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Article

Exploring the Role of Artificial Intelligence in School Counselling: Opportunities & Challenges.

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) are becoming more frequently used in educational contexts (Wang et al., 2024), and school counsellors are starting to explore its use in their professional practice. This rapid review, informed by the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) explores the literature on the use of AI in school counselling, with a focus on generative AI. Thematic categories identified include the opportunities AI presents in school counselling; the ethical challenges associated with AI use in school counselling; and the role of AI in addressing gaps in school counselling practice. These themes emerge independently and collectively as key considerations for school counsellors who are considering or using AI in their practice. This rapid review identified several gaps in the literature, which included a limited scope, the gap between the pace of advancements in artificial intelligence and research, and potential bias. Implications for practice are presented, with a focus on improving, rather than replacing, the work of the school counsellor, confidentiality considerations, and training and support needs. This rapid review's findings will guide future practice, training, and education on the use of AI in school counselling. Directions for future research are proposed.

Keywords

School counselling, artificial intelligence, opportunities, challenges, ethics, Technology Acceptance Model

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Introduction

Rationale for rapid review

Artificial intelligence (AI) is developing rapidly, which has led to education institutions needing to adapt quickly to the novel threats and opportunities that this technology brings (Wang et al., 2024). While AI is not a new technology, its advancements and increased availability have meant that anyone with an internet connection can access it for little to no cost (Elbanna & Armstrong, 2024). However, the pace at which AI is developing has surpassed the ability of many educational facilities to manage it.

Along with the myriad implications that are associated with new technologies such as smart phones, gaming, and social media has on education, the advancements in AI must be understood by education professionals and how AI impacts their work. Currently, the most notable advancement has been to increased availability of generative AI that uses large language models from internet data to produce responses to prompts inputted by the user (Elbanna & Armstrong, 2024). With the increased availability and use of generative AI technology such as ChatGPT, students, teachers, and school leaders including school counsellors are adopting the technology into their practice (Lo, 2023). While AI has existed since the 1940s (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019), it rapidly gained momentum in 2022 with the advent of ChatGPT, an application that incorporates machine learning that uses data from a plethora of sources to make predictions and respond to prompts initiated by the user (Elbanna & Armstrong, 2024; Lo, 2023). Artificial Intelligence, specifically generative artificial intelligence, including Chatbots, is used globally across a range of industries for problem solving, learning, and research (Tang et al., 2024).

Since its inception in 2022, ChatGPT has become the fastest-growing application in history, with 100 million users accessing this technology within the first two months of its release (Lo, 2023). While the term is a catch-all phrase, for this rapid review "artificial intelligence (AI)" has been used to describe generative AI. In this paper, we provide a rapid review of what is known about the use of AI in school counselling. The term school counsellor is commonly used in Australia, though these professionals are also known as, school psychologist, guidance counsellor or guidance officer (Campbell & Colmar, 2014). For this rapid review, the term school counsellor will be used. School counsellors are school-based wellbeing professionals, who hold appropriate qualifications in counselling or psychology and are key mental health support providers for young people (Bettman & Digiacomo, 2022). While qualifications may differ, the role that these professionals play in schools is similar (Campbell & Colmar, 2014). The Queensland Guidance Counsellor's Association (2023), states that the role of the school counsellor in Queensland schools include, assessment and intervention for students, counselling for students, including careers counselling, wellbeing support, behaviour support, program coordination, and professional development for staff.

This review has been undertaken to inform school counsellor practice, as well as training in higher education. The first author is a PhD candidate and practising school counsellor. The second author oversees a master's level school counsellor preparation program, where the use of AI must be considered. The desired outcome of this rapid review was to understand what exists in an emerging area of research and how it can inform school counsellors' practice, and school counselling preparation programs.

This rapid review provides a synthesis of what is known about how school counsellors could, or do, use AI in their work using the Technology Acceptance Model(insert theory) to inform the analysis to the authors' knowledge, this is the first rapid review undertaken to provide a descriptive map of the literature related to the use of AI in school counselling contexts. The findings of this rapid review identify the need for empirical, longitudinal studies, as well as the development of best practice frameworks to ensure the ethical implementation of AI technologies in school counselling. It is important that school counsellors have the capability to use these tools in a safe and ethical manner to enhance their professional practice.

Objective

This rapid review addressed the broad research question:

- How are school counsellors using artificial intelligence in their practice?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how school counsellors use AI in their practice. TAM is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action, which states that people's "beliefs and attitudes predict their intention to perform a behaviour" (Anni et al., 2018, p. 121). TAM states that the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are key determinants of user acceptance, guiding attitudes and actual usage behaviour (Ghimire & Edwards, 2024). Perceived ease of use means the "degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (Davis, 1989, p. 320). While perceived usefulness is defined "as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" (Davis, 1989, p. 320). TAM has been used in previous studies on school counsellors' technology use (Anni et al., 2018; Deslonde & Becerra, 2018). In this study, TAM is used as a guide to explore whether school counsellors' use of AI is determined by their beliefs and attitudes towards AI, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness.

