

BLINDED BUT BIASED

Students Prefer Chatbot — Until They Know It Is One

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Sparking Joy and Discovery in a World of AI

Full study: Lambert et al. (2026), Journal of Nursing Education · doi: 10.3928/01484834-20260216-01

Background & Study Aim

Why study DNP student perceptions of an AI chatbot?

- DNP students need statistical support for capstone projects — typically only one master's-level stats course (AACN, 2006).
- ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2022) shifted higher education; nursing has begun adopting AI for simulation
- Prior work shows reviewers prefer ChatGPT writing when blinded (Pressman et al., 2025)
- Trust and bias drive whether students will adopt it (Choudhury & Shamszare, 2023).
- **AIM: Compare DNP student ratings of a custom-trained chatbot vs. a statistics professor and a GA**

Methods

Randomized, blinded, within-subjects pilot (IRB 2024-0764)

- Sample: N = 7 DNP students at a Midwestern R1 College of Nursing; recruited by email, fall 2024 – spring 2025.
- Students submitted capstone-related stats question via REDCap (analysis choice, interpretation, data management).
- Three blinded responders — statistics professor, trained doctoral GA, and a custom GPT — each answered once; response order randomized per protocol.
- Custom GPT (“Chatbot for DNP Statistics Consultation”, ChatGPT Plus): trained on PI-authored slides, tips, and Q&A drawn from 15+ years of DNP biostats consulting (Lambert, 2020).
- Follow-up REDCap survey (1–5 Likert): helpfulness, satisfaction, likelihood-of-use rank; students also guessed which response was the chatbot.

Results — When Blinded, Chatbot Won

Mean Likert ratings (1 = low, 5 = high), N = 7

Dimension	Chatbot	GA	Prof
Perception	4.43	3.57	2.86
Satisfaction	4.43	4.14	3.29
Rank (use)	3.29	2.43	3.29
95% CI (Perc.)	3.85–5.01	2.63–4.51	2.07–3.65

Table 1. Descriptive statistics by supporter (adapted from Lambert et al., 2026).

