnership with

salesforce

Research roundup

Existing research into the role chatbots can play in educational settings is overwhelmingly positive, particularly when it comes to students' wellbeing and confidence

- Primarily qualitative studies using a particular cohort of college or high school students.
- Participants ranged from 20-110 depending on studies, average was around 40ish students
- Much of the research from a Westernised education context, primarily US, UK, Australia and northern Europe.
- Students often younger, lot of the US-based research looked at high school seniors or new college students, with the assumption they were fresh from school
- Mixed methodologies used, including questionaires, some more prescribed, others with free text comments, interviews with those who opted in, focus groups with users
- Often the researchers had developed their own in-house chatbot, some did this in conjunction with student input
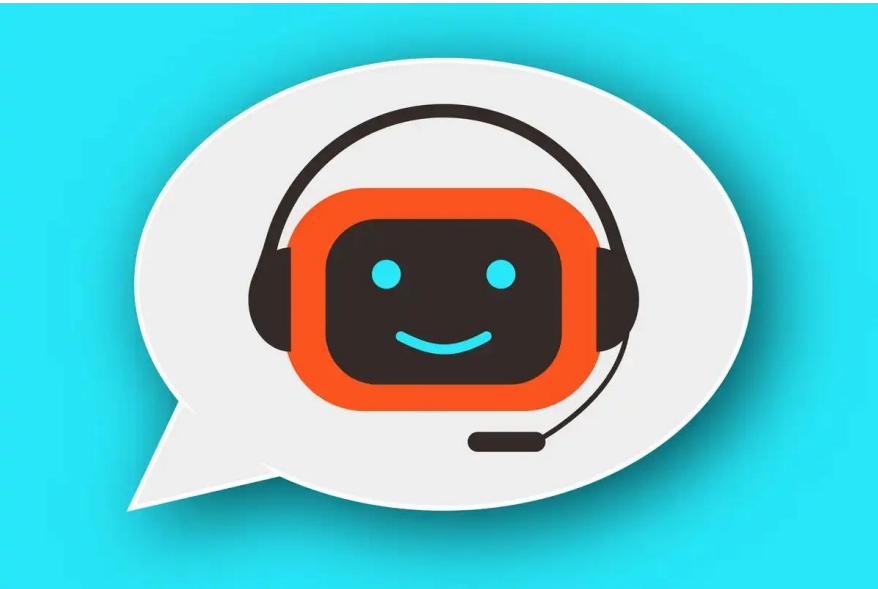
What students liked

- **Reduction of stigma:** students valued the chatbot's anonymity, some said they "felt safe" using it
- **24/7 availability:** students said the ease of accessing the chatbot made them feel as if someone was there when needed.
- Quick and easy: students could get answers they needed fast, saved admin burden and alleviated "daily struggles"
- **Information felt reliable and trustworthy.** There was an assumption from students that the specialised nature of a supportive chatbot (and because it's provided by their institution) that the information given was reliable and accurate.

