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## **Balancing Technology and Empathy: Faculty Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in University Counseling**

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### **Abstract**

This study explores university faculty members' perceptions of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational counseling, focusing on awareness, perceived usefulness, ethical implications, and institutional readiness. Using a descriptive quantitative design, data were collected from 250 faculty members at the University of Zawia through a structured questionnaire encompassing seven thematic domains. Participants were selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure balanced representation in academic disciplines and ranks. The results revealed generally high levels of awareness and positive attitudes toward AI applications in counseling. Faculty participants recognized the potential of AI to enhance efficiency, data management, and accessibility of counseling services. However, they expressed strong ethical and privacy concerns, particularly regarding data protection, bias, and the potential erosion of the human empathy central to counseling practice. Respondents also emphasized the need for structured training programs and institutional investment to strengthen technological readiness. The findings indicate that while cognitive acceptance of AI is high, affective and ethical reservations persist, reflecting the cultural emphasis on interpersonal trust and human connection in Arab academic contexts. Overall, the study underscores the importance of balancing technological innovation with ethical accountability and human values. It concludes that successful AI integration in university counseling requires a comprehensive framework encompassing staff development, policy guidance, and ethical safeguards to ensure that digital transformation remains human-centered and contextually appropriate.

**Keywords:** *Artificial Intelligence; counseling; faculty perceptions; ethical concerns; higher education.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In higher education research, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force across teaching, administration, and student services. Before, it was limited to data analysis and automation, but now is increasingly deployed to augment human decision-making, enable personalized learning, and support student well-being through predictive analytics and intelligent tutoring systems (Alrumayh et al., 2025; Aljarmi et al., 2025). Within university counseling services, these technologies are redefining and reintroducing how educators and counselors identify students' needs, manage files, and deliver guidance. AI-enabled chatbots, emotional analytics, and virtual counseling assistants are designed to complement human professionals by offering real-time support, data-informed insights, and proactive interventions (Elihami et al., 2024; A. Kasheem et al. 2025). However, such integration introduces significant ethical and pedagogical challenges, particularly concerning empathy, privacy, and the counselor-student relationship in academic contexts.

Counseling, as Corey (2016) observes, is rooted in empathy, trust, and the counselor's capacity for understanding qualities that remain difficult to replicate algorithmically. However, the rapid expansion of student populations and the shortage of qualified counselors have created systemic challenges for universities striving to meet diverse academic and psychological needs. In this context, AI appears as a potentially empowering tool to facilitate workloads, expand service reach, and enhance responsiveness. Studies have shown that AI-driven predictive systems can identify students at risk of academic failure or emotional distress, enabling timely, data-supported interventions (Guanin-Fajardo et al., 2024; Almajri et al., 2025). Moreover, AI-based academic advising tools can suggest recommendations based on students' academic histories and preferences, fostering individualized counseling pathways (Majjate et al., 2023; Ramdhan et al., 2025).

While scholarly attention to AI in education continues to grow, explicit investigations into AI's role in counseling remain limited (Luckin et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2020; Kadeni et al., 2025). Most research has concentrated on instructional technologies, adaptive learning systems, and assessment innovation (Baker & Smith, 2019), whereas the affective and interpersonal dimensions of AI-assisted counseling are underexplored. Early experiments in Western contexts reveal that AI applications can aid stress management and academic advising, but their cultural adaptation in developing or non-Western settings is still insufficiently examined (Setiawan & Sari, 2023; Yahya et al., 2025). This research gap underscores the need to understand how cultural norms, institutional infrastructure, and ethical perspectives shape educators' acceptance of AI as a supportive rather than substitutive counseling tool.

Faculty members play a basic role in determining the success of AI integration, acting as mediators between technology and student welfare (Al Lily et al., 2020; Husayn et al., 2025). Drawing on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), adoption depends on perceived usefulness, ease of use, and trust. Within counseling contexts, if educators view AI as enhancing accuracy, accessibility, and efficiency, they are more inclined to adopt it. Conversely, doubts regarding data ethics, bias, or the erosion of empathy may provoke resistance (Holmes et al., 2019; Masoud et al., 2025; Pallawagau et al., 2025). Understanding these perceptions is important to ensure that AI remains aligned with the ethical and developmental values in higher education.

