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Psychological Constructs Underlying Work Identity in AI-Augmented Labor

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the psychological constructs shaping work identity among professionals engaged in AI-augmented labor contexts. This qualitative research employed a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of 20 professionals from various sectors in Turkey who actively work with AI-integrated systems. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diverse representation across occupations such as healthcare, education, finance, and manufacturing. Semi-structured interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was reached. Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and was transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, and NVivo software facilitated the systematic coding and categorization of emerging themes related to work identity, emotional responses, and social dynamics. Analysis revealed three overarching themes: identity transformation through AI, emotional landscape of AI-augmented work, and relational and social reconfiguration. Participants reported renegotiating their professional roles in response to AI's presence, with some experiencing identity loss due to the erosion of traditional skills, while others reconstructed their identity through new technical tasks. Emotionally, participants expressed anxiety, stress, and insecurity, but also curiosity and motivation depending on their perceived control and institutional support. Socially, the presence of AI shifted team dynamics, introduced new authority structures, and reshaped peer comparisons. Adaptive identity responses were strongly associated with supportive organizational cultures and opportunities for human-AI collaboration. AI-augmented work environments profoundly influence psychological experiences of identity, emotional well-being, and social positioning. Organizations seeking successful AI integration must not only provide technical training but also foster identity-supportive practices that promote emotional resilience, autonomy, and meaningful role evolution.

Keywords: Work identity, artificial intelligence, psychological impact, qualitative research, emotional adaptation, professional roles, organizational support.

Introduction

The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into professional environments is transforming not only how work is performed, but also how workers define themselves within these changing contexts. As AI becomes more embedded in decision-making, creative tasks, and service delivery, the traditional boundaries of human labor are shifting—prompting complex psychological reactions and a reconfiguration of work identity [1]. In industries ranging from healthcare to finance, employees are increasingly navigating a blurred line between human autonomy and machine delegation, raising questions about emotional stability, cognitive alignment, and role continuity [2, 3]. Amid these changes, understanding the psychological constructs that underlie work identity in AI-augmented environments has become an urgent research priority, especially as identity-related stressors such as alienation, anxiety, and role ambiguity grow more prevalent [4, 5].

Work identity is a complex construct, composed of an individual's values, beliefs, emotions, and social roles tied to their occupational engagement. This identity is shaped and reshaped through experiences of competence, recognition, purpose,

and relational feedback. The emergence of AI technologies has added a disruptive layer to this dynamic. While some workers experience AI as a tool for enhancement and growth, others view it as a source of existential threat, triggering fear of redundancy or devaluation of uniquely human skills [6-8]. Indeed, the duality of AI's impact—both as a facilitator of efficiency and a potential eroder of identity—necessitates deeper qualitative inquiry into how individuals interpret, negotiate, and reconstruct their sense of self in digitally augmented workplaces.

Emerging literature has begun to examine the relationship between AI and occupational identity. Qin et al. (2024) found that employees' identification with AI as part of the workplace could predict their proactive behavior, suggesting that the incorporation of AI into work identity may have both motivational and behavioral consequences [9]. Similarly, Cheng et al. (2025) argued that AI-induced silence among service employees often results from breaches in the psychological contract and moral dissonance, both of which are intimately tied to identity perceptions and expectations [5]. These findings reinforce the idea that work identity in AI contexts is more than a matter of technological literacy—it is a site of emotional and moral tension, shaped by personal, organizational, and societal narratives.

Emotion is a critical factor in identity formation and transformation in the context of AI. According to Eshraghian et al. (2024), developers and programmers using AI-based coding assistants like GitHub Copilot experience both excitement and alienation, depending on the perceived authenticity of their contributions [10]. Emotional ambivalence also characterizes other sectors, where AI alters not only the content of work but also its emotional valence. For example, Gao and Zamanpour (2024) observed that AI integration among financial engineers introduced new anxieties related to psychological safety and work-life balance, especially in high-stakes decision-making roles [11]. These emotional shifts point to deeper identity disturbances that arise when AI challenges the worker's sense of competence, relevance, and personal agency.