METHODS

A rapid review is a streamlined version of a systematic review (Tricco et al., 2015) where "an acceleration in the process of reviewing a body of literature" (Wollscheid & Tripney, 2021, p. 2) occurs, and are useful when synthesising information on topics that are quickly evolving (Lo, 2023). Rapid reviews are usually undertaken over a 12-month period (Bidmead et al., 2023). Commonly used in health and education research, rapid reviews are useful in informing further research on educational topics that may influence practice and policy (Cirkony et al., 2022). The purpose of this rapid review was to inform decisions around the use of AI in school counselling, as well as to inform the content and methods for school counsellor preparation programs. In this review we scoped the literature (Arksey & O'malley, 2005) rather than assess its effectiveness, due to this being an emerging, and therefore under-researched field. We followed the PRIMSA guidelines for review reporting (Page et al., 2021).

This rapid review article will assist school counsellors in making evidence-based decisions in using AI in their practice, as well as advocating the need for further research in this area.

Search strategy

In this rapid review, we used a systematic search strategy. The first author formulated a list of search terms that could be categorised as personnel (school counsellor, school psychologist, guidance counsellor) and the focus (artificial intelligence). Searches were conducted in August 2024. The following 7 databased were identified as the most relevant to the subject matter for rapid review: Google Scholar, EBSCOhost Education Source, EBSCOhost Education Source, EBSCOhost ERIC, EBSCOhost APA PsycINFO, A+ Education, JSTOR and ProQuest Central. When searching in Google Scholar, the first 10 ten pages of search results were used (Kazi et al., 2021).

Search terms were used in different combinations as required by each database platform as shown in Table 1. Searches were limited to peer-reviewed papers published in English, in academic journals between the years 2020-2024 (inclusive). While artificial intelligence has existed since the mid-twentieth century (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019), articles published between 2020-2024 (inclusive) were sought due to the rapid pace at which this technology is changing (Lo, 2023), and the authors have a particular interest in the use of Generative AI and Chatbots in school counselling, which did not become prevalent until 2022 (Elbanna & Armstrong, 2024).

Table 1.
Search Strategy

Database	Search Statement	Inclusion criteria
Google Scholar	("School psychologist*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "school counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "school counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "guidance counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "guidance counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence")	Peer Reviewed Academic Journals English Language Published Between 2020-2024
EBSCOhost Education Source	("School psychologist*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "school counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "school counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "guidance counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "guidance counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence")	Peer Reviewed Academic Journals English Language Published Between 2020-2024
EBSCOhost ERIC	("School psychologist*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "school counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "school counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "guidance counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR "guidance counsellor*" AND "artificial intelligence"	Peer Reviewed Academic Journals English Language Published Between 2020-2024
EBSCOhost APA PsycINFO	("School psychologist*" AND "artificial intelligence" OR	Peer Reviewed Academic Journals

