

# Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Student Perspectives on Academic Integrity, Misuse, and Ethical Justifications

Asheesh Kumar<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Neha<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Swami Vivekananda Subharti University, Meerut

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor & Joint Director, Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, Meerut, NH-58, Subhartipuram, Meerut, 250005, India

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## ABSTRACT

The growth of digital technology has been recorded during the past few years in all sectors, such as education. We are all aware that these digital tools are not only useful but also very useful, and in time, they assist with the field of academics. However, the problem with the overuse of these tools poses an element of doubt concerning the integrity of education. Such artificial intelligence applications are useful to the students in their writing, and automated content generators facilitate better learning through efficiency and time saving. Nevertheless, their extreme usage poses some crucial ethical questions, such as the responsibility of the students towards their work and educational misconduct. This study paper will discuss the use of artificial intelligence tools in higher education among students and their perception of integrity and the abuse of such tools. We also look into the extreme, rules and regulations in universities and educational institutions in regard of these tools.

Our design of the research is mixed. To gather primary data, I employ the use of questionnaires and interviews with students of various streams in the university. The reports, which are conducted using questionnaires and interviews, indicate that the students lack knowledge of the policies and academic integrity of the university. Students describe their work in various ways, and to defend themselves and their work, they said that everyone uses it, and other students say that AI is nothing but a tool, and it will assist and guide students to complete their tasks. The other usual remark of students is that it will save them time and minimise working hours. It is also demonstrated by the study that this perception is different in the various regions and groups of students. The given research work is a discussion of the topic of academic integrity during the era of artificial intelligence, combining the application and constraints of the implementation of new artificial intelligence tools and ethical aspects. This body of research indicates that colleges and universities ought to consider not only severe penalties to students caught using AI tools, but also give advice, directives, instructional design, and training of staff on how to utilise the digital tools in the academic discipline. Instead of considering the new technologies as a menace, establish a good and reasonable atmosphere among the students in terms of standard policies, precautions, benefits and drawbacks of students using the policies. It will assist in ensuring morality in the application of artificial intelligence.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, academic integrity, student perceptions, ethical justifications, higher education, digital ethics.

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology sets new standards in the education sphere each day. In the modern world, students can have access to various software and use them to improve their learning process and complete their work as soon as possible. Grammar checkers, auto write-assistants, and similar tools have been made a part of the academic process. Even though these technologies hold the potential of enhancing efficiency, accessibility, and time saving in addition to personalisation of learning, they bring with them complicated ethical challenges of academic integrity. These online technologies are a blessing to students, research scholars and faculty as they bring possibilities to learn but also create possibilities to abuse. As an example, taking out essays or doing assignments using the tools can be called unethical. This is a challenge, especially to the learning institutions, which have to establish the limits of academic misconduct in this new technological age in a clear manner.

The issue of academic misconduct is quite rampant in academic institutions, and the overuse of digital tools has brought some new dimensions to academic malpractices. Misconduct normally implies the presence of plagiarism,

copying of another student or text written by an AI. The grammar checker or something that may or may not propose an idea is not as bad an aspect, but the application of high-tech gadgets to complete full-fledged work still leaves one with hard ethical dilemmas, which are not easily resolved. It is not just the issue of having rules on paper. Each university has its way, and a good number of students remain unclear where the boundary lies with regard to using digital tools. Due to this fact, it becomes even more complex to observe academic integrity in a world that is rapidly changing online.

The literature has posed the question of what faculty members believe or the ways institutions manage the academic dishonesty problem. Students themselves have been given much less attention. The gap in this study is that it concentrates on student voices. When considering how the students could define or justify the fact that they are using these tools by themselves, we can extract a better understanding of how the integrity of the practice can be established and sustained.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Technological Integration in Higher Education

Since approximately 2018, the intake of digital technologies into higher education has become noticeable, with an increase in research. The area of scope is extensive, including adaptive learning instruments in the STEM fields and software to facilitate the creation of content and enhance productivity in academic activities. A lot of this literature points to the potential of digital technologies to enhance access, efficiency and personalised feedback to students. Simultaneously, researchers warn about the possible drawbacks, including over uptake of such tools or the lowered academic standards gradually (Holmes et al., 2022; Casnessi et al., 2023). Digital options are increasing in number, and universities are struggling to find a balance between innovation and long-established academic standards (Cotton et al., 2023).