One significant theme in current research is the interplay between AI technologies and creativity. Farah et al. (2024) emphasized how users employ generative AI to express aspects of self-identity in digital environments, suggesting that new technologies not only disrupt traditional work structures but also offer alternative pathways for self-expression [12]. Similarly, Boumous (2024) argued that the tension between human and AI creativity—especially in fields like literature and design—can evoke a crisis of authorship, leading individuals to question the authenticity of their professional output and its role in shaping their self-concept [13]. These identity negotiations are further complicated in contexts where AI impersonates human facilitators, as shown in Zhang et al. (2023), who reported that design professionals altered their behavior depending on whether they perceived their collaborator as human or artificial [7].

Psychological well-being, another key dimension of occupational identity, is also under pressure in AI-integrated workplaces. Huo et al. (2025) examined how job complexity and AI usage among healthcare professionals influenced their psychological needs, such as autonomy and competence—needs that are fundamental to stable identity formation [14]. In parallel, Hou and Fan (2024) demonstrated that job stress resulting from AI-related performance pressures could diminish work engagement, thereby weakening the emotional ties workers maintain with their roles and institutions [15]. Watermann (2025) offers a more optimistic view, suggesting that well-designed AI systems, when aligned with positive psychology principles, can enhance well-being and resilience by supporting meaningful work and individual growth [1]. These contrasting perspectives underscore the context-specific and subjective nature of identity experiences in AI-augmented labor.

In addition to emotional responses, philosophical and ethical questions play a growing role in how individuals experience their work identity in AI contexts. Methuku and Myakala (2025) discuss the implications of "pre-mortem AI clones," or digital

replicas of individuals that may outlive their creators, raising moral concerns about selfhood and legacy in automated spaces [16]. Tadimalla and Maher (2024) similarly argue that as AI systems become more autonomous and anthropomorphized, the boundary between creator and creation becomes blurred, complicating notions of responsibility, authorship, and personal meaning in work [17]. These concerns echo Ashton and Patel's (2024) exploration of robot artists, where the focus shifted from the product to the perceived authenticity and identity of the producer [18]. Such developments reveal how AI not only transforms labor structures but also destabilizes the symbolic and relational aspects of professional identity.

Cultural and geopolitical factors further influence the psychological impact of AI at work. For example, Сніжна (2024) explored the experiences of artistically gifted adolescents in war-torn regions, highlighting how AI both threatens and inspires creative identity amid broader existential crises [19]. Similarly, Аверина (2024) discussed how family dynamics and cultural frameworks mediate identity development, a point that becomes particularly relevant in collectivist societies navigating AI transitions [20]. These studies suggest that identity reactions to AI cannot be universalized; rather, they are embedded in local meanings, values, and socio-political contexts.

Organizational and interpersonal relationships also affect how AI-mediated work identity is constructed. Kant and Adula (2024) found that in Ethiopian organizations, AI-based learning was moderated by perceptions of reward and organizational support, which in turn influenced employees' work attitudes and engagement [21]. Similarly, Norton et al. (2024) identified that consultants using AI in their practice experienced shifts in interpersonal boundaries, altering how they framed trust, empathy, and credibility with clients [22]. As Boysen (2025) noted in the context of psychology education, the integration of AI demands a recalibration of relational dynamics, both between colleagues and between workers and clients or students [3].

Finally, multiple studies emphasize the psychological strategies and coping mechanisms workers employ to navigate the disruptions caused by AI. Fahrudin (2025), for instance, detailed how content moderators in AI-driven environments adopt wellness strategies to maintain psychological health, ranging from peer support to digital detoxes [23]. Maltby (2025) proposed a behaviorally informed framework for guiding agricultural workers through AI transitions, emphasizing the role of identity anchoring and community values in maintaining coherence during change [24]. These findings align with Yu's (2023) broader assertion that AI and machine learning technologies must be studied not only as technical systems but also as psychological environments that reshape human cognition, emotion, and behavior [25].

