



A Qualitative Exploration of AI-Mediated Emotional Support in Romantic Relationships Among Young Adult Women: Implications for Emotional Validation and Communication Quality

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Abstract: The proposed research is aimed at exploring the impact of AI-assisted emotional support on communication and emotional validation quality in romantic relationships in women of young adulthood. A qualitative method was applied to obtain a better understanding of the impacts of AI-led emotional support. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews with ten young adult women aged between 18-25 years all of them being in romantic relationships and having used AI regarding emotional or other related problems. The method resulted in the possibility of capturing not only the experiences of the participants but also capturing their presentation of the experiences in their own language. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview transcripts. The review led to the selection of six topical themes, such as AI as a resource of instant emotional regulation; temporary regulation of emotion with mixed outcomes; AI as a resource of thinking and reflection; AI-informed communication and conflict management; tension between emotion regulation and emotion sincerity; and the maintenance of human primacy in emotions support. The result implied that although AI mediated emotional support may provide temporal relief validation or even help in controlling communication during disputes, it appears to be viewed to a large extent only as a supplementary and not as a real replacement of emotional intimacy in romantic

relationships.

Keywords: *AI-Mediated Emotional Support, Emotional Validation, Communication Quality, Romantic Relationships, Young Adult Women, Qualitative Study, Thematic Analysis*

1. Introduction

In recent years, artificial intelligence has expanded beyond automation and data processing to influence individuals' emotional experiences. AI-based digital platforms are increasingly used not only for productivity and problem-solving but also for emotional reflection, reassurance, and guidance (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023). For many young adults raised in technologically integrated environments, seeking emotional assistance from AI during moments of uncertainty has become both accessible and common (Lyons et al., 2024). The appeal of AI-mediated emotional support lies in its immediacy and constant availability, allowing individuals to share concerns and receive structured responses that may feel validating or reassuring (Abd-Alrazaq et al., 2023). In emotionally challenging situations such as relationship conflicts or confusion about personal feelings AI interactions may provide temporary clarity or emotional containment (Miner et al., 2021). However, the growing use of AI as a source of emotional support raises important questions about how these interactions influence intimate human relationships.

Within romantic relationships, emotional experiences are typically shaped through communication, empathy, and mutual understanding. AI can therefore be viewed as a relational third entity that indirectly shapes how individuals interpret emotions, structure conversations, and decide what feelings to express or withhold (Turkle, 2022; Doherty & McKnight, 2023). While AI may help individuals organize their thoughts or rehearse communication before speaking with a partner, it also introduces complexities into relational processes. Emotional validation defined as the acknowledgement and acceptance of another person's emotional experience is central to relationship satisfaction and psychological safety (Linehan, 2018; Reis & Shaver, 2020). Although AI responses can appear structured and supportive, they lack genuine relational reciprocity, emotional presence, and shared history, raising questions about how AI-generated reassurance compares with human validation.

Young adulthood is a developmental period marked by identity exploration, emotional growth, and the formation of intimate relationships (Arnett, 2020). As digital technologies increasingly shape emotional expression and coping strategies, AI-mediated emotional support may influence how individuals regulate emotions, communicate with partners, and seek validation within relationships. Despite the growing presence of AI in emotional life, existing

research has largely focused on technological effectiveness or mental health outcomes, leaving the relational implications relatively underexplored. Therefore, the present study aims to examine how AI-mediated emotional support influences emotional validation, emotional regulation, and communication within romantic relationships among young adult women, exploring their experiences, perceptions, and relational interpretations of using AI-based conversational tools.

2. Review of Literature

Mushtaq (2025) examined the psychological effects of AI chatbot interactions using validated measures of loneliness, social cognition, and emotion regulation. The findings suggested that moderated engagement with AI chatbot communities can enhance affective resilience and social cognition. However, excessive reliance on AI for social communication was associated with increased social withdrawal and avoidance. The study highlights the dual nature of AI-mediated emotional support while it may assist emotional regulation, overdependence can negatively impact real-world social relationships.

Sun et al. (2025) investigated the psychosocial outcomes of AI interaction among 388 college students using a longitudinal framework based on social affiliation theory. The results showed that frequent AI interaction influenced prosocial behavior through increased belongingness needs but also contributed to problematic mobile phone use through heightened loneliness. Importantly, strong peer support buffered some negative effects, indicating that the impact of AI-mediated support depends on the presence of supportive human relationships.

