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The Double-Edged Sword Of Artificial Intelligence: College S,. 3udents' Experiences In Addressing Academic Challenges

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Abstract — The lived experiences of ten (10) college students utilizing artificial intelligence in their coursework during the academic year 2024–2025 were investigated in this study. In particular, the phenomenological research design was employed as a qualitative research approach. The participants in the use and integration of artificial intelligence in academics experienced the following: AI in academics; AI as a solution to academic challenges; AI usage challenges and limitations; emotional reactions to AI in learning; AI's impact on learning approaches; the role of institutions in adopting AI; ethical considerations and concerns; social dynamics and relationships; the future of AI in education; and striking a balance between AI and personal responsibility. Additionally, based on the participants' testimonies, the following themes emerged: AI usage in academic life; AI tools as a means of overcoming academic challenges; difficulties encountered when using AI; emotions and feelings when using AI; the influence of AI tools as learning approaches; institutional support, obstacles, and restrictions; the ethical implications of using AI; the impact on relationships with classmates and teachers; and AI in influencing future learning experiences. The output of the study was (1) institutional policy on the use of AI in higher education institutions, including the addressing potential adverse effects of AI on learning and behavior; monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of AI tools; supporting the development of AI literacy among students and faculty; responsible AI usage and critical thinking; academic integrity and preventing misuse; collaboration and innovation in learning; addressing ethical use of AI tools; and fair and equal access to AI tools; and (2) and a student guide on using AI: justification, goals, and recommendations are the study's suggested outputs.

Keywords — Academic, Artificial Intelligence, Experiences, Difficulties, And Institutional Policy of College Students

I. Introduction

College students now have access to resources that enhance learning and productivity, thanks to artificial intelligence (AI), which has significantly transformed the academic landscape. These technologies, which range from ChatGPT for content creation to Grammarly for writing help, enable students to overcome academic obstacles more effectively. However, there are concerns about relying too heavily on AI, which could erode creativity and critical thinking. Teachers are concerned that shortcuts made possible by AI may reduce students' ability to interact deeply with course materials, resulting in a cursory comprehension of the material (Akinwalere &

Ivanov, 2022). These issues are made worse by the unregulated use of AI, which leads to disparities in how academic integrity is upheld across institutions.

Recognizing the significant impact of AI on the development of critical academic skills is a significant research gap. There remains a dearth of research on how students incorporate AI into their learning, particularly in non-Western educational settings (Lee et al., 2023). Additionally, current research often overlooks the psychological and social aspects of students' use of AI, instead focusing on its technological capabilities. Many questions remain unanswered due to the lack of thorough frameworks for assessing the ethical implications of AI in education. Institutions must strike a balance between innovation and upholding traditional pedagogical values; however, there is little agreement on how to achieve this.

AI is increasingly being viewed as a learning partner rather than a threat, according to recent trends. By addressing each student's unique needs and learning preferences, tools such as adaptive learning systems help to personalize education. However, the emergence of AI-powered tools also necessitates revisions to academic regulations to address issues such as academic dishonesty and plagiarism (Smith & Brown, 2023). To prepare students for the responsible and ethical use of these technologies, a discernible trend is emerging to incorporate AI literacy into curricula at the same time. This pattern highlights the importance of equipping students with the knowledge and skills to recognize when and how to utilize AI effectively.

The dual nature of AI use among college students raises questions about inequality despite its potential. Socioeconomic status frequently determines access to cutting-edge AI tools, and underprivileged students may be excluded from using these resources (Nguyen, 2023). Furthermore, attitudes toward AI in academia are significantly shaped by institutional and cultural differences. Some areas welcome its potential, but others are dubious because they worry about how it will affect conventional teaching methods. These differences underscore the need for integrating AI into education in a more inclusive manner.

In higher education, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a crucial tool revolutionizing how students approach academic challenges. To enhance teaching and learning, the local Las Piñas College is currently experiencing difficulties in implementing AI technologies, such as virtual tutors, plagiarism detection software, and automated learning platforms. Students are unable to fully leverage AI's potential to enhance academic efficiency and personalize their learning experiences due to a lack of adequate policies and mechanisms in place. However, issues with technology dependence, the ethical use of AI, and the lack of institutional regulations present significant challenges for both students and teachers. For instance, ambiguous rules regarding AI-assisted work cast doubt on student submissions' authenticity and academic integrity (Nosratzehi, Nosratzehi, & Keikha (2025).