Taken together, these studies illustrate the profound and multifaceted impact of AI on how individuals understand, experience, and perform their work identity. They point to a pressing need for qualitative research that captures the lived realities of those navigating this evolving landscape—particularly in under-researched cultural contexts. While much of the literature has emphasized the technological, economic, and organizational implications of AI, this study centers on the human psyche: the internal negotiations, emotional adaptations, and identity reconfigurations that define the worker's response to artificial intelligence.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the psychological constructs underlying work identity in AI-augmented labor. The research design focused on capturing the lived experiences of individuals working in

contexts where artificial intelligence technologies are integrated into routine job functions. The participant group consisted of 20 professionals from various sectors in Turkey, including healthcare, education, finance, and manufacturing, where AI-based tools or systems are actively used. Purposeful sampling was employed to ensure diversity in occupational roles and gender while maintaining relevance to the research question. All participants were required to have at least one year of direct experience with AI-augmented work environments. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, ensuring that no new themes emerged in the final interviews.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted exclusively through semi-structured interviews, allowing for both guided inquiry and the emergence of unanticipated insights. Interviews were conducted either in-person or via secure online video platforms, depending on participant availability and regional COVID-19 guidelines. Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' consent. The interview protocol focused on participants' experiences of role change, identity adaptation, emotional responses, and perceived agency in relation to AI integration in their professional settings. Reflexive field notes were also maintained throughout the process to enhance interpretive depth and track the interviewer's assumptions.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework. Transcribed interviews were imported into NVivo software for systematic coding and organization. Initial open coding was followed by axial coding to identify connections between emerging concepts. Codes were then categorized into broader themes and subthemes that reflected the psychological dimensions of work identity transformation in AI-augmented environments. Ongoing analytic memo-writing and peer debriefing sessions contributed to the rigor and credibility of the analysis. To ensure trustworthiness, techniques such as member checking, audit trails, and triangulation with field notes were applied throughout the analytic process.

Findings and Results

The study sample consisted of 20 participants from various sectors in Turkey, including healthcare (n = 5), education (n = 4), finance (n = 4), manufacturing (n = 3), information technology (n = 2), and public administration (n = 2), all of whom worked in environments where artificial intelligence tools were actively used. Participants ranged in age from 29 to 54 years (M = 41.2), with 11 identifying as female and 9 as male. In terms of professional experience, 7 participants had between 5 and 10 years of work experience, while 8 had between 11 and 20 years, and 5 had more than 20 years. All participants held at least a bachelor's degree, with 6 holding master's degrees and 2 holding doctorates. The diversity in professional backgrounds, age, and experience contributed to a rich and multifaceted exploration of work identity in the context of AI-augmented labor.

Table 1

Main Categories, Subcategories, and Concepts Related to Work Identity in AI-Augmented Labor