"It was good to get knowledge directly instead of using Google and reading a lot of unnecessary text"
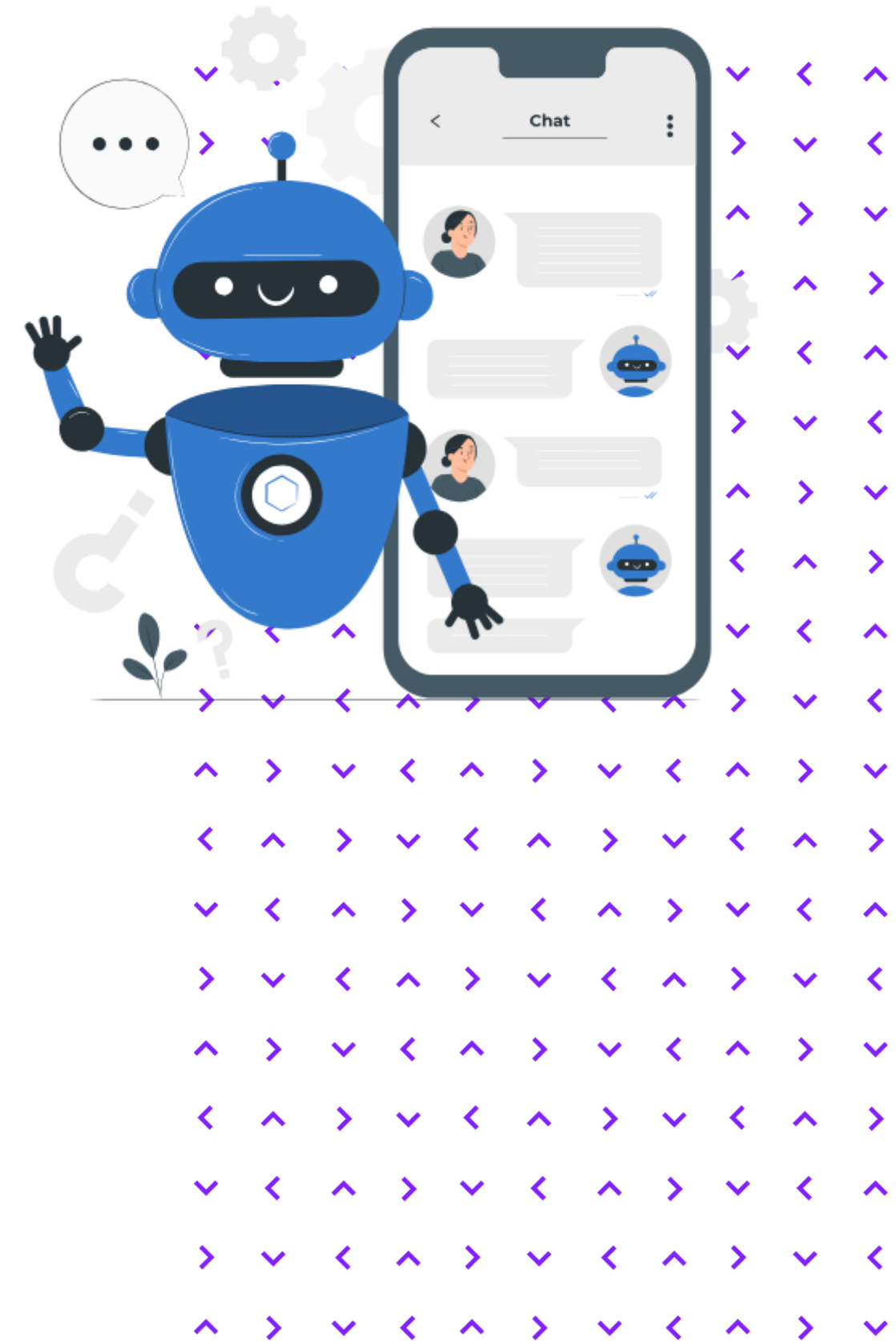
Benefits for students

- Increased student agency: *"[the chatbot] gives students the tools they need to both take care of their own mental health as well as giving them knowledge on when and how to seek professional help"*
- Information on pathways to seek help
- Develop mental health literacy and language by enabling students to understand their feelings, provide them with the words they may need to use to describe how they are feeling if they did want to seek support
- Advice on coping strategies and self-care