Meilan et al. (2024) experimentally compared emotional benefits of venting to an AI chatbot versus a perceived human responder ($N = 279$). Participants received identical supportive responses but were told the responder was either AI or human. The findings revealed significant improvements in emotional well-being in both conditions, with no major differences between AI and human support. This suggests that emotional validation and responsiveness rather than the responder's identity—play a critical role in emotional relief.

Liu et al. (2025) explored motivations for using chatbots for emotional support in Hong Kong using a mixed-method design (focus groups and a survey of 1,041 participants). The study found that perceived companionship, emotional safety, and hedonic experience strongly predicted the intention to use chatbots for emotional support. Users often perceived chatbots as non-judgmental and private spaces for emotional expression, highlighting the role of perceived emotional safety in AI-mediated support.

Fu et al. (2022) investigated emotional responsiveness in human–robot interactions through a pilot study involving an android robot designed to provide emotionally supportive dialogue. By adjusting vocal tone and empathetic responses according to users' emotional states, the robot enhanced perceptions of empathy, emotional understanding, and encouragement. The study demonstrates how emotional expressiveness and conversational design can influence users' perceptions of emotional support from AI systems.

Merrill Jr et al. (2025) examined how person-centered AI communication affects emotional validation in chatbot-based interactions. The experimental findings showed that highly person-centered responses increased users' perceptions of emotional validation, interpersonal warmth, and emotional support. Social presence also mediated these effects, suggesting that communication style and relational cues significantly shape users' experiences of emotional support from AI systems.

2.1 Gap in Literature

Although existing research highlights the emotional benefits and risks of AI-mediated support, several gaps remain. Most studies focus on loneliness, chatbot adoption, or general psychological outcomes rather than romantic relationships. Limited research examines how AI emotional support influences communication patterns, emotional validation, and conflict management between romantic partners. Additionally, the subjective experiences of users particularly young adult women remain underexplored, as much of the literature relies on experimental or survey-based methods. There is therefore a need for qualitative research exploring how individuals integrate AI-mediated emotional support into their romantic relationship dynamics, particularly regarding communication quality.