### 2.2 Academic Integrity in the Digital Age

Plagiarism or contract cheating are the old school approaches to academic honesty that cannot be applied to academic integrity today. According to Dawson and Sutherland-Smith (2023), a new form of boundary ambiguity has been characterised by describing the cases when students and instructors frequently do not agree about what should be considered as the legitimate use of digital aids. As an example, grammar checkers are usually accepted, yet studies indicate that using AI devices to create a whole essay provokes severe ethical issues (Haven, 2023; Stokel, 2024). Another challenge is the fact that institutional regulations are not always uniform, and it is unclear to students where they delineate the line (King and Chatfield, 2023).

### 2.3 Student Perceptions and Behavioural Drivers

Researchers have argued that students will most likely resort to digital tools when presented with minor tasks, whereas a small proportion of them confessed to using digital tools to complete entire tasks (Zwaki-Richter et al., 2019; Tlilly et al., 2023). The majority of learners regard these technologies as the next logical step of the most widespread tools, and compare them with spell checkers or search engines (which is quite legitimate) (Cotton et al., 2023). The qualitative studies also indicate that such factors as time pressure, peer influence, and perceived fairness have a strong effect on the ability of students to justify questionable practices (Dawson, 2023; O'Malley et al., 2024).

### 2.4 Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Academic Misconduct

There are a number of theoretical perspectives that have been used in explaining misconduct during the digital age. For instance, the justification theory emphasises students justifying their actions through minimisation of harm or distribution of responsibility (Curtis and Clare, 2017). In actual practice, it is frequently manifested in words like everybody uses these tools (Xiao and Wang, 2023). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has been popular to examine adoption as well, demonstrating that perceived usefulness and ease of use are the strongest predictors of adoption even in the context of ethical scepticism (Theo, 2021; Twivedi et al., 2023). According to other researchers, inequalities in the perception of risks and benefits elucidate the difference between those students who strictly avoid committing misconduct and those who think that dealing with technology is reasonable when it leads to an improved outcome (Floridi and Siriati, 2020).

### 2.5 Institutional Responses to Digital Misconduct

The increased abuse of digital tools has been met by several reactions from universities. It has already implemented detection software, but the accuracy of it remains controversial (Liang et al., 2023). Second, institutions alter their policies, and in certain cases, also prohibit the use of the tools, though more frequently, they provide warnings or partial prohibitions that can be interpreted in various contexts (Cotton et al., 2023). Third, pedagogical reforms were also trending, and the emphasis was more on digital literacy and designs of assessment less prone to misuse (Dawson and Sutherland-Smith, 2023). According to numerous researchers, taking a middle path is the most appropriate way to act, probably by including more robust research on detection and a more considered method of teaching (Gasnesi et al., 2023).

## 2.6 Cross-Cultural and Disciplinary Variations

It has been found that there are remarkable disparities in student perceptions of digital tools based on their discipline and cultural background. To take one example, the students of SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, and MATHEMATICS are more likely to consider this collection of tools as an increase in productivity, especially in coding and in solving problems, and humanities students are more likely to value the values of originality and creativity (Stockel, 2024). Research in cross-cultural relations indicates that students in collectivist cultures tend to provide peer influence as the reason to justify using digital tools, whereas students in individualistic societies tend to refer to personal responsibility (King and Chatfield, 2023). Such differences indicate that integrity frameworks are not one-size-fits-all solution and, instead, adapted to the situation.

## 2.7 Research Gap

In past research studies done on the application of digital tools in higher education, various issues were discussed by different studies, yet several significant issues have not been addressed. No indication of long-term research on these problems to determine the outcome of causes of misconduct. It is mostly headquartered in Western countries. The number of experimental studies that have been conducted to examine the effects of digital literacy training in the academic sector is very limited. The development of theories is fragmented; theories, i.e., TAM or neutralisation theory, are frequently used separately, and little has been made in the way of integrating them. This piece of work would contribute to bridging these gaps would provide a better understanding of misconduct on the internet, and assist in developing more robust institutional policies.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There is a need to comprehensively know how students analyse and support the application of AI in learning institutions based on solid theoretical ground. The paper under analysis considers three other ways of thinking: justification theory, the technology acceptance model (TAM), and moral justification models to illuminate how students can use AI technologies in learning and explain unethical behaviour simultaneously.