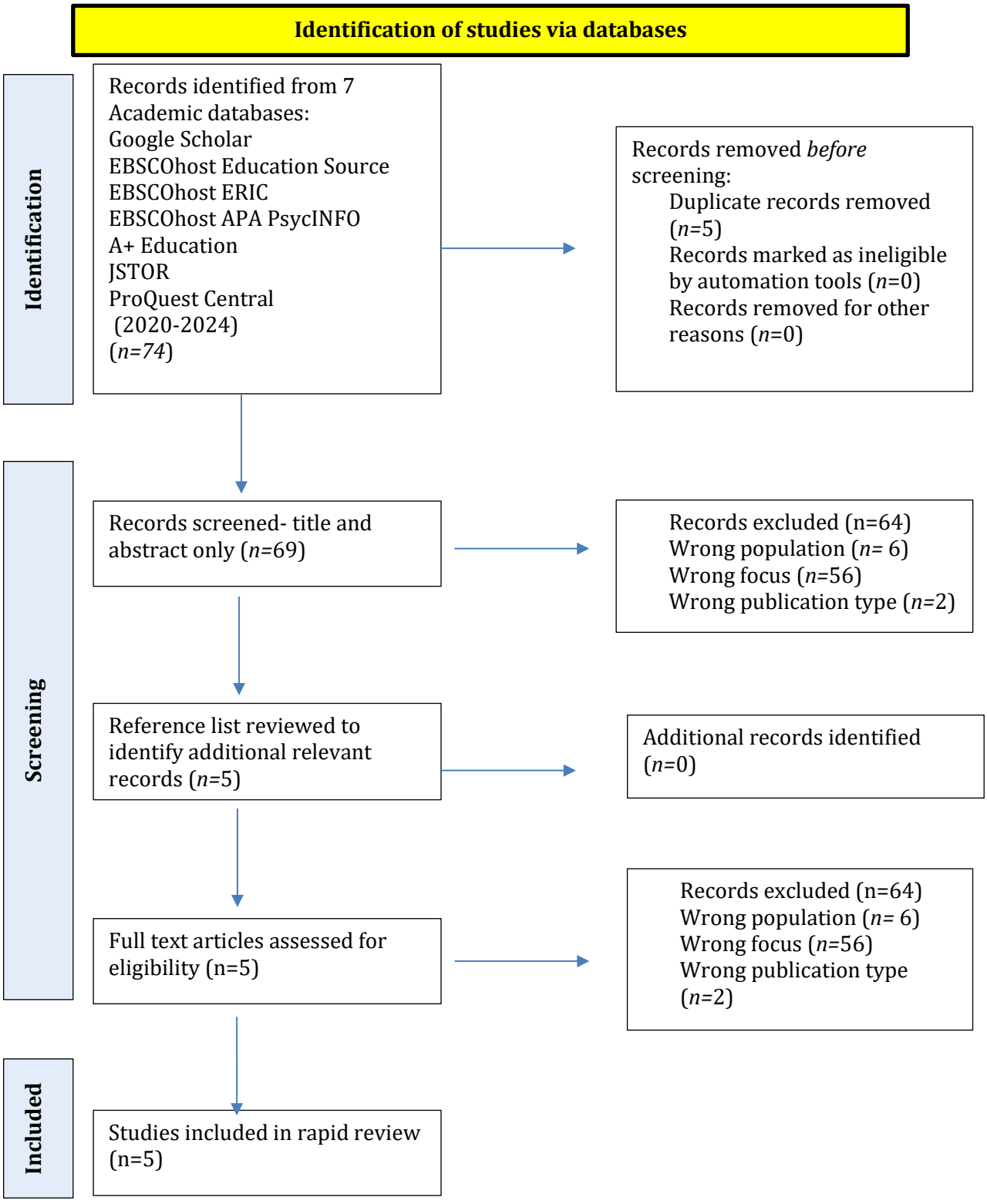
	"school counsellor*"	AND	English Language
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	Published Between
	"school counsellor*"	AND	2020-2024
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	
	"guidance counsellor*"	AND	
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	
	"guidance counsellor*"	AND	
	"artificial intelligence")		
A+ Education	("School psychologist*"	AND	Peer Reviewed
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	Academic Journals
	"school counsellor*"	AND	English Language
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	(Removed years due
	"school counsellor*"	AND	to no entries
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	between 2020-2024)
	"guidance counsellor*"	AND	
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	
	"guidance counsellor*"	AND	
	"artificial intelligence")		
JSTOR	("School psychologist*"	AND	Peer Reviewed
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	Academic Journals
	"school counsellor*"	AND	English Language
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	Published Between
	"school counsellor*"	AND	2020-2024
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	
	"guidance counsellor*"	AND	
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	
	"guidance counsellor*"	AND	
	"artificial intelligence")		
ProQuest	"School psychologist*"	AND	Peer Reviewed
Central	"artificial intelligence"	OR	Academic Journals
	"school counsellor*"	AND	English Language
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	Published Between
	"school counsellor*"	AND	2020-2024
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	
	"guidance counsellor*"	AND	
	"artificial intelligence"	OR	
	"guidance counsellor*"	AND	
	"artificial intelligence"		

Study screening

74 journal articles were initially entered into Rayyan by the first author in August 2024. Duplicates were removed, which left a remaining 69 articles. The 69 articles underwent a two-step blinded screening process with the two authors working independently. The authors reviewed each title and abstract and assigned a decision (include/exclude/maybe), providing reasoning for their decision. Discussions were helping to resolve any conflicts. Of the excluded articles, six had the wrong focus and 56 had the wrong population. Following the title and abstract screening, seven articles were included for full text screening.

The full text of the remaining seven articles was screened independently by the two authors, who met to discuss any conflicts. From the seven remaining articles that were reviewed in the second screening, two were excluded, one for being the wrong publication type, and the other being wrong population. The reference list of the remaining articles was then reviewed by the first author to check for potential inclusions, though this did not yield any further results, which resulted. This resulted in five articles remaining at the conclusion of this process. The PRISMA flowchart is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1:
PRISMA flowchart. Source. Adapted from Page et al. (2021).



Data Extraction and analysis

Data from the five included studies were extracted and organised into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet by the first author and validated by the second author. The data extracted included: author, year, title, country, study design, research aim, participants and key findings. Only findings that were relevant to the research question were extracted.

Following this, we charted the data (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), sorting it into key issues in themes. Themes were coded inductively, using a previous review as a model (Brown et al., 2024), developing a descriptive map of these themes.

Findings

We detail the findings in two sub-sections: characteristics of the included studies, and descriptive map of the included studies.

Characteristics of the included studies

Characteristics of the five included in this rapid review are presented in Table 2. The articles were written by scholars from Lagos (Oyebisi et al., 2024), Malaysia (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024), Morocco (Majjate et al., 2024), the United States (Krach & Corcoran, 2023), and Taiwan (Su et al., 2024). Four articles were published in 2024, (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Majjate et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024) and one was published in 2023 (Krach & Corcoran, 2023).

Three of the five articles reviewed were conceptual papers that used literature reviews to explore potential opportunities and issues on the topic of school counsellors and using AI to support their work (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024).

One of the five articles (Majjate et al., 2024) was an evaluation of a program that used AI to support school counsellors in doing their work, which was developed by the authors, and the remaining article reported on an experiment that tested the use of an AI-driven online journalling program. The one study that involved participants was the experiment, which gathered data from 22 primary-school aged participants who were accessing school counsellor support prior to the study (Su et al., 2024).

