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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INSTITUTIONAL GUIDELINES AND ETHICAL AI USE: STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON USING AI TOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate students' perspectives on the institutional support, training, and ethical use of AI tools in academia. Using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 108 students across diverse academic disciplines, with a focus on their experiences and perceptions of AI tools. The study examined institutional resources, including workshops, written guidelines, and online resources, as well as students' preparedness and views on AI's impact on academic productivity. Results revealed that while many students acknowledged the benefits of AI tools in enhancing learning, a significant number expressed uncertainty about their preparedness to use AI responsibly. Additionally, institutional support for ethical AI use was seen as inadequate, with a majority of students calling for more structured training and clearer guidelines. The findings reveal the need for educational institutions to invest in comprehensive, accessible AI ethics education and support systems to better prepare students for responsible AI tool usage.

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools into educational settings has profoundly transformed learning practices, creating new avenues for academic growth while presenting challenges in ethical use and institutional regulation. AI tools, such as language models, tutoring systems, and research assistants, are increasingly adopted by students to improve comprehension, enhance productivity, and streamline academic tasks (Fitria, 2021). However, these advancements raise critical questions about responsible use, the adequacy of institutional support, and the development of ethical guidelines. Addressing these concerns is vital to ensure that AI's potential is harnessed responsibly within academic environments. Institutions of higher education are uniquely positioned to foster ethical AI adoption through extensive support systems, comprehensive training, and clear usage policies. Recent findings show a growing gap in students' understanding of AI ethics, with over 55% of surveyed students admitting to using AI in ways that conflict with institutional guidelines (GlobeNewswire, 2024). The researcher therefore realises the need for institutions to proactively provide resources and education aimed at addressing the ethical implications of AI in academia. Such initiatives can empower students to use these tools effectively while maintaining academic integrity. Evaluating students' perspectives on AI's role in learning is crucial for tailoring institutional strategies to align with their needs. While many students acknowledge AI's potential to enhance learning outcomes, concerns persist regarding the accuracy, privacy, and ethical challenges associated with its use (Vavekanand, 2024; Ali et.al., 2024). The researcher therefore notes that notes that by understanding these

perspectives, educational institutions can implement policies and training programs that not only mitigate risks but also maximize AI's benefits for academic productivity and innovation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in academia has garnered significant scholarly attention, with researchers exploring its impact on educational practices, student learning, and ethical challenges. AI technologies, including language processing systems and virtual tutors, have been shown to improve comprehension, foster creativity, and enhance academic productivity (Fitria, 2021). These tools allow students to access personalized learning experiences and instant feedback, thereby addressing individual learning needs (Vavekanand, 2024). However, concerns about academic integrity, overreliance on technology, and potential misuse of AI tools have prompted institutions to develop comprehensive guidelines and policies to regulate their use effectively. Institutional support and guidance play a critical role in shaping students' attitudes toward the ethical use of AI in academics. Studies emphasize that clear policies, accessible training programs, and regular engagement with students are crucial in promoting responsible AI usage (GlobeNewswire, 2024). Furthermore, institutions that provide detailed instructions on AI-assisted tasks foster greater awareness of ethical considerations and encourage academic integrity among students (Gruenhagen et. al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of these measures often depends on the extent to which institutions adapt to the evolving capabilities of AI and the specific needs of their student populations.

Another important aspect of AI in education is its role in enhancing academic productivity and learning outcomes. Research indicates that students using AI tools report improved time management, higher-quality work, and better understanding of complex subjects (Fitria, 2021). Tools like AI-driven writing assistants have been particularly beneficial in helping students refine their writing and critical thinking skills (Khalifa and Albadawy, 2024). Despite these benefits, there is an ongoing debate about the potential risks of AI, including issues related to data privacy, bias, and dependency on technology. The researcher notes that these risks point to the importance of equipping students with the skills to use AI tools responsibly. Students' perceptions of AI tools and institutional policies also reveal critical insights into the effectiveness of current support systems. According to recent surveys, students are generally optimistic about AI's potential but express a need for clearer guidelines and more comprehensive training programs (Charles and Charles, 2024). Many students feel that institutions have not adequately addressed the ethical dimensions of AI use, leaving them uncertain about acceptable practices in academic work (GlobeNewswire, 2024). Addressing these gaps requires a collaborative effort from educators, policymakers, and technology developers to create a framework that balances innovation with ethical responsibility.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design: This study utilized a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the prevalence, types, and purposes of AI tool usage among students in academia. This design provided a snapshot of usage patterns and perceptions at a single point in time, enabling systematic data collection and analysis.

