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The Perceptions and Personal Dilemmas Faced in the Use of Artificial Intelligence for Academic Work Among Freshman Students

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) significantly shapes higher education, affecting students in their studies or personal development. AI has transformed how teachers educate and students gain knowledge and also created potential dilemmas towards their perceptions of their AI usage. This research aimed to fill the gap between these dilemmas and challenges that students face. This study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative design, by collecting data through surveys and interviews. The study utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method to select first-year students from the National University Baliwag who have experience using AI for academic purposes. Our findings revealed two major student perceptions on AI: AI-powered assistance and Enhanced Efficiency and Learning Experience. They also balance their academic autonomy and integrity by using AI only as a tool and not as a replacement and by using AI to enhance their critical thinking and their academic productivity. It also showed that the students faced challenges regarding the reliability and accuracy of AI, the possibilities of over-reliance on it and some plagiarism and ethical concerns when using it. The study does not include the views and opinions of professors, instructors, the institution, and other education professionals. Additionally, it concentrates more on students' subjective experience and moral dilemmas using AI tools as opposed to technical precision or efficacy.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), education, personal dilemmas, perceptions, challenges, over-reliance.

1. Introduction

The use of AI tools in schools gives a chance to help the environment by changing how students learn. Studies show that students see that AI works well but worry about harm to the quality of learning and school honesty; this calls for fair, careful use of AI in education to support lasting benefits (Fošner, 2024). For example, in terms of ChatGPT, one of the most popular AI tools that is being used all around the world, has been always drawing a lot of criticism from people, it demonstrates both potential and challenging opportunities in education (Ngo, 2023).

AI chatbots always sparked debate over how they affect teaching and learning practices in higher education. In a study by C. Stöhr et. al (2024) stated that more than half of their sample students have expressed their positive feedback towards the chatbots and their usage in their education.

However, with these positive feedback and positive attitudes towards the good effect of Artificial Technology, particularly AI chatbots like ChatGPT, gaps in these types of research still have not been tackled whether how these students personally feel whenever they use these AI tools, how they perceive themselves as whenever they see themselves getting help from, technically a robot. This research will help to fill the gap of these dilemmas and challenges of students who use artificial intelligence in their studies and academics. Providing insights from this qualitative research, the researchers will gather information through interviews from their sample, from personal experiences, thoughts, and self-perceptions about the usage of AI in their academic work.

This study contributes by exploring the perceptions and personal dilemmas of freshman students using AI in their academic work. It provides insights into how students perceive the benefits of AI tools, navigate their use while maintaining academic integrity, and address the challenges they encounter. The findings aim to deepen understanding of AI's role in education, grounded in the personal experiences of the participants.

Integrating AI into Education

Artificial intelligence (AI) significantly shapes higher education affecting students in their studies or personal development (Chen et al., 2020). Education is adopting AI applications more and more, especially in developed nations like China. This shift can greatly change teaching and learning at all levels (Tahiru, 2021). For example, AI powers adaptive learning platforms to personalize education for each student. Automated evaluations plus AI writing tools are other cases. These writing tools aid students in improving their writing by giving fast feedback on grammar, and punctuation next to style (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

AI helps create learning systems that change to fit each student. These systems use methods such as finding patterns in data, smart tutoring programs, analysis of education information and quick feedback. The goal of this flexible education is to improve how students learn. It does this by uniting testing, teaching, training next to practical exercises into a single system. These systems can collect information on how students study (Cui et al., 2019). They develop personalized study paths based on what each student is capable of. This forms a complete education cycle by giving learning content like online video lessons.

A key feature of artificial intelligence in education is its power to make teaching and learning more focused. AI has transformed how teachers educate and students gain knowledge. It can develop custom study guides based on what each student needs and the setting for learning (Dishon, 2017). AI can also deliver exciting educational events (Ip et al., 2019) and use smart progress tracking to help students learn more effectively plus boost their study abilities. AI can use big data and machine learning to deeply evaluate students' daily and test performance and provide personalized teaching guidance for students with difficult knowledge and difficulties (Bingham, Pane, Steiner, & Hamilton, 2018), shorten students' learning time (Quer, Muse, Nikzad, Topol, & Steinhubl, 2017), and improve learning efficiency (Kong et al., 2019).

