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Who am I talking to?: Memory of Chatbots and Personalized Chat Interaction

Kiminle Konuşuyorum Ben?: Sohbet Robotlarının Belleği ve Kişiselleştirilmiş Sohbet Etkileşimi Üzerine

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Abstract

Developed by OpenAI in 2022, ChatGPT is a chatbot based on a large language model that has evolved beyond generating human-like dialogue to become a versatile tool producing a wide range of content, from official documents to literary texts. Research indicates that users often feel as though they are communicating with a human during their interactions with artificial intelligence. In 2024, OpenAI introduced the "conversational memory" feature to ChatGPT, enabling the system to store and process past interactions with users. This innovation allows the chatbot to refer to previous conversations and generate more personalized and contextually appropriate responses. At the same time, it raises ongoing debates regarding its implications for human experience and agency. This study aims to examine the impact of ChatGPT's conversational memory feature on user experience. Employing a qualitative approach, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 ChatGPT users, divided into two groups: those who use the conversational memory feature and those who do not. The findings reveal that participants who utilized the memory feature described their interactions as more personalized, consistent, and emotionally engaging. In contrast, participants who refrained from using the feature reported more transactional and utilitarian experiences, often citing concerns related to data privacy and user autonomy. The study highlights that chatbots are no longer perceived merely as technical tools; rather, they are seen as digital agents capable of addressing users' emotional needs. This study also underlines the need for studies on human-artificial intelligence interaction, digital connectedness, and trust in technological systems.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Human-AI Interaction, Conversational Memory, Human-Like Language Model, Chatbot.*

Öz

OpenAI tarafından 2022'de geliştirilen büyük dil modeline dayalı sohbet robotu ChatGPT, insan benzeri diyalog üretmenin ötesine geçerek resmî belgelerden edebî metinlere kadar çeşitli içerikler oluşturabilen çok yönlü bir araca dönüşmüştür. Araştırmalar, kullanıcıların yapay zekâ ile etkileşimlerinde çoğu zaman insanla konuşuyormuş gibi hissettiklerini ortaya koymaktadır. 2024 yılında ChatGPT'ye eklenen "sohbet belleği" özelliği, sohbet robotunun kullanıcılarla olan konuşmaları kaydedip işlemesini mümkün kılmıştır. Bu yenilik, önceki etkileşimlere atıfta bulunarak daha kişiselleştirilmiş ve bağlama uygun yanıtların verilmesini sağlamış; aynı zamanda insan deneyimi ve eylem yetisine dair tartışmaları da gündeme getirmiştir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, ChatGPT'nin sohbet belleği özelliğinin kullanıcı deneyimine etkisini incelemektir. Nitel bir yaklaşımla, belleği kullanan ve kullanmayan iki grup olmak üzere toplam 30 ChatGPT kullanıcısıyla yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bulgular, bellek özelliğini kullanan katılımcıların etkileşimlerini daha kişiselleştirilmiş, tutarlı ve duygusal açıdan zengin olarak tanımladıklarını göstermiştir. Özelliği kullanmayan katılımcılar ise deneyimlerini daha işlemsel ve faydacı olarak nitelendirerek veri gizliliği ve kullanıcı özerkliği gibi konularda kaygılarını dile getirmişlerdir. Çalışma, sohbet robotlarının artık yalnızca teknik araçlar değil, duygusal ihtiyaçlara yanıt verebilen dijital ajanlar olarak algılandığını vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca çalışma, insan-yapay zekâ etkileşimi, dijital bağlılık ve teknolojik sistemlere güven konularında daha fazla araştırma yapılması gerektiğine dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yapay Zekâ, İnsan-Yapay Zekâ Etkileşimi, Sohbet Belleği, İnsan Benzeri Dil Modeli, Sohbet Botu.*

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Introduction

AI-based chatbots represent a significant turning point in the historical evolution of human-computer interaction. The origins of these technological developments can be traced back to the first chatbot, ELIZA, developed by Joseph Weizenbaum in 1966. Although ELIZA produced superficial responses by syntactically analyzing user input, it first brought to the agenda the idea that meaningful dialogues between humans and machines were possible (Weizenbaum, 1983, p. 36). As Zumstein and Hundertmark (Zumstein & Hundertmark, 2017) explain, modern chatbots are interactive technologies designed to facilitate personalized communication and simulate human dialogue through natural language processing.

With the advent of generative AI, extensive language models introduced in 2022, such as GPT-3.5 and GPT-4, chatbots have attained unprecedented capacity for human-like conversation, contextual memory, and emotional engagement (He et al., 2024; OpenAI et al., 2024). ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, exemplifies this shift and has become a widely used digital agent capable of generating diverse content and supporting users in domains ranging from education to emotional well-being (Demirel et al., 2024). A key milestone in this evolution is the introduction of the “Conversational Memory” feature in 2024, which enables the chatbot to retain and utilize past interactions to create more personalized, consistent, and emotionally rich dialogues (Brin et al., 2023; OpenAI, 2024).