Sample Population: The study targeted students from diverse academic disciplines. A total of 109 respondents participated in the study, selected through convenience sampling due to accessibility and ease of recruitment. Participants were expected to have prior experience with AI tools for academic purposes.

Data Collection: Data were collected exclusively using Google Forms, which allowed for efficient distribution and data aggregation. The form consisted of structured questions addressing demographics, frequency of AI tool usage, students' perspective on institutional support, perceptions and attitudes towards AI in education, and resources institutions regarding responses AI use.

Data Quality and Validation

To ensure reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a small group of 15 students to refine clarity and relevance. Responses were reviewed for completeness, and incomplete submissions were excluded from analysis. The final instrument demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7.

Data Management and Analysis: Responses from Google Forms were automatically aggregated into a secure database. Data cleaning involved checking for duplicates and inconsistencies. Analyses were conducted using SPSS version 28, with descriptive statistics summarizing the findings.

Ethical Considerations: Proper ethical standards were followed. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured, and data were securely stored on password-protected devices.

Findings: The findings in this study are detailed in this work below:

Institutional Intervention on the Ethical Use of AI Tools in Academics: To evaluate students' perspectives on institutional support, guidance, and training for the ethical use of AI tools in academics, respondents were asked to rate their levels of agreement on the 5 Likert Scale for descriptive analysis and the findings are shown in the table 1 below:

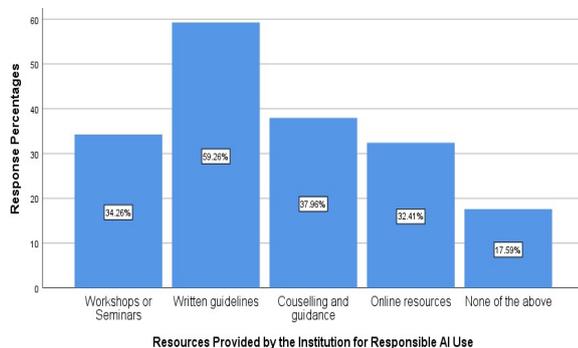
Table 1 above shows that when respondents were asked whether their institution frequently provides guidance on the ethical use of AI tools, 29.4% agreed, and 16.5% strongly agreed, while 23.9% were neutral. On the other hand, 18.3% disagreed, and 11.9% strongly disagreed. This resulted in a mean score of 3.20 (SD = 1.260). These findings suggest a moderate level of agreement regarding institutional guidance, indicating room for improvement. Institutions might need to enhance their outreach efforts to ensure students consistently receive guidance on ethical AI use. During the data analysis, regarding whether students understand their institution's guidelines on using AI in academic work, 33% agreed, and 30.3% strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 22% were neutral, and only a small percentage disagreed (7.3%) or strongly disagreed (7.3%). The mean score of 3.72 (SD = 1.187) indicates that most students feel confident in understanding their institution's guidelines. This level of understanding might be attributed to existing communication strategies or training programs. However, the researcher notes that these findings seem to emphasize the importance of ongoing clarification and dissemination of AI usage policies. This would help ground students in their knowledge concerning this aspect. When respondents were asked whether their institution should offer training on responsible AI use in academics, 35.8% agreed, and 22% strongly agreed, with 30.3% neutral responses. Only a small minority disagreed (6.4%) or strongly disagreed (5.5%), resulting in a mean score of 3.62 (SD = 1.070). These results reveal a strong demand for institutional training programs where the findings imply that students recognize the importance of developing skills for ethical AI usage, which can be a focal point for institutional initiatives. This finding therefore is the major evidence in this study that students look towards a clearer institution's intervention regarding ethical use of AI tools even though there may seem to be some intervention regarding the same already operational. Respondents were also asked if their institution supports students in navigating AI use responsibly. While 24.8% agreed, and 11.9% strongly agreed, a significant proportion remained neutral (33.9%). Additionally, 15.6% disagreed, and 13.8% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.06 (SD = 1.201) indicates a relatively neutral stance among students. This may suggest a perception of insufficient support from institutions, revealing an opportunity to strengthen student support systems. The high percentage of respondents who remained neutral on this item also reveals a major gap in the knowledge of the students on this same. This finding is crucial in this study since ignorance of what should be done or what is required from the students by the institution can lead to a compromise of the established school system regarding the variables of this study.

