

Phenomenological Study of Dependence on Artificial Intelligence and Self-Coping of Academic Problems

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	ABSTRACT
ARTICLE INFO: Received June 22, 2026 Revised July 02, 2026 Accepted July 31, 2026 KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, Emotional Dependence, Islamic Counseling, Self-Coping, Students	This study explored emotional dependence on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the self-coping strategies used to address academic challenges from an Islamic Counseling perspective. This study employed a qualitative approach using the Colaizzi descriptive phenomenological method. The participants were 20 active students at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung who met specific criteria, including active student status, intensity of AI usage, relevant experience, and voluntary participation. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation using a semi-structured interview guide. The analysis identified three main themes: the Genesis and Evolution of AI Interaction, the Psychological and Relational Dynamics of Dependence, and the Hierarchy of Coping Mechanisms. The results revealed two main findings. First, the function of AI shifted from being merely an academic aid to a source of emotional support as students experienced increasing academic pressure. Second, AI tended to be used as a dominant self-coping strategy, thereby reducing the use of spiritual coping in dealing with academic pressure. Nevertheless, all informants continued to view Allah as the primary source of peace. This spiritual awareness became stronger when students realized the limitations of AI in fully meeting their emotional needs. The findings of this study demonstrate the importance of developing Islamic Guidance and Counseling services that are responsive to technological developments and the psychological dynamics of students in academic environments.

INTRODUCTION

The paradigm shift of Society 5.0 has transformed the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) from a mere technical tool into an active cognitive partner and a medium for personal interaction (Sinulingga, 2024). Driven by advances in natural language processing, AI-powered conversational agents are increasingly perceived by some users as virtual listeners and emotional companions (Salsabila, 2025).

This phenomenon is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where digital ethics literacy remains relatively low, with Indonesian netizens ranking 29th out of 32 surveyed countries in terms of online social behavior (Indonesia News Center, 2021). As internet use among students and adolescents continues to increase, intensive interaction with AI may strengthen psychological attachment to technology, leading conversational chatbots such as ChatGPT, Character AI, and Replika to be perceived as "digital friends" that provide immediate and non-judgmental emotional support (Kompas, 2025).

This tendency may be further reinforced by Indonesia's post-pandemic mental health challenges. Generalized anxiety disorder affects approximately 16% of the population, while clinical depression reaches 17.1% (Shabrina, 2024). At the same time, the availability of professional mental health services remains limited, with only one clinical psychologist serving approximately 94,500 residents (Fatika, 2024). These conditions may encourage students to seek alternative sources of emotional support through digital technologies.

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In the academic context, the increasing use of AI to generate instant answers may reduce students' active engagement in critical and reflective thinking processes (Wahyudinarti et al., 2025). An EEG-based study conducted by MIT suggested that intensive reliance on AI-assisted writing may be associated with lower cognitive engagement during writing tasks, potentially affecting thinking, language, and behavioral processes (Gerlich, 2025). Furthermore, data from Internet Matters 2025 indicate that 71% of children are vulnerable to using chatbots to meet emotional needs, while 26% prefer talking to AI rather than to other people (Kurian, 2025). Such reliance may create an illusion of emotional closeness without genuine empathy, potentially affecting the quality of real-world interpersonal relationships (Azizah, 2021).

From a psychological perspective, this phenomenon can be understood through John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, which explains that individuals tend to develop alternative attachment figures when their primary social relationships are unable to provide adequate emotional support (Bretherton, 1992). Under conditions of intense academic pressure and limited interpersonal communication, some students may begin to perceive AI chatbots as alternative attachment figures that offer a sense of security and emotional reassurance.

The broader implications of this phenomenon can also be explained by Media Dependency Theory (Rafiq, 2012). From a cognitive perspective, excessive reliance on AI-generated summaries may reduce independent information processing and critical analysis. Affectively, the immediate emotional comfort provided by AI may foster emotional dependence and reduce motivation to seek support through direct interpersonal interactions. Behaviorally, repeated reliance on AI may gradually diminish learning autonomy and personal initiative. In response to these challenges, effective self-coping mechanisms are needed to help individuals manage academic stress and personal difficulties independently (Angelica & Tambunan, 2021).