In terms of measures, the only empirical study included in this rapid review (Su et al., 2024) used a three-month trial of using a digital journaling platform. Two-factor mixed design ANOVA analysis. Of the participants, there was a treatment and a control group. The treatment group used a digital journaling platform to reflect on thoughts and actions after counselling sessions. The control group did not use the online journalling platform (Su et al., 2024).

Table 2.
Overview of study characteristics

Author(s) (year) and country	Country	Aim/s	Study design and methods	Participants	Key findings
Ganaprakasam, C., Chanthiran, M., & Hashim, H. (2024).	Malaysia	To Explore opportunities, considerations and challenges for using AI in school counselling.	Qualitative Literature review	N/A	Opportunities: Provides an overview of how AI could be used in a school counselling context, discussing the benefits of using it to improve accessibility, efficiency, and accuracy of mental health support for students. Challenges and ethical considerations: identifies confidentiality and data security as risks in using AI in school counselling, and that AI would not be able to understand the nuances of the human experience, nor would it be able to consider cultural diversity.
Krach, S.K., Corcoran, S. (2023).	USA	To explore the opportunities in using AI to support school counsellors to provide counselling, assessment, and consultation services to students.	Qualitative Literature review	N/A	Opportunities: AI could be used to identify trends in student data to facilitate early intervention. It would also be able to provide immediate counselling using Chatbots. Proposes that AI could be used in psychoeducational assessment and reporting. Challenges: Counselling support provided would not be equivalent to that provided by humans. Used as a tool: Provides a prediction of what the authors believe what aspects of the

					school counsellor role are the least likely to be replaced by technology, which include psychometric testing, consulting, and counselling.
Majjate, H., Bellarhmouch, Y., Jeghal, A., Yahyaouy, A., Tairi, H., & Zidani, K. A. (2024)	Morocco	To evaluative the use of AI to assist school counsellors in supporting students to make decisions around their tertiary pathways.	Qualitative Evaluation Research	N/A	Opportunities: AI could be used to provide early intervention for students. It could also predict post-schooling options for students. Addressing Gaps: AI could address school counsellor shortages and low counsellor to student ratios. AI could also reduce school counsellor workload around administrative tasks, allowing counsellors more time to see students.
Oyebisi, O.M., Anyama, S.C., & Ahimie, B. (2024) Lagos	Lagos	To examine the opportunities and challenges for school counsellors and using AI in their practice, with a particular focus on ethical considerations.	Qualitative Literature review	N/A	Opportunities: AI could support school counsellors in counselling, administrative tasks, student engagement activities, providing professional development and training. Challenges: Data security and confidentiality. Addressing Gaps: Increase access to school counsellors through use of Chatbots to provide immediate support to students. Suggests that Chatbots could be used to support teaching staff to identify at-risk students.

Su, S. W., Hung, C. H., Chen, L. X., & Yuan, S. M. (2024)	Taiwan	To measure to effectiveness of using a digital journalling platform to assist schools and school counsellors to provide social/emotional support to students.	Mixed methods Mixed-factor analysis	n=22 elementary students from Taiwan	Opportunities AI can be used as a complimentary tool to school counselling practice to improve student social-emotional outcomes. Addressing Gaps: AI can help address school counsellor shortages, providing students with timely support. AI tools may lead to students more willing to seek support, where cultural stigma may prevent them from doing so.