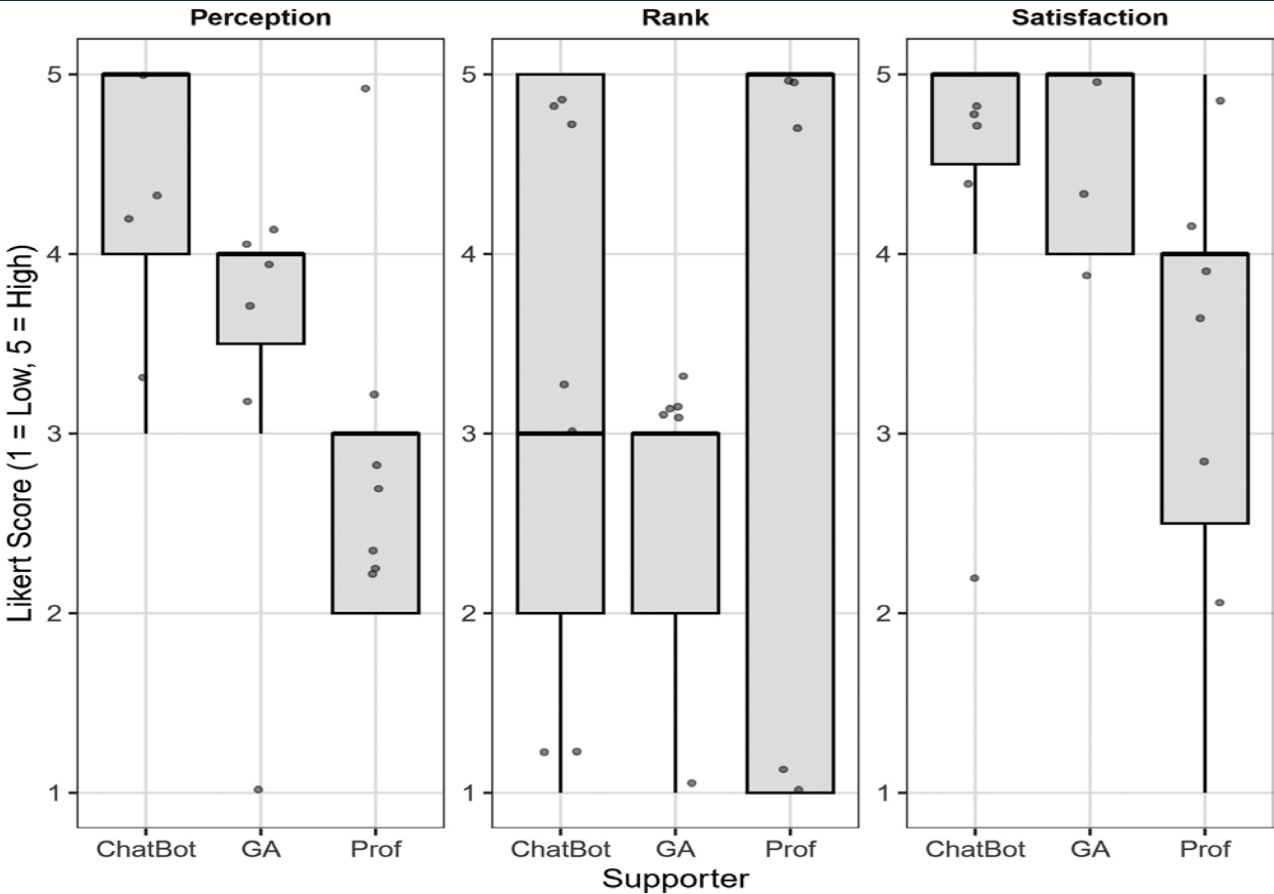


Figure 1. Perception, rank, and satisfaction by source (Lambert et al., 2026).

► Chatbot tied or beat human responders on every dimension when students did not know the source.

Highest helpfulness (M = 4.43) and satisfaction (M = 4.43) ratings of the three sources.

Results — But Suspicion Flipped the Ratings

All 7 students misidentified the chatbot — and downgraded whichever answer they suspected

Source	Times guessed as chatbot	% guessed
Chatbot	0 of 7	0%
GA	3 of 7	43%
Prof	4 of 7	57%

Table 2. No participant correctly identified the chatbot.

Dimension	NOT guessed AI	Guessed AI
Perception	3.93 (3.33–4.53)	3.00 (2.14–3.86)
Satisfaction	4.21 (3.53–4.90)	3.43 (2.39–4.46)
Rank (use)	3.57 (2.81–4.33)	1.86 (0.69–3.02)

Table 3. Mean (95% CI) ratings by chatbot-guessing status.

Key takeaway

- When students suspected an answer was AI, they downgraded it on every dimension
- Consistent with ECT (Oliver, 1980) and prior AI-art bias work (Ragot et al., 2020): trust, not quality, drove the lower rating.
- Implication: AI-tool adoption in DNP education will hinge on perception and trust, not just performance.

Conclusions & What's Next

Pilot evidence for a blended human + AI support model in DNP statistics education

- Blinded ratings: the custom GPT was rated as helpful or more helpful than human responders
- Bias re-emerged the moment AI was suspected.
- Recommend a blended support model.
- Educator implications: AI-literacy training, transparent disclosure, and curricular framing matter as much as model quality (Huang & Ball, 2024; Suh, 2025).
- Next: multi-site replication (target $N \approx 55$ for 90% power, $d = 0.5$) with qualitative interviews on trust and bias.

Read the full study

Lambert, J., Martin, B. E., Stamm, R., White, S., & Kroger-Jarvis, M. (2026). *Blinded but biased: Students prefer chatbot — until they know it is one.* Journal of Nursing Education, 65(X). doi: 10.3928/01484834-20260216-01
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Students Favor AI Chatbots—Until They Realize They're Talking to One

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