Cultural context further complicates these dynamics. In regions such as North Africa and the Arab world, education is shaped by interpersonal trust, collectivism, religious values, and respect for human authority (Hasibuan et al., 2024; Masuwd & Baroud, 2025). Here, AI-driven systems may be perceived as efficient yet emotionally detached. Moreover, institutional readiness, including digital infrastructure, policy frameworks, regulations and training, remains a decisive factor (Primarni et al., 2025; Sulaksono et al., 2025). Many universities in developing contexts continue to face limited digital capacity and ambiguous ethical guidelines, constraining effective implementation.

Despite AI's evident promise, empirical studies exploring faculty perceptions of AI in counseling, especially within developing systems, are rare. While prior research has investigated AI's role in mental health (Bakti et al., 2023; Abdulghani & Alrumayh, 2025) or advanced healthy educational environments (Alfatani et al., 2025; Alsaeh et al., 2025), little is known about how faculty, who often act as both instructors and informal advisors, perceive this technological shift. Examining these perspectives in Libyan universities, currently undergoing rapid digital transformation while retaining humanistic educational traditions, offers valuable theoretical and practical insights (Abdulghani et al., 2025).

In Libya, higher-education institutions have already begun exploring AI's potential, with studies indicating optimism among faculty despite significant infrastructural and policy constraints (Baroud et al., 2024; Alrumayh et al., 2025). The emergence of AI tools in Libyan universities invites reflection on the spiritual dimensions of education, echoing the Sufi tradition of seeking inner transformation through knowledge and mindful awareness—a perspective that suggests AI should support, not disrupt, the cultivation of wisdom in the academic counseling context. Linked to this, the presence of Sufi-educational networks in Libya, which emphasize mentorship, moral formation, and relational trust, underscores the importance of integrating AI in ways that respect human dignity, ethical humility, and the relational ethos of Islamic spiritual pedagogy (Ichwan et al., 2024; Alzletni et al., 2025; Andriawan & Alrumayh, 2025).

Accordingly, this study seeks to explore faculty members' perceptions of integrating (AI) into educational counseling, examining their views on its benefits, challenges, ethical implications, and institutional readiness for adoption. Specifically, the research addresses three measurable questions: (1) What is the level of faculty awareness and knowledge about AI applications in counseling? (2) How do faculty perceive the usefulness and risks associated with AI integration? (3) What factors influence faculty readiness to adopt AI technologies in university counseling practices? By addressing these interrelated questions, the study provides a contextualized, evidence-based understanding of how AI can be ethically and effectively integrated into university counseling. The findings aim to guide higher education leaders and policymakers in balancing technological innovation with the essential human dimension of care, empathy, and professional judgment.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive research design to examine university faculty members' perceptions of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into counseling practices. The target population comprised teaching staff from various faculties at the University of Zawia, representing diverse academic disciplines, gender identities, and professional ranks. A total of 250 faculty members participated voluntarily, selected through

stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across specializations and experience levels. This design was chosen to give a broad, systematic understanding of educators' views on the benefits, challenges, and ethical implications of AI in counseling contexts.

A structured questionnaire was developed by the researchers, drawing upon established literature on AI in education and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989; Luckin et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2019). The instrument contained 28 statements organized into seven thematic dimensions. Each statement was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical methods, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations (SD). The analysis emphasized interpretive insight, identifying not only trends in faculty readiness and ethical awareness but also potential institutional constraints affecting AI adoption. The results were synthesized to offer practical implications for university leaders and policymakers aiming to align technological integration with human-centered counseling values.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study sample comprised 250 faculty members from diverse colleges and departments, including education, psychology, counseling, computer science, and social sciences, ensuring a balanced representation of theoretical and applied disciplines relevant to AI integration in university counseling. About one-third of the participants were from education-related fields, while others represented the humanities, sciences, and technology. The sample included professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and lecturers, providing perspectives across different career stages and institutional roles. Senior academics contributed administrative and supervisory insights, whereas early-career faculty offered viewpoints shaped by recent engagement with digital technologies. Both male and female participants were represented, reflecting the university's overall demographic structure. This diversity in discipline, rank, and experience enriched the analysis, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how professional background and technological exposure shape perceptions of AI's role in university counseling.