Category	Subcategory	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Identity Transformation through AI	Re-negotiation of Professional Identity	Feeling "less human", Reframing expertise, Shifting job meaning, Role redefinition
	Ambivalence Toward AI Integration	Excitement vs. fear, Hope for efficiency, Uncertainty about future, Job insecurity
	Erosion of Traditional Skill Value	Feeling replaceable, Loss of craftsmanship, Devaluation of soft skills
	Identity Anchoring through New Tasks	Learning new roles, Embracing automation, Gaining technical confidence, New task ownership
	Temporal Fluidity of Identity	Identity change over time, Disrupted career trajectory, Adapting self-concept
	Resistance and Identity Preservation	Refusing new roles, Clinging to old identity, Resisting automation
2. Emotional Landscape of AI-Augmented Work	Anxiety and Psychological Insecurity	Fear of redundancy, Increased stress, Feeling monitored, Diminished control
	Motivation and Tech-Driven Curiosity	Interest in AI tools, Motivation to adapt, Intellectual stimulation
	AI-Induced Alienation	Feeling disconnected from work, Lack of meaning, Reduced human contact
	Coping Mechanisms	Humor, Seeking peer support, Downplaying AI impact, Focusing on irreplaceable skills
	Psychological Resilience	Growth mindset, Emotional adaptability, Self-reinvention
3. Relational and Social Reconfiguration	Change in Team Dynamics	New communication norms, AI as third actor, Blurred responsibility
	Recalibration of Authority and Trust	Trust in AI outputs, Distrust of algorithms, Shift in leadership power
	Peer Comparison and Competence Anxiety	Being compared to AI, Competing with AI, Identity threat from faster outputs
	Role of Human Judgment	AI limitations, Human intuition valued, Emotional intelligence as asset
	Organizational Culture and Support	Openness to change, Encouragement to retrain, Lack of emotional support, Peer validation

The analysis of interviews with 20 Turkish professionals working in AI-augmented environments revealed three overarching psychological themes: *Identity Transformation through AI*, *Emotional Landscape of AI-Augmented Work*, and *Relational and Social Reconfiguration*. Each theme consisted of a set of subthemes and associated experiential codes, as detailed below.

Re-negotiation of professional identity emerged as a core subtheme under the broader category of identity transformation. Many participants described how their sense of self at work was being continuously redefined in response to AI integration. Some expressed a loss of uniqueness, as one participant noted, "I used to feel like my decisions mattered more—but now, the system does the thinking." Others reframed their role more positively, seeing AI as a partner rather than a threat. For example, one interviewee explained, "It's no longer just about what I know, but how I use the system to make better judgments." This redefinition led to ongoing internal dialogue about self-worth and occupational identity.

In contrast, the subcategory of ambivalence toward AI integration revealed emotional and cognitive contradictions. While several professionals acknowledged the benefits of AI—such as speed and accuracy—they also harbored skepticism and fear. "It's exciting and frightening at the same time," said one participant. The tension between perceived progress and perceived obsolescence created a mental divide. Some viewed AI as an empowering tool, whereas others feared it would make them "irrelevant in the long run."

The subtheme of erosion of traditional skill value captured a recurring sense of devaluation. Participants often felt that long-held skills were no longer appreciated. A health worker said, "I studied for years to master this, and now the machine does it in seconds." Another added, "There's no space for intuition anymore—everything is data-driven." These narratives reflected not just technological shifts, but emotional wounds linked to perceived redundancy and the waning value of hands-on experience.

At the same time, some participants found opportunities for adaptation in the subtheme of identity anchoring through new tasks. Those who embraced the changes spoke about acquiring new skills and reclaiming a sense of purpose. "Now I'm

the person who trains others on the new software," said one participant proudly. Others highlighted the feeling of accomplishment in mastering new systems: "I never thought I'd enjoy the tech side, but here I am, leading our AI implementation team."

Temporal fluidity of identity emerged in interviews as participants reflected on how their work identity had changed over time. Many reported that their self-concept had shifted multiple times within a few years, especially during the initial stages of AI adoption. One participant shared, "At first, I resisted it, then I felt overwhelmed, and now I'm slowly finding a new version of myself in this job." These dynamic shifts underscore how AI integration is not a one-time change but a continual identity negotiation process.

In contrast, some workers showed clear signs of resistance and identity preservation. These participants actively avoided learning AI tools and clung to their pre-AI roles. "I still do things the old way," admitted one, "and I avoid tasks that involve those smart systems." Others expressed ideological resistance, describing AI as "cold," "inhuman," or "a threat to the craft." This resistance was less about inability and more about protecting a cherished occupational identity.