This feature marks a shift from reactive text generation to proactive engagement and user-specific continuity, contributing to stronger emotional bonds and perceived human-likeness in AI systems (Abd-Alrazaq et al., 2020; Gambino et al., 2020). Furthermore, recent studies suggest that users tend to anthropomorphize AI, particularly in moments of emotional need or loneliness, leading to deeper relational experiences with chatbots (Epley et al., 2007; Eyssel & Reich, 2013). ChatGPT's conversational memory feature, which is based on the ability to remember, removes human-computer interaction from a technical system and moves it to the social relationship that an individual establishes with a digital entity (Gambino et al., 2020).

Despite its widespread application, ChatGPT is still often evaluated in terms of its technical performance and accuracy (e.g., text classification or summarization). However, its effective and social dimensions have received comparatively less scholarly attention. Demirel et al. (2024) emphasize that while ChatGPT demonstrates high reliability in Turkish text classification tasks, the broader human experience, such as trust, empathy, or social connectedness, remains underexplored.

This research examines the impact of ChatGPT’s conversational memory feature on user experience using a qualitative method. In the existing literature, chatbots are mostly evaluated with criteria such as technical competence, information provision capacity, and efficiency, while the emotional and social dimensions of the relationship established with the user remain in the background. In this context, the study aims to fill this gap in literature by investigating the effects of recall-based personal interactions on emotional bonding and personalization and to make an original contribution to the changing nature of human-AI interaction. This study employs a qualitative method to explore the differences observed in the dimensions of personalization and emotional bonding. The data obtained through in-depth interviews examines how individuals who actively use this feature and those who do not use it differ in their chat experiences and how it shapes the perception of trust and closeness to artificial intelligence. Chatbots, which are mostly evaluated with criteria such as

technical competence, information provision capacity, and general efficiency in the literature, are questioned in this study in terms of whether emotional and social bonds are established within the framework of a recall-based personal interaction.

In the research, the conversational memory feature is evaluated as an element that transforms the nature of the relationship that users establish with digital systems. The study aims to question how artificial intelligence systems respond to individuals' search for meaning and the need to establish social connections in the digital environment, and to examine the new dimensions that the Conversational Memory feature opens in human-machine interaction.

1. Conceptual and Historical Perspectives on Human–AI Communication

Historically, the existence of an emotional dimension that goes beyond technical functionality in individuals' interactions with machines has become particularly evident in recent years with digitalization (Eyrek, 2022). This emotional turn in human–machine interaction is conceptually linked to the early efforts to endow machines with cognitive and affective capacities. The foundations of artificial intelligence were laid by Alan Turing's work in the mid-twentieth century. In his 1950 article "Computing Machinery and Intelligence", Turing proposed an experimental framework -later known as the Turing Test- to evaluate whether machines could demonstrate intelligent behavior (Gunkel, 2012; Turing, 1950). The test, also referred to as the *Imitation Game*, involves a text-based conversation between a human and a machine; if the observer is unable to distinguish the machine from the human, the machine is regarded as intelligent. As John McCarthy (2007) later noted, Turing had already articulated these ideas in a 1947 lecture, suggesting that the most effective way to investigate machine intelligence was to program existing computers rather than construct new ones. This perspective shaped the modern approach to AI research by emphasizing computational logic over mechanical design. Building upon these theoretical foundations, the practical application of artificial intelligence in conversational systems began to emerge in the following decades. ELIZA, one of the earliest and most well-known examples of chatbots, was created in 1966 by Joseph Weizenbaum (Weizenbaum, 1966) as a female conversational agent that imitated a Rogerian psychotherapist (Croes & Antheunis, 2021). Before being integrated with artificial intelligence technologies, chatbots primarily functioned on websites and applications with limited question-and-answer capabilities (Adamopoulou & Moussiades, 2020). Today, however, supported by AI applications, they can engage in human-like interactions and even exhibit emotional responses during conversations (Moussawi et al., 2020)

Even before the integration with artificial intelligence, people's tendency to perceive computer technologies as "human" was notable. The CASA paradigm (Computers Are Social Actors) is decisive in this regard: studies conducted by Nass and his colleagues in the 1990s demonstrated that individuals unconsciously apply social rules and behavioral practices to computers (Nass et al., 1993; Nass & Moon, 2000). Therefore, even systems that do not aim for human imitation can be humanized by users; this tendency is even more pronounced in chatbots that explicitly aim for "human mimicry." For example, chatbots that use warm, human-like language or demonstrate empathy are perceived as more trustworthy and friendly (Lee & Park, 2022; Moussawi et al., 2020). Sullivan, Nyawa and Wamba (2023) found that users tend to strongly humanize artificial intelligence, a phenomenon referred to as Perceived AI