The lack of knowledge about how AI affects fundamental academic abilities, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, is a significant gap in the context of local colleges in Las

Piñas. Although AI tools offer quick fixes for challenging academic assignments, little is known about how they will affect students' intellectual development over the long run (Estrellado, 2023). Furthermore, few local studies have examined the specific challenges that college students face when adapting to AI-driven learning. Local socioeconomic and cultural factors greatly influence students' access to and opinions of these technologies.

The unequal access to AI tools among students is another urgent problem. Although AI platforms have the potential to democratize education, students from lower-income families may lack the necessary resources, including access to devices, the internet, and awareness, to utilize these tools fully. Institutions seeking to create inclusive learning environments face additional challenges as a result of this digital divide, which exacerbates existing inequities in the educational system (Vassilakopoulou & Hustad, 2021). Additionally, instructors at Las Piñas colleges must overcome a challenging learning curve when incorporating AI into their lesson plans, frequently without sufficient institutional support or training.

The local college needs to establish structures that promote fair access to AI technologies and prioritize responsible use in order to address these gaps and problems. Training courses on the moral implications of artificial intelligence in educational settings should be part of these frameworks for both teachers and students. Developing culturally relevant strategies also requires research that documents the distinct experiences of Filipino educators and students with AI. Local colleges run the risk of maintaining disparities and failing to utilize AI's full potential to improve learning outcomes in the absence of these interventions.

Colleges in Las Piñas have the chance to take the lead in the responsible integration of AI in higher education by tackling these issues. Policies that guarantee fair access, regional research, and thorough AI literacy initiatives can help institutions navigate the challenges of AI use and turn it into a tool that empowers both teachers and students.

Review of Related Literature on Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is profoundly transforming higher education by reshaping pedagogical methods and introducing innovative approaches to learning, teaching, and administration. This literature review examines four key aspects of AI integration in higher education: the necessity of AI in preparing students for a technology-driven world, the risk of exacerbating existing inequities, the need for targeted policies and investments, and the cultural and institutional resistance to technology adoption.

Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education

As technology becomes increasingly integral to daily life, students need to develop competencies that align with a tech-driven world. AI offers educational institutions powerful tools to bridge the gap between traditional educational systems and the evolving demands of the global job market. AI-powered platforms can adapt to individual learning needs, providing students with

customized experiences that promote efficient learning and enhanced knowledge retention. For instance, the California State University system has integrated OpenAI's ChatGPT Edu across its 23 campuses, providing personalized tutoring and study guides to over 460,000 students, thereby enhancing their AI literacy and preparedness for an AI-driven workforce (Albanese, 2024).

While AI has the potential to personalize education and improve learning outcomes, its integration also poses risks of exacerbating existing inequities, particularly for students from underprivileged backgrounds. Access to AI tools, such as intelligent tutoring systems and adaptive learning technologies, can bridge learning gaps by providing tailored support. However, students from low-income or rural areas may lack access to the necessary technology and resources, potentially widening the achievement gap. According to the OECD (2024), the impact of AI on equity and inclusion in education depends significantly on addressing challenges such as access issues, inherent biases, and the need for comprehensive teacher training.

The transformative potential of AI in higher education necessitates targeted policies and investments to ensure institutions remain competitive and relevant. Investments in infrastructure, staff training, and technology that align with pedagogical goals are crucial. Chan (2023) emphasizes the importance of developing comprehensive AI policies that address ethical use, equitable access, and the professional development of educators. Such policies should prioritize both the acquisition of AI technologies and the creation of equitable access to these tools, ensuring they support diverse learning styles and needs.

Despite the clear benefits of AI in higher education, cultural and institutional resistance persist as a significant barrier to its widespread adoption. Traditional educational practices and a preference for face-to-face interaction can hinder the acceptance of AI technologies. Educators may fear that AI could undermine their authority or lead to job displacement. Tenzin (2023) argues that addressing these concerns requires promoting fairness, transparency, and inclusivity in the design and implementation of AI tools, thereby fostering a more equitable technological and educational landscape.

Risk of Falling Behind Without AI Integration

In today's technology-driven world, integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into higher education is increasingly vital to ensuring students acquire the skills required for success in the digital economy. AI technologies—such as personalized learning systems, predictive analytics, and intelligent tutoring—help institutions deliver more customized and compelling learning experiences. Without AI, colleges risk producing graduates who are unprepared for jobs requiring technological literacy and adaptability.

