

Dossier: Ethics and Integrity, Artificial Intelligence, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and disinformation in Humanities research

Students' Use of Artificial Intelligence in academic research: benefits, challenges, and academic integrity


Uso da Inteligência Artificial na pesquisa acadêmica: benefícios, desafios e integridade acadêmica

Uso de la inteligencia artificial en la investigación académica: beneficios, desafíos e integridad académica

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Abstract: This research aims to capture the experiences of students of the Faculty of Education regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the academic research process, focusing on the ways and stages where AI is used, such as in writing, analysis or working with scientific literature, as well as analyzing the benefits and challenges they encounter during its use, with a focus on academic integrity and ethical issues related to the use of AI. The research uses a qualitative approach conducted through semi-structured interviews with 20 master's students from the Faculty of Education at the University of Prishtina and the Public University "Kadri Zeka" in Kosovo. The research questions aim to identify: how students use AI in research, the benefits and challenges they encounter while using it, and their thoughts on academic integrity and ethical issues of using AI. The results provide good insights into the use of AI in research, maintaining integrity and ethical issues of AI by students, contributing to the development of guidelines and practices that support the effective and ethical use of artificial intelligence in academic research.

Keywords: AI. Education. Academic research. Students. University.

Resumo: Esta pesquisa visa capturar as experiências de estudantes da Faculdade de Educação em relação ao uso da Inteligência Artificial (IA) no processo de pesquisa acadêmica, com foco nas formas e etapas em que a IA é utilizada, como na escrita, análise ou trabalho com literatura científica, bem como na análise dos benefícios e desafios que encontram durante seu uso, com ênfase na integridade acadêmica e nas questões

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éticas relacionadas ao uso da IA. A pesquisa utiliza uma abordagem qualitativa conduzida por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas com 20 alunos de mestrado da Faculdade de Educação da Universidade de Pristina e da Universidade Pública "Kadri Zeka" (Kosovo). As questões de pesquisa visam identificar: como os alunos utilizam a IA na pesquisa, os benefícios e desafios que encontram ao utilizá-la e suas opiniões sobre a integridade acadêmica e as questões éticas do uso da IA. Os resultados fornecem bons insights sobre o uso da IA na pesquisa, a manutenção da integridade e as questões éticas da IA pelos alunos, contribuindo para o desenvolvimento de diretrizes e práticas que apoiem o uso eficaz e ético da inteligência artificial na pesquisa acadêmica.

Palavras-chave: IA. Educação. Pesquisa acadêmica. Alunos. Universidade.

Resumen: Esta investigación tiene como objetivo recopilar las experiencias de los estudiantes de la Facultad de Educación respecto al uso de la inteligencia artificial (IA) en el proceso de investigación académica, centrándose en las formas y etapas en que se utiliza la IA, como en la redacción, el análisis o el trabajo con literatura científica, así como en los beneficios y desafíos que encuentran durante su uso, con especial atención a la integridad académica y las cuestiones éticas relacionadas con el uso de la IA. La investigación emplea un enfoque cualitativo mediante entrevistas semiestruturadas a 20 estudiantes de maestría de la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad de Pristina y de la Universidad Pública "Kadri Zeka" (Kosovo). Las preguntas de investigación buscan identificar: cómo utilizan los estudiantes la IA en la investigación, los beneficios y desafíos que encuentran al usarla, y sus opiniones sobre la integridad académica y las cuestiones éticas del uso de la IA. Los resultados proporcionan información valiosa sobre el uso de la IA en la investigación, el mantenimiento de la integridad y las cuestiones éticas relacionadas con la IA por parte de los estudiantes, y contribuyen al desarrollo de directrices y prácticas que apoyen el uso eficaz y ético de la inteligencia artificial en la investigación académica.

Palabras clave: IA. Educación. Investigación académica. Estudiantes. Universidad.

Introduction

In recent decades, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has brought about significant changes in various areas of society, including higher education and academic research. AI-based tools are increasingly being used by students and researchers to search scientific literature, gather information, analyze data, and improve academic writing. These developments have created new opportunities for increasing the efficiency and quality of academic work, but at the same time have also raised concerns about academic integrity and ethical issues (Asiksoy, 2024).