### 3.1 Neutralisation Theory

According to the neutrality theory, individuals invoke rationalisations in order to reduce the binding effect of morality temporarily in order to be able to commit inappropriate acts without subjecting themselves to self-incrimination (Sykes and Matza, 1957). The approaches to academic dishonesty detection that have been considered as neutral entail denial of harm (Everyone I teach will not be harmed using AI), appeals to higher loyalty (Everyone in my class uses it), or apologies from those who oppose (The company is unfair, that is why I should use AI). Recent research on the topic of plagiarism and contract cheating document attest to the fact that students usually employ such justifications when they are faced with acts of integrity breach. The theories of neutrality are very useful in the context of AI, as they help understand how the students are obscuring the distinction between the acceptable forms of assistance and the dishonest ones.

### 3.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) is a model that is frequently applied in the explanation of technology adoption in education. It hypothesises that technology adoption is predicted using the acceptance of usefulness and usability. As demonstrated by recent empirical studies, students who view AI tools as helpful, available, and conducive to their academic success tend to use them despite the possible institutional obstacles. That is why AI tools are widely implemented and especially in situations with confusing or restrictive policies. Encompassing the technology acceptance model with the equity theory can explain the issue of the adoption of AI: students can feel threatened by it, and at the same time hold the use of AI in high regard as the means to achieve the perceived educational advantages.

### 3.3 Ethical Reasoning Frameworks

In addition to the legitimate acceptance and confirmation of the moral justification model, they also provide insight into the way students assess AI use morality. According to research based on deontological ethics, compliance with rules and responsibility is paramount; thus, students affected by such a viewpoint might not misuse AI, because institutional norms simply do not allow it. Conversely, the model of consequentialist justification focuses more on consequences: some of the students would defend the use of AI in a case where it will save time, or generate more output without damage that is evident. The moral disengagement concept helps us understand why individuals reformulate unethical behaviour using their minds to justify it as being rational. On the whole, these models help to understand the spectrum of moral justifications employed by the students to address problems related to AI.

### 3.4 Integrative Model for This Study

An integrated approach taken by synthesising the views helps this study to develop a multidimensional framework:

- The neutralisation theory describes the way students justify the misuse of AI.
- TAM is used to explain the reasons students use AI tools, even taking risks.
- Ethical reasoning paradigms clarify the instances in which students would consider their decisions to be morally justified.

In this broad model of a conflict inherent in the application of AI in the educational context, in higher education, is identified not only because AI could greatly benefit education, but also as the possible facilitator of unethical behaviour. It offers a critical basis on which further empirical analysis can be added.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to give breadth and depth, the dual approach was employed in the form of qualitative interviews combined with the numerical data. The first quantitative data were collected through a structured survey in order to determine the rate of adoption and predictors of AI use, despite the fact that qualitative interviews provided significantly deeper insights into the ethical reasoning and rationalisation of students. The subjects were analysed separately and then triangulated. The sample of participants was selected to guarantee the coverage of SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, and MATH subjects, humanities, social sciences, and professional subjects (law and business). The sample of participants was comprised of undergraduate and postgraduate students of C.C.S. University, Meerut.

- Survey: 412 valid responses (response rate 68%).
  - Gender: 53% female, 47% male.
  - Level: 54% undergraduate, 46% postgraduate.
  - Disciplines: Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (146), humanities (103), social sciences (108), professional (55).
- Interviews: 28 semi-structured interviews, which will be purposely sampled and will try to create diversity, in terms of gender, discipline, and study level, based on the respondents of the survey.