Before the digital era, Islamic Counseling was predominantly conducted through direct face-to-face interactions between counselors, such as Kyai or Ustaz, and clients, emphasizing spiritual values, moral development, and Sufi traditions (Umriana et al., 2023). In the contemporary digital era, AI provides opportunities to expand access to counseling services by offering preliminary assistance and educational resources aligned with Islamic values (Adri & Febriani, 2025). Nevertheless, its application also raises important ethical concerns, as AI has inherent limitations in understanding spiritual dimensions (*ruhaniyah*), cultural contexts, and the genuine empathy required in Islamic Counseling. Therefore, the use of AI as a coping medium should be carefully considered to ensure that technological assistance does not diminish the essential role of religious and spiritual values.

A review of the existing literature reveals several important research gaps. Previous studies on students' self-coping have primarily focused on general academic stress without specifically examining AI as a coping medium that may trigger emotional dependence. In addition, research on AI and mental health has largely emphasized technical effectiveness while paying limited attention to spiritual perspectives, particularly within the framework of Islamic Counseling. Methodologically, most previous studies have adopted quantitative approaches using psychological measurement instruments, leaving a limited understanding of the subjective lived experiences of Muslim students regarding emotional dependence on AI.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating emotional dependence on AI and academic self-coping within a single analytical framework through a qualitative phenomenological approach from the perspective of Islamic Counseling. It contributes to the growing body of literature by providing a deeper understanding of how Muslim students experience emotional dependence on AI while maintaining their spiritual orientation in coping with academic challenges. Furthermore, the findings are expected to contribute both theoretically to the development of Islamic Counseling scholarship in the digital era and practically to the design of counseling interventions that balance technological adaptation with psychological resilience and spiritual well-being.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into higher education has extended beyond its function as a cognitive support tool to become a source of emotional support for some students experiencing academic pressure. While previous studies have highlighted the educational benefits and technical efficiency of AI, relatively little attention has been given to the psychological consequences of prolonged emotional reliance on AI and its implications for students' coping behavior. Understanding this phenomenon from the perspective of Islamic Guidance and Counseling is particularly important because AI-mediated emotional support may influence students' patterns of spiritual coping, including practices such as prayer and dhikr. Therefore, this study aims to explore the psychological dynamics of emotional dependence on AI chatbots among university students and to examine their academic self-coping mechanisms through the lens of Islamic Guidance and Counseling using a phenomenological approach.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a phenomenological design to explore how higher education students interpret the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academic life, particularly in relation to self-coping mechanisms and experiences of emotional dependence.

A qualitative approach was selected because the phenomenon under investigation—including psychological pressures, communication barriers, and patterns of digital attachment—is complex, personal, and context-dependent. Such experiences require an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives rather than numerical measurement. Therefore, a qualitative approach enables the researcher to capture the emotional, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions of students' interactions with AI in greater depth (Waruwu, 2024).

A phenomenological design was adopted to explore the participants' lived experiences of emotional dependence on AI. Rather than evaluating the technical performance or effectiveness of AI, this study sought to understand how students experienced, interpreted, and gave meaning to their psychological relationships with AI chatbots. Through a phenomenological perspective, the researcher applied the principle of *bracketing* by setting aside preconceived assumptions to better understand the essence of participants' experiences as they navigated the transition from human-to-human interactions to human–AI relationships. This approach provides an appropriate methodological framework for examining the subjective psychological dynamics of students from the perspective of Islamic Guidance and Counseling.

Participants and Procedures

This study involved 20 students from the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung who had experienced emotional dependence on AI and employed self-coping strategies in dealing with academic challenges. The participants served as the primary informants, providing detailed accounts of their lived experiences through in-depth interviews.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on predetermined inclusion criteria. They were active university students who regularly utilized AI chatbots in their academic activities and were willing to share their experiences voluntarily. Data were collected primarily through in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide consisting of 24 questions. The interview questions were organized into three main clusters corresponding to the research objectives, enabling a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and patterns of AI utilization in academic settings.

Instruments

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher as the human instrument, supported by a semi-structured interview guide designed to obtain in-depth information regarding students' psychological experiences and patterns of digital attachment that could not be adequately captured through standardized instruments (Ramdhan, 2021). The interview guide was organized into several thematic areas to explore students' academic stressors, emotional experiences, and the reasons for utilizing generative AI as a source of academic and emotional support (Udar, 2024). In addition, the interviews examined the participants' emotional attachment to AI chatbots, their experiences of perceived comfort, possible changes in social interaction, and their reflections on the relationship between AI use and traditional spiritual coping practices.