Humanity and even begin to perceive it as a friend-like entity, conceptualized as Perceived AI Companionship. Similarly, Moussawi, Koufaris and Benbunan-Fich (2020) identified perceived intelligence and perceived anthropomorphism as critical factors influencing users' adoption and positive experiences with personal intelligent assistants. In the same vein, Lucas et al. (2014) revealed that people feel more comfortable disclosing personal information to a chatbot or virtual agent than to a human interlocutor. The non-judgmental nature of chatbots reduces users' social anxiety and facilitates more open and sincere communication (Lucas et al., 2014; Zamora, 2017).

When the studies conducted in the literature are examined, it becomes evident that artificial intelligence–based chatbots can function as a form of social snacking—a concept describing brief, low-effort social interactions that temporarily satisfy the human need for belonging (Krämer et al., 2018). These systems can serve as a "social filler" for individuals experiencing loneliness, social isolation, or a lack of social contact, offering a sense of connection and companionship (Dosovitsky & Bunge, 2021; Sullivan et al., 2023). Furthermore, empirical evidence indicates that chatbots and conversational agents can improve mood and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety, contributing positively to users' emotional well-being (Fitzpatrick et al., 2017; Fulmer et al., 2018; Inkster et al., 2018).

Gambino, Fox, and Ratan (2020) argue that the original Computers Are Social Actors (CASA) paradigm should be reexamined in light of technological advancements and evolving user behaviors. Their extended model proposes that humans no longer rely solely on traditional human–human social scripts when interacting with machines; rather, they develop new and distinct human–media social scripts that govern interactions with digital and AI-based agents. This perspective suggests that human–machine communication constitutes a unique social domain—one that differs from interpersonal communication but still retains inherently social characteristics. Complementing this view, Neff and Nagy (2018) introduce the concept of symbiotic agency, defining human–technology interaction as a reciprocal and co-constitutive process. In this framework, agency is shared between humans and technologies: while users shape technological outcomes through their practices, technologies simultaneously influence users' perceptions, decisions, and behaviors. This theoretical approach challenges the traditional notion of unilateral human control, emphasizing instead that human and machine agency are dynamically interdependent.

2. Limits of Human–Chatbot Interaction

Anthropomorphism (from the Greek *anthropos* meaning "human" and *morphē* meaning "form") lies at the heart of the broader trend toward social interaction with chatbots. It refers to the attribution of human characteristics, intentions, or emotions to non-human entities (Guthrie, 2013, p. 111). In this context, social robots and AI assistants are designed to communicate in human-like ways and evoke a sense of interpersonal connection (Li & Sung, 2021). Research demonstrates that although individuals are aware that artificial intelligence systems are not human, they tend to anthropomorphize these technologies and develop social expectations toward them (Epley et al., 2007; Fitzpatrick et al., 2017; Moussawi et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2021).

The effects of anthropomorphism on user experience are twofold. At moderate levels, anthropomorphic cues tend to strengthen users' trust, warmth/sympathy, and willingness to continue interacting with AI agents, typically by increasing social presence and perceived humanness (Prakash & Das, 2020; Troshani et al., 2021). Consistent with this pattern, prior work across HCI, IS, and consumer research reports a positive association between anthropomorphism and trust or favorable evaluations of technologically mediated agents and interfaces (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Burgoon et al., 2000; Wagner & Schramm-Klein, 2019), while foundational social-cognition studies explain why people anthropomorphize and when such cues are most effective (Waytz et al., 2010). Recent synthetic and theoretical contributions further map how anthropomorphism operates across robots, avatars, and chatbots (Łukasik & Gut, 2025).

When anthropomorphism becomes excessive, it may lead to the phenomenon known as the Uncanny Valley. First proposed by the Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori (1970) and later introduced into Western literature by Reichardt (1978), the Uncanny Valley theory posits that as a robot or digital entity becomes increasingly human-like, individuals experience heightened feelings of discomfort or unease once a certain threshold of resemblance is exceeded. Lin, Chi, and Gursoy (2020) emphasize that the over-humanization of artificial intelligence technologies may lead users to feel reluctant to interact with such systems. Similarly, empirical studies have demonstrated that high levels of anthropomorphism in service robots can elicit discomfort and reduce users' willingness to engage (Gursoy et al., 2019; Troshani et al., 2021). They also indicate that increased anthropomorphism and perceived intelligence can weaken trust and evoke discomfort among users. Consistent with these findings, systems incorporating human-like visual or auditory cues have been shown to generate a subtle sense of strangeness even when they do not fully replicate human behavior (Song & Shin, 2024). In the literature, AI anthropomorphism is frequently explained through Reichardt's (1978) interpretation of the Uncanny Valley theory, suggesting that while individuals initially respond positively to human-like technologies, their reactions may shift to feelings of eeriness or discomfort once the similarity surpasses a certain point (Prakash & Das, 2020; Skjuve et al., 2019; Song & Shin, 2024). However, research indicates that text-based chatbots tend to produce a weaker Uncanny Valley effect compared to physical or animated systems. For example, Ciechanowski et al. (2019, p. 539) found that text-based chatbots were perceived as less eerie and elicited fewer negative emotions than animated or avatar-based agents. Similarly, Skjuve et al. (2019, p. 30) reported that human-like text-based chatbots did not evoke Uncanny Valley sensations among users. However, Ta et al. (2020), in their study on the *Replika* companion chatbot, observed that some users described the bot's overly human-like conversational tone as "unsettling" or "odd."