In the university context, the use of AI by students is an unavoidable reality of the times, especially in the process of scientific research. While some studies highlight the benefits of using AI in information organization and time management, international literature warns of the risks associated with AI dependence, plagiarism, lack of critical thinking and non-transparent use of these tools. Therefore, the need for a balanced and ethical approach to the use of AI in academic research has become increasingly important (Francis, Jones, & Smith, 2025).

This research has captured the experiences of students of the Faculty of Education regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the academic research process, focusing on the ways and stages where AI is used, such as in writing, analysis or working with scientific literature, as well as analyzing the benefits and challenges they encounter during its use, with a focus on academic integrity and ethical issues related to the use of AI. Through a qualitative approach, this research contributes to a better understanding of the role of AI in academic research and provides a basis for the development of institutional guidelines that support the responsible and ethical use of artificial intelligence in higher education, serving students, university professors, and researchers on this topic.

Literature review

Artificial intelligence (AI) has taken on an increasingly important role in higher education, directly impacting teaching, learning, and research processes. According to Luckin et al. (2016), AI offers opportunities for personalized learning, cognitive support, and academic task automation, increasing the flexibility, efficiency, and quality of higher education. These technological developments have changed the way students and academic staff interact with knowledge and scientific resources, and universities are facing the need to integrate AI in a strategic and sustainable manner (Luckin, Holmes, Griffiths, & Forcier, 2016).

In their study, Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019) emphasize that the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education is not only a technological challenge, but also involves important pedagogical, organizational and ethical dimensions. The authors argue that the effective use of AI should be based on clear didactic principles and be accompanied by the development of digital competencies in both students and academic staff, so that technology serves as a supporting tool for teaching and research processes, and not as a substitute for them (Zawacki-Richter, Marín, Bond, & Gouverneur, 2019). In this context, more recent studies highlight the need for universities to develop policies and institutional frameworks that regulate the use of AI in a fair, responsible and sustainable manner (Holmes, Bialik, & Fadel, 2019). Recent reports show that most higher education institutions are currently developing or have adopted specific guidelines for the use of AI in teaching and research, reflecting an increasingly conscious approach to the ethical and pedagogical implications of this technology (UNESCO, 2025; Public University "Kadri Zeka", 2025).

The use of technology and artificial intelligence by students in academic research, contemporary literature shows that students use artificial intelligence (AI) tools at various stages of the research process, including generating ideas, formulating research questions, searching and summarizing scientific literature, organizing data, and writing and editing academic texts (Kasneji, et al., 2023; Avdiu-Kryeziu & Halili, 2025). These tools are often seen as practical aids or academic assistants that reduce the complexity of the research process, especially for master's students with teaching specializations, helping them structure their papers and improve the clarity and coherence of the text (İpek, Gözüm, Papadakis, & Kallogiannakis, 2023). However, students' use of AI varies significantly according to their experience and technological knowledge, and often occurs without institutional guidance or ethical treatment, which increases the risk of misuse in academic research (Turková, Krásničan, Prázová, Turčínek, & Foltýnek, 2025).

Studies show that the use of artificial intelligence in academic research brings numerous benefits, especially for master's students. AI helps save time, improves the quality of academic writing, and facilitates the processing of large amounts of scientific information, making the research process more efficient and allowing students to focus more on the analytical aspects (Chan & Hu, 2023; Pypenko, 2024). Appropriate and reflective use of AI can foster the development of students' metacognitive and reflective skills, helping them to critically review, improve, and analyze their work, when technology is used as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for critical thinking (Castillo-Martínez, Margarita, Flores-Bueno, Gómez-Puente, & Vite-León, 2024).

Despite the many benefits, literature points to a number of challenges and risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence in academic research. One of the main challenges is the over-reliance on AI tools, which can reduce students' intellectual engagement and negatively impact the development of analytical skills and critical thinking. Another challenge is related to the reliability of information generated by AI, as these tools can produce inaccurate information, sources, biased content, jeopardizing the quality and validity of scientific research, academic integrity (Kasneji, et

al., 2023; Ocen, Elasu, Aarakit, & Olupot, 2025). This situation highlights the need to develop skills for critical evaluation and verification of AI-generated content, so that the technology is used as a supporting tool and not as an uncontrolled source of information (Mulaudzi & Hamilton, 2025).