Another benefit of AI in education is that it reduces teacher workload and allows teachers to focus more on humanistic care. Nowadays, much of the teachers' time is spent correcting homework and exam papers. These recurring tasks take up teachers' teaching and research time, as well as time spent interacting with students. Intelligent tutor systems (Holstein, McLaren, & Aleven, 2017), intelligent assessment systems (CUI & LI, 2019), educational robots (Chevalier, Riedo, & Mondada, 2016), and other AIs can assist teachers in completing many mechanically repeated daily tasks, such as correcting homework and test papers, relieving teachers of various tasks, and freeing teachers from heavy knowledge transfer.

On the other hand, AI chatbots have given multiple advantages in education fields such as ChatGPT. ChatGPT's user-friendly and straightforward interface has the potential to remove barriers to its widespread adoption across educational contexts and among various groups of teachers and learners (Kasneci et al., 2023), overcoming many of the hurdles described in the AIED literature. ChatGPT and similar AI applications can be used as self-study tools (Nisar & Aslam, 2023), assisting students in acquiring information, answering questions (Chen et al., 2023), facilitating group discussions, and resolving problems immediately (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023), enriching students' learning experiences, providing personalized support, and potentially improving academic performance (Kasneci et al., 2023). ChatGPT has also been successfully used in the manufacturing of educational materials and creative assessments, opening up new opportunities for content creation and curriculum development (Cotton, Cotton, & Shipway, 2023; Dijkstra et al., 2022).

Ethical and Personal Dilemmas in AI Usage

Artificial intelligence became more convenient and became a fast-growing reality in 2023 through modern technologies, such as Meta AI, Open AI, or ChatGPT, and has created some ethical concerns. This research provides examples of how AI is being used in academia, how it can be used, and how to assess college students' familiarity with such technologies, their perception of it, and their level of usage (Mujtaba, 2024).

Senior high school students are common users of artificial intelligence tools. They use artificial intelligence for their academic work because of its convenience and to avoid time consuming work. Students had an urge to use AI when they had a difficult time to do all the tasks in all of their subjects and when they got bored doing their work. Students had ethical and personal dilemmas to choose AI over their own capability to do their work. It may affect their confidence and ability to use their knowledge. It also affects their morality, their moral judgment and decision-making (Carmona-Perera, Caracuel, Pérez-García, & Verdejo-García, 2015).

Moreover, addressing these concerns through responsible usage of artificial intelligence, ethical education is essential to ensure that students use these AI tools for their enhancement rather than a replacement for critical thinking and personal growth. Breaking the stigma about the people who use AI tools, and engaging them must choose their own capability with the help of artificial intelligence to enhance and to gain more knowledge by using tools to their academic works (Parks & Breazel, 2023).

AI and The Risks to Learning

Artificial intelligence (AI)-driven technologies, such content creation platforms, have made it simpler for students to get around conventional academic evaluation procedures, which has increased cheating and plagiarism. Academic institutions are concerned about this because it makes it more difficult to assess students' true comprehension and intellectual capacity (Ndungu & Chepsergon, 2024). AI tools might provide quick answers or generate content, but they do not facilitate deep understanding of the underlying concepts. Evidence shows students over-reliance on AI tools for the achievement of their academic goals can result in decline in critical thinking skills, disappearance of the traditional skills such as handwriting skills, memorization and math-solving skills which are still important for academic settings (Yunus Basha, 2024). Moreover, it includes personal disconnection, a lack of customization, the dissemination of inaccurate information, privacy and security concerns, increased screen time, and excessive technological reliance (Abd Rahman et al., 2023).

