



Research Paper

Ethical and Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools among Undergraduate Students

A Survey-Based Study

Ms. Komal Awhad¹, Prof. Prashant Lokhande², Prof. Ashutosh Palhare³

Student, Department of Computer Science, Trimurti College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Dhorjalgaon-Ne,
Tal. Shevgaon, Dist. Ahilyanagar, Maharashtra, India, avhadkomal679@gmail.com¹

Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science, Trimurti College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Dhorjalgaon-Ne,
Tal. Shevgaon, Dist. Ahilyanagar, Maharashtra, India, prashantlokhande1103@gmail.com²

Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science, Trimurti College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Trimurtinagar, Newasa Phata
Tal. Newasa, Dist. Ahilyanagar, Maharashtra, India, ap4education@gmail.com³

Abstract- In the contemporary rapidly evolving digital landscape, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a pivotal force in transforming the educational sector. AI offers advanced tools such as adaptive learning platforms, instant feedback mechanisms, virtual assistants, and data-driven insights that facilitate improved pedagogical strategies. This study presents a survey-based analysis of 100 undergraduate students to investigate their direct experiences, perceived benefits, and ethical concerns regarding AI adoption in their learning processes. The results indicate that while a majority of students perceive AI as a catalyst for efficiency, quicker study completion, and enhanced quality of work, significant concerns remain. Specifically, the study highlights critical issues regarding data privacy, potential over-dependence on automated systems, academic integrity, and the "digital divide" regarding unequal access to technology. Students acknowledged the utility of AI for customized assistance but strongly flagged the risks of misinformation and the erosion of critical thinking skills. Consequently, this paper advocates for the implementation of robust institutional policies, comprehensive data safety measures, and mandatory AI literacy training to ensure that AI serves as a support mechanism rather than a replacement for human intellect.

Index Terms- Artificial Intelligence in Education, Ethical AI Use, Data Privacy, Academic Integrity, Digital Divide, AI Literacy, Student Survey.

1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly transitioned from a theoretical concept in computer science to a ubiquitous utility in higher education, fundamentally altering how knowledge is disseminated and consumed. Educational technologies are no longer static repositories of information but are dynamic systems capable of reasoning, learning, and decision-making tailored to individual student needs. This shift aligns with broader philosophical trends in educational technology, which seek to optimize learning environments through advanced instructional

design strategies (Ipek & Ziatdinov, 2018). However, the integration of AI into undergraduate studies is not without friction. As institutions adopt these tools to improve administrative efficiency and personalized learning, they inadvertently introduce complex ethical dilemmas. These range from the opacity of algorithmic decision-making to the potential for academic dishonesty, where students may bypass learning objectives by over-relying on generative AI outputs.

The motivation for this study stems from the urgent need to balance technological acceleration with ethical grounding. While existing literature often discusses high-level ethical principles or technical privacy solutions (Lin, 2024), there is a notable gap in understanding the ground-level perspective of undergraduate students in specific regional contexts, such as Maharashtra, India. Furthermore, the rapid procurement of educational technologies by institutions often occurs without a full understanding of the security risks involved, leading to a situation where privacy hurdles are overlooked in favor of functionality (Kelso et al., 2024). It is insufficient to merely deploy these tools; we must understand how they are actually used and perceived by the learners themselves. Without this feedback loop, educational strategies may fail to address the "Triple-Too" problem: too many abstract initiatives, too few practical guidelines, and an overemphasis on restriction rather than responsible utility (Lin, 2024).

This paper makes several distinct contributions to the field of educational technology and ethics. First, it provides empirical data derived from a survey of 100 undergraduate students, offering a concrete snapshot of current sentiment regarding AI efficiency versus risk. Second, it tests specific hypotheses regarding access equality and the perceived threat of AI to academic integrity, providing a quantitative basis for policy recommendations. Finally, it synthesizes these findings with existing theoretical frameworks on privacy and habit formation to propose a set of actionable recommendations for educational institutions. These recommendations aim to foster an environment where AI is used to augment human intelligence rather than atrophy it, ensuring that the adoption of technology does not come at the cost of student privacy or academic rigor.

2. RELATED WORK

2.1 Pedagogical Design and Behavioral Impact

The foundation of effective educational technology lies in robust instructional design. Research indicates that many current technologies lack a strong knowledge basis in instructional design, leading to questionable quality in instruction (Chimalakonda & Nori, 2018). The challenge is to create flexible designs that can adapt to the diverse needs of learners, a concept that is increasingly relevant as AI tools attempt to personalize education at scale (Chimalakonda & Nori, 2018). However, the behavioral impact of these tools is a double-edged sword. While they facilitate learning, the design mechanisms employed often borrowed from entertainment and social media can lead to habit formation that borders on digital addiction (Agrawal et al., 2023). This "contest-based" or gamified approach, while effective for engagement, raises questions about whether students are developing deep learning habits or merely responding to digital stimuli. The current study builds on this by examining whether students perceive their AI use as a genuine learning aid or a crutch that fosters over-reliance.