3. Research Design, Approach and Methodological Framework

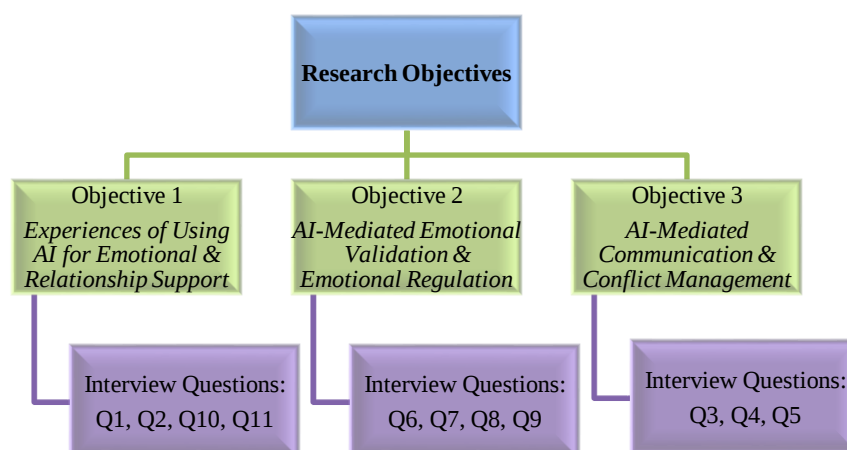
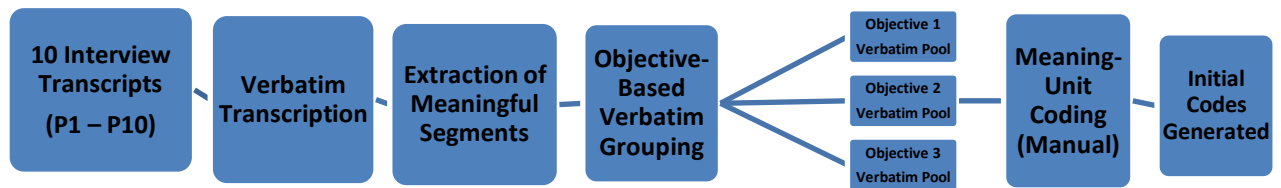
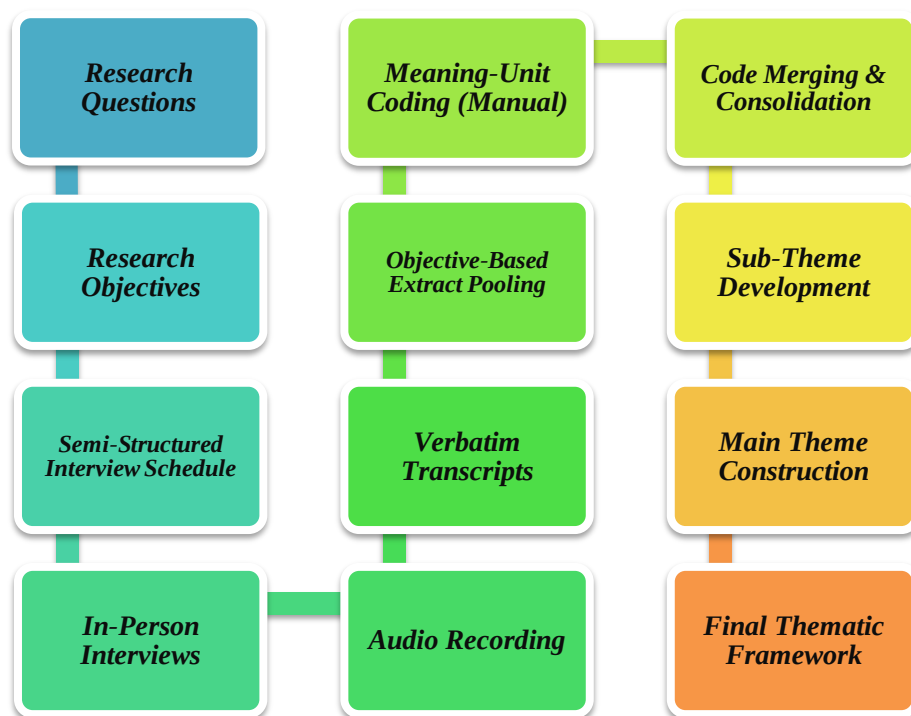


Figure 3.1: *Distribution of Interview Questions Across Research Objectives***Figure 3.2:** *Objective-Based Verbatim Pooling and Coding Process***Figure 3.3:** *Analytic Pathway From Research Questions to Final Themes*

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore how AI-mediated emotional support influences emotional validation, emotional regulation, and communication in romantic relationships among young adult women. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on lived experiences, subjective meanings, and relational interpretations rather than measurement or hypothesis testing (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Willig, 2013). Data were collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with ten women aged 20–25 who were in committed romantic relationships and had prior experience using AI tools for emotional or relationship-related support. This format allowed the researcher to

explore key themes while giving participants flexibility to share personal experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021) to identify patterns of meaning across participants' narratives. Coding was conducted manually to maintain close engagement with the data. Overall, the qualitative design and reflexive thematic analysis provided a coherent methodological framework for understanding participants' perceptions and experiences of AI-mediated emotional support within their romantic relationships.

4. Results

Table 4.1: *OBJECTIVE 1: Verbatim Extracts and Initial Coding*

Experience gained in using AI-based conversational tools to receive emotional and relational support

Participant Verbatims (Merged)	Code
P1: "I had small but frequent doubts about relationships, friendships, or even my emotions." P8: "I was very emotionally overwhelmed... I could not contain myself." P9: "When I was feeling low, I used AI."	Emotional distress as context for AI use
P2: "My relationship felt emotionally confusing and unresolved conversations kept repeating." P3: "I used to have a constant argument regarding one topic for months." P4: "When a conflict occurred... that is when I had gone to AI." P10: "Whenever I get into a conflict with my partner, I occasionally use AI."	AI use during relationship conflict
P2: "I needed a space to process my feelings without fear of being misunderstood." P5: "I wanted someone to talk to, but in the fear of oversharing." P6: "I just wanted to vent out and tell it to someone without being judged." P7: "I feel unjudged and got this opinion from ChatGPT."	Non-judgmental venting experience
P1: "I didn't always want to talk to friends about everything."	Limited access to

