

Exploring Students' Ethical Decision-Making in The Use of AI-Generated Content: Awareness, Practices, and Action Plans for Strengthening Academic Integrity at NEUST.

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Abstract- Ethical dilemmas of increasing complexity are woven into the life of most students because of increasing usage of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in academic works. This study is devoted to understanding students' knowledge, behavior, and ethical decision-making practices on the use of AI-generated content in academic submissions. Data were collected from 51 students across various departments using a quantitative- descriptive approach, through a structured Likert-scale survey. In all these discoveries, they revealed some forms of awareness and unethical behavior among them. It is found that many students recognize the moral dimension of their use of AI. However, it is because of the inadequacy of citation and acknowledgment practices some students admit full dependence on AI without tweaking anything, while others say they do not know the proper citation formats to apply. The paper points out that AI ethics seminar conduct policy changes related to AI, as well as AI literacy programs offering ideas on how to strengthen academic integrity. The findings underscore the urgent need for educational institutions to put in place clear standards and proactive strategies on how students are to use AI technologies responsibly in academic works.

I. INTRODUCTION

Students across the world have access to Artificial Intelligence (AI) - ChatGPT, Grammarly, avatar creation tools, paraphrasing tools, etc. - each of which give students new ways to compose, edit, and compose their own original academic work, fundamentally shifting how they approach academic assignments. Given the rapidity in which educational technologies are being utilized, it raises pressing questions about academic integrity, especially in relation to ethical

decision-making with AI generated content. Through this evolution of AI, learning, originality and authorship are being brought into question.

In many institutions, the policies or rules governing the extent of AI or technologies that can be utilized by students are unclear, unknown or non-existent, leaving students to decide their course of ethical action. Students have to weigh the convenience that AI & technologies bring to the academic experience with the responsibility to uphold, honor and maintain academic honesty. Not attributing AI generated content properly or carelessly misusing AI may put students in a situation where they inadvertently commit plagiarism, which can have life-altering impacts on their academic journey and potentially adverse academic consequences. For these reasons, it is essential to see what students think, how they will act, and their level of understanding of ethical options when using AI in their academic work.

The Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST), a progressive educational institution, faces the challenges of dealing with these emerging issues with the purpose of maintaining the integrity of its academic programs. This study aims to investigate student behaviors, ethical decision-making and awareness regarding the use of AI-generated content, and propose an action plan to help NEUST strengthen its academic integrity policies.

Through this approach, this study wishes to contribute to evidence-based actions that are aligned with policies that encourages responsible use of AI in the academic context. The findings are intended to support NEUST and GSC in preparing its students to make ethical choices when using technology and provide a learning environment that embraces honesty, critical thinking and true scholarship.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Foreign Literature

Artificial Intelligence in Education: Promises and Implications for Teaching and Learning

According to Holmes, W., Bialik, M., & Fadel, C. (2022) from the Center for Curriculum Redesign, AI tools can significantly enhance the learning process by offering personalized support, improving writing quality, and streamlining student feedback. However, the study cautioned that misuse or overreliance on AI-generated content may lead to ethical concerns such as plagiarism or misrepresentation of work. Students who fail to cite or disclose the use of AI in their academic submissions may unintentionally violate institutional codes of conduct.

Education and Technology: Key Issues and Debates

Selwyn (2021), in his book published by Bloomsbury Publishing, emphasized the disconnect between students' awareness of plagiarism rules and their understanding of how these apply to AI-generated content. Many students do not view AI tools as sources that require attribution, leading to unintentional academic dishonesty. This finding highlights the need to revise academic integrity policies to include guidelines specific to the use of digital tools like AI.

Ethical Perceptions of AI Usage among University Students

Wang and Liu (2023), in their study published in the Journal of Educational Ethics, found that university students' ethical use of AI is shaped by peer influence, perceived consequences, institutional policies, and their own understanding of responsible technology use. Students in schools with clear AI policies and active discussions on academic ethics showed higher levels of ethical behavior. The study concluded that institutions must not only set clear rules but also foster a culture of academic integrity.

Local Literature

The Role of Institutional Culture in Promoting Academic Integrity: A Case Study

According to De Guzman, L. M., & Reyes, C. A. (2022) from the PNU Journal of Teacher Education, institutional culture plays a crucial role in guiding ethical academic behavior among students. The study focused on a state university in Northern Luzon and revealed that students who received formal academic integrity training demonstrated greater caution in using AI tools. These students often sought advice on how to cite AI-generated material, underscoring the importance of institutional efforts in shaping responsible academic practices.