The emotional consequences of these identity shifts were captured in the second main theme: *Emotional Landscape of AI-Augmented Work*. Within this domain, anxiety and psychological insecurity were dominant narratives. Participants often voiced fear of being replaced or reduced to oversight roles. "Every update makes me nervous," confessed one employee. "It's like waiting for the moment they say, 'we don't need you anymore.'" The constant need to prove one's relevance created a persistent undercurrent of stress and vigilance.

On the other hand, motivation and tech-driven curiosity surfaced in those who saw AI as an intellectual challenge. These individuals found joy in experimenting with new tools. "It's like learning a new language," said a financial analyst. Others spoke of AI as a catalyst for growth: "It keeps me sharp. I enjoy the mental workout of staying current with tech." Such responses illustrated how AI can stimulate professional curiosity and goal-oriented learning.

Still, not all reactions were positive. The subtheme of AI-induced alienation highlighted feelings of detachment and meaninglessness. Participants in healthcare and education particularly lamented the loss of human connection. "I used to talk more with my patients," one nurse explained. "Now I spend more time inputting data than making eye contact." Others echoed similar sentiments about the shift from relational to transactional labor.

Participants employed a variety of coping mechanisms to manage these emotional strains. Some relied on humor: "We joke that the AI is our new boss," one respondent said. Others leaned on their colleagues for support, or reinterpreted the AI as a tool rather than a rival. "I remind myself that no machine can replace empathy," said a teacher. Such coping strategies served as psychological buffers in uncertain work environments.

Finally, the subtheme of psychological resilience was present in those who actively adapted to change. These participants demonstrated emotional flexibility and a growth mindset. "I've learned to evolve with the job," one participant stated. "I stopped fighting the change and started learning from it." Many saw their ability to pivot as a personal strength, a sign that identity in the AI age must be not only defined—but redefined.

The third main category, *Relational and Social Reconfiguration*, addressed changes in interpersonal dynamics at work. In the subtheme change in team dynamics, participants noted that AI tools altered communication patterns and blurred role boundaries. "Sometimes we rely on the system so much that we forget to consult each other," said a manufacturing supervisor. Others described AI as a new, unspoken member of the team—"like a silent partner we all answer to."

Recalibration of authority and trust was also a recurring concern. Trust in algorithms varied widely. "I believe in AI's precision, but not in its judgment," a manager said. Some felt that AI undermined their professional discretion, while others accepted it as a legitimate authority figure. The redistribution of power—away from human managers and toward systems—was seen as a significant cultural shift.

A particularly sensitive topic was peer comparison and competence anxiety. Many participants described a sense of competition—not just with colleagues, but with AI itself. "It's hard when your output is compared to a machine's," said one employee. "You start to doubt your own value." Some even reported performance anxiety triggered by algorithmic benchmarks. The internalization of AI standards intensified feelings of inadequacy for some.

In contrast, the subtheme of role of human judgment focused on areas where participants felt irreplaceable. They emphasized emotional intelligence, intuition, and moral reasoning as uniquely human assets. "AI can spot patterns, but it can't understand people," said a teacher. Others mentioned that trust, empathy, and creativity were still crucial in contexts like crisis response or counseling—contexts where AI "doesn't know how to care."

Lastly, organizational culture and support played a critical role in how workers adapted to AI integration. Supportive environments were marked by open dialogue, retraining opportunities, and emotional acknowledgment. "My manager encouraged us to take time to learn and not be afraid to fail," said one participant. Others, however, reported toxic cultures that dismissed emotional concerns: "They just expect us to adjust and be grateful." These differing environments shaped not only the emotional responses but also the identity trajectories of employees navigating AI transformation.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the profound and complex impact of AI integration on the psychological construction of work identity among professionals in Turkey. The analysis revealed three overarching themes: Identity Transformation through AI, Emotional Landscape of AI-Augmented Work, and Relational and Social Reconfiguration. Participants reported re-negotiating their professional identity in light of AI systems altering task structures, decision authority, and skill relevance. Some professionals described a loss of control or purpose, while others reframed their identities around new technical competencies and emerging hybrid roles. Emotionally, the data pointed to a mixture of anxiety, alienation, curiosity, and resilience. Participants often experienced psychological insecurity but also found coping strategies and growth opportunities. On a relational level, the study captured shifts in team dynamics, authority distribution, and organizational support, all of which influence how workers perceive their roles in an AI-mediated environment.