In addition to raising questions about academic integrity, AI-driven learning platforms might be a factor in students' decreased motivation and engagement. Students may find it difficult to acquire autonomous

problem-solving abilities and creativity if they depend on AI to produce answers rather than actively engaging in the learning process (Sullivan & Keith, 2023). AI-generated content can result in shallow knowledge rather than deep comprehension since passive consumption lowers the cognitive effort needed for learning. Research indicates that students who actively interact with course materials through conversation and critical thinking outperform those who only take in knowledge (Kirschner & Neelen, 2020).

Furthermore, traditional teaching approaches that prioritize human contact may be undermined by the employment of AI in education. It is challenging to address the subtleties of student demands with personalized AI tutors and virtual classrooms since they lack the emotional intelligence and flexibility that human teachers offer (Selwyn, 2022). AI is capable of effectively analyzing learning patterns and making recommendations for enhancements, but it is unable to completely replace the ethical direction, support, and mentoring human educators provide. An over-reliance on AI in the classroom could harm relationships between students and teachers, which are essential for supporting students' social and emotional growth (Bond et al., 2021).

On top of that, because AI systems have the potential to produce biased, erroneous, or misleading information, they are not necessarily trustworthy sources of information. Due to the data they are trained on, several AI models—including language-based ones—have been shown to perpetuate preconceptions and produce factually inaccurate results (Bender et al., 2021). Students run the risk of forming misunderstandings and disseminating false information if they rely on AI for research without checking the information's accuracy. Digital literacy issues are brought up by this, as is the necessity for students to assess AI-generated content critically rather than taking it at face value (Breakstone et al., 2023).

Use of Artificial Intelligence in Academic Settings in The Philippines

From May to June 2024, researchers surveyed college students in Cebu, Philippines. These students attended a public college during the first semester of the 2023-2024 school year. The study included 451 participants. This number is larger than the minimum of 137 needed to find a moderate effect in this type of research according to G*Power 3.1.9.7. Having more participants strengthens the study's statistical power and makes the findings more widely applicable (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).).

These 451 students provided data about how they use AI tools, what they think about them and their worries. Later parts of the study will explore these topics. The data from this large group will aid in understanding AI adoption or views in rural Philippine colleges or universities. Students generally view AI tools positively and consider them simple to use plus helpful for studies. This supports Chan plus Hu's (2023) research that demonstrated students like AI in education. The study demonstrated serious worries about AI's tendency to give incorrect or prejudiced information plus how it affects critical thought.

This contrast between believed good points or potential bad points matches Kumar's (2023) research about AI's ethical problems in education. This means rural students in the Philippines have a complex view of what AI does in education, a mix of eagerness and doubt. This balanced viewpoint creates a firm foundation to develop ethical principles plus AI literacy programs for rural education.

This research shows rural Philippine college students widely use AI tools for school work and know well both the good points or possible dangers. The results challenge ideas about a digital gap in rural areas suggesting these students can easily get plus are comfortable with AI tools. The research found big problems with school policies and knowledge about how AI is used for learning. Students really want more data and lessons on using AI morally, which highlights how vital full AI education plans are. The tension between expected good things from AI in teaching and concerns about too much dependence, thought skills as well as honest school work shows the tricky situation of adding AI into rural Philippine college education (Villarino, 2024).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the study was to know the differences in the perception of first-year psychology students in National University-Baliwag in the use of Artificial Intelligence Technology in their academic work.

In particular, it intended to answer the following questions:

1. How do the participants perceive the benefits of AI in their academic work?
2. How do students balance the use of AI in their academic autonomy with integrity and convenience?
3. What challenges and problems were encountered by the students when using AI for their academic work?
4. What insights can be gleaned from the results of this study?

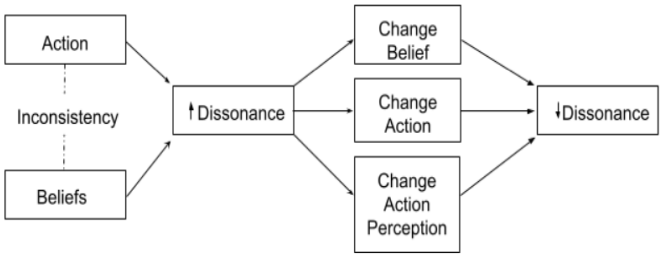
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Leon Festinger

Humans have unique attitudes and approaches to their circumstances in life. The various ways and conditions that each individual has faced have resulted in the development of different values, beliefs, and ideas, both individually and collectively. Leon Festinger developed the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) in 1957. According to this theory, conflict occurs when people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are different from one another. His theory proposes that humans are capable of cognitive consistency. It happens when we use our innate inner drive, which allows us to control our attitudes and behavior, in order to balance its harmony and disharmony or dissonance. The CDT applies when we attempt to do something in order to remove the disharmony or the dissonance between our values, beliefs, and behaviors.