AI has demonstrated the ability to enhance learning by providing adaptive educational experiences tailored to individual student needs. This shift away from traditional, uniform instruction models is essential, particularly in competency-based learning environments. Without such technologies, students may face a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to address diverse

learning styles or paces, limiting their academic success and competitiveness (Luckin, Holmes, Griffiths, & Forcier, 2016).

Furthermore, AI can streamline administrative processes such as grading and class scheduling, enabling faculty to focus more on instruction and mentorship. This operational efficiency allows institutions to remain competitive in an academic environment that increasingly values innovation and responsiveness (Chassignol, Khoroshavin, Klimova, & Bilyatdinova, 2018). Delaying AI adoption could result in reputational risk, as institutions that are slow to innovate may appear outdated to prospective students.

AI also contributes to accessibility and institutional sustainability. By optimizing resource utilization and enhancing engagement, AI can help institutions respond to increasing demand and cost pressures while maintaining the delivery of high-quality education. Colleges that do not adopt AI may struggle to meet the evolving expectations of both students and employers, placing their future growth at risk (Zawacki-Richter, Marín, Bond, & Gouverneur, 2019)

Exacerbation of Inequities without AI Tools

A significant concern with the absence of AI in higher education is the risk of exacerbating inequities, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. AI has the potential to democratize education by offering personalized learning and support tools that can help fill resource gaps for students who lack external academic assistance.

Personalized AI tools can provide continuous, targeted support, particularly for low-income or rural students who might not have access to private tutoring or high-quality learning environments. These technologies can level the academic playing field when deployed in an equitable manner. However, without AI integration, students in underfunded institutions may fall further behind, widening achievement and opportunity gaps (Baker & Smith, 2019).

The lack of AI also creates a digital divide. Students in institutions with substantial funding and access to AI tools benefit from enhanced academic advising, adaptive learning technologies, and intelligent content recommendations. In contrast, students in under-resourced settings are denied these advantages, limiting both academic outcomes and future employment prospects (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

Moreover, AI can help institutions detect early signs of academic struggle and implement timely interventions. This is especially beneficial for marginalized or underrepresented students who may face unique challenges. Predictive analytics and performance tracking can empower educators to act quickly, offering tailored support where it is most needed (Holmes, Bialik, & Fadel, 2019).

AI integration is essential for maintaining educational relevance, promoting equitable learning, and preparing students for future careers. Institutions that fail to adopt AI risk producing

underprepared graduates, exacerbating educational disparities, and falling behind in a global landscape that is increasingly reliant on intelligent technologies. As such, AI is no longer an optional enhancement but a strategic necessity for the future of higher education.

Need for Targeted Policies and Investments

To ensure that AI adoption in higher education is both practical and equitable, there is a clear need for targeted policies and investments. AI technologies have the potential to transform higher education, but without appropriate planning and resource allocation, their integration could be uneven and fail to meet the diverse needs of students and faculty (Chaudhary & Vadhera, 2021). Institutions must invest in AI tools, infrastructure, and training to ensure that these technologies are accessible, well-integrated, and used to their full potential. Studies highlight that institutions in Las Piñas and similar regions should implement clear policies to guide AI adoption, ensuring all stakeholders are prepared to leverage these technologies effectively.

The World Economic Forum (2020) emphasizes the importance of educational institutions investing in both hardware and software to facilitate the integration of AI. These investments should focus on acquiring necessary computing infrastructure, ensuring reliable internet access, and purchasing AI tools tailored to the unique needs of students and faculty. Financial resources must also support the training and professional development of educators to help them utilize AI technologies effectively in their teaching practices. Targeted policies that prioritize these investments will ensure AI adoption is both sustainable and impactful.

Policies must also address the ethical use of AI in education, focusing on issues like data privacy, algorithmic bias, and transparency. AI systems often rely on extensive student data to personalize learning, making it essential to establish guidelines that protect privacy and promote fairness. Zawacki-Richter et al. (2022) emphasize that research and development should create AI systems aligned with pedagogical goals, avoiding reinforcement of existing biases or inequalities. Holmes et al. (2019) further argue that ethical guidelines must underpin the integration of AI to ensure it contributes positively to the educational ecosystem.

In addition to financial investment, fostering collaboration between higher education institutions, technology companies, and government agencies is crucial. Collaboration can ensure that AI tools align with the specific needs of educators and students while addressing societal challenges such as equity and access. Investments in AI can also foster innovation, enabling institutions to develop more efficient and effective teaching and learning models (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2022).

