# HILA SABOUNI

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## EDUCATION

**PhD Student in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)** | *Iowa State University (ISU), Ames, IA*  ***2023–Present***
**Master of Science in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)** | *ISU*  ***2022–2023***
**Master of Architecture** | *ISU*  ***2020–2022***

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Customer Experience Analyst Intern | Rocket Mortgage |** *Detroit, MI*  ***May 2025–Aug 2025***

- Benchmarked Qualtrics Text iQ's qualitative data tagging capabilities against ChatGPT
- Demonstrated that ChatGPT, through prompt engineering, outperformed Text iQ in qualitative tagging and sentiment analysis, while generating additional insights and completing tasks faster
- Developed a reusable framework enabling teams to standardize qualitative data tagging and apply better prompt engineering for research tasks using ChatGPT
- Analyzed NPS shifts across 2023-25 clients, identifying 3 key factors driving change
- Mapped client motivations for loan closure and translated findings into 5 product recommendations, improving the digital mortgage journey for future clients
- Collaborated in interviews with data scientists and product strategists under tight deadline, streamlined documentation, synthesized workflows into actionable recommendations, and shared insights to stakeholders
- Won **"Best Use of AI for Discovery & Research"** at a company-wide hackathon, outperforming 10+ teams with innovative application of AI

**Researcher & Designer |** *ISU*  ***Aug 2022–Present***

### Designer-Engineer Mental Model and AI Interaction

- Exploring engineers' and designers' mental models of AI, with emphasis on ChatGPT
- Designing multi-phase studies (surveys, interviews, and experiments) to examine personality traits, communication patterns, and teamwork
- Creating experimental and survey instruments to capture insights on AI understanding, interaction dynamics, and collaboration workflows in AI-supported collaboration
- Examining ChatGPT interaction patterns, including prompting strategies, communication effectiveness, and collaborative outcomes, to uncover drivers of effective AI adoption
- Evaluating the relationship between professional background and AI acceptance and usage patterns
- Assessing how professional background relates to AI acceptance and usage behaviors
- Collecting and coding qualitative and quantitative data from 100+ participants to develop a framework that helps designers and engineers better understand and leverage AI/ChatGPT in tasks where it adds the most value

### NSF-Funded Cybersecurity Exploration

- Explored new pathways into cybersecurity careers for rural English learners through XR-enabled educational tools
- Conducted interviews and focus groups with students to understand user needs, behaviors, and pain points
- Collaborated with interdisciplinary experts in cybersecurity, cybersickness, UX design, and 3D modeling
- Modeled and implementing game elements and conceptualizing the game atmosphere in Unity
- Contributed to the game's narrative development to create an immersive, inclusive experience for learners

### Sensory Cues in Virtual Reality

- Designed and executed a mixed-method user experience study to explore sensory cues in VR environments
- Developed 3D task environment in Rhino and implemented interactive VR conditions in Unity
- Deployed in-depth survey questions in Qualtrics
- Recruited 71 participants; Setup a training session and led the full study
- Analyzed quantitative results using ANOVA in SPSS and coded qualitative themes in Taguette
- Translated research findings into strategic narratives, clear understanding, and opportunities they present

**Research & 3D Modeling Mentor | NSF REU (Research Experience for Undergrads) |** *ISU*  ***May 2024–Jul 2024***

- Instructed Blender to nine undergrads from diverse backgrounds across the USA accepted into SPRITE-EIT 2024
- Explored remote, high-earning career paths for rural students
- Mentored three undergrads in creating a 3D mini-game on electric circuits with practical, cross-field applications

- Designed surveys; Led focus groups; Conducted three site visits; Performed qualitative analysis to uncover user needs and behavioral patterns

### University Instructor | Architecture Studio Course | *ISU*    *Aug 2022–May 2024*
- Provided course materials and lectured groups of second-year students (19/semester)
- Directed desk crits and discussion sessions
- Provided and graded assignments
- Organized and moderated three major review sessions and invited reviewers from various backgrounds and professions; Collaborated on midterm and final critiques for advanced architecture students

### Research & 3D Modeling Mentor | NSF REU (Research Experience for Undergrads) | *ISU*    *May 2023–Jul 2023*
- Taught Blender to nine undergraduates from diverse backgrounds across the USA for SPRITE-EIT 2023
- Mentored three undergrads in creating a 3D game to inspire first-gen students to pursue higher education
- Designed survey and focus group questions; Tested a text-based prototype among local 8 to 12-year-old students

### Architect Intern | Klingner & Associates, PC | *Pella, IA*    *Jan 2022–Aug 2022*
- Engaged in all phases of design and construction process of 4 projects (industrial)
- Produced with technical drawings, 3D modeling, and documentation
- Collaborated in client meetings, actively listening to and documenting their requirements and desire

### Founder, Owner, and Designer | Risen Design | *Iran*    *May 2016–Nov 2018*
- Managed end-to-end design and construction of nine industrial and residential projects (industrial-residential)
- Delivered projects with 20–30% fewer revisions and achieved cost savings of up to 10% below budget
- Developed culturally and generationally inclusive designs to meet diverse client needs
- Awarded the City Diploma of Customer Rights Protection for excellence in client satisfaction and service quality

## KEY SKILLS
- **Quantitative Research Methods:** Surveys, Experimental Design, Statistical Analysis (Regression, Correlation, T-test, ANOVA)
- **Qualitative Research Methods:** Usability Testing, Interviews, Contextual Inquiry, Task Analysis, Focus Groups
- **Data Visualization & Communication:** Conceptual Design, Mind Mapping, Presenting Research Findings into strategic narratives
- **Project Management:** Strategic Planning, Scheduling, Cross-Functional Collaboration, Time Management, Motivating Teams
- **Design & Prototyping Tools:** Unity, Rhinoceros 3D, Blender, Adobe Creative Suite, Miro, Figma
- **Languages:** Persian, English, Turkish

## LEADERSHIP & AWARDS

### HCI Student Organization, *President*    *May 2024–May 2025*
- Expanded events from 2 to 6 per semester (3 professional, 3 social)
- Boosted participation through improved planning, promotion, timing, and engagement strategies
- Revived the Usabilathon competition after a two-year gap, managing all coordination and planning
- Enhanced the group's social media presence and visibility

### HCI Student Organization, *Vice President*    *Aug 2023–May 2024*
- Planned and organized professional development events; Reached out to potential guest speakers and reviewers
- Addressed leadership responsibilities in the absence of the President
- Inspired and motivated other cabinet members to actively plan and participate in online/on-campus social events

### Iowa Women in Architecture (IAWIA), *Mentor and Membership Chair*    *Dec 2020–Dec 2021*
- Collaborated in drafting emails and announcements
- Contributed to brainstorming sessions for event planning
- Managed and maintained the IAWIA LinkedIn account; Efficiently engaged with students to encourage their participation

### Honorable Mention – ACM CHI Conference    *2024*
### Customer Right Protection Award – Risen Design    *2018*