P5: “I cannot dump my feelings of being alone and lonely on him all the time.” P8: “I was not able to reach out to people physically.”	human support
P1: “I wanted a quick clarity or reassurance.” P3: “It also helps to validate my thoughts.” P5: “I start feeling validated.” P7: “I feel validated about what I was feeling.”	Seeking reassurance and validation
P1: “It feels okay in the moment, like a temporary pause.” P2: “I usually feel calmer and more grounded.” P6: “After venting out... helps me calm down.” P8: “For the moment... things will calm down.”	Initial emotional calming
P1: “It helped me think through things without overcomplicating them.” P2: “My emotions are being organised into words.” P6: “AI helps me understand my feelings.” P9: “It helped me organise my thoughts.”	Emotional and situational clarity
P2: “The comfort is reflective rather than deeply emotional.” P4: “It is more of a misguiding.” P8: “It’s not that comforting... not as comforting as human reassurance.”	Perceived limitations of AI support
P3: “I usually don’t use AI that much, once or twice i a blue moon.” P6: “When the topic is so conflicting... I turn to AI.” P9: “Most of the time I turn to AI first when I only need clarity.”	Conditional or occasional AI use
P2: “AI works as a support tool, not a substitute.” P7: “One can use it, but should always communicate with their partners.” P9: “It hasn’t replaced my partner.”	AI as supplementary support

Table 4.2: OBJECTIVE 2: Verbatim Extracts and Initial Coding***The perceived effects of AI-mediated emotional support on emotional validation and emotional control***

Participant Verbatims (Merged)	Code
P3: “It also helps to validate my thoughts.” P5: “As soon as I start feeling validated...” P6: “It validates what I’m saying and makes me feel secure about my thoughts.” P7: “I feel validated about what I was feeling.” P9: “I felt really good.”	Emotional validation through AI
P6: “Whatever I share with it, it keeps no judgement.” P6: “What I am going through is just normal and it’s all right to feel like that.” P7: “I feel unjudged... it was unbiased.” P9: “Process my feelings without judgement.”	Non-judgmental validation
P1: “There is some clarity, but also a sense that something is missing because it’s not a real human response.” P2: “The comfort is reflective rather than deeply emotional.” P10: “It does not comfort me anymore.”	Limited emotional depth of validation
P1: “It feels okay in the moment, like a temporary pause from overthinking.” P2: “I usually feel calmer and more grounded.” P6: “After venting out... helps me calm down.” P8: “For the moment... things will calm.”	Short-term emotional calming

P3: “It helped me stay calm and gather my thoughts.” P5: “Now I seem to be more controlled, more emotionally regulated.” P6: “Seeking advice before talking makes my words less	Emotional regulation before communication
P3: “I used to lash out... now I should look at the problem and not the person.” P5: “Less of an emotionally coercive person.” P9: “Less reactive.”	Reduced emotional reactivity
P1: “It helps in shorter duration, but does not always leave me fully settled.” P5: “Rather than feeling reassured, I feel that I’m stuck in a loop.” P8: “It’s back to normal.”	Short-lived emotional regulation
P1: “Sometimes it makes me keep thinking more.” P2: “It highlights my gaps... emotionally challenging.” P8: “You get more points to overthink.” P9: “Making things feel slightly more complicated before they become clearer.”	Emotional complexity and rumination
P1: “It’s not a real human response.” P2: “It does not fully replace warmth.” P6: “It’s better when you get it from your partner.” P8: “Taking comfort from my partner is way better.”	Preference for human validation
P2: “AI works as a support tool, not a substitute.” P6: “It cannot replace a human connection.” P9: “It shouldn’t replace emotional intimacy.”	AI as supplementary emotional regulator

Table 4.3 *OBJECTIVE 3: Verbatim Extracts and Initial Coding*

The perceived effects of AI-mediated emotion support on relationship communication patterns and conflict management processes