Cultural and Institutional Resistance to Technology Adoption

Despite the many benefits of AI in education, cultural and institutional resistance to new technologies remains a significant barrier to adoption. Many institutions display an entrenched preference for traditional teaching methods, often viewing AI as a threat to established practices

(Holmes et al., 2019). Resistance among educators and administrators may stem from concerns about job security, perceived complexity, or lack of understanding about AI's benefits, ultimately hindering its integration.

A key contributor to resistance is the fear that AI could replace human educators, diminishing their role in the classroom. Holmes et al. (2019) counter this fear, highlighting AI's potential as a complement rather than a replacement for human teaching. AI tools can automate administrative tasks, provide personalized learning experiences, and support educators in enhancing teaching quality, but they cannot replicate the essential role of teachers in fostering creativity and critical thinking. Addressing this fear requires raising awareness about how AI can support, rather than undermine, traditional teaching practices.

Concerns about cost and complexity also contribute to resistance. Integrating AI involves substantial investments in technology and training, which some institutions may be reluctant to make. However, failing to adopt AI may leave institutions lagging in terms of educational quality and competitiveness. Chaudhary and Vadhera (2021) emphasize the need for awareness and training programs to address these concerns and help educators and administrators appreciate the value of AI in improving educational outcomes.

Cultural factors also play a role, with some systems being deeply attached to traditional pedagogies that prioritize face-to-face interaction and established assessment methods. Overcoming these barriers requires a shift in mindset and effective communication about the benefits of AI. Faculty development programs focusing on AI in pedagogy can ease transitions and foster positive attitudes toward technology integration (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2022).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The goal of this study is to investigate the experiences of Las Piñas college students using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to solve academic problems. The study aims to explore the ethical implications of using AI in academic work, as well as the benefits and challenges that students encounter with this technology. Furthermore, this study aims to understand how institutional policies and support systems influence the practical application of AI to enhance student's learning experiences and academic performance. The following queries were intended to be addressed:

1. What are the lived experiences of the participants in the utilization and integration of artificial intelligence in academics?
2. What themes emerged based on the testimonies of the participants?
3. Based on the testimonies, what output can be proposed?

II. Methodology

A qualitative research methodology, specifically a phenomenological research design, was employed in this study. A study on "The Double-Edged Sword of AI: College Students' Experiences in Addressing Academic Challenges" would benefit from the qualitative research approach, particularly the phenomenological research design, which focuses on comprehending people's lived experiences and how they interpret them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through phenomenology, researchers can explore the core of participants' experiences with AI in academic settings, illuminating the complexity of its dual nature as a source of new problems and a tool for overcoming obstacles.

Finding people who could offer significant insights into the phenomenon being studied was the primary goal of the participant selection process for the study "The Double-Edged Sword of AI: College Students' Experiences in Addressing Academic Challenges." Participants were selected from among college students who regularly use artificial intelligence (AI) tools for their coursework, such as Grammarly, ChatGPT, and plagiarism detectors. This emphasis guarantees that the information accurately represents the experiences of people who use AI to solve academic problems.

Purposive sampling, a technique that explicitly chooses people based on their applicability to the research topic, was used in this study, which included ten (10) recruited participants. This method aligns with the phenomenological design, which prioritizes the detailed examination of lived experiences over generalizability. These strategies ensured that participants with a range of pertinent experiences were included, which helped create a thorough understanding of AI's dual role in academia.

To select participants whose experiences most closely aligned with the study's goals, inclusion criteria were established. To be eligible, participants had to be enrolled college students actively using AI tools for their studies, fluent in the research language, and willing to participate in interviews. These standards made sure that the information gathered was rich in detail and pertinent. On the other hand, exclusion criteria excluded people who had no prior experience with AI tools were not enrolled in college at the time, were unwilling to participate, or had communication difficulties. This prevented the study from gathering unnecessary or insufficient data, ensuring it remained focused on its target population.

The study was able to capture genuine and complex viewpoints due to the meticulous participant selection process, which employed purposive sampling and precise inclusion and exclusion criteria. This method was crucial in understanding how students perceive and navigate the benefits and challenges of incorporating AI into their academic pursuits.

A semi-structured interview guide was employed as the primary research instrument and data collection method for the study. This tool was thoughtfully created to extract in-depth, rich narratives of college students' experiences using AI to solve academic problems. To ensure that

the phenomenological approach's nuanced viewpoints were captured, the interview guide included open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their ideas, feelings, and reflections freely and openly.

The study's objectives guided the development of the questions, which focused on topics like the perceived advantages and disadvantages of utilizing AI tools, ethical issues, and how AI affected their academic achievement and personal development. Probing and follow-up questions were also used to delve deeper into participants' answers and, if needed, elucidate their meanings.