Academic integrity is one of the most debated issues regarding the use of artificial intelligence in higher education. The use of AI-generated content without clear disclosure violates the principles of authorship, transparency, and academic honesty, creating uncertainty for students about the boundaries between technological assistance and violations of academic integrity (Lund, Lee, Mannuru, & Arutla, 2025). Studies highlight the need for institutional policies and ethical codes that regulate the use of AI in academic research (Nguyen, 2025). Ethical education, training in use, along with the development of digital literature and clear institutional guidelines on citing and reporting the use of AI, is considered essential to ensure a transparent, fair and responsible use of the technology (Medina-Gual & Parejo, 2025; Đerić, Frank, & Vuković, 2025).

The studies we have researched show that students have largely positive attitudes towards the use of artificial intelligence in academic research (Otermans, Roberts, & Baines, 2025). They value AI as a useful tool for organizing ideas, improving academic writing, managing time, and reducing stress associated with research tasks, calling for the creation of guidelines for the use of AI (Sousa & Cardoso, 2025). However, students express concerns about the long-term impact of AI on academic autonomy and the development of research skills, highlighting the risk that excessive use of technology could affect their independence and critical thinking skills. These suggest the need for a balanced approach, where AI is used as a supporting tool, while the active and critical role of the student remains essential in the academic research process (Klimova & Pikhart, 2025).

Research purpose

The purpose of this research is to obtain the experiences of students of the Faculty of Education regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the academic research process, focusing on the ways and stages where AI is used, such as in writing, analysis or working with scientific literature, as well as analyzing the benefits and challenges they encounter during its use, with a focus on academic integrity and ethical issues related to the use of AI.

Research questions

How do students of the Faculty of Education use artificial intelligence in the academic research process?

What benefits and challenges do students encounter when using AI in research?

How do students view academic integrity and ethical issues related to the use of AI?

Research methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach to capture the experiences of students at the Faculty of Education of the University of Prishtina and the Public University “Kadri Zeka” in Kosovo in using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academic research. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students, which provided flexibility to explore their experiences, attitudes regarding the use of AI in information retrieval, data processing and academic knowledge construction. The

qualitative methodology was chosen for its ability to provide rich and detailed data on complex phenomena, while thematic analysis was used to identify and interpret the main themes emerging from the interviews, providing a deep understanding of how students integrate AI into their academic process, the advantages and challenges they encounter when using it. (Muzari, Shava, & Shonhiwa, 2022; Usman, Al-Hendawi, & Bulut, 2025).

Sample

For this study, purposive sampling was used to select participants who were most likely to provide rich and relevant insights on the use of Artificial Intelligence in academic research, as they are master's students and have conducted various academic research (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). The sample consists of 20 students from the Faculties of Education of the University of Prishtina – Prishtina and the Public University “Kadri Zeka” – Gjilan. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants have direct knowledge of academic research and can contribute meaningfully to the goals of the study (Douglas, 2022).

Participants

This research involved 20 students from the Faculties of Education of the University of Prishtina (UP)- Prishtina and the Public University “Kadri Zeka” (UKZ)- Gjilan. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting participants who could provide rich, relevant and diverse opinions on the use of Artificial Intelligence in academic research. The selection of participants was based on the inclusion of students with direct experience and knowledge in academic research, ensuring that the data collected is useful and closely related to the purpose of the study. This approach helps in obtaining more detailed information and on the opinions, attitudes, experiences and challenges that students encounter when using AI in their academic research (Dahal, et al., 2024; Avdiu-Kryeziu & Kryeziu, 2024).

In Table 1, the details of the interviewed participants are presented.