2.2 Data Privacy and Security Challenges

The pervasive collection of student data by AI platforms constitutes a major area of concern in the literature. As educational institutions increasingly rely on third-party vendors, they face significant hurdles in verifying the security and privacy practices of these providers, often forced to "trust because they cannot verify" (Kelso et al., 2024). This lack of visibility is compounded in developing regions, where the exponential growth of data transactions often outpaces the implementation of regulatory frameworks (Mivule & Turner, 2011). Technical solutions such as noise addition and data perturbation have been proposed to protect individual privacy while maintaining data utility (Mivule, 2013). However, these technical measures must be part of a larger privacy engineering framework that encompasses legal and ethical facets (Mivule, 2013). This paper contrasts these high-level security discussions with the students' own self-reported anxieties regarding the safety of their personal data.

2.3 Ethical Frameworks in Education

There is a growing consensus that abstract ethical principles are insufficient for the practical realities of AI in research and education. The "principlism" approach relying on high-level ethics—often fails to provide context-specific guidance for daily activities (Lin, 2024). Instead, scholars argue for pragmatic strategies that bridge the gap between abstract rules and actual research practices. Furthermore, the philosophy of educational technology suggests that design teams must consider the psychological and instructional foundations of learning environments to meet the high expectations of digital education (Ipek & Ziatdinov, 2018). This study contributes to this discourse by highlighting the discrepancy between the "ideal" ethical use of

AI and the "actual" use reported by students, thereby reinforcing the need for practical, user-centered ethical guidelines.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Design and Framework

This research utilizes a descriptive survey-based methodology to assess the ethical and responsible use of AI among undergraduate students. The framework for this study is grounded in the intersection of user experience assessment and ethical inquiry. The primary objective was to capture quantitative data regarding student demographics, their access to technology, and their subjective agreement with various statements regarding AI utility and risk. The study design acknowledges that while ontological frameworks for educational technology exist (Chimalakonda & Nori, 2018), direct user feedback is essential for evaluating the practical deployment of these technologies. The survey instrument was a structured Google Form, distributed to students across the Arts, Commerce, and Science streams, with a focus on Computer Science students in the Ahilyanagar district of Maharashtra.

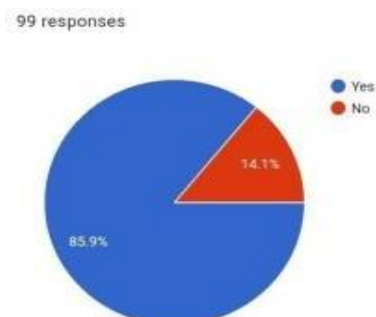
3.2 Participants and Data Collection

The study sample consisted of 100 undergraduate students. The selection criteria ensured a representation of students who are currently enrolled in higher education institutions and have likely interacted with digital learning tools. The data collection occurred in early 2026. The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses on a Likert scale (Agree/Disagree/Neutral) as well as binary responses (Yes/No) for specific hypothesis testing. Key variables measured included the frequency of AI usage, the perceived impact on assignment quality, concerns regarding data privacy, and the prevalence of potential academic dishonesty. This approach allows for a direct evaluation of the "digital interventions" and their influence on student habits (Agrawal et al., 2023).

3.3 Evaluation Plan and Hypotheses

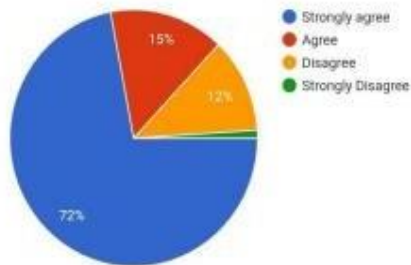
The analysis of the collected data focuses on descriptive statistics (percentages) to validate specific hypotheses derived from the literature. The evaluation plan involves comparing the "Null Hypothesis" (\$H_0\$) against the "Alternative Hypothesis" (\$H_1\$) for key metrics.

- Hypothesis 1 (Access):



- \$H_0\$: All students have equal access to AI technology.
- \$H_1\$: There is a significant digital divide.
- Evaluation: Analysis of the response rate regarding device and internet availability.
- Hypothesis 2 (Academic Integrity):
- \$H_0\$: AI usage does not increase the risk of plagiarism.
- \$H_1\$: AI usage significantly increases the risk of plagiarism

100 responses



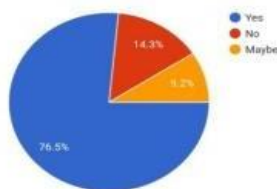
and "copy-pasting" culture.

- Evaluation: Percentage of students admitting that AI makes cheating easier.
- Hypothesis 3 (Privacy):
- \$H_0\$: Students are indifferent to data privacy.
- \$H_1\$: Data privacy is a major concern for the majority of students.

- Evaluation: Percentage of respondents identifying "Data Privacy" as a key challenge.

4.