The instrument's semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling the researcher to modify interview questions in response to the flow of the conversation. This allowed the researcher to gain surprising yet pertinent insights while ensuring that participants could speak candidly about their experiences. The applicability and efficacy of the interview guide in answering the study's research questions were confirmed through a review conducted by specialists in educational technology and qualitative research.

The study's collection of thorough and significant data through the use of this instrument was essential for comprehending AI's dual role as both a tool and a challenge in the academic lives of college students.

Throughout the research process, rigorous methods were employed to ensure the study's reliability and credibility. The researcher did the following:

Credibility refers to the degree to which the results are genuine and trustworthy, ensuring that they accurately represent the participants' actual experiences. Credibility was established in this study using several methods:

During the interviews, the researcher provided participants with sufficient time, creating a candid and secure atmosphere that allowed them to discuss their experiences in depth.

By obtaining opinions from a diverse range of participants with varying backgrounds in academic AI tools, data triangulation was achieved. To validate preliminary interpretations, methodological triangulation also involved cross-checking results through follow-up interviews.

To improve the validity of the results, participants were asked to review the interpretations following data analysis to ensure their experiences were accurately recorded and reflected. The participants' experiences were described in great detail and vividly, providing readers with a thorough understanding of the background and conclusions. The consistency and stability of research findings over time and across various contexts are the primary focus of dependability. It was made sure of by:

The researcher meticulously documented transcripts of interviews, coding procedures, and methodological choices. This open record allows others to follow the procedures used and confirm the validity of the study.

Experts in qualitative research in education conducted a peer review of the study's methodology and conclusions. The interpretations were made more logical and data-based thanks to this outside review.

By taking these precautions, the study ensured that its conclusions were reliable and credible, providing a consistent and accurate description of college students' experiences with using AI to solve academic problems.

To guarantee the collection of thorough and genuine participant insights, the data collection process for the study was conducted methodically. Based on the framework created by Braun and Clarke (2006), which is well known for its methodical approach to finding, examining, and interpreting patterns in qualitative data, the study used thematic analysis. Because it enabled the researcher to explore the dual role of AI as a challenge and support in academic settings, this approach was especially suitable for encapsulating the essence of college students' experiences with AI tools.

III. Results and Discussion

In a brightly lit classroom on a bustling college campus, a group of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Information Systems shared their unique experiences with artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Their journeys, marked by varied levels of exposure and reliance on AI, revealed a tapestry of insights into how technology shapes modern education.

1. What are the significant experiences of the participants in the utilization and integration of artificial intelligence in academics?

The significant experiences shared by the participants reveal that the integration of AI into academic life is deeply personal, emotionally nuanced, and pedagogically transformative. Participants described AI as both a helpful companion and a potential crutch—enhancing their productivity, confidence, and understanding of complex subjects while also raising concerns about dependency, authenticity, and the ethical use of AI. Many viewed AI as a supportive tool that empowers independent learning, facilitates time management and assists in overcoming academic challenges. Others highlighted internal conflicts such as guilt, self-doubt, or fear of losing originality, which point to the emotional weight students carry in balancing technological convenience with academic integrity.

1. AI Tool Use in Academic Life

2. AI Resources to Help With Academic Difficulties

3. Difficulties With AI

4. Feelings and Emotions in AI Use

5. Impact of AI-Powered Learning Methods

6. Institutional Assistance, Barriers, and Limitations

7. Implications of AI Use for Ethics

8. Effect on Classmate and Teacher Relationships

9. AI's Role in Developing Future Educational Opportunities

2. What themes emerged based on the testimonies of the participants?

The study on college students' experiences with artificial intelligence (AI) tools in solving academic problems provided insightful information about the complex effects of AI in the classroom. The data were organized into several key themes using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, which addresses both the benefits and concerns that students have about integrating AI into their education. Important passages from the interview data were found and coded as part of the analysis process. These were then categorized into more general themes that reflected the participants' varied experiences.

A. Utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) Resources in the Classroom

AI is now a crucial part of students' academic lives, serving as both a strong tool and a source of internal strife. AI was cited by Participant 2 as a learning aid that made it easier for them to understand complex subjects, stating, "It simplifies concepts I would otherwise spend hours trying to understand." Participant 11 also relied on AI to start challenging academic assignments, frequently using it when they were unsure of where to start.