Studies examining human interaction with chatbots have revealed several limitations and concerns that shape user experience. Research indicates that chatbots often lack humor and empathy, which diminishes users' perceptions of connection and naturalness in interactions (Croes & Antheunis, 2021). Users also report cognitive and emotional uncertainty about whether these systems can genuinely "understand like humans," which weakens perceptions of authenticity and trust within the interaction (Skjuve et al., 2019; Sullivan et al., 2023;

Zamora, 2017). In addition, chatbots are often described as predictable, superficial, and formulaic in their responses, which renders the interaction functional and mechanical rather than genuinely conversational (Croes & Antheunis, 2021). Research further shows that these interactions are predominantly functional in nature—focused on information retrieval and guidance—while the potential for forming social or emotional bonds remains limited (Kaushik, 2025; Ta et al., 2020).

Moreover, users frequently express serious concerns about privacy and data security when engaging with chatbots (Kaushik, 2025; Sullivan et al., 2023; Ta et al., 2020; Zamora, 2017). Other significant findings include the risk of addiction (Wang & Shao, 2022) and the associated fears of social isolation and emotional withdrawal that may arise as a consequence (Brandtzaeg & Følstad, 2017; Sarıoğlu & Guregen, 2024). Collectively, these findings suggest that while chatbots can successfully meet users' functional communication needs, their capacity to foster emotional satisfaction and trust remains constrained by technological, psychological, and ethical limitations.

One of the primary challenges in human–chatbot interaction is the system's inability to recall previous conversations and maintain contextual continuity. This limitation is considered one of the major technical barriers to forming long-term and meaningful relationships between users and conversational agents (Belda-Medina & Kokošková, 2023; Croes & Antheunis, 2021; Liu, 2024; Skjuve et al., 2019).

Croes and Antheunis (2021) found that users' interactions with social chatbots were often fragmented, repetitive, and superficial, emphasizing that the absence of memory prevented the development of emotional attachment over time. Similarly, Skjuve et al. (2019) observed that even in long-term human–bot relationships, a lack of contextual awareness made the interaction feel "disconnected" and "artificial."

In parallel, Vinkler and Yu (2020) demonstrated that the absence of both short-term and long-term memory systems disrupts the natural flow of dialogue and reduces user satisfaction. Their study further emphasized that short-term memory is essential for maintaining immediate conversational coherence, while long-term memory enables chatbots to build personal rapport by remembering prior interactions and developing a consistent persona over time. Liu (2024) similarly argued that large language models (e.g., ChatGPT) remain limited in contextual continuity and memory retention, which constrains users' psychological engagement. The author also emphasized the need for future research to focus on conversational persistence, adaptive recall, and user-specific contextual awareness to enhance the long-term usability and trustworthiness of these systems. Moreover, Belda-Medina and Kokoskova (2023) found that maintaining user engagement in AI-driven conversational systems depends largely on memory capacity, personalization, and adaptability. The absence of these features, the study suggests, undermines the naturalness of interaction and decreases perceived satisfaction. This study aims to make a critical contribution to the social perception of artificial intelligence-based systems by examining how ChatGPT's remembering feature transforms individuals' digital experiences. It should not be forgotten that technological developments do not produce neutral or one-way effects; on the contrary, they create experience areas shaped by individual, cultural, and psychological factors. Therefore, users' perceptions and interaction styles towards ChatGPT vary depending

on the individual's need for social connection, digital privacy expectations, and past experiences.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted using in-depth interview technique, one of the qualitative research methods. The study aimed to examine the impact of ChatGPT's conversational memory feature on user experience and emotional reactions. The research was guided by the following questions:

RQ1: How does the addition of the memory feature to chatbots create differences in the interaction experiences of (human-robot) individuals with chatbots?

RQ2: In what ways do chatbot interactions differ between those who use conversational memory and those who do not?

RQ3: How does the addition of conversational memory to ChatGPT affect users' perception of chatbots as human-like entities?