### • Data Collection Instruments

#### Survey Questionnaire

- Four scales: demographics, AI usage patterns, perceptions of integrity, and rationalisations.
- Rationalisation items were based on the neutralisation theory (e.g., denial of harm, appeal to higher loyalties).
- 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).
- Validation: This was reviewed and pilot tested by 3 academic integrity experts.
- Consistency: Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was between 0.74 -0.89 between scale and scales.
- Construct Validity: Factor structure was confirmed with the use of Exploratory factor analysis (KMO = 0.82, Bartlett's test  $p < .001$ ).

#### Interviews

- 30-45 minutes each in semi-structured format.
- Topics: perceptions of use of AI that is seen as legitimate, being caught with ambiguity, moral boundaries, and rationales behind behaviour.
- In English or Hindi, taped with permission, and word-for-word.

## 4.4 Data Analysis

### Quantitative Analysis

- Conducted in SPSS 27.
- The descriptive statistics summarised the use of AI by groups.
- The differences within groups were measured by chi-square tests.
- Many predictors of AI misuse (dependent variable: full-task substitution) were tested by multiple regression.
- Standardised beta, p-value and explained variance ( $R^2$ ) results.

### Qualitative Analysis

- Thematic analysis was based upon the six steps of Braun and Clarke.
- Coding was inductive (themes of the analysis) as well as deductive (categories of neutralisation theory).
- Independent coding was done by two researchers; the intercoder reliability obtained was at Cohen's Kappa = 0.81, which is a good agreement.
- The coding was handled and visualised using NVivo 12 software.

### Triangulation

- The survey and interview findings were combined to enhance validity.
- To illustrate, peer influence evidence of the state of adoption of AI was supported by interview narratives of peer norms as a justification strategy.

## 4.5 Ethical Considerations

- The informed consent was electronically given by the participants.
- Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed through the elimination of data that could be identified.

- Considering the sensitivity of the issue of misconduct, the survey and interview questions were neutrally formulated to reduce the social desirability effect.

## RESULTS

### 5.1 Reliability and Validity Checks

Survey items were first analysed in terms of reliability and validity before analysis. Alpha was found to be between 0.74 to 0.89; thus, internal consistency was established in every scale. Factor analysis of exploratory factor analysis generated a value of 0.82 KMO and a significant statistic of the Bartlett test of sphericity ( $\chi^2 = 1034.67$ ,  $df = 276$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which indicates construct validity.

### 5.2 Patterns of AI Use

Out of 412 surveyed respondents, 79% of respondents said they used AI tools at least once during the current academic year. The use was concentrated on three areas:

- **Grammar & editing support:** 62%
- **Summarisation & brainstorming:** 51%
- **Full-task substitution:** 19%

There were disagreements in the disciplines. Students of SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, and MATHEMATICS reported their greater use of substitution (28%), whereas students of the humanities proclaimed editing assistance (64%).

**Table 1 here: Distribution of AI Uses Across Disciplines**

Discipline	Grammar & Editing (%)	Summarization & Brainstorming (%)	Full-Task Substitution (%)	N
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics	58	47	28	146
Humanities	64	45	12	103
Social Sciences	61	54	17	108
Professional (Law/Business)	65	57	22	55
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>412</b>

The usage of AI to engage in substitution tasks was significantly more frequent among undergraduates than among postgraduates in a chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 8.31$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .004$ ).

### 5.3 Predictors of AI Misuse

The predictors of AI misuse were tested using regression analysis (binary (1 = substitution, 0 = support use)) results. Significant was the model,  $F(5, 406) = 12.47$ ,  $p = .001$ , which explained 22% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.22$ ).

The considerable predictors were:

- **Perceived usefulness** ( $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $p < .001$ )
- **Peer usage norms** ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p < .01$ )
- **Policy clarity** ( $\beta = -0.21$ ,  $p < .05$ )

Neither gender nor year of study showed significance.