For others, such as Participant 1, AI was a time-saving tool that increased productivity: "It allows me to finish my workload faster, especially during busy weeks." Participant 6 utilized AI to streamline formatting and editing, reducing the time spent on small details and manual labor. Participant 3 expressed guilt and expressed concern, saying, "Sometimes I wonder if I am really learning or just depending on a machine." Participant 4 highlighted the potential of AI for personalized learning.

The tool's limitations were also noted by Participant 14, who said, "Sometimes the answers are too complicated to be useful." Participant 9 utilized AI for coding and debugging, while Participant 17 employed AI to summarize lengthy video lectures, stating, "It saves me hours of watching when I can just get the key points instantly."

Students like Participant 10 ultimately envision AI being fully integrated into classrooms, provided there is moderation and ethical guidance. It is interesting to note that AI was also perceived as emotionally supportive—Participant 5 shared, "When I am stressed and do not know where to start, AI feels like a study buddy that does not judge me."

College students increasingly value AI tools as essential study aids. Commonly used tools like QuillBot, Grammarly, and ChatGPT are utilized for a wide range of purposes, from writing essays to demystifying complex subjects. This pervasive integration is indicative of a trend toward technology-embedded learning ecosystems, where digital tools complement conventional study techniques (Luckin et al., 2016).

However, there are issues with this convenience. In line with Selwyn's (2019) caution about over-automation in education, many students acknowledged that they relied on AI for even simple tasks, which sparked concerns about the decline of cognitive abilities such as writing and critical thinking. The "double-edged sword" metaphor is embodied by AI's dual role as both a helper and a hindrance, as students weigh its effectiveness against the increasing dependency it fosters.

Even in casual academic interactions, such as group chats, AI tools have become ubiquitous due to their accessibility through mobile devices. According to Bessen (2019), the democratization of AI has made it increasingly difficult to distinguish between human and machine input, which in turn complicates skill development and academic integrity.

B. AI Resources to Help With Academic Difficulties

Many students see AI as a flexible tool to help them in their academic endeavors. For instance, Participant 9 valued AI's ability to debug code, saying, "It is like having a second set of eyes for debugging." Meanwhile, Participant 11 thought AI was beneficial for organizing research ideas and enhancing the caliber of their writing.

AI provided helpful answers for students, such as Participant 17, who said, "I used AI to generate transcripts from long videos, and it gave me more time to focus on other tasks." Similarly, Participant 2 benefited from AI's explanations of complex ideas: "I finally understood my statistics lesson thanks to how AI broke it down."

Significant achievements were also made possible by AI. Participant 16 reported that AI-assisted in the creation of an award-winning app, stating, "It helped us fine-tune our project and made our group presentation more polished." For Participant 5, emotional and cognitive relief was crucial, as they stated, "It lowers my anxiety when I am overwhelmed."

Additionally, the tool helped students in weaker academic areas—Participant 3 stated: "AI filled in the gaps when I did not fully understand the lecture." The versatility of AI across disciplines further proved its worth, especially for students like Participant 9, who stated: "It is useful for both coding and essay writing."

Participants frequently saw AI as a safety net during stressful academic periods. Tools that helped demystify complex material, mimic exam questions, and decipher unclear instructions were referred to as "24/7 tutors." These results are consistent with Holmes et al. (2019), who contended

that AI has the potential to provide tailored, just-in-time assistance, particularly in learning environments with limited resources.

It also helped students with different learning needs. For example, while non-native English speakers relied on grammar correction tools, visual learners valued apps that generated diagrams to aid in their learning. Thus, AI served as a compensatory mechanism, which was especially helpful in addressing the pedagogical gaps following the COVID-19 pandemic (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020).

However, concerns regarding long-term academic resilience are raised by the ease of AI support. According to Heffernan and Heffernan (2021), AI has the potential to undermine students' motivation to tackle intellectual challenges if it is used as a shortcut rather than a scaffold.

C. Difficulties in Applying AI Tools to Academic Tasks

Students faced significant challenges despite the advantages. "Sometimes the information is just wrong—it is misleading." Creating effective prompts was another challenge: "I struggle to phrase what I want; if I am not clear, the output is not helpful." Participant 14 commented on the complexity of AI's language: "It uses words that are too academic, not like how we talk in class." Participant 13 was frustrated by AI's inaccuracy.

Over-reliance was a more serious issue. Participant 6 acknowledged that "I have noticed I have started depending on it too much—it is making me lazy to think on my own." These issues highlight AI's dual nature, which enables it to both empower and hinder critical engagement.