Participant Verbatims (Merged)	Code
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P2: “The conversation felt more organised because I already knew what I wanted to say.” P5: “It helps me rehearse my thoughts before I present them raw.” P6: “Seeking advice before talking to my partner makes my words less harsh.” P7: “GPT told me exactly how to put my feelings into words.” P10: “I use AI to understand how to convey a message in a more subtle and less rude way.”	Communication preparation before partner interaction
P3: “AI helped me look at the problem and not the person.” P6: “It makes my words more attuned to what he would like to hear.” P9: “It helped me choose better words during sensitive conversations.” P10: “It helps me set a tone that de-escalates the situation.”	Tone modulation and conflict de-escalation
P3: “It helped me stay calm and gather my thoughts before lashing out.” P5: “Now I seem to be more controlled, more emotionally regulated.” P7: “AI helped me tone down my anger.” P9: “I express myself calmly instead of reacting impulsively.”	Emotional regulation during conflict
P5: “Earlier I would text right away... now I seem to be more controlled.” P6: “It sugar coats my words to make the conversation more civil.” P9: “I know when it’s better to pause or hold back.”	Reduced impulsive communication
P2: “I may appear more emotionally distant or less expressive.” P5: “It makes me sound very transparent and expressive, but people might not like that.” P6: “It holds back the raw emotions.”	Changes in emotional expressiveness

P6: “Sometimes raw emotions are the most important thing the other person needs to hear.” P5: “ChatGPT is the one who communicates everything for me and I don’t like that.” P8: “It felt like we were using their brain rather than our own.”	Discomfort with AI-mediated communication
P4: “Whatever the advice I received from AI was negative, so I’ve not applied it.” P8: “After using AI, when we communicated, it felt disconnected.”	Ineffectiveness or negative impact on communication
P2: “Over time, it reduced my urge to seek reassurance directly from my partner.” P5: “I would refrain from using it in romantic relationships.” P10: “Usage of AI is very little to discuss my relationship.”	Limiting AI use in partner communication
P3: “The conversation felt more organised and real.” P7: “It helped me somewhat when I was unsure what to do.” P9: “The conversation felt more productive.”	Perceived improvement in communication outcomes
P10: “I seek emotional support from my partner directly.” P6: “Most of the time I prefer my partner over anybody.” P7: “One should always communicate with their partners.”	Partner-centred conflict resolution

Table 4.4: *Code Consolidation Map: Codes and Corresponding Sub-Themes*

Codes	Sub-Themes
Emotional distress as context for AI use AI use during relationship conflict Limited access to human support	Emotional overwhelm as the primary trigger for AI use
Non-judgmental venting experience Seeking reassurance and validation	AI as a non-judgmental space for venting and validation
Initial emotional calming Short-term emotional calming Short-lived emotional regulation	Temporary emotional regulation with mixed after-effects

Emotional complexity and rumination	
Emotional and situational clarity Cognitive clarity and organisation Perspective-taking	AI as a cognitive tool for clarity, reflection, and perspective-taking
Communication preparation before partner interaction Tone modulation and conflict de-escalation	Communication preparation and conflict de-escalation
Emotional regulation before communication Reduced emotional reactivity Reduced impulsive communication Changes in emotional expressiveness	Shift toward controlled and self-monitored communication
Discomfort with AI-mediated communication Loss of emotional authenticity	Tension between emotional authenticity and AI-mediated expression
Limited emotional depth of validation Perceived limitations of AI support	Perceived limits of AI in providing emotional depth
Preference for human validation Partner-centred conflict resolution	Clear boundary between AI support and partner intimacy
Conditional or occasional AI use AI as supplementary support Limiting AI use in partner communication	Awareness of risks, dependency, and relational consequences

Table 4.5: *Final Thematic Structure: Main Themes and Sub-Themes***(Main Themes and Sub-Themes)**

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
AI as an Immediate Emotional Coping Resource	• Emotional overwhelm as the primary trigger for AI use • AI as a non-judgmental space for venting and validation
Short-Term Emotional Regulation with Mixed Outcomes	• Temporary emotional regulation with mixed after-effects • Perceived limits of AI in providing emotional depth
AI as a Cognitive and Reflective Aid	• AI as a cognitive tool for clarity, reflection, and perspective-taking