**Table 2 here: Regression Results for Predictors of AI Misuse**

Predictor Variable	$\beta$ (Standardised)	SE	t	p-value
Perceived Usefulness	0.34	0.05	6.12	<.001
Peer Usage Norms	0.29	0.07	4.26	<.01
Policy Clarity	-0.21	0.06	-3.51	<.05
Gender	0.03	0.04	0.81	.42
Year of Study	0.05	0.05	1.07	.29
<b>Model Statistics</b>	<b><math>R^2 = .22</math></b>		<b><math>F(5, 406) = 12.47</math>, <math>p &lt; .001</math></b>	

### 5.4 Ethical Perceptions

As the question arises whether the use of AI is misconduct:

- 44% considered “supportive” use (grammar, summarisation) legitimate.
- 38% described it as a “grey area.”
- Only 18% viewed any AI use as dishonest.

This goes to illustrate the existence of a gap between institutional definitions and student definitions.

### 5.5 Rationalisations and Justifications

It was found (thematic analysis of 28 interviews) that there are five justification strategies (see Figure 1):

1. **Denial of harm** – “AI only checks my language; it doesn’t change my ideas.”
2. **Appeal to higher loyalties** – “If I don’t use it, I fall behind others.”
3. **Condemnation of condemners** – “Professors don’t set clear rules.”
4. **Necessity justification** – “Deadlines are impossible without AI.”
5. **Normalisation discourse** – “AI is already part of everyday study.”

Cohen's Kappa = 0.81 intercoder-reliability between two coders, gave them thematic strength.

Figure 1. Thematic Map of Student Rationalizations



Figure 1 here: Thematic Map of Student Rationalisations

### 5.6 Cross-Group Differences

Comparisons were used to point out contextual differences:

- **STEM vs. Humanities:**STEM students were focused on efficiency and output, while humanities students were focused on creativity and uniqueness.
- **Domestic vs. International students:**International, especially non-native English speaking students, defined AI as an interpreter of any language, but home students emphasised the saving of time.
- **Cultural orientation:**Individualist students defended their use as per peer norms, and everybody uses it, and collectivist students defended their use as per personal responsibility.

### 5.7 Integrated Themes

Three general lessons were derived in both data sets:

1. **Boundary Ambiguity** –The students will have perceived the lack of clear lines of acceptable and unacceptable use of AI.
2. **Normalisation of AI Reliance** – Slowly, AI is becoming viewed as a normal process in the academic world.
3. **Conditional Integrity** – Moral thought is contextual in its dealings, as the workload, peer influence, and the institutional cues influence the moral thought.



Figure 2 here: Conceptual Framework linking Neutralization + TAM + Ethics → AI Use Outcomes

## DISCUSSION

### 6.1 AI as a Double-Edged Sword in Student Practice

The findings indicate that artificial intelligence has a dual role in higher education, as it currently promotes learning and, at the same time, points to ethical issues. This is a dual role that indicates the past studies that described the use of artificial intelligence as both beneficial and detrimental, depending on how the technology is applied. Minor tasks like

grammatical correction, idea generation and summary are also often applied by students with the help of AI. These applications seem to be useful, though not dangerous. Most people, however, express doubt when applying artificial intelligence in achieving full-fledged projects, expressing confusion about the boundaries of ethics.

### **6.2 Boundary Ambiguity and Institutional Disconnect**

Noteworthy is the disparity between institutional attitudes to academic honesty and student attitudes. However, sometimes colleges establish binary rules that specify what applications are allowed and not allowed, although the attitude of the students toward artificial intelligence is on a continuum of reliability, between being assistive of processes and being substitutive of products. The same uncertainty of the border has been demonstrated in recent research investigations addressing the subject of artificial intelligence in writing and assessment. Regulations are not likely to be effective. Still, the lack of clear norms and education about AI tools forces students to assess what should be adequate.

### **6.3 Neutralization Strategies and Rationalization of Misuse**

Interestingly, according to the interviews, there was a great dependency on neutralisation tools, including denying the perpetrators, the higher loyalties, and refuting the damage. The findings are consistent with the past research in the field of contract cheating and plagiarism; however, the aspect of artificial intelligence introduces a new dimension. When cheating by means of artificial intelligence, students do not think of anything serious. They regard such kind of an action as being regular.