The first major finding—identity transformation in response to AI augmentation—echoes growing evidence in recent literature that AI technologies are not merely tools but transformative forces in shaping how professionals view their own value, uniqueness, and expertise. As some participants noted, AI's capacity to perform routine or analytical tasks led them to feel de-skilled or redundant, reflecting the concept of "role erosion" discussed by Ashton and Patel (2024), who found that creators and designers often feel their artistic identity threatened when automation encroaches upon expressive domains [18]. Similarly, Qin et al. (2024) argue that the degree to which workers identify with AI systems significantly affects their behavior and motivation, suggesting that identity alignment with technology can be a buffer against psychological disruption [9]. In the current study, those participants who internalized AI as a professional ally, rather than a threat, were more likely

to exhibit adaptability and derive meaning from new roles—an observation supported by Jain (2025), who noted similar flexibility among remote workers exposed to AI-driven coordination systems [8].

The subtheme of ambivalence toward AI integration reflects a cognitive and emotional duality that is consistent with recent psychological frameworks on AI acceptance. Frenkenberg and Hochman (2025) described this phenomenon as the "approach-avoidance paradox," in which employees simultaneously feel compelled to engage with AI for productivity gains while experiencing psychological resistance due to fears of loss of control and dependency [2]. Our participants' language often oscillated between enthusiasm and unease—mirroring what Cheng et al. (2025) interpret as a breach in the moral and psychological contract between employer and employee when AI is introduced without adequate ethical grounding [5]. These identity frictions can lead to emotional strain, mistrust, and internal conflict about one's legitimacy and value in the workplace.

The findings also highlighted the devaluation of traditional human skills, particularly those linked to tacit knowledge, empathy, and creativity. Participants expressed concern over AI's capacity to replace intuition-based decisions, craftsmanship, or emotional sensitivity. This aligns with Boumous (2024), who observed that in creative writing domains, AI-generated stories challenge authors' claims to originality and personal expression, often creating a crisis of authenticity [13]. Similarly, Сніжна (2024) found that AI exposure during formative years can disrupt young artists' sense of creative identity and lead to emotional withdrawal [19]. These concerns emphasize that identity loss in AI settings is not only about skill redundancy but also about symbolic erosion—when human contributions are no longer viewed as distinctively valuable.

Conversely, the theme of identity anchoring through new tasks provided insight into the adaptive side of AI integration. Participants who embraced new roles—such as training peers in AI use or leading automation initiatives—reported a restored sense of purpose. This finding parallels Watermann (2025), who argues that when AI systems are implemented in ways that enhance autonomy and provide skill-building opportunities, they can strengthen psychological well-being and professional identity [1]. Similar benefits were observed by Liu and Li (2025), who demonstrated that when core human tasks are preserved within AI workflows, workers report higher levels of engagement and motivation [6]. Thus, identity resilience may depend not only on personal openness to change but also on the design of the technology and the organization's strategy for implementation.

The second core theme—emotional responses to AI—reinforces existing literature showing that AI adoption carries significant emotional consequences. Participants frequently reported psychological insecurity, anxiety, and stress, particularly when AI systems were perceived as opaque, error-prone, or judgmental. These findings align with Hou and Fan (2024), who found that job stress increased substantially among hospitality workers using AI for real-time performance monitoring, which in turn reduced their work engagement [15]. Huo et al. (2025) similarly noted that healthcare professionals using AI systems experienced emotional exhaustion when their work was reduced to machine-mediated interactions, often lacking human complexity or ethical nuance [14]. Our participants' accounts—such as fears of being "watched" by AI or concerns over the disappearance of human judgment—reflect these patterns of techno-stress and ethical unease.

