

Ethical Use of AI in Higher Education: Student Perspectives from the University of the Western Cape (UWC)

Section 1: Contribution Details

Contribution	Detail
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Title of Submission:	Ethical Use of AI in Higher Education: Student Perspectives from the University of the Western Cape (UWC).
Sub-Theme(s) of Submission:	AI literacy programs in the region
Keywords of Submission:	Artificial Intelligence; AI; Personalised Learning; Ethical Concerns; Student Engagement; Data Privacy; Critical Thinking

Section 2: Abstract Text

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming education by enhancing teaching efficiency, boosting student engagement, and expanding access to educational resources. However, integrating AI into education raises ethical concerns such as data privacy, inherent biases, and dependency on machine intelligence. This study investigates student perspectives on the ethical use of AI in education gathered during South African Library Week (2024) through an informal method using whiteboards and paper. This study employs a mixed methodology by analysing the collected comments both quantitatively and qualitatively through thematic analysis. The findings highlight students' balanced yet diverse views, with a slight tilt toward positive sentiments. While recognising AI's benefits, students express concerns about its impact on critical thinking and good study habits. Quantitative analysis shows that 37.19% of students view AI as ethical, 26.44% see its use as unethical, and 35.53% believe the ethicality of AI depends on the context and type of use. Qualitative analysis reveals themes of improved understanding and efficiency as positive aspects. However, the potential drawbacks of AI, such as critical thinking erosion and dependency, are also highlighted, reminding us of the need for caution and awareness. The study underscores the importance of engaging students in discussions about AI ethics to develop responsible and inclusive educational practices. Recommendations include fostering ethical literacy, promoting responsible AI use, and ensuring AI complements rather than replaces human judgment.