### **6.4 Cross-Cultural and Disciplinary Variation**

In the present research work, I have noticed the disparities between students taking SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, and MATHEMATICS and the opinions of academic norms on the opinion of artificial intelligence. Science, engineering and technology, and mathematics students emphasised efficiency, and humanities students emphasised originality, an issue previously investigated with regard to discipline-specific problems of integrity issues. Similarly, the fact that international students referred to AI as an equaliser points to the impact of the cultural and linguistic background on ethical thinking. Individualist and collectivist perspectives have significantly influenced integrity justification as a result of previous research. These variations indicate that they cannot presume that all students will act in the same way, but rather that institutional policy must be aware of situational and unique aspects of the students.

### **6.5 Normalisation and Conditional Integrity**

One of them is the way students are slowly getting tolerant of their technology dependence and perceiving it as a significant component of their studies. This demonstrates how the common thinking of people is with regard to the constant access to digital equipment, as well as the concept that technology influences our behaviour. The moral behaviour of students becomes flexible: they adhere to integrity, but rules appear fair and approachable. When they are subjected to pressure or influenced by colleagues, they can give in. This coincides with the moral disengagement thoughts and demonstrates that punishment is not sufficient to establish actual integrity. It requires the development of personal moral values and responsibility among everyone.

### **6.6 Implications for Policy and Practice**

According to the research results, colleges must make the right decision in terms of the use of AI. The excessive use of AI technologies may affect the confidence of students and result in reduced rates of learning. Tough boundaries will only produce unwanted covert abuse. The institutions need to aim at putting down clear and open regulations regarding the use of AI and provide limits that will educate students on the way AI can and cannot be used. The Awareness activities on AI need to be in relation to educating learners on the safe use of tools.

In formulating integrity policies, one should bear in mind that students have different backgrounds. In order to preserve the integrity of academics even in the face of adopting the new technology, colleges can think of AI being a tool that should be accommodated successfully, but not a threat that should be eradicated.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The results of the current research outweigh the theoretical input and have substantial implications for different stakeholders in higher education. In order to understand artificial intelligence as a confusing tool, colleges, educators, policy-makers, and students must evaluate academic approaches, ethical values, and the morality of online education.

### **7.1 Implications for Institutions**

Institutions can develop a balanced approach instead of the prohibition of Intelligence, or lack of concern for what Intelligence is, its policies should demonstrate both care and ingenuity. It will have to have evident and transparent standards that distinguish a process-oriented help among other forms of help. Moreover, it is also necessary that the businesses ensure that the policies they have are reliable and applicable in situations when the technology is modified,

and also that they are subjected to the same legal procedures. Both students and teachers could be assisted with the help of investing in digital integrity hubs or AI literacy centres.

### 7.2 Implications for Educators

The faculty members play an important role in affecting the opinions of students regarding integrity. Teachers must embrace practical assessment procedures like verbal defences, project-based work or progressive assignments which do not focus on the product but on the process. Training activities need to equip the professors with an insight into AI tools, which will assist them in teaching students how to use them ethically, and not just look up violations. The use of open classroom conversation on the role of AI is useful in reducing ambiguity and fostering shared norms.

### 7.3 Implications for Policy Makers

The macro-level governmental and accreditation of governments should be used to facilitate the adaptation of the academic integrity standards to new technologies in the universities. They should cooperate on creating cross-institutional guidelines on using AI in the education field national and global institutions, and should eliminate the existing discrepancies that mislead students. The policy must promote responsible innovation and ensure that the regulations do not harm the integrity without actually addressing the true benefits of AI in education.

### 7.4 Implications for Students

This study indicates that the creation of AI literacy in students, such as being able to evaluate technical expertise and ethics, is necessary. Students are to question whether further AI use improves their education. Is it innovative and intellectually just? Is it always contributing towards my learning? Is it promoting self-reliance in students? To make students not dependent on outside outcomes, educational establishments need to include digital ethical modules in their curriculum.