Table 1 - Details of participants interviewed

| No. | Gender | University | Code |
|-----|--------|------------|------|
| 1. | M | UP | S1 |
| 2. | F | UKZ | S2 |
| 3. | F | UKZ | S3 |
| 4. | F | UKZ | S4 |
| 5. | F | UKZ | S5 |
| 6. | M | UKZ | S6 |
| 7. | F | UP | S7 |
| 8. | F | UP | S8 |
| 9. | F | UP | S9 |
| 10. | F | UP | S10 |
| 11. | M | UP | S11 |
| 12. | F | UKZ | S12 |
| 13. | F | UKZ | S13 |
| 14. | F | UKZ | S14 |
| 15. | F | UP | S15 |
| 16. | F | UKZ | S16 |
| 17. | F | UP | S17 |
| 18. | F | UKZ | S18 |

| | | | |
|---------|---|----|-----|
| 19. | M | UP | S19 |
| 20. | M | UP | S20 |
| Totally | | 20 | |

Source: Authors.

Data collection instruments

In this study, a semi-structured interview was used as a data collection instrument, which was conducted with 20 students from the Faculties of Education of the University of Prishtina and the Public University “Kadri Zeka” – Gjilan. The interview consisted of 10 open-ended questions, designed to elicit students' experiences and opinions regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence in academic research. The semi-structured format offered a balance between structure and flexibility, enabling all key topics to be addressed, while at the same time allowing for adaptation and follow-up of ideas that arose during the conversation. This methodological approach is consistent with the best practices of qualitative research, enabling the collection of data on the attitudes and experiences of participants. Semi-structured interviews are considered conversations with a purpose, allowing researchers to explore predetermined topics, as well as the insights that emerge during conversations with participants. The questions used in this research are presented in the appendix (Naz, Gulab, & Aslam, 2022; Karhulahti & Backe, 2023).

Validity and reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of this research, proven practices in the literature regarding the suitability of research instruments, methodology, questions, and data analysis were followed, so that the results are coherent and reliable in the context of artificial intelligence in academic research (Leung, 2015). Prior to the semi-structured interviews, participants provided informed consent and were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. The findings were discussed in relation to existing literature and comments were obtained from academic experts to strengthen the quality of interpretation. This approach helped to increase the reliability of the data and the research results (Aung, Razak, & Nazry, 2021).

Ethics

Approval for the conduct of this study was provided by the management of the respective faculties of education. The application was reviewed and approved by the competent authorities of the faculties, who confirmed that the research instruments, including the semi-structured interview questions, met the necessary ethical, legal and academic standards. All participants were fully informed about the purpose, scope and nature of the study, particularly regarding the topic of artificial intelligence and its use in academic research. Their participation was voluntary and confidentiality and anonymity of the data were guaranteed (Husband, 2020).

Data analysis

Data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed through thematic content analysis. Thematic analysis is a well-known method for identifying and interpreting patterns and themes within qualitative data. The analysis process involved coding the data, grouping them into categories, and developing major themes. To increase the reliability of the findings, coding was conducted independently by the researchers (Roberts, Dowell, & Nie, 2019; Belotto, 2018).

Procedures

The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with 20 students, who were interviewed individually in appropriate settings and at times that did not interfere with the academic process. Participants were encouraged to express themselves freely on the use of artificial intelligence in academic research. For analysis, the data were coded, with some codes being predefined according to the research questions and conceptual framework, while others emerged from the data. Specific codes included dimensions of academic work, ethical principles in the use of AI, and time references. The data were also classified according to research questions, examining experiences, advantages, challenges, integrity, and academic ethics (Dahal, 2025).

Research results

This section presents the findings from semi-structured interviews with students who comprised the study group. The content analysis was based on data collected from semi-structured interviews with 20 students involved in academic research at various educational institutions, the research was conducted in 2026. The findings reflect the attitudes, experiences and use of artificial intelligence by students in their academic research activities.

Experience using AI in academic research

Students use AI to summarize literature, organize information, generate ideas, and analyze simple data, increasing the efficiency and clarity of papers. However, some experiences are limited and the information provided by AI is not always accurate, so excessive use can reduce critical thinking and negatively impact academic integrity.