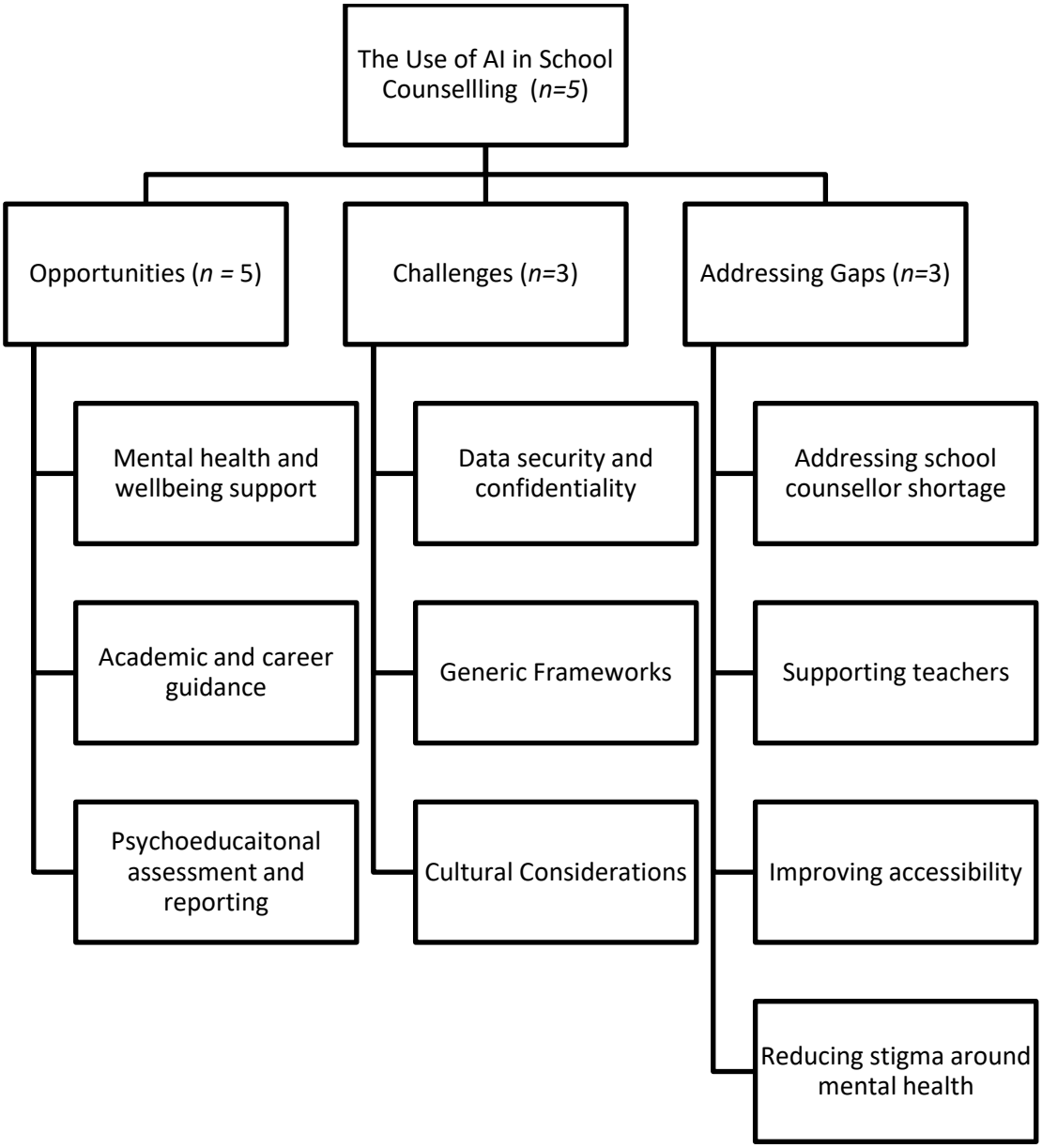
Overview of study participants

Of the five included studies, only one used participants, with a total of 22 Taiwanese primary school students that had previously been identified as having emotional disorders, being involved in the study (Su et al., 2024). This article presents the findings from an experimental study involving a three-month trial of a digital journal platform that incorporated AI functions to support students' social/emotional development. Su et al. (2024)'s paper sought to uncover the efficacy of using AI-driven intervention tools to support neurodiverse students to improve their social-emotional skills.

Descriptive map of the included studies

Using the five included studies, a descriptive map (Arskey & O'Malley, 2005) was compiled, showing the landscape regarding school counsellors and their use of artificial intelligence. Studies fell into three thematic categories (Figure 2).

Figure 2.
Descriptive Map of Included Studies



- *Opportunities:* Examines the potential and actual benefits of using AI in school counselling contexts, including mental health and wellbeing support, academic and career guidance support, and assistance with psychoeducational assessment and reporting.
- *Challenges:* Examines the potential and actual challenges and ethical considerations surrounding the use of AI in school counselling contexts, including data security, confidentiality, use of generic frameworks in AI generated responses, and cultural considerations.
- *Addressing Gaps:* Examines the way that AI could address gaps in school counselling including addressing school counsellor shortages, improving accessibility to school counselling support, reducing stigma around mental health support seeking, and supporting school counsellors to support teachers.

The descriptive map of the included studies is shown in Figure 2. Of the five included studies more than one theme was addressed (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Krach & Corcoran, 2023; Majjate et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024).

All of the sources reviewed for this article focussed on ways that AI could be used to compliment or improve the work that school counsellors do, with a focus on both pathways planning (Majjate et al., 2024) or wellbeing support (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Krach et al., 2020; Oyebisi et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024). The reviewed literature indicates that there are both opportunities and challenges for the use of AI in school counselling, as well as ways that it can be used to address gaps in school counselling.

Opportunities (n = 5)

A significant advantage of using AI in school counselling as identified in the reviewed literature is its ability to analyse data to facilitate early intervention (Krach & Corcoran, 2023; Majjate et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024). AI's capacity to use predictive-analysis based on student attendance, academic, and behaviour data, can help school counsellors in identifying at-risk students, thus making early-intervention and behaviour support plans a greater possibility (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024). Krach and Corcoran (2023) also suggest that AI could improve consultation and decision-making processes involving early-intervention of at-risk students, using data to provide predictions not only of who may need support, but also what types of support would be best suited to the individual.

AI tools have the potential to provide immediate responses to student concerns, improving accessibility, particularly in cases where access to school counsellors is limited (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024). Chatbots provide an initial contact point for students, directing them to appropriate resources which may reduce school counsellor workload (Krach & Corcoran, 2023; Oyebisi et al., 2024).