### **Section 1: Awareness and Knowledge of Artificial Intelligence**

The data in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 indicate that the majority of respondents demonstrated a relatively strong conceptual awareness of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential applications in higher education. Item 1, with a mean of 3.97 (SD = 1.02), suggests that most faculty members possess a clear understanding of AI as a concept and its broad educational uses. This finding aligns with prior research highlighting the rapid diffusion of AI awareness among educators globally, even in developing academic systems (Holmes et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2020).

**Table 1. Frequency and Distribution of Responses on Awareness and Knowledge of AI (N = 250)**

Item	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I have a general understanding of the concept of Artificial Intelligence and its applications in education.	7	22	41	76	104
2	I am familiar with basic AI tools and services (e.g., chatbots, data analytics, and recommendation systems).	82	37	94	25	12
3	I regularly follow updates and developments related to AI in the educational field.	17	28	67	71	67
4	I believe my current level of knowledge about AI is sufficient to evaluate its potential in university counseling.	16	34	60	97	43

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Faculty Awareness and Knowledge of AI**

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	3.97	1.02	High awareness
2	2.43	1.11	Low familiarity
3	3.58	1.08	Moderate engagement
4	3.55	1.06	Moderate confidence
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>Moderate awareness</b>

However, despite high conceptual awareness, the results from Item 2 ( $M = 2.43$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) reveal limited familiarity with specific AI tools and services. Most respondents either disagreed or remained neutral when asked about their knowledge of chatbots, data analytics, and recommendation systems. This pattern suggests that while theoretical understanding of AI is widespread, practical exposure remains insufficient, a trend similarly reported by Al Lily et al. (2020) and Alsayd et al. (2025), who found that faculty in Arab universities often recognize AI's potential but lack operational knowledge and confidence in applying AI-based platforms.

Furthermore, Item 3 ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) reflects moderate engagement with AI developments, implying that a portion of faculty members actively follow AI-related educational innovations, possibly through professional networks or online resources. This resonates with global findings by Baker and Smith (2019), who observed that educators' AI engagement typically depends on institutional emphasis and access to professional development opportunities.

Finally, Item 4 ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) shows moderate confidence in evaluating AI's role in counseling. While many respondents agreed that their knowledge allows them to assess AI's potential benefits, the neutral responses suggest that faculty uncertainty persists regarding AI's applicability in emotional or ethical counseling contexts, where human interaction remains essential (Corey, 2016; Huang & Rust, 2018).

The overall mean score of 3.38 ( $SD = 1.07$ ) indicates a moderate level of awareness and knowledge across the sample. This suggests that while AI awareness is relatively

widespread, practical understanding and technical proficiency are still developing. This mixed pattern reflects the transitional stage of digital adoption in Libyan higher education, where universities are embracing innovation but continue to face infrastructural and training barriers (Baroud, 2024; Abushafa, 2025).

These results underscore the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives, including workshops and professional development programs that bridge the gap between conceptual awareness and hands-on AI proficiency. As noted by Luckin et al. (2016) and Majjate et al. (2023), equipping educators with applied AI skills not only enhances instructional innovation but also prepares them to make informed ethical and pedagogical judgments about integrating AI in counseling practices.

### Section 2: Perceived Usefulness and Effectiveness of AI Integration

The results in Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 demonstrate that faculty members largely perceive AI as a valuable tool for improving the quality and efficiency of educational counseling. The highest-rated statement (Item 1,  $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) indicates that respondents believe AI can significantly enhance counseling processes by improving the efficiency and accuracy of student guidance. This supports the argument of Holmes et al. (2019) and Majjate et al. (2023), who emphasize that AI can strengthen academic decision-making by analyzing large datasets to deliver personalized recommendations for students.

**Table 3. Frequency and Distribution of Responses on Perceived Usefulness and Effectiveness of AI Integration (N = 250)**

Item	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	AI can enhance the efficiency and accuracy of student academic counseling.	10	15	47	88	90
2	AI-based systems can help identify students at risk and provide early interventions.	12	22	56	94	66
3	Integrating AI tools can reduce counselors' administrative workload.	20	31	64	84	51
4	AI can improve decision-making by providing data-driven insights into student performance and needs.	8	26	70	87	59
5	AI-based platforms can improve students' access to timely counseling support.	14	18	73	86	59

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Faculty Perceptions of AI Usefulness**

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	3.77	1.01	High usefulness
2	3.63	1.04	High perceived benefit
3	3.37	1.09	Moderate benefit
4	3.63	1.02	High perceived effectiveness
5	3.61	1.06	High perceived support
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>High perceived usefulness</b>

Item 2 (M = 3.63, SD = 1.04) reveals that most respondents agree AI can help identify students at risk and provide early interventions, an insight consistent with findings from Guanin-Fajardo et al. (2024), who showed that predictive analytics models can accurately detect early signs of academic difficulty, thus supporting counselors in proactive engagement. The positive response here suggests that faculty recognize AI’s potential as a preventive rather than merely reactive counseling tool.