Students' experiences with the use of artificial intelligence (AI)

“Students use it to understand subjects more easily, for summaries and simple explanations” (S1);

“In recent years, I have used AI in seminar papers, and now in the preparation of project proposals I see that the use of AI has become a habit” (S2);

“As a student, I have used AI in academic research to improve the efficiency and accuracy of my work” (S3);

“I do not have AI as an application, but I see it through Google. I rarely use it for translations” (S5);

“...for example, I have used AI-based tools to analyze academic literature, organize information, and create summaries of numerous materials. AI has also helped me find relevant sources faster and identify connections between concepts that could sometimes go unnoticed” (S6, S7, S9);

“...I asked something and it did not answer me correctly regarding different works...” (S10);

“I use it often and I am very satisfied with the help it provides offers me!” (S11);

“Our work has been made much easier, but I believe it is negatively affecting me because I am not giving critical opinions or reading too much for an assignment because it is only providing us with one question and giving us all the information” (S13, S14);

“My experience in using AI is limited” (S16);

“In any writing or in verifying any information” (S18);

“My experiences show that AI can be a powerful tool for students, but it is important that it is used as an aid and not to replace critical analysis and independent academic thinking” (S19);

“I have used ChatGPT to help me write summaries of articles and to get ideas for essay topics” (S20).

The use of artificial intelligence in academic research by students

“I often use it to find similar literature and articles on my topic” (S2);

“I have used artificial intelligence in some aspects of academic research. AI has helped me in searching academic literature, identifying relevant articles and sources faster than searching manually” (S3, S4);

“I have used AI-based tools for summarizing and analyzing long texts, which has made it easier for me to organize information” (S6);

“I have used it to create initial drafts of reports or to structure ideas, while always verifying and analyzing the results myself, to maintain accuracy and critical thinking” (S8, S9);

“...complex scientific terms are explained in a simpler way” (S11);

“To derive research questions, to define the research purpose, to derive comparative results” (S12);

“Occasionally to improve a text, or for some quick information” (S14);

“I have used AI to generate questions essay guidelines, to analyze simple quantitative data, and to create outlines or summaries of academic articles” (S15, S16);

“I have occasionally used AI to improve the structure of writing and to check language” (S18, S19).

Stages of using AI in academic research

“Literature collection, AI has helped me find relevant articles and sources faster and filter information by topic of study” (S1, S3);

“At every stage, AI has served as an aid to increase efficiency, but I have always checked the results myself to ensure accuracy and academic quality” (S5, S7);

“AI is used for generating research ideas, formulating research questions and structuring the paper” (S8);

“Data analysis, for simple statistics or for graphic visualizations” (S10);

“I used AI in literature collection and data combination” (S12);

“Writing and organizing texts, AI has been useful in creating literature summaries and structuring the ideas of the initial chapters, allowing me to focus on critical thinking and interpretation” (S14, S15, S17);

“In the methodology stage, I find it helps excessive” (S18);

“Data analytics, AI to process and analyze statistical data or to extract patterns from collected information, to draw conclusions and recommendations” (S19, S20).

The use of AI and the impact on the quality of academic papers

“Yes, this is a very important topic to reflect on the effect of AI on academic research. For a clear and balanced answer you could say something like this: where can I positively and negatively influence it” (S1, S2);

“AI helps in collecting and organizing information, summarizing literature and analyzing data, which can increase the accuracy and efficiency of work” (S4, S6);

“The quality of papers improves more when AI is used as an auxiliary tool and not as a complete replacement for academic thinking” (S7);

“It helps in avoiding linguistic errors and improves academic style” (S9);

“Yes, because sometimes the references it gives do not match and are not correct, this makes it affect the quality if we do not further investigate the flow of references” (S10, S12);

“I believe that it affects the quality because AI is a software program that gives us data from software often not related to topic” (S14);

“The use of AI can positively impact the quality of academic papers, but this depends on how it is used” (S15,16);

“AI cannot replace critical thinking and personal analysis, if used carelessly, there may be a risk of excessive reliance on sources or writing that does not reflect personal analysis” (S18, S19);

“AI can improve the organization and clarity of academic papers, but excessive use can reduce critical thinking, as it does not replace human analysis and interpretation and can damage academic integrity” (S20).

Benefits and challenges of using AI

Students say AI offers numerous benefits in academic research, such as saving time, organizing and summarizing literature, helping to understand complex concepts, and structuring ideas, allowing for greater focus on critical analysis. However, challenges include inaccurate or unverified information, lack of understanding of context, and the risk of dependency or violation of academic integrity. AI has a positive impact on time management, as long as it is used as an aid and not as a replacement for critical work.