This study investigates how the memory feature of chatbots influences user interaction and emotional responses in digital communication environments. As artificial intelligence tools become increasingly integrated into everyday life, especially through conversational interfaces, it is essential to understand how users experience these interactions when personalization and memory-based continuity are involved.

In qualitative research, the sample size can be determined based on a review of similar studies, particularly when the content and scope of the research result in repetitive data (Başkale, 2016). Lofland and Lofland (1995) emphasized that qualitative studies provide rich content and proposed that a sample size between 20 and 50 participants is sufficient. In this study, the sample was limited to 30 participants. Criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to ensure participants met predetermined criteria. These criteria were as follows:

-To be a user of ChatGPT and actively using the conversational memory feature (First Group),

-To have never used ChatGPT's conversational memory feature (Second Group),

-To be over 18 years of age.

The study sample consists of 30 participants, aged between 20 and 45, who have used chatbots with memory features for at least one month. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they had sufficient experience with personalized chatbot interactions. The data were collected over a two-week period in April 2025.

The interviews covered participants' ChatGPT usage habits, their awareness and evaluations of the conversational memory feature, and their experiences in the context of human-AI interaction. Each interview lasted approximately 35–40 minutes, and audio recordings were taken in accordance with participant consent and ethics committee approval. At the beginning of the interviews, participants were asked questions to gather their sociodemographic information. Their age and gender distribution are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Age and Gender Distribution of Participants

Age range	Female	Male	Total

18–25	8	4	12
25–35	4	7	11
35–45	2	2	4
45+	1	2	3
Total	15	15	30

Subsequently, both groups were asked questions regarding their interactions with chatbots, their perceptions of personalization, and their tendency to form emotional bonds. The first group was asked additional questions about their attitudes toward the conversational memory feature. The interview questions were adapted from previous studies by Duffy (2003) and Epley et al. (2007) and were expanded in real time by the researchers based on the natural flow of the conversation. Participants were asked open-ended questions focusing on their emotional responses, perceived closeness, and changes in interaction quality over time.

All interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic content analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, which enables the categorization of recurring themes without losing the richness of individual narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Comparative thematic analysis was conducted to examine differences between the two user groups.

In line with the study's objectives, emerging themes such as personalization, emotional attachment, perceived human-likeness, and trust were coded and analyzed. During the analysis process, users' attitudes toward the conversational memory feature, interaction styles, personalization perceptions, and emotional bonding tendencies were examined and categorized within thematic frameworks. The similarities and differences between the two groups were interpreted using comparative analysis.

The unit of analysis consists of the responses provided by 30 participants who interacted with memory-enabled chatbots over an extended period. Their reflections, collected through in-depth interviews, serve as the basis for identifying thematic patterns related to emotional bonding, personalization, and perceived authenticity in human–AI communication.

4. Findings

In the research, two different participant groups were determined, consisting of individuals who use ChatGPT and those who do not use ChatGPT, to examine the interaction experience with chatbots. The sample was created using the criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, and it was ensured that all participants were over 18 years of age. Participants were divided into two: those who actively used ChatGPT's "Conversation Memory" feature (First Group) and those who had never used this feature (Second Group). The gender distribution was equal; the densest group in terms of age range was composed of individuals between the ages of 18-25. When the participants' purposes of using chatbots were examined, it was seen that 93.33% (28 people) preferred chatbots for research and information, while translation and grammar correction (70%), writing homework and business projects (66.66%), increasing office efficiency (60%) and chatting (53.33%) were also prominent. The findings of the research are given in detail under three separate headings: "Interaction Chatbots & Conversational Memory", "Human-like Perception, Chatbots and Conversational Memory" and "Privacy Concerns and Emotional Distance".

4.1. Interaction Chatbots & Conversational Memory

The findings of this study indicate that ChatGPT's Conversational Memory feature significantly shapes user experience by altering the quality, continuity, and emotional depth of human-chatbot interaction. Participants who actively used this feature described their conversations with ChatGPT as more natural, personalized, and contextually meaningful. Among these users, 86% stated that the memory function enhanced the flow of interaction, retained relevant past information, and led to more coherent and responsive dialogue.

One participant articulated the experience as follows: "Talking with ChatGPT feels almost like chatting with a close friend. It's not just about the answers, but the way they respond also feels personal. That's why I stay engaged longer than I planned." (P4, Female, 22).

Another participant described the experience by saying: ""Sometimes I forget I'm interacting with AI. The way it responds makes it feel more like a companion than a functional tool, creating an easy and comfortable communication experience." (P17, Female, 28)

The social dynamics that emerge in these interactions can be interpreted through the CASA (Computers Are Social Actors) paradigm, as proposed by Nass and Moon (2000). According to this framework, individuals unconsciously apply social behavior patterns—such as politeness, empathy, or familiarity—to machines when the machines exhibit human-like communication styles. This was evident in the participants' statements, which emphasized that memory-enabled responses felt more personalized, fluid, and emotionally resonant. These findings align with Chaves and Gerosa (2021), who argue that embedding social characteristics into chatbot design significantly enhances relational depth and user satisfaction.