The use of AI in school counselling practice can also allow for the integration of therapeutic approaches such as exposure therapy and virtual reality, generated by AI (Oyebisi et al., 2024). It is suggested that AI algorithms can personalise Virtual Reality (VR) experiences to support students with a range of mental health challenges. The use of AI supported VR exposure therapy can enable students to access this form of support more easily, and in a familiar school environment(Oyebisi et al., 2024).

It has been conceptualised in the research that AI could also be used by school counsellors to provide students with engagement activities (Oyebisi et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024). Data from Su et al. (2024)'s study also shows that AI can improve the social and emotional outcomes of students. The integration of AI to support students in this domain has been shown to be more effective than traditional counselling alone (Su et al., 2024). Online platforms that are driven by AI can also support school counsellors in providing post-schooling support for students. Career counselling can also be supported through the integration of AI, with Majjate et al. (2024) suggesting that it can be used to predict educational and post-schooling pathways based on student data and interests.

AI can support school counsellors in early intervention through monitoring and analysing attendance, behaviour, and academic data, thus identifying students of concern (Oyebisi et al., 2024). When intervention occurs, AI can also be used to manage administrative tasks such as note-taking, and to measure the effectiveness of support provided, thus improving school counsellor efficiency (Oyebisi et al., 2024).

It is proposed that AI can be used in psychoeducational assessment, particularly around assessment scoring and calculating results (Krach & Corcoran, 2023). In addition, interpretation of test results can also be facilitated by AI, having the potential to reduce bias (Krach & Corcoran, 2023). AI can also support the evaluation of interventions that are put in place following psychoeducational assessment (Krach & Corcoran, 2023).

Challenges (n =3)

While there are several benefits for school counsellors to use AI in their practice, there are also challenges, which have been identified. Confidentiality and data security is a concern raised in the reviewed literature (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024). As AI tools are run by third-party providers and are web-based (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024), there is potential for data breaches to occur. As much of the information that school-counsellors work with is sensitive in nature, it is essential that strict measures are taken in ensuring the safety and confidentiality of student information.

Krach et al. (2020) outlined areas of practice that would be difficult to replicate through AI, such as relationship building, psychoeducational test selection, and planning for suitable interventions within the educational context. Ganaprakasam et al. (2024) raised the concern that AI would be unable to fully appreciate the complexity and nuances of the human experience. This leads to potential limitations around AI's ability to provide appropriate intervention and support plans for students.

Relying on AI to analyse data to create interventions for students is also a concern, due to the potential for these plans to lack accuracy and reliability (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024). AI does not have the same ability to understand the cultural nuances and complexities of the human experience, and therefore the interventions may not have the same efficacy of those created by a school counsellor (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024). This may lead to these interventions being unsuitable for the student or context in which they are to be implemented. It is therefore imperative that the information provided by the school counsellor is detailed to enable the accuracy of AI-driven intervention (Oyebisi et al., 2024).

Addressing Gaps (n = 3)

In some countries, a lack of sufficient staffing has led to many students not having timely access to support, with some going unnoticed, leading to problems with academic and social-emotional wellbeing (Majjate et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024). A main challenge identified by the reviewed literature is the difference between staff numbers and students needing support (Majjate et al., 2024). Due to these barriers, research has suggested the use of AI to assist school counsellors in creating personalised recommendations for intervention, reduces workload requirements (Majjate et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024). It has also been suggested that there is cultural stigma surrounding mental health and seeking support for this, and AI-driven tools may allow for individuals to access this more readily (Su et al., 2024).

Research also proposes that AI could be used in a school counselling context is through providing teachers to identify at-risk students in the classroom (Oyebisi et al., 2024). By inputting academic, attendance, and behaviour data, teachers could use AI to monitor student progress and identify any early indicators that a student needs additional support. This is seen as benefiting students, who may receive support more quickly, as well as teachers, to reduce their workload (Oyebisi et al., 2024).

DISCUSSION

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was used to inform this rapid review which addressed the broad research question "*How are school counsellors using artificial intelligence in their practice?"* The review has generated a descriptive map of five included studies. The existing literature shows that school counsellors are, or have the potential to, use AI in their practice to provide support to students, and that AI use is influenced by whether school counsellors perceive it to be useful. The existing evidence is limited with only a small number of studies having been conducted on this topic. A majority (*n*=3) of these are conceptual (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Krach & Corcoran, 2023; Oyebisi et al., 2024), with the remaining (n=2) being empirical (Majjate et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024). This rapid review has identified both strengths and weaknesses for school counsellors in using AI in their work.

Viewed through the TAM, the studies included in this review focus on how school counsellors perceive the usefulness of AI, which, in the context of this study, means the strengths of AI use in school counselling practice. The reviewed studies indicate that a strength of AI is that it has the potential to support school counsellors to streamline their work through supporting with administrative tasks, supporting early intervention, and enhancing service delivery in mental health, wellbeing, and career planning (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Krach & Corcoran, 2023; Majjate et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024). Empirical research shows that chatbots and AI-driven platforms were shown to support emotional regulation and student engagement (Su et al., 2024). Such tools may benefit students and school counsellors through the delivery of timely support, particularly in areas where access to these professionals is limited.

Another perceived usefulness and strength is that the studies included in this review investigating school counsellors' use of AI reveal that there are opportunities for these professionals to use this technology to reduce their workload and improve practice (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Krach & Corcoran, 2023; Majjate et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024).