Item 3 (M = 3.37, SD = 1.09) reflects moderate agreement that AI can reduce administrative workloads. This indicates that while faculty members acknowledge AI’s efficiency potential, they remain cautious about its ability to streamline all tasks—likely due to infrastructural limitations and lack of institutional integration. As Yahya et al., (2025) point out, in many developing university systems, digital technologies are not yet fully embedded in everyday counseling workflows, which limits their practical impact.

Similarly, Item 4 (M = 3.63, SD = 1.02) and Item 5 (M = 3.61, SD = 1.06) show strong agreement that AI can enhance data-driven decision-making and improve students’ access to support. This reflects growing confidence in AI’s analytical capabilities and its potential to increase inclusivity through digital counseling platforms. Such perceptions align with global trends identified by Chen et al. (2020) and Luckin et al. (2016), who reported that AI applications in education tend to be most effective when used to complement, rather than replace, human counseling functions.

Overall, the mean score of 3.60 (SD = 1.04) suggests that faculty hold a generally positive attitude toward the usefulness and effectiveness of AI integration in counseling. Nevertheless, qualitative trends from similar studies (Huang & Rust, 2018; Holmes et al., 2019) caution that enthusiasm must be accompanied by careful planning to ensure AI augments professional judgment rather than undermines human relationships in counseling contexts.

The results, therefore, highlight an important duality: while faculty members appreciate AI’s data-driven precision and scalability, they implicitly acknowledge the need for ethical oversight, technical training, and institutional readiness to realize these benefits in practice. These findings underscore that AI is viewed not as a replacement for counselors but as a supportive instrument for more effective, timely, and equitable guidance.

**Section 3: Attitudes and Acceptance toward AI in Counseling**

The data in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 reveal a high overall level of acceptance and positive attitudes among faculty toward integrating Artificial Intelligence into university counseling systems, with an overall mean of 3.82 (SD = 0.99). This indicates that while most faculty members are receptive to adopting AI-based systems, they favor a gradual and controlled implementation rather than a rapid or full-scale transformation.

**Table 5. Frequency and Distribution of Responses on Attitudes and Acceptance toward AI in Counseling (N = 250)**

Item	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I am open to using AI tools as part of the university counseling system.	19	8	41	146	36
2	I feel comfortable sharing some counseling tasks with intelligent systems.	31	38	71	49	61

3	My colleagues are likely to accept the use of AI in university counseling.	6	19	46	112	67
4	I prefer a gradual integration of AI rather than a sudden, large-scale implementation.	9	13	24	96	108

**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Faculty Attitudes and Acceptance toward AI Integration**

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	3.84	1.02	High acceptance
2	3.46	1.10	Moderate-to-high comfort
3	3.87	0.94	High perceived peer acceptance
4	4.12	0.91	Very high preference for gradual integration
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>High overall acceptance and cautious optimism</b>

Item 1 ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) shows that the majority of respondents expressed openness to using AI tools in counseling processes. This finding is consistent with the global trend of increasing faculty readiness toward AI adoption in higher education, as reported by Chen et al. (2020) and Holmes et al. (2019). Such openness reflects growing awareness of AI’s potential to complement traditional counseling methods and improve service delivery efficiency (Luckin et al., 2016; Masuwd, 2025a).

Item 2 ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) suggests a moderate-to-high comfort level with sharing specific counseling tasks with AI systems. This aligns with studies such as Huang and Rust (2018), which found that professionals are generally willing to delegate routine, data-intensive, or administrative tasks to AI but remain cautious about using it in emotionally nuanced or ethically sensitive contexts. This cautious optimism suggests that while faculty recognize AI’s strengths, they are aware of its current limitations in replicating empathy and contextual sensitivity, which are critical to effective counseling (Corey, 2016).