"The chatbot was at its core very supportive and positive and gave me the feeling that I was in control of my life and had the power to make changes if I just learned how"
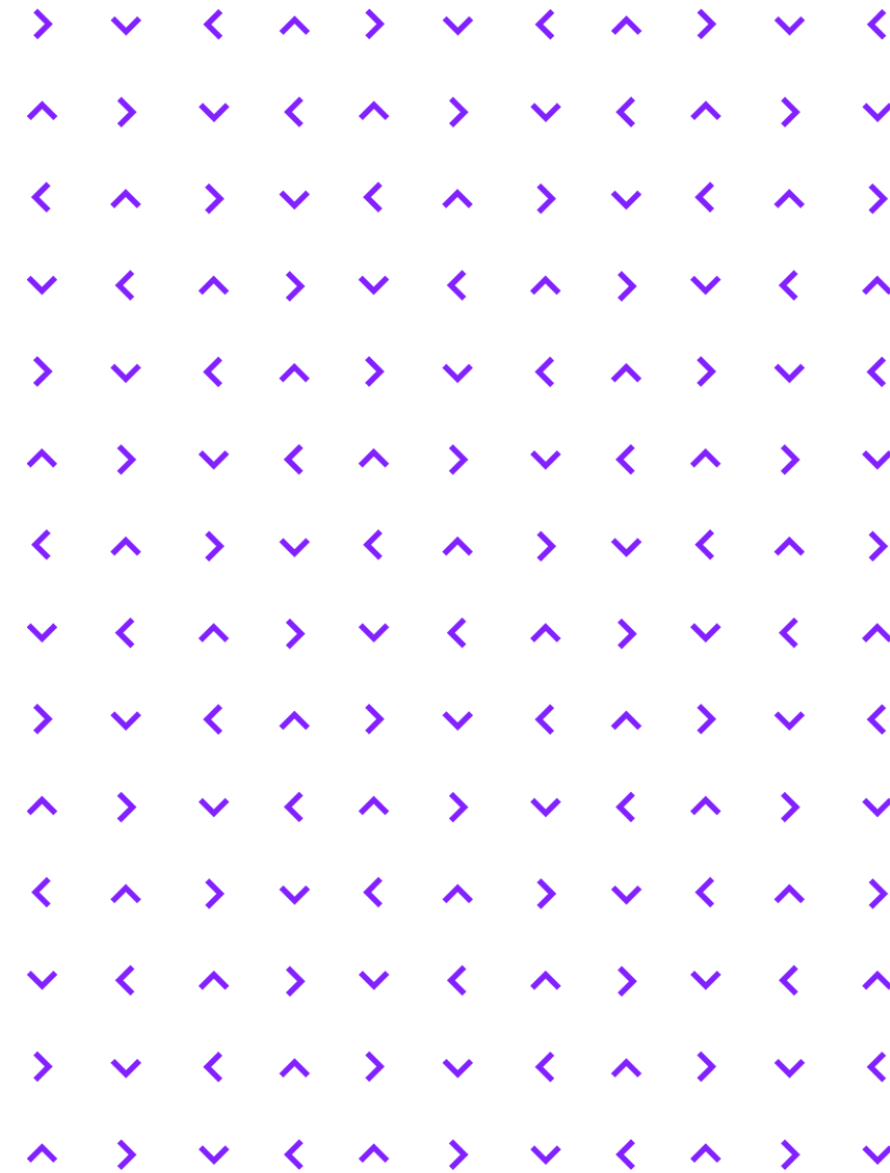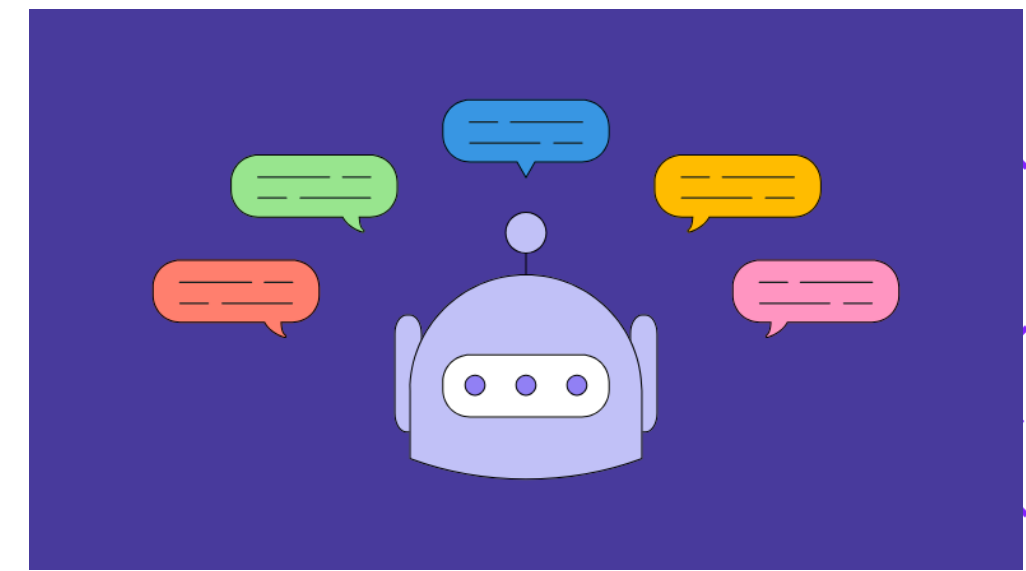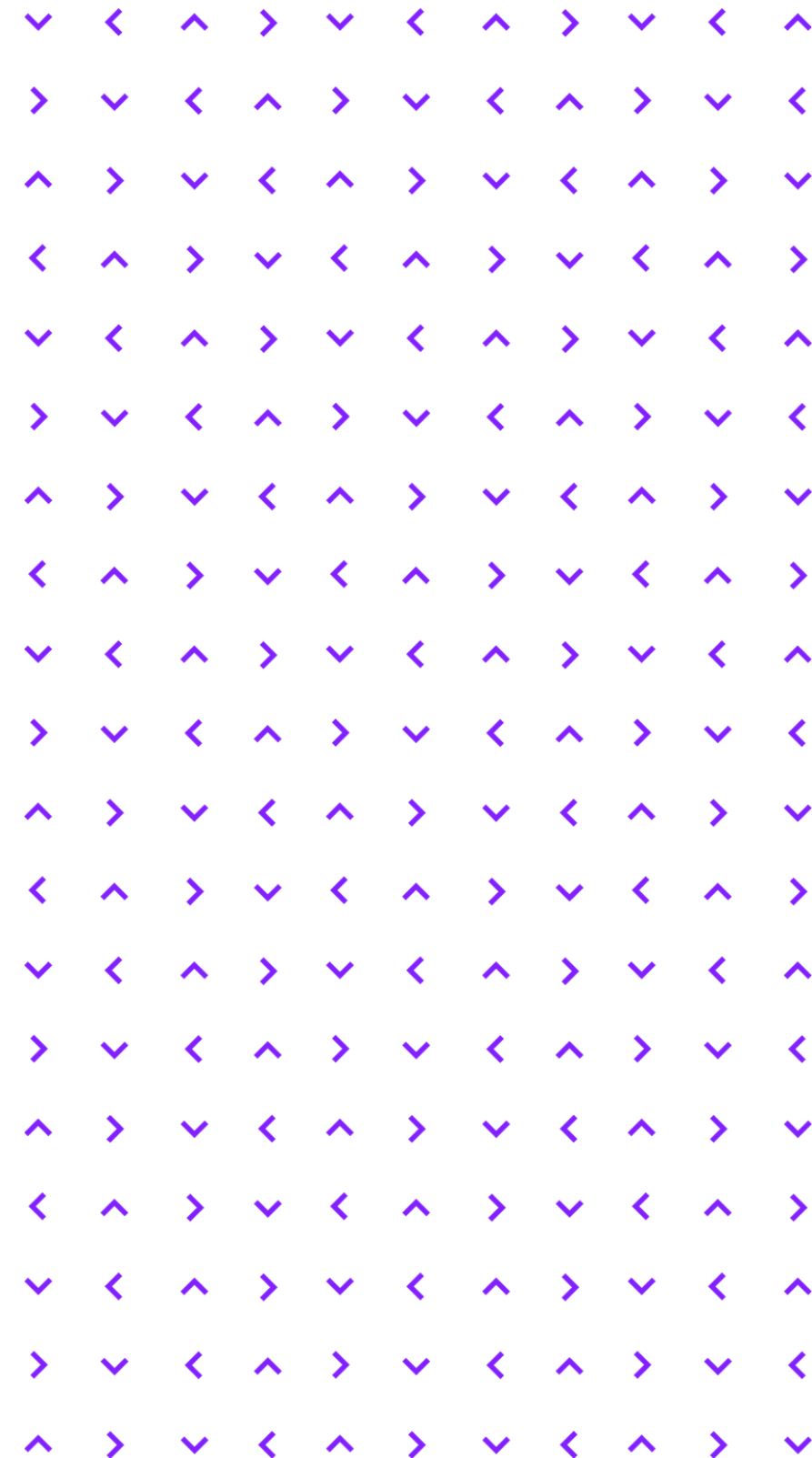
Limitations and risks