In our current times, different types of technology have arisen and have spread throughout our lives, such as the internet. When people consume information on the internet that is against their known belief system, it creates conflicts with their cognitive beliefs. Due to this conflict, different emotions such as “dread, guilt, anger, frustration, anxiety, stress, and other psychosomatic symptoms” occur. In application of Festinger’s theory, when people, in the case of this study, college students, face discrepancies with their belief systems and their behaviors, they would lessen the behavior that causes the discomfort with the occurrence of the discrepancies (Yahya & Sukmayadi, 2020; Fontanari et. al., 2012).

Figure 1. Illustration of Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Leon Festinger

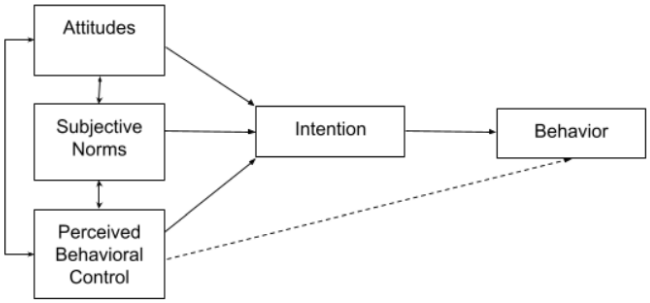


Theory of Planned Behavior by Icek Ajzen (1991)

Each individual has a unique way of dealing with and approaching the same problems and circumstances. Intentions affect the differences in our behavior. Intentions are then determined by three factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Our knowledge, experiences, and thoughts come together to form our attitudes. Other people's perceptions of particular behaviors, such as taboos and cultural norms, are known as subjective norms. Finally, the degree to which we think we have control over our conduct is known as perceived behavioral control. This is usually dependent on our discipline and determination in our acts.

Using AI technology such as generative AI for academic works serves multiple roles, such as a writing assistant, virtual tutor, and digital peer. (Kim et. al., 2021) Despite the beneficial roles that AI-Tech and Generative AI provide, some students have also expressed their concerns regarding improving their creativity, critical thinking, and ethical academic writing processes (Malik et. al., 2023). With this, students' decisions and behaviors regarding using AI for their academic work are influenced by their views of its benefits, the efficiency its usage brings, and how often they decide to use AI for their academic work.

Figure 2. Illustration of Theory of Planned Behavior by Icek Ajzen



3. Method

This study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative design, by collecting data through surveys and interviews. This design is most appropriate for this study, as it is focused on the personal experiences and perceptions of the participants, as defined, a descriptive qualitative research design aims to provide a straightforward explanation of a certain event, through the experiences and thoughts of the sample.

For the data gathering, the researchers conducted a voice-recorded interview of the participants that consisted of ten (10) questions related to the use of artificial intelligence in academic work. Two (2) pre-survey questions (e.g. Do you use AI in your academic work? Are you willing to take part and be interviewed for our research?) were also asked before proceeding, then the researchers continued with the interview. The researchers also asked about the demographic profile of the first-year students before continuing with the main interview.

The study utilized purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method to select first-year students from the National University Baliwag who have experience using AI for academic purposes. Participants were chosen based on specific criteria, such as their academic program and frequency of AI usage, to ensure diverse perspectives. Data saturation was also employed to determine the sample size, ensuring that the collected data comprehensively represents freshmen students' experiences.