Finally, respondents were asked about their willingness to follow stricter institutional guidelines on AI use if implemented. A total of 36.7% agreed, and 16.5% strongly agreed, while 29.4% were neutral. A smaller percentage disagreed (8.3%) or strongly disagreed (9.2%), resulting in a mean score of 3.43 (SD = 1.142). These findings suggest that students are generally open to adhering to stricter guidelines, provided they are clearly communicated and justified. This highlights an opportunity for institutions to establish detailed policies that align with academic integrity and ethical AI use.

Perceptions and Attitudes Toward AI in Education: In order to explore students' perceptions and attitudes towards AI in education, five items on a Likert Scale were given to respondents to find out their level of agreement on the items and the findings are shown in the Table 2. Data analysis in the Table 2 above shows that when respondents were asked whether AI tools enhance their overall learning experience, 35.8% agreed, and 33.9% strongly agreed, while 19.3% were neutral. Only a small percentage disagreed (5.5%) or strongly disagreed (5.5%). The mean score of 3.87 (SD = 1.115) indicates a strong positive perception of AI tools' contribution to learning. This finding suggests that students recognize the potential of AI to improve learning outcomes, potentially due to its ability to provide personalized and efficient educational support. Study findings reveal that regarding the necessity of integrating AI tools into the curriculum for preparing students for future careers, 29.4% agreed, and 26.6% strongly agreed on this item. Meanwhile, 26.6%

were neutral, and smaller proportions disagreed (10.1%) or strongly disagreed (7.3%). The mean score of 3.58 (SD = 1.196) reflects a moderate level of agreement. These results show the importance students place on the relevance of AI in future career preparation, suggesting a growing recognition of its transformative role in education and the workforce. When respondents were asked whether they feel comfortable using AI for educational purposes, 34.9% agreed, and 25.7% strongly agreed, while 25.7% were neutral. A smaller group disagreed (8.3%) or strongly disagreed (5.5%). This yielded a mean score of 3.67 (SD = 1.114), indicating a generally positive attitude toward AI use in education. This comfort level may be attributed to increased exposure to AI tools and their user-friendly interfaces, fostering confidence among students in utilizing these technologies. Respondents were also asked if they believe AI tools will eventually replace traditional learning methods. A total of 18.3% agreed, and 15.6% strongly agreed, while 33.9% were neutral. On the other hand, 16.5% disagreed, and 15.6% strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.02 (SD = 1.269) indicates a neutral stance on this issue. These findings suggest that while students acknowledge AI's significance, they do not universally view it as a complete replacement for traditional methods, reflecting a balanced perspective on AI's role in education. Finally, during the analysis on the Perceptions and Attitudes Toward AI in Education, when respondents were asked whether using AI tools significantly increases academic productivity (such as, writing speed, research efficiency), 35.8% agreed, and 28.4% strongly agreed, while 18.3% were neutral. A smaller percentage disagreed (10.1%) or strongly disagreed (7.3%). The mean score of 3.68 (SD = 1.201) highlights a positive perception of AI's impact on productivity. This finding indicates that students value AI tools for their ability to streamline academic tasks, enhancing efficiency and output quality.

Resources Institutions Provided Regarding Responsible AI Use in Academic Work



During the study, respondents were asked to about the resources in their institution that are provided regarding responsible AI use in academic work and the findings are shown in the Figure 1 below:

When evaluating institutional resources provided for responsible AI use, 59.3% of respondents indicated that written guidelines were available, making it the most commonly provided resource. Counseling and guidance services were identified by 38.0% of respondents, while 34.3% reported participating in workshops or seminars. Online resources were noted by 32.4%, and 17.6% stated that their institution provided none of these resources. These findings imply that institutions prioritize written resources for guiding AI use, potentially due to their broad accessibility and low cost. However, the lower percentages for interactive resources such as workshops or counseling suggest a gap in engaging, personalized support. Institutions could address this by increasing active training initiatives, fostering better understanding and ethical AI use among students.