AI-Shaped Communication and Conflict Management	• Communication preparation and conflict de-escalation • Shift toward controlled and self-monitored communication
Tension Between Regulation and Emotional Authenticity	• Tension between emotional authenticity and AI-mediated expression
Maintaining Human Primacy in Emotional Support	• Clear boundary between AI support and partner intimacy • Awareness of risks, dependency, and relational consequences

Table 4.6: Hierarchical Thematic Map: Themes, Sub-Themes, and Codes

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Codes
AI as an Immediate Emotional Coping Resource	Emotional overwhelm as the primary trigger for AI use.	Emotional distress as context for AI use AI use during relationship conflict Limited access to human support
	AI as a non-judgmental space for venting and validation	Non-judgmental venting experience Seeking reassurance and validation
Short-Term Emotional Regulation with Mixed Outcomes	Temporary emotional regulation with mixed after-effects	Initial emotional calming Short-term emotional calming Short-lived emotional regulation Emotional complexity and rumination
	Perceived limits of AI in providing emotional depth	Limited emotional depth of validation Perceived limitations of AI support
AI as a Cognitive and Reflective Aid	AI as a cognitive tool for clarity, reflection, and perspective-taking	Emotional and situational clarity Cognitive clarity and organisation Perspective-taking
AI-Shaped Communication and Conflict Management	Communication preparation and conflict de-escalation	Communication preparation before partner interaction Tone modulation and conflict de-escalation
	Shift toward controlled and self-monitored communication	Emotional regulation before communication Reduced emotional reactivity Reduced impulsive communication Changes in emotional expressiveness

Tension Between Regulation and Emotional Authenticity	Tension between emotional authenticity and AI-mediated expression	Discomfort with AI-mediated communication Loss of emotional authenticity
Maintaining Human Primacy in Emotional Support	Clear boundary between AI support and partner intimacy	Preference for human validation Partner-centred conflict resolution
	Awareness of risks, dependency, and relational consequences	Conditional or occasional AI use AI as supplementary support Limiting AI use in partner communication

The present study explored how AI-mediated emotional support influences emotional validation, emotional regulation, and communication within romantic relationships among young adult women. Using a qualitative design, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with ten women aged 20–25 who were in committed romantic relationships and had used AI tools for emotional or relationship-related support. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021). Meaning-centered coding and objective-based categorization were used to identify patterns in participants' narratives, followed by code consolidation, sub-theme formation, and theme development.

The analysis resulted in six major themes that capture participants' experiences with AI-mediated emotional support: AI as an Immediate Emotional Coping Resource, Short-Term Emotional Regulation with Mixed Outcomes, AI as a Cognitive and Reflective Aid, AI-Shaped Communication and Conflict Management, Tension Between Emotional Regulation and Emotional Authenticity, and Maintaining Human Primacy in Emotional Support. These themes illustrate how participants used AI for immediate emotional relief, reflection, and communication preparation, while also recognizing the limitations of AI in providing deep emotional validation compared to human partners.

Overall, the findings suggest that AI functions primarily as a **supplementary emotional support tool** rather than a replacement for human relationships. While AI interactions offered temporary emotional regulation, cognitive clarity, and assistance in structuring communication, participants emphasized that **authentic emotional validation and**

relational intimacy remained rooted in human connection, particularly with their romantic partners.

5. Discussion

The present study examined how AI-mediated emotional support influences emotional validation, emotional regulation, and communication within romantic relationships among young adult women. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten women aged 20–25 who had used AI conversational tools for emotional or relationship-related support. Reflexive Thematic Analysis identified six major themes: AI as an Immediate Emotional Coping Resource, Short-Term Emotional Regulation with Mixed Outcomes, AI as a Cognitive and Reflective Aid, AI-Shaped Communication and Conflict Management, Tension Between Emotional Regulation and Emotional Authenticity, and Maintaining Human Primacy in Emotional Support. Together, these themes suggest that AI is primarily used as a situational emotional support tool that offers quick reassurance, reflection, and communication guidance, while still being perceived as less emotionally rich than human support.