This study was focused on the perspectives and individual challenges that first-year students face when using artificial intelligence (AI) technology to complete their academic requirements. Based on their opinions on AI technologies, and their ways of dealing with the moral dilemmas and challenges of using AI in learning, it tries to understand what they think of AI technologies. The study is limited to freshmen from a single institution to ensure that the results reflect the lived experiences of people who eventually have their first exposure to the demands of a college education.

However, some restrictions are placed on the study. The study does not include the views and opinions of professors, instructors, the institution and other education professionals. Additionally, it concentrates more on students' subjective experience and moral dilemmas using AI tools as opposed to the technical precision or efficacy. Although the findings may be limited to a particular university and time period, this study is restricted to one specific university and time period.

To obtain necessary and proper data while using the proper procedure for this study, the researchers began with a formal letter of request that was granted with the approval of the administration of the chosen school of their sample, providing ethical considerations while conducting the pre-survey and interview, utilizing the Data Privacy act of 2012 or R.A. 10173 to respect the respondent's privacy and confidentiality of information. The researchers also provided consent forms that are needed to be agreed upon by the participants, to indicate that they are willing to be interviewed. Pre-surveys were also given first to the participants to meet certain the needed criteria of the researchers for this study, so that the appropriate data shall be gathered, which is followed by the aforementioned consent form. The researchers then conducted face-to-face interviews that were audio-recorded for data collection and analysis.

To conduct the semi-structured interviews, first-year university students will serve as the primary sources of data. This approach will offer a nuanced interpretation of the experiences and attitudes of the participants. A verbatim transcription of the interview responses was also integrated to further arrange the data with an arranged manner. The transcripts have been read over several times and are intended to familiarize the mind with the content of the interview and highlight the categories, themes, and patterns that may emerge from it. The coding then analyzed and divided the data into chunks. Because the findings were shared with participants to interpret them correctly, member checking was done. The conclusions drawn from the earlier research will be in conjunction with our own for more robust support for our understanding. A narrative will detail the findings, replete with quotations from participants to provide a richly complex understanding of their experiences, after which we shall conclude that we have something important to underscore to teachers, policymakers, and this generation of future researchers in equally necessary support on the need to further the course of digital literacy and ethical vigilance amongst students.

The researchers will supervise the study to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines throughout. All participants will be asked for consent for their involvement in answering questions and providing voice recordings. The teacher-in-charge, program chair, and dean have been informed to properly and formally conduct the interviews. All personal information provided by respondents, especially their demographic profiles, will be kept private and not disclosed. The researchers are obligated to maintain confidentiality to protect respondents from being exposed to their data and also in conformity with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Respondents can also withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. There will be honesty, sympathy, and respect for the respondents and data will be used only for research purposes.

4. Results and Discussion

The General AI Usage of the Students

The results of our study included a total of sixteen (16) first-year psychology students, with their ages ranging from 18 to 19 years old. Most of them have been using AI for more than 1-2 years now, with most of them started integrating AI into their academic work during their senior high school years. The most common AI tools they use most of the time are ChatGPT, QuillBot, Grammarly, and other generative AI technologies such as Google's Gemini AI, Peplexity.ai, and Cici AI. Their average usage of AI ranges from using it 3-4 times a week, depending on the heaviness and the amount of workload they have to accomplish for that week.

Participants' General Perception of the Benefits of AI in their Academic Performance

The current developments show AI tools to function as progressively important resources for a wide range of uses. The implementation of advanced algorithms allows AI to enhance research study as well as writing tasks and data analysis which results in improved outcomes and better education.

Theme 1. AI-Powered Assistance

AI tools offer different ways to give individual help to freshmen students. People view AI tools more and more as helpful resources. AI can also help people come up with ideas. Researchers Zawacki-Richter, Marín, Bond, & Gouverneur (2019) stated AI can offer "intelligent support for creative tasks or problem-solving." This matches what the participants of this study have stated, that they used AI to create ideas for school assignments. AI can give advice tailored to each person. Chen, Chen, & Lin (2023) wrote in their study that AI could offer "adaptive learning or personalized feedback," which can lead students through difficult subjects. This is like what students said in interviews; they use AI for support and direction. We must think about possible dangers. Bialik, & Fadel (2022) stressed we need to consider the "ethical and societal implications" of AI in education, like unfairness and the need for people to supervise it. Even though AI offers useful ways to assist students, we should use it carefully and know what it cannot do.