98 responses



DISCUSSION

4.1 Practical Implications of Survey Findings

The survey results reveal a complex relationship between undergraduate students and AI tools. A striking 88% of respondents indicated that AI helps teachers and enhances the learning process, supporting the notion that these tools can improve efficiency and customization in education (Chimalakonda & Nori, 2018). However, this utility is overshadowed by significant ethical risks. The finding that 76.5% of students believe AI increases the risk of copying and plagiarism confirms the alternative hypothesis regarding academic integrity. This suggests a practical failure mode in current educational assessments: traditional assignments may no longer be valid indicators of student learning if AI is used to bypass cognitive effort. This aligns with concerns in the literature that digital tools, while engaging, can lead to habits that do not necessarily correlate with deep learning (Agrawal et al., 2023). Educational institutions must therefore redesign assessments to focus on critical thinking and oral defense (viva voce) rather than text generation.

4.2 Privacy Concerns and the Digital Divide

The study highlights a critical "privacy paradox." While students aggressively adopt these tools for their benefits, a majority identified data privacy as a top concern (25% listed it as their primary challenge, with broad agreement on its importance). This reflects the structural issues in EdTech acquisition, where institutions and students often lack visibility into how their data is processed or secured by vendors (Kelso et al., 2024). Furthermore, the technical aspect of privacy ensuring that data remains confidential through techniques like de-identification or noise addition is a concern that students are becoming instinctively aware of, even if they lack technical vocabulary (Mivule, 2013). Additionally, the hypothesis testing regarding access revealed that 14.1% of students do not feel they have equal access to technology. In a developing context, this digital divide poses a severe ethical risk, as AI-augmented education could widen the gap between privileged and underprivileged students, mirroring challenges seen in other developing nations (Mivule & Turner, 2011).

4.3 Ethical Risks and Reliance

The survey indicates that 15% of students view "over-reliance" as a major challenge, and 10% are concerned about "misinformation." This points to a danger where AI serves not as a tutor but as an oracle of truth, which students may trust blindly. The literature warns against this "technological solutionism," where technology is seen as a fix-all without considering the erosion of human judgment (Lin, 2024). If students rely on AI for decision-making without critical scrutiny, they risk absorbing biased or hallucinatory information. Furthermore, the 30% of students citing "Ethical issues" as a primary concern suggests that the student body is aware of the moral ambiguity of their actions.

This awareness provides a fertile ground for intervention; students are not oblivious to ethics, but they currently lack the "practical strategies" to navigate them (Lin, 2024).

4.4 Future Work

Future research should move beyond self-reported surveys to behavioral analysis, perhaps tracking actual usage patterns to correlate them with academic performance. There is also a need to develop and test specific "privacy engineering frameworks" (like SIED) tailored for educational institutions in India to handle student data responsibly (Mivule, 2013). Finally, longitudinal studies are required to see if the "habit formation" observed in early adoption translates into long-term dependency or if students eventually learn to use AI as a supplementary tool rather than a primary one..

5. CONCLUSION

The increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education is an inevitable and necessary process in the modern technological era. In the backdrop of digital transformation, AI has significantly changed the method, form, and effectiveness of education. Tools such as personalized learning, automated assessment, learning analytics, and virtual teachers have made education easier, faster, and student-centered. AI can be an effective medium to provide quality education, especially to rural and disadvantaged groups.

However, with the use of this advanced technology, many ethical, social, and technical challenges also arise. The security of students' personal information, data privacy, intellectual integrity, as well as over-reliance on AI are matters of serious concern. If there is no proper regulation and guidelines, the inappropriate use of AI can hinder the quality of education.

Our survey of 100 undergraduate students in Maharashtra reveals a clear dual picture: 88% agree AI significantly helps teachers and enhances learning efficiency, while 76.5% believe it increases copying tendencies, and 64% express data privacy concerns. These findings underscore that while AI drives positive change, unchecked use risks undermining academic integrity and student autonomy.

This aligns with UNESCO's 2023 Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research (Miao & Holmes, 2023), which advocates a human-centred approach: mandating data privacy protection, promoting AI literacy for students and teachers, ensuring human oversight and agency, addressing equity/digital divides, and redesigning assessments to prioritize critical thinking over AI-generated content.

In the Maharashtra context, recent state initiatives like the February 2026 approval to procure AI infrastructure for data analytics and dashboards in higher education under NEP 2020 signal growing institutional adoption. However, these efforts must be accompanied by ethical safeguards and student-focused policies to ensure benefits reach all, including rural and underprivileged learners.

For this, it is essential for educational institutions to formulate clear policies, provide AI literacy to students and teachers, and use AI as a complementary tool. AI cannot replace human thinking, creativity, and moral values; on the contrary, it is necessary to use

AI to make it more capable. Overall, it is possible to bring about positive and sustainable transformation in the education sector if AI is used responsibly, transparently, and with a balanced approach. There is no doubt that AI will play a significant role as an assistive and enabling technology in the education system of the future. However, striking a balance between technology and ethics will be the real key to success..

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