Participants commonly turned to AI during emotional distress, relationship confusion, or conflict, using it as a non-judgmental space for venting and gaining clarity. This aligns with emotional support and digital coping theories, which suggest individuals seek support to manage stress and emotional overload (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Rains & Wright, 2016). AI interactions were often reported to provide short-term emotional regulation, helping participants calm down, organize their thoughts, and prepare for conversations with their partners. However, participants frequently noted that AI validation felt cognitively reassuring but emotionally limited, supporting theoretical distinctions between informational reassurance and emotionally attuned validation (Linehan, 1997). In this sense, AI functioned more as a cognitive and reflective aid, assisting users in reframing situations and structuring emotional experiences rather than providing deep relational comfort.

The findings also suggest that AI may influence communication and conflict management in romantic relationships. Many participants reported using AI to rehearse messages, regulate emotional responses, and frame conversations more constructively, which reflects principles of conflict communication and mediated communication theories (Walther, 1996). However, some participants experienced tension between controlled communication and emotional authenticity, feeling that AI-assisted phrasing could make their expression less spontaneous or genuine. Despite these benefits, participants consistently emphasized the

primacy of human emotional support, particularly from romantic partners, indicating that AI was viewed as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for relational intimacy. Overall, the findings highlight that AI-mediated emotional support functions mainly as a temporary cognitive-regulatory scaffold within human-centered emotional relationships.

6. Implications for Future Research

Further studies are needed to broaden the current study to include male participants and gender-diverse participants as well as romantic couples to investigate the effects of AI-mediated emotional support in various gender categories and relationship interactions. The couple-level designs would prove particularly helpful when it comes to assessing the views and reactions of both partners in the same relationship towards AI-aided emotional coping and communication preparation directly. Longitudinal research is required to trace the trends in the use of AI emotional support over an extended duration, with changes in dependency, emotion regulation methods, and outcomes of relational communication. The methods of behavioral and interactional observation that the researchers might consider as the addition to self-report data include the use of recorded conflict discussions, message drafts, or guided communication tasks that would provide possible visible implications of communication processes. Also, platform-specific studies involving comparisons between structured therapeutic chatbots and open conversational AI systems can assist in determining which of its design aspects leads to particular emotional and relational effects. Clinical and counseling population studies would help to better understand the mechanisms of AI-mediated support in persons with anxiety, mood problems, attachment issues, or relationship distress. Causal effects of AI-assisted communication preparation on the treatment of conflicts, emotional regulation, and perceived validation would also be beneficial to test using mixed-method and experimental approaches. Last but not the least, the future work must focus on how to set ethical boundaries, usage rules, and dependency patterns in AI emotional support at various development stages through future works.

7. Conclusion

The present study examined how AI-mediated emotional support influences emotional validation, emotional regulation, and communication in romantic relationships among young adult women. Using a qualitative design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten women aged 20–25 who were in committed relationships and had used AI conversational tools for emotional or relationship-related support. The interview data were analyzed using

Reflexive Thematic Analysis, which generated six key themes: AI as an Immediate Emotional Coping Resource, Short-Term Emotional Regulation with Mixed Outcomes, AI as a Cognitive and Reflective Aid, AI-Shaped Communication and Conflict Management, Tension Between Regulation and Emotional Authenticity, and Maintaining Human Primacy in Emotional Support. Together, these themes illustrate how AI is incorporated into everyday emotional coping and relational communication.

The findings indicate that participants primarily used AI as a low-barrier emotional coping tool, particularly during emotional distress, relational confusion, or conflict. AI interactions were perceived as accessible, non-judgmental spaces for venting, gaining reassurance, organizing thoughts, and preparing for conversations with partners. In many cases, AI helped users calm down, gain clarity, and structure communication more carefully. However, participants consistently distinguished between AI reassurance and deeper human emotional validation, describing AI responses as cognitively helpful but emotionally limited. Emotional regulation benefits were often temporary, highlighting the supportive yet restricted nature of AI-mediated comfort.

The study also revealed that AI could shape communication and conflict management by helping individuals rehearse conversations, soften tones, and regulate impulsive reactions. While this often-improved clarity and reduced escalation in conflicts, some participants reported concerns that AI-assisted wording felt less authentic or emotionally genuine. Despite these influences, participants clearly emphasized that romantic partners remained the primary source of emotional validation, reassurance, and intimacy, with AI viewed only as a supplementary support tool. Overall, the findings suggest that AI-mediated emotional support functions best as a situational cognitive-emotional scaffold within human-centered relationships, complementing rather than replacing authentic human connection.

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