Theme 2. Enhanced Efficiency and Learning Experience

The use of artificial intelligence in education has had a significant influence, including enhanced efficiency, global learning, customized/personalized learning, smarter content, and increased effectiveness and efficiency in school administration, among other things (Timms 2016). The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into education has transformed how students learn, teachers instruct, and institutions run academic operations. Artificial intelligence technologies like customized learning systems, computer-based grading software, and smart tutoring systems have been demonstrated to enhance the learning process by offering customized educational material and freeing instructors from mundane tasks (Luckin et al., 2021; Acosta-Enriquez et al., 2024). The AI-based applications have enabled learners to assume responsibility for their learning while offering instant feedback and direction, leading to better academic achievement (Holmes et al., 2022).

Our findings revealed two major themes based on students' perceptions of AI: AI-powered assistance and Enhanced Efficiency and Learning Experience. In line with this, Chan and Hu (2023) also revealed the various perceptions of the students regarding their use of AI. According to their results, students encounter many different advantages and difficulties in this regard. AI provides quick, simple, efficient, assistance that is personally catered according to their needs, which results in reduced workloads and increased efficiency in their task completion. Supporting our participants' responses, their findings also indicated that students frequently use AI since it can help them whenever they need it. A study by Ngo (2023) also validates the findings that students decide to employ AI in their academic work due to its efficacy and efficiency. They benefit from using AI since it helps them manage their time and tasks more effectively as it can provide information more quickly. In addition to its effectiveness, AI makes it faster for individuals to access a variety of material, aids in conceptualization and enhances the quality of their writing and other academic products.

Participants' Perspectives Towards Balancing AI Use with Academic Autonomy and Integrity

As artificial intelligence becomes more integrated into education, it is crucial to consider the ethical implications for student learning. This includes ensuring that students use AI responsibly, preserving their autonomy, and avoiding plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct.

Theme 1. Academic Productivity

These AI algorithms aid in simplifying academic tasks, streamlining such things to make essay writing faster, and help students read and understand a complex topic faster, create paragraphs faster, find more information easier, and manage references easier. It fits with peoples' interview experiences of using AI for 'paragraphs, essays, grammar sensitive outputs, research as a guide for references and complicated topics/tasks.' The research found by Wink and Adrianto (2023) that this perceived increase to access information and efficiency is justified especially with the use of the AI tool to reduce the time taken for task automation and quick access to wider information. However, responsible AI use has to come with this enhanced productivity. Interviewees also said that the ethical use of AI needs critical consideration and ethical awareness for tricky things. Cotton et al. (2023) suggest that students should be educated on ethically considering how AI is used, and, in particular, that they indicate other work which they have used appropriately and refer to it with citations and references. Cotton et al. (2023) agree with the participant's recognition that careful evaluation and ethical awareness are needed to ensure that you do not give plagiarised information. Therefore, the challenge is to harness the productivity benefits from AI and students' critical thinking skills to maintain academic autonomy and integrity.

Theme 2. Critical Thinking Assisted by AI

People do not just utilize AI to get answers or solve problems. They also don't operate completely without AI help. They apply their critical

thinking abilities while getting support from AI. A study by Larson et. al (2024) found that students can helpfully employ Generative AI. They do this by questioning the AI tool plus applying their own judgment to make its results better. They also treat the AI result as a beginning, not a final product, individual critical thinking allows this. Gonsalves (2024) proposed in another study that students who carefully examine plus employ AI-created ideas for particular assignments successfully utilize AI to build real-world skills. This shows how AI aids the growth of practical critical thought abilities.