Benefits you have encountered from using AI

“Time saving, fast, accurate information and the student himself when doing research on the master's topic” (S1);

“In general, AI has increased efficiency and improved the quality of my work, making the research more structured and easier to manage” (S3, S4);

“Facilitating the understanding of complex literature, explaining complicated concepts in a simpler and more understandable way” (S6);

“It makes my work much easier, I find sources very quickly without having to do a lot of research” (S8);

“More data and help in sorting documents” (S10);

“Organizing information, AI has helped me summarize and structure the collected information more clearly” (S11);

“Saving time in summarizing literature” (S12, S13);

“It helps me organize my writing and understand the information better” (S15);

“Data analysis, AI has facilitated data processing and extracting models or trends from complex information” (S17);

“AI can provide ideas for structuring chapters or summarizing literature, allowing me to focus on critical thinking and interpretation” (S18, S19).

Challenges when using AI

“Challenges can be managed with careful use and control, combining AI with critical thinking and academic analysis by students themselves” (S2);

“Information sources are unverified, unwillingness to make one's work easier” (S3);

“I have not encountered any challenges that I can mention” (S4);

“There is a risk of being used in a way that violates academic integrity, such as plagiarism of ideas” (S6, S7);

“AI can help in processing data and literature, but it does not always understand the deep academic context or the argumentation that the research requires” (S8);

“AI requires precision in the request, and does not always give what we ask for, I asked it about the author of the works and it did not show it correctly. Since that day I do not trust it” (S10, S12);

“Difficulty in understanding the deep meaning of the analysis, since AI can give general answers and not critical interpretation” (S13);

“Sometimes AI offers suggestions or sources that are not completely accurate or verified, so I always have to check the information myself” (S15);

“Doesn’t always provide the right data, can confuse the topic” (S17);

“You can become dependent on AI and not learn on your own” (S19);

“Using generated texts without personal editing can violate academic integrity” (S20).

The impact of AI on organization and time management in academic research

“AI has a positive impact on time management, making the research process more structured, efficient and productive, as long as it is used as an aid and not as a replacement for academic work” (S1, S2, S4);

“Not much, I trust printed literature more” (S5);

“I can prepare for essays or projects faster because AI helps me organize ideas” (S7);

“It saves me a lot of time because I don’t have to read every article from scratch” (S9);

“I can sort documents faster and collect data faster” (S10);

“Maybe I can find the literature I need faster without wasting much time” (S12);

“AI tools for summarizing and organizing information allow me to structure ideas and materials in a more organized way, which saves me a lot of time when writing and analyzing papers” (S14, S16);

“...leaving me more time for personal analysis and reflection” (S18);

“AI saves me time in analyzing research data, always maintaining academic integrity and ethics” (S20).

Academic integrity and ethical issues

Students see AI as a tool that can improve research, but uncontrolled use increases the risk of plagiarism and reduces academic and ethical integrity. Ethical use requires transparency, accurate citation of sources, and preservation of personal analysis. The university can support students through mentoring, training, citation guidelines, and plagiarism-checking tools, ensuring that AI is used responsibly without compromising academic integrity.

The impact of AI on academic integrity during research

“AI can affect academic integrity in various ways” (S1);

“Careless use of AI can increase the risk of plagiarism or create excessive reliance on AI, reducing academic integrity and professional ethics” (S2, S4);

“AI should be used as an aid and not as a complete replacement for academic processing and interpretation, and any information used should be correctly referenced according to academic standards” (S6, S8);

“AI can support academic integrity or jeopardize it. The key is ethical, transparent and critical use by the researcher” (S9, S10);

“AI can be a risk to academic integrity if it is used to create entire texts without personal contribution. However, if it is used as an aid, integrity is maintained and the work remains authentic” (S12, S13, S15);

“But if you copy all the ideas of AI without changing anything, then it is a problem to maintain academic integrity” (S17);

“I think it does. The use of AI should be limited” (S18);

“...it is very important that institutions create regulations for the use of AI to preserve academic integrity”, even though the University where I study has drafted guidelines for the use of AI (S19).