Even though there is perceived usefulness in using AI in school counselling, there are weaknesses for school counsellors to use AI in their work, for example ethical implications must be considered. While AI offers significant opportunities to enhance school counselling practice, its implementation must be carefully managed to ensure ethical use. AI systems often rely on third-party, data-driven algorithms that may carry bias or have the potential to be inequitable if not monitored closely (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024).

A further weakness surrounding the use of AI in school counselling is data security and privacy (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024). School counsellors work with sensitive information and require informed consent from students or caregivers to work with them (Campbell & Colmar, 2014). Using third party AI platforms raises concerns about the storage and privacy of data inputted into these systems. Without clear structures around data privacy and informed consent procedures, the use of AI poses the risk of breaches in confidentiality, which could damage the student-school counsellor relationship and even put the school counsellor's job in jeopardy (Krach & Corcoran, 2023; Oyebisi et al., 2024).

While the ethical considerations have been outlined in this rapid review, studies in this review have not addressed how schools are currently managing these concerns. Discussions on legal implications, data management systems, and further training in ethical practices for school counsellors have not been considered. Future research could explore best practices of ethical AI implementation in school counselling practice (Oyebisi et al., 2024).

It is imperative that school counsellors receive proper training in the use of AI technologies, and more research is needed into the ways that schools can address the potential and actual ethical challenges raised (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024). It is also important to identify that AI is best used as a tool for school counsellors to use to enhance their practice, rather than a replacement for this service (Krach & Corcoran, 2023). As the use of AI in school counselling evolves, there is room for more empirical, longitudinal and cross-cultural research on its use to evaluate its effectiveness, both for school counsellor workload and student academic and wellbeing outcomes.

The reviewed articles were written by authors located in Malaysia (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024), Morocco (Majjate et al., 2024), Lagos (Oyebisi et al., 2024), the United States (Krach & Corcoran, 2023) and Taiwan (Su et al., 2024), which may not fully represent the global landscape of AI in school counselling. Various factors can influence the adoption of a novel technology, such as cultural, and economic differences, and thus the findings from this review may not be applicable to other settings. There is therefore room for further cultural perspectives on the use of AI in school counselling.

The use of AI has important cultural implications. Counselling is deeply rooted in trust, empathy and cultural sensitivity (Corey, 2024). The use of AI risks dehumanising the counselling process due to its lack of empathy, limited understanding of emotional cues, reliance on pre-programmed responses, and the inability to adapt to complex and unpredictable human behaviours (Chan, 2025). AI is trained on large data sets that may embed cultural biases and lack representation of diverse populations, thereby unintentionally perpetuating stereotypes (Urom et al., 2025; Vesna et al., 2025). Therefore, school counsellors must evaluate AI-generated content and adapt to the cultural context in which they are working and/or the student's cultural background. Despite the promise that GenAI can bridge inequalities (Assefa, 2025), many considerations need to be addressed to ensure equitable use for all users. For school counsellors in underprivileged areas, a lack of access to high-speed internet and the financial cost of using AI-driven learning platforms and devices can affect the quality of the AI content available to help inform school counselling practice (Assefa, 2025; Vesna et al., 2025).

Technological advancements in AI technology are also evolving at a rapid pace, so research in this field is likely to have difficulty maintaining this pace. The focus of this rapid review is on Generative AI, which is only one way that AI technology is used. As there are other forms of AI aside from its generative forms, there is room for further research on other forms of AI in school counselling (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Krach & Corcoran, 2023).

As AI in education, and particularly in school counselling contexts, is an emerging field, the publications have the potential to hold bias towards the potential of AI, focussing more on the positives than the short- and long-term challenges. It is suggested that more systematic approaches to research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the benefits and risks of using AI in school counselling practice (Oyebisi et al., 2024). The majority of the studies that met the inclusion threshold for this study were conceptual (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Krach & Corcoran, 2023; Oyebisi et al., 2024), therefore there is a significant lack of empirical, evidence-based data on the use of AI in school counselling.

It must be acknowledged that presently, only a small number of studies that address the use of AI in school counselling exist. As the technology continues to develop, it is expected that research that focuses on this field will as well. Future research such as longitudinal studies or case studies that focus on how school counsellors use AI in their work across diverse contexts has the potential to expand the scope of research on this topic.

This review can only offer short-term data and insights into the role of AI in school counselling. Current thinking and data have only measured outcomes in the short term, and this article has not addressed the potential challenges in the longer-term. As AI continues to be used in school counselling contexts, studies using longitudinal data can potentially address this gap (Su et al., 2024).

It is imperative that school counsellors receive proper training in the use of AI technologies, and more research is needed into the ways that schools can address the potential and actual ethical challenges raised. It is also important to identify that AI is best used as a tool for school counsellors to use to enhance their practice, rather than a replacement for this service. As the use of AI in school counselling evolves, there is room for more empirical, longitudinal and cross-cultural research on its use to evaluate its effectiveness, both for school counsellor workload and student academic and wellbeing outcomes.