Understanding Students' Awareness of AI Usage in Academic Writing

Alonzo, M. C., & Andres, J. R. (2023), in their research published in the Philippine Journal of Educational Technology, surveyed undergraduate students from Metro Manila and found that only 34% were aware that AI-generated content needs proper citation. Many students treated AI-generated outputs as original work, raising concerns about rising cases of unintentional academic dishonesty. The authors recommend integrating digital ethics and responsible AI use into core academic subjects.

Synthesis

The international and local literature review show there is an increasing concern around the ethics associated with the use of artificial intelligence in academic contexts. In the international papers there was discussion of how colleague behavior, institutional policy and personal awareness could each play a role in ethical actions. From the local documents, the evidence showed that strong institutional culture and formal academic integrity training could mitigate unethical use of AI. The recommendation surfaced across all of the studies for prompt integration of ethics around AI use and digital literacy, and adjusting academic policies to educational systems was the same across all documents. This level of agreement informed the action plan suggested in this study to support students' responsible use of AI tools when supporting their activities.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this study, a quantitative-descriptive method was used for the purposes of investigating students' awareness, behaviours and ethical decision making involving the use of AI-generated content in academic work. A structured survey was conducted via Google Forms, which consisted of eight (8) Likert statements, with values between "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5). The survey produced responses from 51 students from several campuses and departments of the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST). The questionnaire measured responsible use, understanding plagiarism, citation practices, general perception of school guidelines, attendance at seminars, and confidence in citing AI-generated content. The survey data will be examined descriptively to highlight prevalence of students' behaviours of awareness of ethical behaviours using AI tools.

IV. RESULTS

The survey findings from 51 students show a mix of responsible and uncertain behaviors regarding the ethical use of AI-generated content in academic settings.

Responsible Use of AI in Academic Work

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree/Strongly Agree	24	48%
Neutral	20	40%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	7	14%

Awareness that Uncited AI Use is Plagiarism

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree/Strongly Agree	32	64%
Neutral	14	28%

Disagree/Strongly Disagree	5	8%
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Regular Acknowledgment of AI Use in Submissions

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree/Strongly Agree	19	38%
Neutral	24	48%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	8	14%

Responsibility for Academic Authenticity

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree/Strongly Agree	29	58%
Neutral	16	32%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	6	10%

Clarity of School Guidelines on AI Use

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree/Strongly Agree	27	54%
Neutral	18	36%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	6	12%

Belief that AI Can Be Used Ethically

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree/Strongly Agree	23	46%
Neutral	21	42%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	7	14%

Attendance in AI Ethics Seminars

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree/Strongly Agree	19	38%
Neutral	18	34%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	14	28%

Confidence in Citing AI-Generated Content

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree/Strongly Agree	25	50%
Neutral	17	34%
Disagree/Strongly Disagree	9	16%

V. DISCUSSIONS

The findings show that most NEUST students are aware of the ethical issues surrounding AI-generated content. More than 64% of participants understand that using AI without proper citation is plagiarism. This understanding is rooted in academic ethics. However, this awareness doesn't always lead to action; only 38% have credited AI tools in their work.

Almost half of the participants (48%) are unsure or neutral about their citation practices. This aligns with Alonzo and Andres (2023), which found that students were confused and lacked confidence about citing AI correctly. The difference between what students know and what they do suggests that awareness campaigns may not be sufficient. Students need practical training and experience for using AI ethically.

There also seems to be a lack of institutional clarity. While 54% of respondents felt that NEUST enforced ethical guidelines, a significant 36% felt neutral, and 12% disagreed. This indicates a gap in communication or stricter enforcement of policies.

The low participation rates (38) for the seminar, along with a large number of people expressing low confidence (50) about their citation practices, reflect findings from research by De Guzman and Reyes in 2022 regarding this issue.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study suggest NEUST students know about AI-generated content and the related ethical aspects, however responsible use practices, including those for citation and attribution, were not utilized uniformly. This study also identified a disconnect between awareness of ethics and engaging ethically, indicating there are areas for improvement within the institutions' guidelines, additional training seminars, and/or better references on responsible AI usage.

It is critical for institutions to prepare more quickly and develop policies and programs that focus on ethical engagement, and to ensure students engage with AI in an ethical way through education and training seminars. The action plan describes AI ethics seminars, policy changes, and the education on basic principles or digital literacy with AI that could focus on potential gaps and responsible technology use contributing to a culture of honesty and authenticity.

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