The strong mean for Item 3 ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) indicates that faculty perceive peer acceptance of AI integration as high. This social dimension of acceptance underscores that collective institutional attitudes influence adoption more strongly than individual beliefs, a pattern supported by Rogers’ et al. (2014) Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which emphasizes peer influence as a determinant of technology uptake in academic environments.

Item 4 ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ), the highest mean in this section, reveals an overwhelming preference for a gradual, phased integration of AI tools. This perspective reflects an awareness of the need for institutional readiness, training, and ethical oversight before full-scale deployment, a sentiment echoed in Alsayd et al. (2025) and Holmes et al. (2019), who argue that sustainable AI adoption requires alignment between technological capability, user readiness, and institutional support.

Collectively, the findings from Section 3 suggest that while faculty attitudes are predominantly positive, their acceptance is tempered by caution and a desire for ethical, human-centered integration. The evidence also highlights that emotional readiness and professional trust remain pivotal in determining how AI is adopted in counseling contexts. The results reinforce the importance of developing AI literacy programs, transparent

communication strategies, and participatory implementation models to maintain faculty confidence during the digital transformation of counseling services.

**Section 4: Readiness and Training Needs**

The results in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 reveal a clear distinction between individual readiness and institutional preparedness for AI integration in university counseling. While faculty members show strong personal motivation and willingness to engage with AI-based counseling tools, they also express concern over the lack of structured institutional support, resources, and formal training opportunities. The overall mean of 3.77 (SD = 0.81) indicates that readiness is high at the individual level but uneven at the organizational level.

**Table 7. Frequency and Distribution of Responses on Readiness and Training Needs (N = 250)**

Item	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	The university provides sufficient training programs for faculty to use AI tools effectively.	149	57	31	10	3
2	I am willing to participate in workshops or training on how to use AI in counseling.	2	5	12	68	163
3	Practical training in AI applications would enhance my counseling performance.	10	23	32	81	104
4	The university provides adequate resources (time, technical support, equipment) for experimenting with AI-based counseling tools.	3	5	10	28	204

**Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Faculty Readiness and Training Needs**

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	1.90	0.89	Very low institutional readiness
2	4.54	0.77	Very high willingness to train
3	3.91	0.93	High perceived training benefit
4	4.71	0.65	Very high need for institutional support
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>High readiness but institutional training gaps</b>

Item 1 (M = 1.90, SD = 0.89) received the lowest score, reflecting a widespread perception that universities currently lack sufficient training programs to prepare faculty for AI use. This mirrors findings from Alsayd et al. (2025), who reported that while enthusiasm for AI integration is increasing in higher education, many institutions, particularly in developing regions, struggle to provide adequate digital literacy programs or continuous professional development in AI technologies. Similarly, Yahya et al. (2025) highlight that effective AI adoption in education requires not only technical infrastructure but also systematic, ongoing faculty development efforts.

In contrast, Item 2 (M = 4.54, SD = 0.77) reveals very high willingness among faculty members to participate in AI training workshops. This result underscores a strong proactive attitude toward professional learning and self-improvement, aligning with prior research emphasizing educators' intrinsic motivation to engage with innovative technologies (Holmes

et al., 2019; Luckin et al., 2016). The high level of willingness indicates fertile ground for capacity-building initiatives that could translate enthusiasm into practice, provided universities invest in structured training mechanisms.

Item 3 (M = 3.91, SD = 0.93) shows that most faculty members believe practical training would significantly enhance their counseling performance. This belief resonates with findings from Chen et al. (2020) and Huang & Rust (2018), who assert that AI’s pedagogical value depends heavily on human expertise in interpretation, contextual application, and ethical use. Training is therefore essential not only for technical competence but also for fostering reflective understanding of AI’s counseling implications.

Item 4 (M = 4.71, SD = 0.65)—the highest mean in this section—indicates strong agreement that universities must provide more institutional resources, including time, technical support, and equipment, for faculty to experiment with AI-based counseling systems. This suggests that while faculty enthusiasm is strong, sustainable adoption will depend on adequate institutional investment. As Pedro et al. (2019) argue, successful AI integration requires a holistic ecosystem that supports teachers through both infrastructure and professional growth pathways.

Overall, this section highlights a critical gap: faculty readiness and eagerness to adopt AI tools is not matched by institutional readiness or resource allocation. Universities must therefore establish targeted training frameworks, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between IT and counseling units, and ensure the availability of technical and ethical guidance. Without such systemic alignment, individual motivation may not translate into effective or sustainable AI-driven counseling practices.