Theme 3. Using AI as a Complementary Tool not Replacement

Tasks that require human touch and creativity, such as writing, painting, making music, and creating solutions for complex issues, can now all be done using AI. Applications and websites such as ChatGPT and DALL-E can generate essays and artworks based on the code input by the user. This ability raised an issue regarding the originality of the students' outputs. However, AI brings this assumption into question by allowing pupils to avoid the creative and intellectual processes that have traditionally been required to create original work. Some claim that utilizing AI as a tool in this manner does not harm creativity, but rather increases productivity and efficiency, allowing students to concentrate on more difficult work. Critics argue that over-reliance on AI reduces the student's participation in knowledge generation and undermines the fundamental value of creativity (Zhai, Wibowo, & Li, 2024).

The data from the participants showed three main themes regarding how the students balance the use of AI and the use of their capabilities and skills: Academic Productivity, Critical Thinking Assisted by AI, and Using AI as a Complementary Tool and Not as a Replacement. As the usage of AI increases within the academe, it is critical to establish a balance between utilizing AI as a tool and developing human intellectual capacities. Educating students and professors on digital literacy and critical thinking skills is vital for successfully navigating the AI-driven landscape. These ethical concerns extend to all other industries, including the academe (Mennella et al., 2024). Adequate AI knowledge and information could help the students in balancing their academic integrity and AI use. Institutions should start integrating AI education into the curriculum to help students know when to use and when to not utilize AI for their academic outputs. Knowing its purpose and limitations allows learners to navigate their learning journey at their own pace while utilizing the help of AI and improving their critical thinking and learning. (Pawar et. al., 2023)

Participants' Challenges and Problems with AI in Academic Work

Participants identified the possibilities of using AI for academic productivity in terms of the speed of the research and the ease of access to the information but also enumerated a range of the difficulties and problems when using these tools. Accuracy and reliability of AI-generated information were foremost in those concerns.

Theme 1. Reliability and Accuracy

According to participants, the reliability of the information is a concern for AI as many participants said that AI "doesn't always provide accurate and reliable information" therefore AI could spread wrong or misleading information. According to some participants, AI-generated content provided information that was in 'disagreement with the professor's explanation.' While its accuracy seems obvious to some, there are good reasons to question the reliability of text generated by AI because AI models based on data and antecedents will transition to the stochastic, and only as good as its training data (Bender et al., 2021). This leaves room for generated material to be attributed wrongly to the wrong author or even produce quotations entirely, thereby becoming a source of concern around the matter's credibility and authenticity.

Theme 2. Over-Reliance

The more AI systems merge into academic analysis, the greater the chance that students will rely on it heavily (Krullaars, 2023) With increasing possibility of students' overreliance and dependence on AI, there is the potential future issue of students' reduced analytical and critical thinking skills (Koos & Wachsmann, 2023). Another point that some critics make is that dependence and reliance on artificial intelligence may produce apathy, which diminishes the students' critical thinking capabilities thus rendering them from critical thinking, particularly in cases where they are supposed to think critically and exercise their complex thinking and judgment (Gao et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2023).

Theme 3. Plagiarism, Academic Dishonesty and Ethical Concerns

Nevertheless, its capability to produce human like language, to complete complicated questions, essays and coding assignments, and so on, has blurred the line between genuine academic help and cheating (AI can make this work seem fraudulent; Elkhatat et al., 2023; Gulumbe et al., 2024; Moya & Eaton, 2024). However, a lot of people in the education sector fear that some AI-powered tools might cause academic dishonesty because they help students complete the task but not be part of the process of learning (Johnson & Molloy, 2023). This contradiction—AI as both an academic tool and an agent of misconduct—lays the groundwork for current conversations about academic integrity in the digital era. (Aburass & Rumman, 2024; Kumar et al., 2024; Moya & Eaton, 2024).

The problem of integrity has long been an affair in educational institutions. However, the application scope, characteristics and expressions all could have experienced some profound changes with the development of artificial intelligence technology. Actions such as theft, impersonation and use of prohibited resources in assessments traditionally constitute academic dishonesty. Nevertheless, internet and digital learning environment development provides more resources to students (Cummings et al., 2017). Having online plagiarism detection programs like Turnitin and Grammarly introduced many colleges to monitor the classical area of academic misconduct namely plagiarism.