To complement and triangulate the interview findings, the researcher employed a structured observation checklist as a secondary instrument (Udar, 2024). The observation focused on participants' behavioral patterns during AI use, including the frequency of AI utilization in academic activities, observable emotional responses during interaction with AI chatbots, and indicators of technological reliance.

A document review protocol was also used to strengthen the credibility of the findings. The documents analyzed included participants' chat history with AI platforms, such as ChatGPT, Character.AI, and Replika, as well as self-reflective journals and relevant academic documents provided voluntarily by the participants. The integration of interviews, observations, and document analysis enabled comprehensive data triangulation and facilitated a deeper understanding of students' lived experiences from the perspective of Islamic Guidance and Counseling.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method to explore students' experiences of emotional dependence on AI. The analysis followed four interconnected stages adapted from Colaizzi's phenomenological procedure. First, immersion and coding were conducted by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts and identifying significant statements related to the triggers and patterns of emotional dependence on AI. Second, formulating meanings involved interpreting these significant statements to understand participants' experiences of using AI as an emotional coping resource. Third, theme clustering was carried out by grouping related meanings into broader conceptual themes that reflected shared experiences among participants. Finally, synthesis and validation involved integrating the themes into a comprehensive description of the phenomenon, followed by member checking to ensure the credibility of the findings. The final interpretation was then developed from the perspective of Islamic Guidance and Counseling to understand the psychological and spiritual dimensions of students' interactions with AI (Ardiansyah, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Experience of Emotional Dependence on AI

Research data shows significant behavioral changes among students using Artificial Intelligence (AI). In the initial phase, AI adoption was purely instrumental-academic—such as assisting with drafting assignments, searching for references, or translating texts. However, as academic stress accumulated (assignment pressure, future anxiety, and burnout), intense interactions triggered a shift in AI's function into a space for emotional catharsis. AI's non-judgmental, 24/7 responsiveness and constant validation of user complaints created a new habituation. Informants reported a "psychological attachment," where the lack of access to AI triggered negative affective symptoms such as acute anxiety, panic, and feelings of isolation.

None of the informants consciously started using AI with the intention of building emotional dependency; it all started from instrumental and academic motives.

"...I initially tried ChatGPT because I saw friends often using it to help with their college assignments. Gradually, I became curious and finally tried it myself"

"...I first encountered an AI chatbot on TikTok, which discussed how to write scientific articles. From there, I started using it to brainstorm ideas and improve my writing..."

"...My professor once suggested using AI for quick reference searches. Since then, I've been using Gemini to help me understand the lecture material..."

"...I have, because I felt that AI wasn't judgmental, so I felt more comfortable talking about personal problems..."

"...Sometimes I feel more comfortable with AI because it can tell me stories anytime..."

Informant one's statement indicates that the initial use of AI by informants was influenced by their social environment. This phenomenon aligns with Fadhila's findings in "Children's Emotional Dependence on Artificial Intelligence: Psychoanalysis and Its Implications for Islamic Family Counseling." The finding of the phenomenon of the younger generation, especially Gen Z, preferring to talk to AI rather than their parents is not solely influenced by technological developments. This condition is closely related to unmet emotional needs within the family environment. When communication within the family is rigid, authoritarian, or lacks space for discussion, children tend to feel insecure enough to express their feelings and problems (Afresya & Setianingrum, 2026). A similar situation can also arise when parents are too busy, resulting in limited responses to children's stories and a lack of empathy. Short, normative answers often leave children feeling emotionally unheard or unappreciated (Emrinawati & Hasibuan, 2025).

Role pressures within the family also influence how children express their emotions (Dwistia et al., 2025). For example, firstborns, accustomed to being expected to appear strong and set an example for other family members, often learn to suppress complaints and keep their feelings to themselves (Zahra & Hayati, 2022). In the long run, this can develop a habit of suppressing emotions and seeking other, safer outlets for self-expression (Zahra & Hayati, 2022).

"...Initially, I tried ChatGPT because I saw my friends often use it to help with their college assignments. After a while, I got used to it. I use AI almost all the time when I'm working on my thesis or looking for supporting journals. In one day, I can open AI more than five times, especially when I have a lot of assignment deadlines..."

"...I have, because I felt that AI wasn't judgmental, so I felt more comfortable talking about personal problems. The AI response made me feel less alone in facing the problem. The AI response made me feel less alone in facing the problem..."

"...Ever felt panicked when AI was inaccessible because you needed help completing a task quickly? Sometimes I feel empty because I usually open AI to chat with friends. I have because I feel freer to express my thoughts without feeling awkward..."