Notwithstanding its advantages, artificial intelligence has apparent drawbacks. Several students encountered errors in AI-generated outputs, ranging from outdated information to logical contradictions, which contributed to a decline in their academic performance. This aligns with the concerns expressed by Marcus and Davis (2019), who cautioned against hallucinations in large language models that display information that is believable but not accurate.

More importantly, students acknowledged that they had submitted AI-generated work without giving it much thought, running the risk of academic dishonesty and losing their agency. The ethical ambiguity highlighted by Floridi and Cowls (2019), who advocated for ethical literacy in the use of digital tools, is exemplified by this blurred line between authorship and assistance.

Furthermore, a digital divide that reflects wider educational inequalities has emerged, with disadvantaged students unable to afford premium AI services (van Deursen & van Dijk, 2019). Therefore, if AI is not institutionally addressed, it may unintentionally exacerbate inequality, even though it promises to promote inclusion.

D. Feelings and Emotions in AI Use

The use of AI evoked a wide range of emotions. Participant 3 expressed self-doubt and questioned the creativity of their work, asking, "Is it still my work if AI helps too much? On the other hand, Participant 5 was grateful, saying, "I am thankful—AI has saved me from many breakdowns during deadlines." Participant 12 was worried about becoming dependent, asking, "What if I cannot do things anymore without it? Others, such as Participant 6, maintained that using AI should be reserved as a last resort after all other options have been exhausted. In the meantime, Participant 4 explained how AI increased confidence, saying, "It gives me a framework, so I am not starting from zero." "I still want the pride of figuring things out myself."

The use of AI elicited a range of complex emotional reactions. Particularly when AI tools alleviated burdensome workloads, relief, and empowerment were often mentioned. This is consistent with the emotional scaffolding theory proposed by Rosenberg and Martindale (2009), which suggests that technology helps students who are anxious about their academic performance.

However, some students saw widespread AI use as "cheating," so this relief was frequently accompanied by guilt. These ethical quandaries reflect larger discussions about academic authenticity and the decline of effort-driven learning (Lancaster & Cotarlan, 2021). The emotional vulnerability involved in relying on AI is highlighted by the fact that some individuals have expressed concern about unpredictable AI performance, or professors have questioned the authenticity of their work.

As a result, the emotional landscape reflects the dual nature of AI, which reduces stress while also posing moral and psychological challenges.

E. Impact of AI-Powered Learning Methods

Students' approaches to learning have changed as a result of AI tools. AI helped Participant 1 complete tasks more quickly, describing it as "efficient and convenient." AI gave Participant 4 more confidence when taking on new topics. While Participant 3 emphasized the importance of independent thought before seeking AI assistance, Participant 2 reported feeling more engaged in the learning process: "When AI explains something, it feels like a conversation—I stay focused."

Not all effects, however, were favorable. Participant 6 observed: "I realized I do not push myself creatively anymore—it is too easy to let AI think." Participant 3 raised ethical questions about academic honesty, asking, "At what point does it become cheating?"

Students' interactions with learning materials are changing as a result of AI tools. AI-generated summaries are now preferred by many over reading entire texts, resulting in quicker but often shallower information processing. This supports Carr's (2010) argument that the convenience of digital devices can undermine the practice of reading deeply and reflecting. Nevertheless, students showed a move toward inquiry-based learning—albeit one that was mediated by

algorithms—by becoming more methodical in their question formulations to AI. According to some, AI strengthened learner autonomy by enabling autonomous investigation of subjects outside of the curriculum (Luckin, 2018).

Others, however, warned that this new way of learning discourages perseverance and patience, which are essential for academic success. AI thus speeds up access while possibly impeding intellectual depth, thereby highlighting the gap between immediate efficiency and long-term cognitive growth.

F. Institutional Assistance, Barriers, and Limitations on the Application of AI Tools in Education

Different institutions had different reactions to the use of AI. "Schools should teach how to use AI responsibly, not just ban it," said Participant 5, and Participant 10 agreed, arguing that AI use should be guided rather than outright banned. Participant 7 stressed the need for balance, saying, "AI should be allowed, but there has to be accountability." However, there were still worries, as Participant 10 cautioned against prioritizing convenience over education, saying, "Students might stop trying if everything comes easy."

Diverse experiences were had with institutional AI policies. Some students gave schools that provided training on responsible AI use and clear guidelines high marks. These proactive measures are indicative of what Selwyn et al. (2020) referred to as AI readiness in education, wherein evolving policies accompany technological advancements

However, many institutions were inconsistent. Confusion and a covert culture of AI use resulted from some professors' outright bans on the technology and others' indifference. This opacity reveals a missed opportunity for productive discussion about responsible innovation and digital ethics (Popenici & Kerr, 2017).