This corresponds with the findings of Offor et al., (2024) of undergraduate students in public universities in Anambra State misuse of Artificial Intelligence. They found out that students use AI to write essays, assignments, or projects without proper citation or comprehension, as well as using AI-powered tools to answer exam questions or complete assessments without knowledge or comprehension. The results also revealed that some students use AI-generated content as their own work. Students rely too heavily on artificial intelligence (AI), which they use to fabricate academic work or transcripts and spread false or misleading information. To back up these findings, Omame and Alex (2020) said that students using artificial intelligence (AI) to prepare tests is a growing concern in academic integrity. Muayyad and Maha (2024) also agreed that students use AI-powered tools to create essays or assignments, naming it as their own work, and that they rely on AI-powered chatbots or tutoring tools to finish tasks or answer exam questions without adequate knowledge.

5. Conclusion

The outcomes of our search suggest that most students used AI tools during their senior year of high school, primarily for guidance on academic tasks and paraphrasing. As our research says, students can really benefit from AI, especially at the time when they need to complete their assignments in no time. Despite AI being seen as a helpful tool, students are still unwilling to use it due to their uncertainty over its validity and the voice of its sources. College students, in contrast, find AI more helpful as an idea generator, but their confidence in using it is still modest. Swayed by different views and private quandaries about using it.

1. This study suggests that although AI is a useful academic tool, better awareness of responsible AI use — and training on its use — is needed. To build students' confidence in their learning through AI tools, educators and institutions should emphasize critical thinking and proper citation practices. Our research, however, is limited by students' perceptions rather than reality in terms of AI usage patterns and academic performance. "Future studies should also investigate the long-term effect of AI usage on students' learning habits as well as its impact on critical thinking skills and how AI-generated content stacks up against traditional ways of conducting research." Explore, for example, how other academic disciplines are using AI and how AI literacy programs can be integrated into the curriculum to promote responsible and effective usage.
2. While concerns over credibility, moral implications, and overdependence in AI persists, its advantages emerge via adaptability, conceptualizing or brainstorming, curated guidance. Educational institutions must target responsible use by establishing coaching packages that emphasize essential pondering, and moral issues to harness the positives of AI and forestall negatives from occurring. We need to find this balance for students to use AI in ways that assist rather than replace their intellect. Such techniques will help learning while preserving academic integrity in an increasingly digital education ecosystem.
3. Educators and policymakers need to keep current on the latest capabilities of AI technology and its implications for education. By creating a collaborative environment that encourages the responsible use of AI, individuals are nurturing a generation of learners that not only knows how to use the technology but also possesses analytical skills to sift through complex information. Ultimately, this proactive approach would crown AI as a valuable partner on knowledge and academic achievement.

Recommendations

1. This study was only conducted on first-year psychology students, so it may not be appropriate to provide a general perspective of a population. The limited sample size also makes it difficult to be generalizable in all educational contexts. The researchers recommend that future articles use a larger sample size to better understand the perceptions of a larger population. Aside from the number of participants, it solely included students and did not consider the perspectives of instructors, educators, or institutions. It is also essential that their perspectives on AI be researched and comprehended.
2. A quantitative investigation of this subject could also be considered. A more quantitative approach could result in a more in-depth investigation of the themes identified in this qualitative study. This could also improve the findings of our paper. The numerical approach could provide figures and numbers to assist organizations in developing policy.
3. The researchers also employed self-made semi-structured questionnaires based on the paper's statement of the problems. We also recommend conducting a data gathering using validated questionnaires. As it was also conducted using interviews, the responses of the participants are also all based on their own opinion and may be subject to biases. Using a structured survey or questionnaire may help decrease these biases and differences towards their beliefs.
4. Future researchers need to explore longitudinal research to examine how views on AI evolve over the years. By monitoring changes in attitudes and expertise, researchers can examine the lengthy-term impact of AI publicity and training on exceptional businesses, which include students, instructors, and experts. This method may want to provide precious insights into how AI-associated opinions develop and impact coverage and practice in academic settings.

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