- Students did sometimes find the chatbot the researchers' created had limitations
- Made some feel lonely as this made them aware they were talking to a robot
- Chatbot's problem-solving design, i.e. to show routes to support, made some feel their feelings weren't being validated or listened to
- Students trusted the information the chatbot gave and sought reassurance the info had been vetted by experts, institutions will want to know what and where info is pulled from,
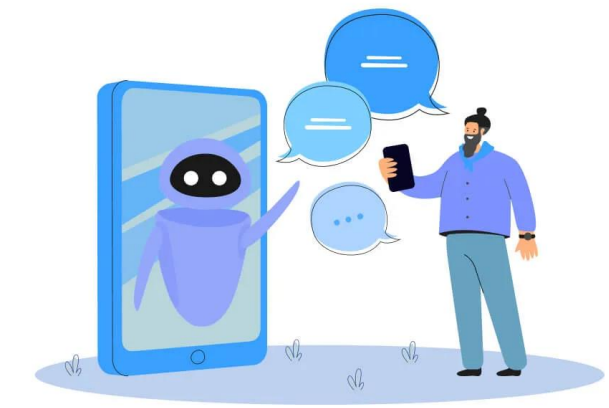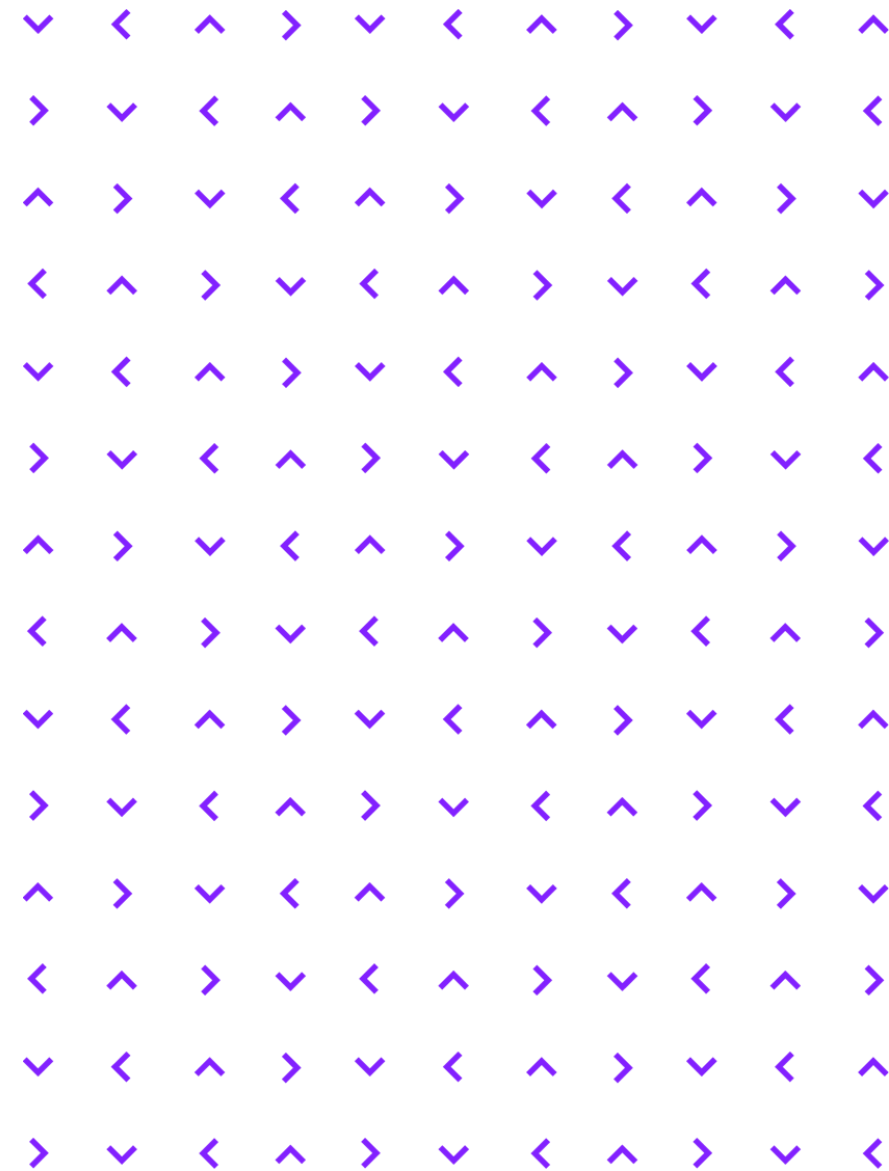
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