"...It has a slight impact because there is less time to chat with friends. Sometimes it feels like a friend because his responses are quite understanding

of feelings. Sometimes I feel guilty because I confide in AI more often than those closest to me..."

The use of AI started from social influences (friends, social media) and academic needs, then developed into a daily habit with increasing intensity. Students felt comfortable sharing their stories with the AI because it was non-judgmental and always responsive. The AI's supportive responses created a sense of calm, being heard, and not being alone, a sign of developing an emotional connection. The absence of AI evokes reactions such as panic, anxiety, and a feeling of emptiness. Some informants prefer AI over humans for reasons of privacy, freedom of expression, and accessibility, a strong indication of emotional dependence. The relationship with AI is shifting from tool to conversation partner. Excessive use is beginning to impact social interactions. Self-awareness is generating feelings of shock, worry, and guilt, essential for change.

Empirically, this phenomenon aligns with research by Wang (2024) entitled Emotional Dependence Path of Artificial Intelligence Chatbot Based on Structural Equation Modeling. Wang's research concluded that users' emotional dependence on AI chatbots is formed through two main psychological pathways. First, a sense of identification, the feeling that AI understands, reflects, and "resembles" the user, is proven to be the strongest predictor that encourages someone to form an emotional attachment to a chatbot. Second, a sense of control, the feeling that the user is in control of the interaction with AI, also contributes significantly to the formation of this dependence, although its effect is slightly weaker than identification.

Critically, the emotional comfort students receive from AI is "pseudo-comfort." Large Language Model (LLM) algorithms are designed to predict the next most satisfying word based on data patterns, not on true empathy derived from psychological awareness.

This dependency indicates a fragility in students' real-world social support systems. When academic institutions or family environments fail to provide a safe space free from judgment, technology steps in to fill the void. Extreme affective dependency risks degrading students' social resilience, making them awkward in the dynamic, unpredictable, and conflict-ridden interpersonal interactions of the real world.

Self-Coping Strategies in Academic Problems

When faced with academic pressure (stressors), students consciously choose AI as their primary coping mechanism. This strategy displaces traditional methods such as social coping (discussing with friends/lecturers) and conventional problem-focused coping. Speed and instant accessibility are key determinants. Students turn to AI not because they perceive it as the best long-term solution, but rather as a pragmatic way to instantly reduce psychological stress amidst mounting deadlines.

From a psychological perspective, these findings demonstrate the dominance of instantaneous Emotion-Focused Coping over Problem-Focused Coping. The use of AI here acts as a form of escapism from academic anxiety. These results align with a study by Vernanda, which highlighted that habituation to receiving instant information from AI reduces students' critical thinking skills. When students encounter cognitive barriers, they no longer engage in dialectical thinking processes, but instead directly hand over the cognitive burden to AI algorithms (Vernanda et al., 2025).

"...The most common pressure felt is the large number of assignments with close deadlines. The demands from the family to get good grades are quite a burden. Thesis deadlines and revisions are quite stressful..."

"...Usually try to make a priority list of tasks so you don't panic too much when facing deadlines. Often talk to close friends when you feel the pressure of

college is getting too much. Exercising at home helps reduce academic stress..."

"...Often remember God when you feel panicked because of lots of assignments and deadlines. think it's important to remain steadfast after trying to complete assignments and study. once cried while praying when I felt very tired with college assignments..."

"...Asked lecturers for advice about difficulties in completing assignments and received good guidance. Sometimes I feel calm, but when the tasks pile up, the panic appears again. Sometimes feeling calm is only for a while..."

Academic pressures stemming from piles of assignments and tight deadlines, GPA demands, thesis revisions, and family expectations trigger the need for effective coping strategies. Students used a combination of problem-focused coping (prioritizing, scheduling) and emotion-focused coping (exercising, talking to friends, entertainment). AI developed into one of the dominant emotional coping strategies. All informants used spiritual coping (prayer, dhikr, and prayer) and understood that striving accompanied by trust in God is the ideal attitude for a Muslim. However, in practice, the convenience of AI often shifts the priority of spiritual coping

The dominance of AI as a self-coping strategy creates a vicious cycle. On the one hand, AI temporarily reduces anxiety (short-term positive affective effects). However, this strategy erodes students' capacity for deep thinking and academic independence (long-term cognitive and behavioral effects).