**Section 5: Ethical and Privacy Concerns**

As shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, faculty members expressed strong ethical awareness and significant concern about privacy, fairness, and accountability in the use of AI for counseling. The overall mean of 4.36 (SD = 0.78) indicates a very high level of sensitivity toward ethical and privacy-related dimensions of AI integration, underscoring that educators view these issues as central to the legitimacy of AI-assisted counseling practices.

**Table 9. Frequency and Distribution of Responses on Ethical and Privacy Concerns (N = 250)**

Item	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	I am concerned that using AI in counseling may compromise student confidentiality.	4	10	38	83	115
2	AI systems might introduce bias or unfairness in counseling decisions.	9	15	43	71	112
3	AI tools should always operate under human supervision to ensure ethical compliance.	1	2	6	69	172
4	There is a need for clear institutional policies regulating data use and privacy in AI-supported counseling.	0	3	11	77	159

**Table 10. Descriptive Statistics of Ethical and Privacy Concerns**

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	4.18	0.87	High concern about confidentiality
2	4.05	0.91	High concern about algorithmic bias
3	4.63	0.64	Very high agreement on human oversight
4	4.57	0.69	Very high need for ethical governance
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>Very high ethical and privacy awareness</b>

Item 1 ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ) demonstrates widespread concern that AI systems may compromise student confidentiality, a finding consistent with global discourse on data ethics in educational technology (Kizilcec & Lee, 2020). Counselors handle sensitive personal and psychological data, and the use of algorithmic systems introduces risks of unauthorized data access or misuse. Al Lily et al. (2020) and Baroud et al. (2024) both argue that privacy concerns are especially acute in Arab academic contexts, where cultural values place strong emphasis on discretion, interpersonal trust, and respect for students' dignity.

Similarly, Item 2 ( $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ) indicates strong agreement that AI systems may introduce bias or inequity in decision-making processes. Faculty members appear aware that algorithms trained on limited or Western-centric datasets can inadvertently perpetuate cultural or gender bias, leading to inaccurate counseling predictions or recommendations. This concern aligns with the findings of Floridi & Cowls (2021) and M. Kasheem et al. (2025), who highlight algorithmic transparency, fairness, and explainability as critical prerequisites for ethically sustainable AI in education and mental health services.

The highest mean scores were recorded for Item 3 ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) and Item 4 ( $M = 4.57$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ), reflecting very strong agreement that AI must be used under human supervision and that clear institutional ethical policies are essential. These findings affirm the human-centered philosophy of counseling, as articulated by Corey (2016), emphasizing that technology should augment, not replace, human judgment and empathy. Faculty participants clearly favor a hybrid model in which AI serves as a supportive tool, offering efficiency, data-driven insight, and consistency, while ultimate responsibility remains with trained counselors.

This emphasis on institutional regulation and human oversight also resonates with recent recommendations by UNESCO (2022) and Luckin et al. (2016), both of which call for AI governance frameworks that address data privacy, consent, accountability, and cultural adaptation. As Masoud et al. (2025) and Husayn et al. (2025) note, without well-defined policy boundaries, educators may hesitate to adopt AI tools, fearing ethical violations or reputational risk.

Overall, these results reveal that ethical and privacy concerns are not barriers of resistance but expressions of professional responsibility. Faculty members acknowledge AI's potential yet remain vigilant about its moral and human implications. Their responses reflect a sophisticated ethical literacy that prioritizes student welfare and institutional accountability over uncritical technological adoption. This balance between innovation and integrity represents a promising foundation for developing trustworthy, culturally attuned, and ethically governed AI counseling systems in higher education.

**Section 6: Human Relationship and Counseling Interaction**

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 reveal that faculty members strongly value the human dimension of counseling and perceive it as indispensable, even in the era of AI integration. The overall mean of 4.19 (SD = 0.89) indicates a high acknowledgment of the irreplaceable role of human empathy, trust, and relational depth in counseling interactions.