### 7.5 Broader Implications for Academic Culture

The findings of this study suggest that the intellectual honesty at this age of artificial intelligence is not limited by legal aspects. Institutions of learning ought to inculcate a culture of morality among the learners in line with the virtues of justice, honesty and responsibility. Higher education will be able to defend itself against technological disruption in a loop by considering artificial intelligence as an ethical technology involvement, and not a danger. This entails the students being aware of the pros and cons of AI tools.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

### 8.1 Limitations

This research work addresses various concerns of the utilisation of digital tools in the academic discipline, yet this work also has several drawbacks. The evidence test is largely based on self-report, and this is subject to bias. To justify the rightness of the students, it is possible to explain their personal opinions positively about the use of digital tools in higher education.

The second constraint is based on the data collection in the present work, I gathered the data of students in various streams; however, all students belong to the same region same university. Cultural differences, varying disciplinary norms, and university policies might potentially give rise to the effect of different patterns that are not covered by this study. The third weakness is, I have employed a mixed research methodology, which is deepening in this research work; however, the period of data collection is minimal. These results are not indicative of a linear trend, considering the fact that higher education is becoming more and more reliant on the application of AI tools in the creation of AI tools.

This paper was centred on the notion of neutralisation and technology acceptance, and never thought about longitudinal or experimental designs. This research never explored the change in student attitudes as the use of AI went up over time. The research that follows into the future ought to follow these directions so that the relationship between causes and effects can be established more effectively, and how the attitude of students will transform when AI technologies evolve.

### 8.2 Future Research Directions

Following these constraints, some research opportunities are identified:

1. **Longitudinal Studies:** Future research needs to monitor the changes in the perceptions and reasons of students as AI increasingly enters higher education. This would give information regarding the process of normalisation and whether ethical boundaries change with time.
2. **Cross-Cultural Comparisons:** Due to the differences in the responses of the international students, cross-country and cross-cultural comparative studies would help illuminate the role of social norms and educational traditions on AI-related practices of integrity.

3. **Disciplinary Perspectives:** Going beyond SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, and MATHEMATICS and the humanities, the next area of research should be on professional programs (e.g., law, medicine, business) where AI integration might have special ethical consequences related to the standard of the profession.

4. **Intervention Studies:** Experimental studies involving the investigation of how AI literacy workshops, ethics training/assessment redesign, contribute to student behaviour may help shift institutional policymaking operations.

5. **Faculty and Policy-Maker Perspectives:** Although the research was student-centred, similar studies about how faculty and policy-makers comprehend the meaning of AI as it should be applied to integrity would provide a more comprehensive view of the academic ecosystem, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

6. **Technological Co-Evolution:** Lastly, because AI-detection technologies are in progress, studies should be done critically to determine whether the arms race between AI generators and detection results in trust or resistance among students.

### 8.3 Concluding Note on Research Agenda

Combined, these guidelines provide the understanding that AI in higher education is not a short-term disturbance but a larger change in the academic culture. To eliminate this, the problems of Integrity, academic misconduct, and Ethical Justifications, a standard policy was prepared by universities on an international level. Students' training sessions are also expected to be familiar with the boundaries and the utilisation of digital tools in academic studies.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined the perceptions and reasons of students on the use of artificial intelligence in higher education, particularly in academic dishonesty. The findings imply a two-sided effect: AI can help to make the learning process more efficient and accessible, but it also introduces the grey sides, according to which students can justify their decision to address university regulations in conflict. The evidence of surveys revealed that the usefulness of adoption and peer influence is the most influential factor in adoption. The interviews further enriched the information, as it became clear that frequent neutralisation strategies assist students in making their dependency on AI the norm.

On a conceptual level, the article builds upon the area of research discussing integrity insofar as it connects the neutralisation theory with the models of technology acceptance and moral reason to provide a more multi-tiered view of how students can walk the fine line between being supportive and engaging in misconduct. As a matter of fact, the results indicate the shortcomings of the prohibition-oriented policies. Rather, universities must ensure they make AI literate, engage in ethical thinking, and express a high level of expectation. Re-examination and creation of culturally sensitive integrity systems will also play a critical role in matching the institutional standards and the lived experiences of the students.

Insecting into the future, one of the students has accurately portrayed the state of affairs: AI will not disappear; it has become a part of how we think today. The thing is not to do away with it but to coexist. With the development of the common standards regarding ethical application, higher education could gain the advantages of AI potential and retain confidence in academic and professional results.

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