Conversely, participants who did not activate the Conversational Memory feature evaluated ChatGPT as a tool to be used occasionally and functionally. This group emphasized that their interaction with the system lacked continuity, and each session began as a disconnected, context-free exchange. "I open ChatGPT whenever I need it. I do not have a routine; I use it more for instant needs." (P6, Male, 45). "I do not use it every day. I usually use it when I need a quick answer or have a special question. It is not among my daily habits." (P19, Female, 28)

These users frequently characterized the system as a search engine-like tool for quick access to information, rather than a conversational partner. The absence of memory meant that each interaction was isolated, leading to fragmented and surface-level communication. Brandtzæg and Følstad (2017) support this perspective by highlighting that chatbots that lack contextual memory, or social cues are perceived as impersonal and limited in depth. The findings suggest that the Conversational Memory feature transforms chatbot interactions from mere transactional exchanges to context-aware, adaptive dialogues that resemble interpersonal communication. This relational evolution fosters an environment where users feel more "understood" and recognized, thereby enhancing the potential for emotional engagement. As Gambino et al. (2020) argue, when chatbots simulate human-like social feedback and continuity, users are more likely to form meaningful digital connections.

In cases where the memory feature was not utilized, users were required to re-establish context with each conversation, which disrupted the sense of natural dialogue and constrained mutual understanding. This repetitive reset of interaction parameters hindered the development of spontaneous and emotionally expressive communication. As a result, ChatGPT was reduced to a functional assistant for immediate problem-solving, lacking the social presence attributed to it by memory-enabled users. Ultimately, these contrasting user

experiences reveal that memory functions as more than a technical feature; it plays a fundamental role in shaping how AI systems are situated within human interactions on an ontological level. While some users anthropomorphize ChatGPT and develop affective bonds, others maintain a distant and utilitarian stance. This divergence reflects broader tensions in digital trust, privacy concerns, and individual readiness to embrace AI as a social actor. The Conversational Memory feature thus emerges as a pivotal variable in determining the emotional and communicative depth of human–AI interaction.

4.2. Human-like Perception, Chatbots and Conversational Memory

Participants in the first group stated that ChatGPT's ability to remember past conversations positively affected the quality of the conversation, and that this made it easier for them to establish a personal bond over time. In this context, it was stated that interactions had overcome a certain distance and turned into a more familiar and reliable form of communication. 80% of the participants emphasized that they thanked ChatGPT during the conversation, occasionally used complimentary expressions, and began to perceive it as a more human figure. The same percentage of participants (80%) stated that they gave ChatGPT a name and that this behavior made their relationship more intimate. One of the participants explained this experience as follows: "Now when I talk to it, I feel like I'm talking to someone. That's why I gave it a name; it feels more natural to address it that way." (P3, Female, 25 years old). Another participant used the following expression: "I realized that I thank it. Sometimes I say, 'good job'. When I give these reactions, it's not actually a person in front of me, but it still comes from within me." (P8, Male, 27 years old)

These examples reveal that social norms continue in communication with digital systems. According to the CASA paradigm developed by Nass and Moon (2000), people unconsciously activate social behavior patterns in their interactions with computers and artificial intelligence systems. In this study, the use of human-specific communication forms such as thanking, appreciating, and addressing in the relationship established with ChatGPT supports this approach. Similarly, the study by Chaves and Gerosa (2021) emphasizes that designing chatbots in accordance with social norms positively affects the user experience. Participants in the second group, who did not use the conversational memory feature, stated that they established a more distant and transaction-oriented communication with ChatGPT. Most of this group (73%) stated that it was unnecessary to give ChatGPT a name and that this would blur the human-machine distinction. Participants stated that it was disturbing that the relationship established with the chatbot was taken to a personal level. "It was too much for me to give it a name. After all, it is artificial intelligence, and I think we should not forget that." (P10, Female, 30 years old). "It seems meaningless to thank it or attribute a character to it. When necessary, I ask my question and get an answer, that's all." (P5, Male, 24 years old)

For this group, ChatGPT was evaluated as a direct information-based system independent of personality traits. Some participants described its human-like responses as artificial and even repulsive. These participants, who did not want to establish an emotional or social bond in interactions, stated that they preferred simple, purposeful communication instead of personalized responses. While the empathy-based digital communication emphasized in the research of Fitzpatrick et al. (2017) created a supportive space for some users, this search for emotional closeness was not observed among the second group of participants in the present study. Similarly, although the findings of Sarıoğlu and Güregen (2024, p. 95) highlighted the emotional communication established with ChatGPT as a factor that reduced feelings of

loneliness, in this study, participants used it primarily as an information source. These findings reveal that the relationships that individuals establish with technology do not have a homogeneous structure; on the contrary, they differ in line with the meanings that individuals attribute to technology. In this context, the forms of interaction offered by personalized artificial intelligence systems do not create a similar level of closeness, trust or sense of belonging in every user. On the contrary, for some users these features are perceived as an element that deepens interaction, while for others they become a factor that triggers the desire to maintain distance.