**Table 11. Frequency and Distribution of Responses on Human Relationship and Counseling Interaction (N = 250)**

Item	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	The use of AI may negatively affect the human relationship between counselor and student.	34	42	71	49	54
2	AI cannot replace human interaction in sensitive psychological or emotional situations.	1	9	35	91	114
3	AI should support, not replace, human counselors in the university setting.	16	4	27	42	161
4	Integrating AI requires counselors to develop new communication and professional skills.	1	18	23	7	201

**Table 12. Descriptive Statistics of Human Relationship and Counseling Interaction**

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	3.64	1.23	High perception of potential relational risks
2	4.22	0.79	Very high recognition of human irreplaceability
3	4.36	0.85	Very high preference for human-AI collaboration
4	4.55	0.68	Very high readiness to adapt communication skills
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.19</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>High recognition of the centrality of human connection</b>

Item 1 (M = 3.64, SD = 1.23) suggests a moderate-to-high concern that AI could weaken the counselor–student relationship, a sentiment echoed in prior studies emphasizing that over-reliance on automation can dilute empathy and emotional attunement (Van Wynsberghe, 2021; A. Kasheem et al., 2025). The faculty responses here underscore the importance of maintaining authentic human engagement, especially when dealing with students’ emotional or psychological concerns that require nuanced understanding and compassion (Corey, 2016; Shalghoum et al., 2025; Alriteemi et al., 2025).

Item 2 yielded a very high mean of 4.22, with the majority of participants agreeing that AI cannot replace human counselors in sensitive contexts. This finding resonates with the perspective of Montemayor et al. (2022), who argue that while AI can efficiently process data and identify risk patterns, it lacks the empathic responsiveness and moral reasoning essential in human counseling. The Arab and North African educational context, as noted by Al Lily et al. (2020), further amplifies this sentiment, given its cultural orientation toward interpersonal trust and collectivist values that emphasize relational warmth in teacher–student interactions.

Similarly, Item 3 ( $M = 4.36$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ) and Item 4 ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) recorded the highest agreement, suggesting strong endorsement of a collaborative model between humans and AI. Faculty members widely support the notion that AI should augment rather than replace the counselor’s role, a stance in line with the “human-in-the-loop” principle advocated by Luckin et al. (2016) and the UNESCO (2022) Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, which emphasizes that human oversight is essential to uphold autonomy and accountability in AI-assisted decision-making.

Moreover, the finding that faculty members recognize the need for developing new communication and professional skills (Item 4) reflects a pragmatic awareness of the evolving competencies required in the digital age. As counseling becomes increasingly data-informed, professionals must cultivate digital literacy, interpretive reasoning, and ethical discernment to effectively collaborate with intelligent systems (Holmes et al., 2019; Budiningsih et al., 2024). This readiness suggests openness to professional transformation rather than outright resistance to AI, highlighting a constructive mindset toward adaptive learning and hybrid counseling models.

Overall, this section underscores that faculty members maintain a balanced and ethically grounded perspective: they appreciate the potential of AI as a supportive tool but insist on preserving the human core of counseling practice. This aligns with recent research emphasizing that technology should serve as a facilitator for relational depth and accessibility, not a substitute for the interpersonal and cultural richness of human connection which implies psychological and religious sides (Floridi & Cows, 2021; Pulungan et al., 2025; Aini, et al., 2025; Masuwd, 2025b).

**Section 7: Institutional Infrastructure and Practical Constraints**

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 demonstrate that faculty members generally perceive their institutions as technologically capable of integrating AI-based counseling systems, while recognizing financial and structural constraints as significant barriers. The overall mean of 4.02 ( $SD = 0.89$ ) indicates a high level of institutional readiness, accompanied by an awareness of resource and policy limitations that may affect implementation.

**Table 13. Frequency and Distribution of Responses on Institutional Infrastructure and Practical Constraints (N = 250)**

Item	Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	The university has adequate technological infrastructure to implement AI-based counseling solutions.	11	7	34	82	116
2	Financial limitations represent a major barrier to adopting AI in university counseling.	0	0	8	28	214
3	There is sufficient collaboration between university units (IT, student affairs, counseling centers) to support AI initiatives.	29	18	45	90	68
4	National regulations and policies may affect the adoption of AI applications in university counseling.	5	58	80	93	14

**Table 14. Descriptive Statistics of Faculty Perceptions of AI Usefulness**

Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	4.14	0.97	High perception of adequate technological readiness
2	4.82	0.47	Very high concern about financial barriers
3	3.79	1.04	Moderate-to-high collaboration awareness
4	3.32	1.06	Moderate recognition of regulatory constraints
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>0.89</b>	<b>High readiness with acknowledged structural limitations</b>