In this review, we offered a synthesis of factors that influence how school counsellors use AI in their practice (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Krach & Corcoran, 2023; Majjate et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024).

Contributions and implications for practice

With the use of AI becoming increasingly commonplace in education, this rapid review of school counsellors' use of AI makes an important contribution to the development of ethical guidelines, policies, and training for school counsellors. *Formation of ethical guidelines*. While AI holds great potential in school counselling practice, its implementation must be carefully considered, with due consideration of ethics and accessibility. The formation of ethical guidelines for school counsellors' use of AI needs to consider the key findings of this rapid review are as follows (Figure 3):

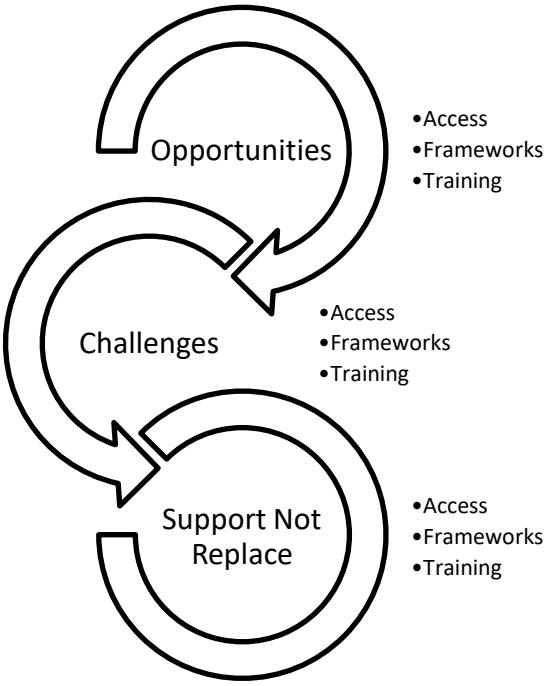
The use of AI should be viewed as a tool to improve, rather than replace, the work that school counsellors do. As outlined in the research, AI cannot replicate the empathy and understanding needed in this profession that only a human can produce (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Krach & Corcoran, 2023). It is also important to understand that AI is based on generic models (Su et al., 2024), and do not have the capacity to understand cultural and social nuances. It is recommended that AI is used for administrative tasks, or as a way for students to initially engage with a school counselling service.

Policy development: Findings from this review will also help inform policy development of school counsellors' use of AI. As outlined in this review, the use of AI technologies poses concerns around data security and confidentiality (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024; Oyebisi et al., 2024).Therefore, it is crucial that school counselling associations, education departments, schools, and school counsellors develop and implement strict guidelines and frameworks to ensure its ethical use. Such policies should focus on data security, consent, and alignment with existing policies and legislation.

School counsellor training. The effective use of AI in school counselling will require additional training and support for those who intend to use it (Oyebisi et al., 2024). As not all schools have the same level of access to the technologies required for its implementation (Ganaprakasam et al., 2024), adequate resourcing is also required to improve its accessibility. A deeper understanding of how AI is used, and the risks and benefits associated with it, will inform school counsellor training and professional development through targeted programs and support. It is therefore recommended that schools be provided with adequate training and resources to implement this technology.

Given the rapid development of artificial intelligence in education and the emerging role of AI in school counselling, it is recommended that school counsellor preparation programs embed foundational training in the ethical, practical, and evidence-informed use of AI technologies. This may include a focus on ethical decision-making frameworks specific to AI use, case-based learning on AI tools in counselling contexts, and critical evaluation of AI-supported interventions through education policy development or revision. Including such content will equip future school counsellors to confidently and critically navigate AI tools as part of their professional toolkit, ensuring their practice remains ethical, culturally responsive, and student-centred.

Figure 3.
Using AI in school counselling



LIMITATIONS

There are limitations to this rapid review that must be considered when interpreting the findings. In this rapid review, we acknowledge that only a small number of studies met the inclusion criteria of being published in peer-reviewed academic journals. The inclusion of grey literature may have contributed studies with different findings. Searches for this rapid review were limited to studies published in English as translating studies was not in our capacity. Expanding the search range to include studies written in other languages may contribute additional findings. Due to the lack of research on this topic, we did not plan to conduct meta-analysis. As further research into this field is conducted, meta-analysis may be possible. Future research should aim to expand the scope of school counsellors' use of AI by focusing on empirical study designs to enable cross-study comparisons. In addition, longitudinal studies could provide greater opportunities to explore the benefits and challenges of using AI in school counselling. This will also help with identifying the ethical implications of AI use in school counselling. There is a particular need for studies that explore the efficacy and effectiveness of AI use in school counselling. Models for achieving this goal can be found in the broader literature on the use of AI in education literature, for example, evaluations of AI in teaching (Chen et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

Findings from this study highlight that the knowledge of how school counsellors use AI is emerging. While AI has the potential to support school counsellors in their work, there are ethical and logistical challenges that must be acknowledged. School counsellors must receive training, support, and appropriate resources to ensure the ethical and appropriate use of AI in their practice. As this is an area of rapid growth and change, further research with a focus on empirical studies, long-term outcomes, and best practice is needed to ensure that this technology is safe and equitable.

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