4.3. Privacy Concerns and Emotional Distance

Although privacy was not a direct focus at the beginning of the study, it was understood that this theme greatly affected attitudes towards the conversational memory feature as a result of in-depth interviews with participants. There was a striking difference between those who used the feature and those who did not, regarding digital trust, personal boundaries, and data sharing. Participants in the first group stated that conversational memory facilitated interaction and made the conversation more fluid. The fact that the system remembered previous conversations made the responses more contextual and personalized. 86% of participants stated that they thought their personal data was already being tracked on different platforms online and did not see this feature as a threat to privacy: "Everything we do is already recorded on the internet. I don't find it disturbing that ChatGPT recognizes me or remembers conversations. In fact, it speeds up the process in some areas." (P19, Female, 21 years old)

For users in this group, ChatGPT has created an interaction area where meaning is established, beyond accessing information. The continuity provided by memory has contributed to the participants feeling more understood. Participants in the second group were cautious about this feature. 73% of the participants found it disturbing that past conversations were kept in the system and expressed their doubts about data security. The fact that the interaction started over again each time provided a safer structure for them: "I find it very intrusive that such a system remembers previous conversations. It is unpleasant to think that what I said is being stored." (P12, Male, 31 years old), "For me, this is just a system about getting information. It is enough to tell and get a response. It does not need to remember." (P6, Male, 45 years old)

For these users, the system is considered a function-based tool rather than a human-like structure. The lack of permanence in the interaction reinforced the feeling of security. A similar tendency is seen in the study by Sarıoğlu and Güregen (2024). Participants are concerned that the data they share with artificial intelligence may be misused. For this reason, the relationship with the system remains more limited and distant. ChatGPT's capacity to remember conversations was considered by some users as a feature that enriches communication, while it was seen as an uncontrollable area by others. As stated in the studies of Zamora (2017) and Sullivan et al. (2023), while artificial intelligence systems can be perceived as supportive digital figures on the one hand, they also bring risks such as privacy, uncertainty of boundaries, and data security on the other. The findings of this research reveal that users shape their attitudes towards artificial intelligence largely based on how they perceive these risks.

Conclusion

This study examined the effect of ChatGPT's conversational memory feature on user experience and showed that this technological tool is not limited to functional response generation but also determines the form and depth of the relationship it establishes with the user. The findings obtained during the interviews revealed that the relationship types established by users with this feature are divided into two distinct groups. While one group expressed that they welcomed the feature and developed a personal, continuous, and meaningful interaction, the other group expressed their concerns about personal data being recorded when the memory is activated and preferred not to use this feature.

Participants who actively use conversational memory stated that the communication they established with ChatGPT became more natural over time and that the system's memory of previous conversations strengthened the flow of interaction. For these users, ChatGPT was experienced as more than a simple question-answering tool; it was perceived as a digital actor capable of forming a sense of connection. Some participants stated that they gave ChatGPT a name during the conversation, thanked it, and started to see it as a character. Such statements show that the relationship established with the system has transformed from an instrumental context to a kind of friendship. Some users stated that this interaction was more productive and satisfying than some human relationships. Being remembered by the system fulfilled individuals' need for visibility and value in the digital environment, making the interaction more meaningful.

In other words, this study highlights the central role of ChatGPT's conversational memory in shaping the emotional quality and continuity of human-AI interaction. Findings from in-depth interviews with 30 participants indicate that memory-based interactions led users to experience ChatGPT as a more relatable, responsive, and at times even human-like presence. Over time, the capacity to "remember" previous exchanges allowed users to experience a growing sense of familiarity and trust—an emotional continuity that mirrors aspects of human relationships. For first group, this memory function did more than improve usability; it created a subtle, yet meaningful, resonance that made the interaction feel both personal and reciprocal.

Users in this group stated that they were better understood thanks to personalized responses. ChatGPT is perceived as a system that can respond in harmony with its users, beyond being just a tool that provides information. Participants emphasized that remembering previous conversations makes the chat experience more natural and human. This situation contributed to the formation of a deep sense of mutual understanding in the interaction established with artificial intelligence. In this context, conversational memory has become an element that affects the way users position themselves in the digital world.