Continually handing over problem-solving to AI undermines students' self-efficacy. They become insecure about their own intellectual capacity without validation or guidance from AI. This is a form of commodification of mental well-being, where students outsource their emotional regulation and problem-solving to commercial technology.

The Meaning of AI as Self-Coping from an Islamic Counseling Perspective

The most unique finding in this study is the emergence of a paradoxical dimension of spirituality. On the one hand, the instant convenience offered by AI actually shifted the priority of students' spiritual coping strategies. When stress peaked, students' first reflex action was to open the AI application, rather than praying, remembering God, supplicating, or relying on God. There was a temporary shift in orientation from *Hablun min Allah* (connection with God) to an artificial relationship with algorithms.

However, this phenomenon did not diminish the foundation of their faith. When students realized the limitations of AI—which lacks a soul, cannot provide true inner peace, and is merely digital code—a spiritual awareness emerged, strengthened by feelings of guilt. Ultimately, all informants maintained their understanding that God is the ultimate source of transcendental peace.

This analysis enriches the literature on Islamic Guidance and Counseling. Classic studies such as those by Wardhani consistently emphasize that for Muslims, spiritual coping (patience, prayer, *dhikr*, and pleasure) is the primary defense against psychological crises. The findings of this study modify this theory in the context of the digital era: technology can disrupt the chronological order of coping, but not destroy its meaningful structure (Wardhani et al., 2018).

"...The use of AI has been quite helpful in making me feel calmer because tasks feel easier to complete. AI helps reduce stress but sometimes makes me too dependent. AI helps reduce stress but sometimes makes me too dependent..."

Confiding in AI only provides temporary peace, while praying brings peace to the heart. The calmness of AI is more towards logical assistance, while prayer provides emotional and spiritual calm.

"...The calmness from AI is usually temporary, but after worship I feel more emotionally stable..."

"... AI is only a tool, and God is still the main place to depend on. Sometimes I'm afraid that relying too much on AI can weaken my faith. My emotional dependence on AI made me learn to re-strengthen my relationship with God..."

"...I want to continue using AI but balance it with social interactions and worship..."

AI provides temporary relief and helps academic productivity, but the more it is used as a coping mechanism, the stronger the emotional dependency that forms, characterized by AI becoming the primary escape during times of stress. All informants differentiated between the qualities of calm: AI produced a quick and temporary cognitive calm, while worship and prayer produced a deeper, more lasting, and more spiritual calm. Students interpreted their reliance on AI as a spiritual displacement, shifting their reliance from God to technology. Nearly all informants felt a disconnect with Islamic values and were driven to strengthen their relationship with God.

Students have developed an awareness of the need to use AI more wisely and in a balanced manner. They recommend that Islamic educational institutions strengthen spiritual guidance, provide counseling services, and conduct AI literacy education. Students' awareness of returning to Allah after experiencing digital saturation aligns with the concept of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (Purification of the Soul) in Islamic psychology. When the soul feels emptiness due to the consumption of artificial resources (AI), it naturally seeks to fulfill its true spiritual needs (Hapsari & Rahman, 2022).

Based on the descriptive phenomenological data analysis conducted through the framework of Colaizzi's method, the researcher extracted profound insights regarding the lived experiences of twenty active students at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University, Bandung. To offer a comprehensive and contextual understanding of how these individuals navigate their academic lives in the digital era, the empirical findings have been integrated into distinct thematic sections. These sections capture the psychological transition from instrumental utility to deep technological intimacy, shedding light on the complex interplay between human vulnerability and artificial support structures.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate a psychological shift among university students, in which Artificial Intelligence (AI) has evolved from functioning primarily as a cognitive tool to serving as a source of emotional support. In the early stages, students adopted AI mainly for instrumental and academic purposes, such as completing assignments and improving learning efficiency, consistent with previous studies emphasizing the educational benefits of AI (Wang, 2024). However, the present study extends these findings by showing that prolonged academic pressure and intensive interaction with AI may gradually transform its role into that of a surrogate companion. The non-judgmental responses, continuous availability, and consistent validation provided by AI create a perceived safe space that may reduce students' tendency to seek emotional support from real-life interpersonal relationships (Park, 2026).

These findings also provide additional insight into Media Dependency Theory by suggesting that dependency on generative AI extends beyond the traditional need for information or entertainment toward the fulfillment of personal and emotional needs. Unlike conventional media, AI-powered conversational agents generate human-like responses that may encourage digital anthropomorphism, in which users perceive AI as possessing empathy and understanding. This finding complements previous studies that emphasized the educational benefits of AI personalization, while also highlighting its potential psychological consequences (Peliza, 2024).