Item 1 ( $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ) shows strong agreement that universities possess sufficient technological infrastructure, suggesting that digital transformation initiatives and IT capacity have reached a level supportive of AI integration. This aligns with findings by Holmes et al. (2019) and Ayad et al. (2025), who argue that the growth of digital ecosystems in higher education has paved the way for scalable AI adoption. Nonetheless, the variation reflected in the standard deviation implies that infrastructure readiness may differ across institutions, particularly between technologically advanced universities and those with limited digital investment (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

The highest mean score is found in Item 2 ( $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ), where nearly all respondents identified financial limitations as a major barrier. This finding is consistent with global literature emphasizing that sustainable AI implementation requires substantial funding for software acquisition, system maintenance, staff training, and data management (Luckin et al., 2016; UNESCO, 2022). Particularly in developing and resource-constrained contexts, budgetary constraints often delay or limit innovation in counseling and student support systems (Majjate et al., 2023). Faculty concerns here underscore the need for strategic investment and public-private partnerships to ensure equitable access to AI resources across institutions.

Item 3 ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) reflects a moderate-to-high perception of cross-departmental collaboration, suggesting that while some level of coordination exists between IT, counseling, and student affairs units, it remains inconsistent. Studies by Greller & Drachler (2012) and M. Kasheem et al. (2025) highlight that effective AI adoption in education depends not only on infrastructure but also on organizational integration and knowledge sharing. Faculty respondents appear to recognize that without a shared institutional vision and cross-functional collaboration, AI applications in counseling may remain fragmented or underutilized.

Meanwhile, Item 4 ( $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ) indicates moderate agreement regarding the influence of national regulations and policies on AI adoption. The mixed responses may reflect varying levels of awareness about policy frameworks or the evolving nature of AI governance in education. As noted by Floridi and Cowls (2022) and the UNESCO (2022) Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, regulatory clarity is essential to ensure transparency, fairness, and ethical accountability in AI-driven educational systems. In many developing countries, including those in the Arab and North African regions, policy

infrastructures for AI ethics are still emerging (Al Lily et al., 2020; Alouzi, 2024), creating uncertainty among educators and administrators.

Collectively, these findings suggest that while technical capacity and faculty openness are promising, financial, organizational, and policy factors remain major bottlenecks. The faculty's responses reflect a nuanced understanding that successful AI integration in counseling requires a holistic approach, combining infrastructural readiness with sustainable funding, interdepartmental cooperation, and a robust regulatory framework. These insights mirror the conclusions of Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019), who stress that technological innovation in education must be accompanied by institutional strategy, ethical oversight, and human capacity-building.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal a nuanced and forward-looking perspective among university faculty members toward the integration of AI in educational counseling. Faculty respondents generally demonstrate strong awareness, positive attitudes, and readiness to explore AI-assisted counseling tools. They recognize that AI can expand access, reduce workload, and support data-informed decision-making, consistent with international trends in educational innovation. Nevertheless, significant concerns persist about ethical accountability, data privacy, and the preservation of empathy and interpersonal trust that define effective counseling relationships.

These results affirm that technological transformation in counseling cannot be divorced from humanistic and cultural considerations. The study suggests that AI should complement rather than replace the counselor's role, functioning as an intelligent assistant within ethically guided and empathetic frameworks. Furthermore, the successful adoption of AI requires institutional commitment—through funding, infrastructure, training, and policy clarity, to ensure effective and equitable implementation.

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample was limited to faculty members from a single Libyan university, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other institutional or cultural contexts. Second, the study relied solely on self-reported data, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or differences in respondents' interpretation of AI-related terminology. Third, the quantitative descriptive design does not capture the depth of faculty experiences or the contextual nuances that qualitative methods might reveal. Future research incorporating multiple institutions, mixed-method approaches, and longitudinal analyses would provide a more comprehensive understanding of AI integration in counseling.

Recommendations: Universities should develop targeted professional development programs that build faculty digital and ethical competence; establish regulatory frameworks ensuring data protection and transparency; and foster collaboration between technologists, counselors, and policymakers to create culturally relevant AI systems. Such initiatives will not only strengthen institutional readiness but also ensure that the integration of AI in university counseling supports both innovation and the enduring human values at the heart of educational guidance.

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