Students' Preparedness to Use AI Tools Responsibly in Academic Work: During the Study, respondents were asked to what extent they felt prepared to use AI tools responsibly in their academic work and the responses are shown in the table 3 below: The data reveals that while 43.5% of respondents feel prepared or very prepared to use AI tools responsibly, a significant portion (28.7%) feel unprepared or

very unprepared, and 27.8% are uncertain. This indicates that many students lack confidence or clarity about responsible AI use, likely due to insufficient training or guidance. The researcher notes that these findings could justify the need for institutions to implement targeted educational programs, such as workshops and clear guidelines, to bridge this gap. The implication of this finding therefore is that by enhancing preparedness, institutions can ensure ethical AI usage and improve students' academic productivity and confidence in integrating AI tools into their work.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal varying levels of institutional support and guidance for the ethical use of AI tools in academics. A significant proportion of students (33.9%) reported neutral perspectives regarding institutional support, with only 16.5% strongly agreeing that their institutions provide frequent guidance. These results are consistent with a study by Selwyn (2019), which emphasized the uneven integration of institutional frameworks to support emerging technologies. Institutions' lack of extensive systems for training and policy dissemination likely contributes to these mixed perceptions. Addressing this gap by providing structured, frequent workshops or written guidelines could foster a better understanding of AI's ethical use among students. Students' comprehension of institutional guidelines appears more positive, with 63.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they understand these guidelines. This aligns with findings by Holmes et al. (2019), who identified clear communication as a critical factor in enhancing students' adherence to academic policies. However, the data also highlight that a substantial proportion (22%) remain neutral, suggesting that some institutions fail to communicate their guidelines effectively. This gap implies that while some institutions excel in creating accessible guidelines, others might require improved dissemination strategies, such as interactive online platforms or personalized guidance. The finding that a majority (57.8%) of students believe their institutions should provide training on responsible AI usage aligns with the argument presented by Dagnino and Barrera (2024), who emphasize the importance of integrating emerging technologies, like AI, into educational curricula to better prepare students for the evolving digital landscape. Their work highlights the need for targeted training programs in vocational education to equip students with both technical and ethical competencies, ensuring they can navigate the complexities of AI responsibly. This indicates that institutions must prioritize structured training initiatives focused on responsible AI usage to foster a balanced understanding of technology's potential and its ethical implications.

In evaluating perceptions of AI's role in academics, 69.7% of students agreed or strongly agreed that AI enhances their overall learning experience. This aligns with Luckin et al. (2016), who noted that AI tools have revolutionized academic productivity by simplifying complex tasks and improving learning outcomes. However, the findings also indicate concerns about AI's potential to replace traditional methods, with 33.9% remaining neutral and 32.1% disagreeing with this prospect. This dichotomy reflects a balance between embracing AI's benefits and valuing traditional educational practices. Institutions should focus on integrating AI tools as complementary resources rather than replacements, preserving essential aspects of traditional learning. Preparedness to use AI responsibly emerged as a key concern, with only 43.5% of students feeling prepared or very prepared. This finding mirrors previous studies, such as those by Nouraldeen (2023), which highlight the need for tailored support to enhance technological readiness among students. The significant proportion of students expressing uncertainty (27.8%) suggests a lack of comprehensive training programs. Institutions must prioritize initiatives that address this gap, such as ethics-focused workshops and mentorship programs, to build student confidence in using AI responsibly. Lastly, the provision of institutional resources shows an over-reliance on written guidelines (59.3%), with lower engagement in interactive resources like workshops (34.3%) or online platforms (32.4%). These findings align

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Institutional Intervention on the Ethical Use of AI Tools in Academics

	STATEMENT	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
		%	%	%	%	%		
1	My institution frequently provides guidance on the ethical use of AI tools.	11.9	18.3	23.9	29.4	16.5	3.20	1.260
2	I understand my institution's guidelines on using AI in academic work.	7.3	7.3	22	33	30.3	3.72	1.187
3	I believe my institution should offer training on responsible AI usage in academics.	5.5	6.4	30.3	35.8	22	3.62	1.070
4	My institution supports students in navigating AI use responsibly	13.8	15.6	33.9	24.8	11.9	3.06	1.201
5	I would follow stricter institutional guidelines on AI use if implemented.	9.2	8.3	29.4	36.7	16.5	3.43	1.142

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on Perceptions and Attitudes Toward AI in Education

	STATEMENT	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
		%	%	%	%	%		
1	AI tools enhance my overall learning experience	5.5	5.5	19.3	35.8	33.9	3.87	1.115
2	Integrating AI tools into the curriculum is essential for preparing students for future careers.	7.3	10.1	26.6	29.4	26.6	3.58	1.196
3	I feel comfortable using AI for educational purposes.	5.5	8.3	25.7	34.9	25.7	3.67	1.114
4	I believe AI tools will eventually replace traditional learning methods.	15.6	16.5	33.9	18.3	15.6	3.02	1.269
5	Using AI tools significantly increases my academic productivity (such as writing speed, research efficiency among others)	7.3	10.1	18.3	35.8	28.4	3.68	1.201