Although personalized AI interactions may enhance students' learning experiences, they may also contribute to emotional attachment, as reflected in participants' experiences of anxiety, panic, and feelings of emptiness when access to AI was unavailable.

The findings further indicate that students increasingly relied on AI as an immediate strategy for coping with academic pressure. This preference appears to reflect the dominance of emotion-focused coping over conventional problem-focused coping, primarily because AI provides rapid, accessible, and non-judgmental responses. These findings are consistent with Vernanda et al. (2025), who reported that habitual reliance on AI-generated information may reduce opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking processes. Beyond its cognitive implications, the present study suggests that prolonged dependence on AI may also influence students' confidence in managing academic challenges independently. Although AI effectively reduces psychological tension in the short term, excessive reliance on algorithmic assistance may gradually weaken students' learning autonomy and resilience in dealing with complex interpersonal and academic situations.

One of the most important contributions of this study is its identification of a spiritual paradox experienced by Muslim students from the perspective of Islamic Guidance and Counseling. The findings indicate that the convenience and immediacy of AI may alter the sequence of students' coping responses when facing academic stress. Rather than immediately engaging in spiritual practices such as prayer, dhikr, or dua, some students reported first turning to AI as an accessible source of emotional support. This finding extends Wardhani et al.'s (2018) perspective that spiritual coping occupies a central position in helping Muslims deal with psychological difficulties. In the context of digital technology, the findings suggest that technological convenience may temporarily shift the order of coping responses without necessarily replacing the spiritual values that underlie them.

Importantly, this temporary shift did not weaken the participants' fundamental spiritual beliefs. Instead, many participants recognized the limitations of AI in providing lasting inner peace, which encouraged reflection and strengthened their awareness that Allah remains the ultimate source of tranquility (*al-thuma'ninah*). Feelings of guilt associated with excessive reliance on AI often became a catalyst for *muhasabah* (self-reflection), motivating students to restore the balance between technological assistance and spiritual dependence. These findings resonate with the concept of *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (purification of the soul), suggesting that spiritual awareness continues to function as an important psychological resource even within highly digitalized learning environments.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing discourse on Artificial Intelligence and Islamic Guidance and Counseling by demonstrating that technological advancement not only transforms students' learning behaviors but also influences their emotional and spiritual coping processes. The findings suggest that AI should not be viewed solely as either a beneficial educational tool or a potential psychological threat. Rather, it should be understood as a technological reality that requires appropriate guidance to ensure its use remains balanced with students' psychological well-being, social relationships, and spiritual development. Accordingly, Islamic Guidance and Counseling services need to develop technology-responsive interventions that encourage students to utilize AI responsibly while maintaining meaningful interpersonal relationships and a strong transcendental orientation.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest that students' interactions with Artificial Intelligence (AI) have evolved beyond its role as an academic support tool to include emotional support in coping with academic challenges. These findings highlight the need for higher education institutions to develop cyber-spiritual counseling models that integrate technological awareness with psychological and spiritual guidance. Such an approach may help students use AI more responsibly while strengthening

self-regulation, maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships, and reinforcing the values of *tawhid* and worship as the foundation of emotional well-being.

Limitations

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the findings are not intended to be generalized because the study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach involving 20 participants from a single institution, Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the participants' lived experiences. Nevertheless, this study provides a foundation for future research to develop quantitative instruments for measuring emotional dependence on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and to examine the effectiveness of Islamic Guidance and Counseling intervention models through experimental or mixed-methods research.

CONCLUSION

This study found that emotional dependence on Artificial Intelligence (AI) among Muslim students at Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University Bandung gradually evolved from its initial function as an academic support tool into a source of psychological and emotional support. The findings indicate that AI increasingly became part of students' emotion-focused coping strategies because of its constant availability, accessibility, and non-judgmental responses. Although this reliance may reduce students' tendency to rely on independent coping and interpersonal support, it did not diminish their spiritual beliefs. Instead, participants recognized the limitations of AI in providing lasting inner peace, which encouraged self-reflection and strengthened their awareness that Allah remains the ultimate source of tranquility. From the perspective of Islamic Guidance and Counseling, these findings highlight the importance of developing counseling services that integrate technological adaptation with psychological resilience and spiritual well-being, enabling students to utilize AI responsibly while maintaining a balanced relationship with social support and spiritual coping.

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