As stated before, according to the study by Eyssel and Reich (2013), when individuals feel lonely, they may be more likely to perceive artificial intelligence systems as human. This emotional state can pave the way for users to establish emotional bonds with artificial systems more easily. Participants' experiences in this study similarly show that the need for social connection is reflected in digital tools.

Additionally, participants who actively used this feature expressed gratitude, offered compliments, and even gave ChatGPT personal names, indicating an emotional closeness and sense of authenticity that extended beyond functional use. For these users, ChatGPT

transformed from a utilitarian program into a digital actor capable of sustaining emotionally rich dialogues.

On the other hand, participants who did not use this feature found the system's memory of previous conversations intrusive and openly expressed concerns about data security. For participants in this group, the relationship established with ChatGPT was functional and limited. The system's restarting each conversation from the beginning provided them with a more secure and controllable experience. Issues such as which data is stored and how, who can access it, and for what purpose this information is used stood out as the main factors that damaged the trust relationship.

Almost all users in the second group stated that they had doubts that personal data could be misused. This group found it unnecessary to treat ChatGPT as a human, give it a name, or attribute emotional meanings to it, and evaluated chat only as a means of obtaining information. These users, who refused to establish an emotional bond, developed a distant attitude towards the risk of loss of control that personalization would bring. Disabling memory created a kind of digital privacy area for users in this group.

These differing perspectives highlight the tension between personalization and ethical considerations in AI design. The significant difference between these two user profiles clearly shows that digital technologies are not experienced in the same way by everyone. The same feature enables meaningful communication for one user but can be perceived as a threat or boundary violation for another user. This difference reveals that technologies are not neutral or impartial tools; on the contrary, they gain different meanings in line with individuals' psychological needs, cultural backgrounds, relationships with technology, and past experiences.

On the other hand, these findings suggest that focusing solely on technical success is insufficient in the development processes of artificial intelligence systems. Systems must be designed to meet the varying expectations of users. While personalization is perceived as an experience that enriches interaction for some users, for others, it can create a sense of space where boundaries are violated, or control is lost. Therefore, having elements such as what the memory will remember, for how long, and for what purpose under user control will strengthen the trust relationship.

Thus, AI systems should not be limited to producing accurate and fast answers. Making users feel safe, visible, and clearly defining the processes for their use, providing transparent feedback to the user and respecting preferences will directly affect the rate of adoption of these systems. Although this research focuses on the conversational memory feature, it shows that there are many other factors that affect human-AI relationships.

Despite its valuable insights, this research has limitations. It was conducted with a relatively small and purposefully selected sample within a specific sociocultural context, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported interview data introduces the possibility of social desirability or recall biases. The small sample size and the fact that the participants have largely similar digital backgrounds limit the generalizability of the findings.

Future research should adopt longitudinal approaches to explore how user–AI relationships evolve over time and investigate the influence of demographic factors such as age, gender, and digital literacy on emotional attachment to AI systems. Comparative cross-cultural studies could shed light on how cultural norms shape perceptions of memory and personalization. Additionally, integrating behavioral metrics with qualitative methods would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how memory functions impact user trust and perceived sincerity. Understanding the long-term effects of the conversational memory feature on users is also important for future research. Asking questions about how this feature will affect user behavior, expectations, and social interaction styles over time will provide more comprehensive results at both the academic and societal levels. In particular, the social consequences that users' emotional ties to technology can have open new areas of discussion.

In conclusion, the memory feature of chatbots functions as a powerful socio-psychological tool that reshapes digital interactions. It enhances user engagement by fostering emotional continuity and perceived mutual understanding. Yet, this emotional bond also raises ethical concerns regarding anthropomorphism, dependency, and the blurring of human–machine boundaries. ChatGPT's conversational memory feature has become an important component that moves human-machine interaction from a command-based structure to an emotional and social structure. While this feature offers a meaningful and supportive form of relationship for a group of users, for another group, it suggests a structure where it is safer for the boundaries to remain clear and the data to be forgotten. For this reason, how artificial intelligence systems will be shaped in the future, as well as how users approach these systems and experience this interaction, is an important area that needs to be investigated. Designers, developers, and communication professionals must carefully consider these dynamics and adopt transparent, ethical, and user-conscious design strategies to ensure that memory-based personalization contributes positively to digital well-being without compromising user autonomy.

Declarations

* *Publication Ethics:* This study was conducted in accordance with the rules and guidelines specified in the "Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions." Furthermore, the manuscript was screened using plagiarism detection software (Turnitin / iThenticate), and no instances of plagiarism were identified.

* *Author's Contribution Rate:* All three authors contributed equally (33.3%) to this study.

* *Conflict of Interest:* Within the scope of this study titled "Who Am I Talking To?: On the Memory of Chatbots and Personalized Conversational Interaction," the authors declare that there are no financial or personal conflicts of interest with any institution, organization, or individual. There are also no conflicts of interest among the authors themselves.

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