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Showing Students' Preparedness to Use AI Tools Responsibly in Academic Work

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Very prepared	26	24.1
	Prepared	21	19.4
	Not sure	30	27.8
	Unprepared	24	22.2
	Very unprepared	7	6.5
Total		108	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2024)

with the work of Martinez and Gomez (2025) emphasizing the effectiveness of active learning strategies, such as think-pair-share, problem-based learning, and collaborative projects, in promoting student engagement and critical thinking. The heavy reliance on static resources suggests a missed opportunity to engage students through dynamic, participatory methods. Expanding resource types to include interactive and personalized learning experiences could significantly enhance students' ability to apply AI tools ethically and effectively in their academic pursuits.

Limitations: One of the limitation of this study is its reliance on self-reported data from a relatively small sample of 108 students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across different institutions or academic settings. Additionally, the study employed a cross-sectional design, capturing perceptions at a single point in time, which restricts the ability to assess changes in student attitudes or preparedness over time as AI tools and institutional support evolve.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings from this study reveal the varying levels of preparedness and institutional support for the ethical use of AI tools in academic settings. While many students express a positive perception of AI's role in enhancing learning and productivity, there remains a significant gap in institutional resources, training, and clear communication of guidelines. A considerable portion of students feels uncertain or unprepared to use AI responsibly, indicating that further investment in ethical AI education is needed. These findings suggest that while AI tools hold substantial potential to support academic achievement, their responsible integration into academic practices requires stronger institutional efforts to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills.

Recommendations: Based on the findings, it is recommended that educational institutions prioritize the development of comprehensive and accessible AI ethics training programs. These programs should include workshops, online resources, and practical training focused on the ethical implications of AI use in academics. Additionally,

clearer communication of institutional guidelines and increased engagement with students through interactive resources such as seminars and counseling could foster greater preparedness and confidence in using AI tools responsibly. Institutions should also strive to create a balanced approach that integrates AI tools as complementary resources, enhancing rather than replacing traditional academic methods.

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APPENDIX:

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am undertaking a research study on the topic above. Your responses are imperative in enabling me to obtain a full understanding of this topical issue. Your responses will be kept highly confidential. As you will notice, there's no requirement for you to include your name, email, or address anywhere on the questionnaire. I will not even be able to see your name. This questionnaire will take only five minutes to fill. If you would like to know the results of the findings, I will gladly share them with you upon completing the study. Thank you for accepting to participate in this study and giving your valuable time to make it a success. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Best Regards,

Dr. Kehinde Kenny Onayemi

SECTION A

What is your age range?

Less than 20 yrs	20-28 yrs	30-39 yrs	40 years and above
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Gender

Male	Female	Prefer not to say
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What is your field of study?

Humanities and social sciences	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)	Business and Economics	Health Sciences	Other
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How frequently do you use AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, other study aids) for academic purposes?

Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
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How familiar are you with your institution's policies on the use of AI in academic work?

Very Familiar	Somewhat familiar	Neutral	Not very familiar	Not familiar at all
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SECTION B

For each of the following, please tick [√] where applicable the extent to which you agree with the statements using the following Likert scale.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided/Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

INSTITUTIONAL GUIDELINES AND AI USE

No.	Question Items	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1	My institution frequently provides guidance on the ethical use of AI tools.					
2	I understand my institution's guidelines on using AI in academic work.					
3	I believe my institution should offer training on responsible AI usage in academics.					
4	My institution supports students in navigating AI use responsibly.					
5	I would follow stricter institutional guidelines on AI use if implemented.					

Which of the following resources has your institution provided regarding responsible AI use in academic work? (Select all that apply)

No.	Question Items	
1	Workshops or seminars on AI and academic integrity	
2	Written guidelines on AI usage	
3	Counseling or guidance from professors on AI use in assignments	
4	Online resources or training modules on AI in academics	
5	None of the above	

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD AI IN EDUCATION

No.	Question Items	SD	D	NS	A	SA
1	AI tools enhance my overall learning experience.					
2	Integrating AI tools into the curriculum is essential for preparing students for future careers.					
3	I feel comfortable using AI for educational purposes.					
4	I believe AI tools will eventually replace traditional learning methods.					
5	Using AI tools significantly increases my academic productivity (such as writing speed, research efficiency among others).					

To what extent do you feel prepared to use AI tools responsibly in your academic work?

Very prepared (1)	Prepared (2)	Somehow prepared (3)	Unprepared (4)	Very Unprepared (5)

Thank You So Much