Students stated that they needed educational—rather than punitive—interventions, such as open forums, workshops, and ethical training, that would enable them to use AI in a meaningful way. AI turns from a structured learning tool to a hidden curriculum in the absence of institutional alignment.

G. The Ethical Consequences of AI Use in Academic Research

Ethics continued to be a significant issue. In contrast, Participant 9 exhibited responsible use, saying, "I only use it to guide me—I make sure my ideas are still original." These divergent opinions highlight the delicate ethical balance in integrating AI into academia. Participant 18 voiced concerns about plagiarism, saying, "It is easy to misuse AI and submit work that is not yours."

One of the most prominent themes was the consideration of ethics. Students questioned whether using AI can be considered academic dishonesty, especially when outputs are turned in

without critical thinking. This is in line with McKenna and Hughes' (2013) caution that the appearance of productivity can conceal unethical behavior due to technological facilitation.

According to the testimonies, it was awkward to be praised for work done with AI, which led to internal conflict and a decrease in self-worth. These incidents underscore the pressing need for ethical frameworks that extend beyond straightforward permission or ban policies to address the complexities of AI use (Williamson & Eynon, 2020).

Students demanded an ethics of digital citizenship that fosters AI literacy along with integrity, accountability, and reflective practice.

H. AI's Effect on Relationships with Teachers and Students

The use of AI also impacted academic relationships. As a test of independence, Participant 1 favored independence over AI or instructor assistance. A serious concern was voiced by Participant 3: "Some professors assume you used AI even if you did not." Even so, Participant 9 regarded AI as a backup: "I only use it when I have really tried and still do not get it." It breeds mistrust.

The use of AI quietly changed academic relationships. Pupils reported relying less on instructors and preferred AI for clarification and feedback, which also undermined established pedagogical relationships.

AI created conflict in group projects. Conflicts over fairness and trust resulted from some students' covert use of AI. The consensus was that, when applied opaquely, AI could undermine interpersonal trust, even though some people offered AI advice as a way to collaborate in tech-driven environments. Therefore, relational ethics—the ability to uphold trust and cooperation in technology-mediated learning environments—as well as digital fluency are required for the integration of AI into academic life.

I. AI's Role in Developing Future Educational Opportunities

Students considered the long-term potential impact of AI on education. Participant 1 praised its ease of use, saying, "AI makes things easier, and that is hard to give up." Participant 4 envisioned a personalized education in which AI would tailor lessons to the individual needs of each student. On the plus side, Participant 9 saw AI developing into a specialized tool for technical fields, such as programming: "It is like a lab partner—it does not get tired." However, Participant 2 cautioned about growing dependency, saying, “We might lose the habit of thinking for ourselves."

Students viewed artificial intelligence (AI) as a key component of future education. They envisioned real-time learning analytics, intelligent tutoring systems, and customized curricula. These goals align with UNESCO's vision for human-centered AI in education, which was put forth in 2021.

However, worries about over-reliance persisted. Students were concerned that using AI as a crutch might undermine core academic skills. According to Holmes et al. (2019), the challenge lies in promoting critical thinking and metacognition in addition to the use of AI.

Participants underlined that the objective should be to master AI responsibly, striking a balance between efficiency and ethical reflection, automation, and autonomy.

The experiences of college students highlight the dual nature of AI in education. Although these resources provide previously unheard-of assistance in overcoming academic obstacles, they also give rise to grave worries regarding emotional health, dependency, equity, and authenticity. AI is a "double-edged sword," requiring both institutional direction and personal judgment to make sure that its application complements rather than replaces the educational process.

3. Based on the findings of the study, what output can be proposed?

The study suggests two key outputs: an institutional policy on the use of AI in higher education institutions and a student guide on using AI, including justification, goals, and recommendations.

IV. Recommendations

The following are suggested in light of the findings and conclusions summarized:

1. To increase their usage of AI tools and their responsible application in academic work, students should actively participate in training sessions.
2. To enhance learning experiences and foster students' creativity and critical thinking, educators should integrate AI tools into their curricula.
3. By offering institutional subscriptions and shared facilities, administrators can guarantee fair access to AI tools and resources.
4. The institution must implement the proposed policy.
5. National guidelines that standardize the ethical and equitable use of AI in educational institutions must be established by policymakers.
6. Future studies should investigate how AI tools impact learning outcomes and their long-term effects on students' behaviors and abilities.

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