However, the presence of motivation and curiosity among several participants also supports research that views AI as a catalyst for intellectual engagement and skill diversification. For instance, Eshraghian et al. (2024) reported that developers using GitHub Copilot often described the tool as a co-creator that encouraged exploration and reduced coding fatigue [10]. Likewise, Farah et al. (2024) observed that the use of generative AI in branding and virtual environments enabled users to

experiment with identity and creativity in ways that felt liberating and expressive [12]. This duality—AI as both a stressor and a stimulant—suggests that emotional outcomes are context-dependent and mediated by factors such as perceived autonomy, feedback quality, and cultural readiness.

The third main theme—relational and social reconfiguration—highlighted significant changes in the interpersonal dynamics of AI-augmented work environments. Participants noted shifts in team communication, authority structures, and trust hierarchies, particularly when AI systems functioned as "third actors" in decision-making. These findings align with Zhang et al. (2023), who showed that design teams collaborated differently when they believed their facilitator was human versus AI—suggesting that relational scripts are altered when machines mediate human interactions [7]. Similarly, Norton et al. (2024) noted that in consulting settings, AI tools affected how professionals framed empathy, responsibility, and trust, often necessitating a redefinition of what it means to connect meaningfully with others [22].

Participants also expressed concerns about peer comparison and AI benchmarking, leading to performance anxiety and lowered morale. This mirrors the findings of Kant and Adula (2024), who observed that in Ethiopian organizations, AI learning environments increased feelings of inadequacy when organizational support was lacking [21]. Additionally, the absence of strong organizational support in our study was associated with emotional withdrawal, identity resistance, and lower adaptation rates—findings that parallel those of Fahrudin (2025), who emphasized the need for structural wellness strategies in AI-intensive workplaces [23]. Conversely, participants who felt supported by leadership or peers demonstrated greater psychological resilience and openness to role evolution, echoing the role of institutional trust in shaping adaptive identity pathways.

While this study provides valuable insights into the psychological constructs of work identity in AI-augmented labor, it has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to professionals in Turkey, which may affect the generalizability of findings to other cultural or economic contexts. Cultural factors such as collectivism, hierarchy, and digital literacy may influence how individuals perceive and respond to AI, and further comparative studies across different national settings are necessary. Second, the study relied exclusively on self-reported data from semi-structured interviews, which may be subject to recall bias, social desirability effects, or emotional filtering. Finally, although theoretical saturation was achieved with 20 participants, the study did not include perspectives from marginalized labor groups, contract workers, or those in informal AI-affected sectors—groups whose identity experiences may differ considerably.

Future studies should consider adopting a longitudinal design to examine how work identity evolves over time as AI tools are upgraded or normalized within organizations. Research comparing different sectors—such as education, manufacturing, and creative industries—may also uncover sector-specific identity strategies and emotional patterns. Additionally, integrating observational methods or diary studies alongside interviews could enrich the data and reduce reliance on retrospective narratives. Future research should also explore the intersection of AI integration with gender, age, and career stage to better understand who is most vulnerable—or resilient—to identity disruption in AI-mediated work. Finally, mixed-method studies combining psychological measures with narrative accounts could provide a more holistic view of how identity transformation unfolds across both cognitive and affective domains.

Organizations implementing AI technologies should prioritize psychological safety and identity preservation in their change management strategies. This includes involving employees early in the design and deployment stages, offering transparent communication about the role of AI, and creating opportunities for skill enhancement and identity renegotiation.

Managers should be trained to recognize signs of identity stress and facilitate peer support networks where workers can share experiences and strategies for adaptation. Rather than positioning AI as a replacement, it should be framed as a partner in human productivity, with emphasis on uniquely human attributes such as empathy, creativity, and judgment. Lastly, investing in ongoing mental health support and identity-focused leadership development can help ensure that AI integration leads to both technological and psychological sustainability.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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