FROM ANXIETY TO HOPE: UNDERSTANDING THE ADOPTION OF AI COUNSELING TOOLS FOR ANXIETY MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

AI-powered chatbots are emerging as scalable solutions for managing anxiety symptoms, offering guided support in contexts with limited access to mental health services. Yet, adoption of these technologies remains uneven.

OBJECTIVES

Analyze how **Hope** shapes patient **acceptance of AI-based mental health counseling** chatbots.

METHOD

* **Cross-sectional Survey** with 310 adult Brazilians following guided use of ChatGPT-based mental health chatbot designed to provide anxiety-specific support

* conceptual approach grounded in **Snyder's Hope Theory**

* **Use of established scales** to measure Behavioral Intention, Attitude, Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, Self-Efficacy, Task-Technology Fit, Hope, and Trust

* **Structural Equations Modeling** (SEM) for direct and indirect effects

RESULTS
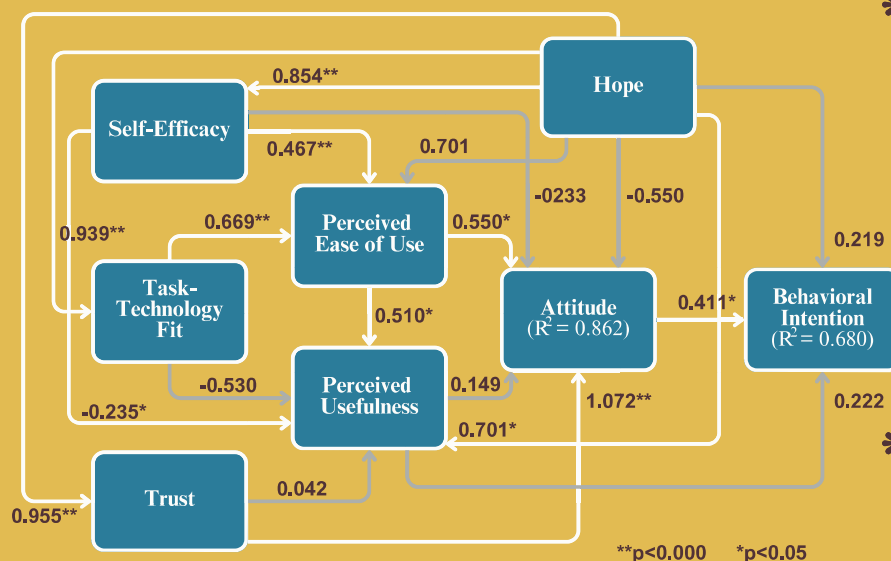
* Significant effects for these relationships:

  * **Hope** on **Usefulness** (0.701), **Self-Efficacy** (0.854), **Task-Technology Fit** (0.939), and **Trust** (0.955)
  * **Trust** on **Attitude** (1.072)
  * **Ease of Use** on **Attitude** (0.550) and **Usefulness** (0.510)
  * **Self-Efficacy** on **Ease of Use** (0.467) and **Usefulness** (-0.235)
  * **Task-Technology Fit** on **Ease of Use** (0.669)
  * **Attitude** on **Behavioral Intention** (0.411)

* The model could explain:

  * **86.2%** of the variance in **Attitude**
  * **68.0%** of the variance in **Behavioral Intention** to adopt AI-based mental health support chatbots.

CONCLUSIONS

* Hope...

  * Plays a defining role in AI-based counseling evaluation and acceptance.
  * Enhances usefulness, self-efficacy, task-technology fit, and trust.
  * Had the strongest effects, making traditional usability measures less predictive than affective-motivational factors.

* Practical Implications:

  * designing chatbot interactions that foster emotional engagement may increase adoption and improve treatment outcomes,
  * integrating hope-driven design principles into AI tools may promote earlier intervention, reduce treatment gaps, and support long-term adherence.

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