Ethical issues of using AI in academic research

“Ethics in the use of AI is as important as its benefits” (S1);

“AI is becoming increasingly important. It is losing professional ethics. I think it should be limited by rules from institutions” (S3, S4);

“It is important that the use of AI is transparent and declared when used in research. Students should be aware of their responsibilities and the limits of AI, not relying exclusively on it” (S6, S7);

“AI is good to use as long as the work or research does not lose its meaning” (S8);

“Only through ethical, transparent and critical use, AI can contribute positively to research and science” (S10, S11);

“From an ethical point of view, the use of AI should be done very carefully, adhering to ethical rules for research” (S13, S15);

“...it is important to respect academic standards, to refer to the sources used and to use AI only as an aid, not as a substitute for analysis and human creativity” (S16, S17);

“Just as when you are in an archive or library we must adapt to ethical rules, even in the scientific research we do every week we must adhere to ethical rules” (S19, S20).

University support for maintaining academic integrity and ethical issues from the use of AI

“Plagiarism control tools that also take into account the use of AI” (S2);

“Universities have already created regulations for the use of AI” (S3);

“This is an issue that requires discussion because with the extensive use of AI, the work of the author and the human are lost. We risk moving towards automation...” (S4, S5);

“Support from mentors to understand how AI can be used as an auxiliary tool without compromising integrity” (S6, S7);

“Clear instructions about the rules for citing and using AI” (S9);

“Provide plagiarism control tools that also take into account AI, by offering us a code of ethics and by offering us different rules” (S11, S12);

“Create brochures, courses or trainings on the ethical use of AI” (S14);

“...I think by enriching the libraries with new academic books so that the student is not given the opportunity to receive passive, dry things without feeling and not secure” (S16, S17);

“Establish clear policies for the use of AI in research and academic writing, including issues of citation and plagiarism” (S18);

“The university could provide mentors and advisors for guidance on the ethical use of AI, as well as training, workshops for students and staff” (S20).

Discussions

The research shows that students use artificial intelligence (AI) primarily for literature review, information organization, data analysis, and research idea generation. This confirms the findings of the emerging literature, according to which AI can increase the efficiency and structure of academic papers when used as an aid to, rather than a substitute for, critical thinking (Vieriu & Petrea, 2023). Our students use AI for obvious benefits, including saving time, clarifying complex concepts, and improving research organization; studies highlight AI's potential to support the research process and maintain academic integrity (Sanmugam, Khlaif, Yahaya, & Abdullah, 2025).

The importance of ethical and mentored use of AI, students see AI as an auxiliary tool that can improve research, but uncontrolled use increases the risk of violations of academic integrity. This result is supported by current literature that emphasizes the need for transparency, accurate referencing of sources, and preservation of personal analysis to ensure ethics in the use of AI (Tang, et al., 2024).

The use of AI brings challenges, with students pointing to inaccurate or unverified information, a lack of context, and the risk of overreliance on AI, which can reduce critical thinking and threaten academic and ethical integrity. In research in the literature that warns that careless use of AI can lead to plagiarism, loss of intellectual autonomy, and ethical challenges (Zawacki-Richter, Marín, Bond, & Gouverneur, 2019; Nguyen, Ngo, Hong, Dang, & Nguyen, 2023).

Another important aspect is the role of educational institutions, students suggested that support through mentors, clear citation guidelines, training on plagiarism control programs help the responsible use of AI, suggesting institutional policies and regulations that are necessary to minimize the risks and maximize the benefits of AI in academic research (Wong, Tan, Ooi, & Dwivedi, 2024).

Overall, the research highlights a delicate balance: AI has great potential to improve the quality and efficiency of academic work, but this potential is only realized when used fairly, ethically, and within institutional rules. Students should be supported by the university to learn best practices for using AI, while maintaining academic integrity and promoting ethics in academic research.

Conclusions

This research aimed to obtain the experiences of students of the Faculty of Education regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the academic research process, focusing on the

ways and stages where AI is used, such as in writing, analysis or working with scientific literature, as well as analyzing the benefits and challenges they encounter during its use, with a focus on academic integrity and ethical issues related to the use of AI. The results show that students use AI for literature review, information organization, idea generation and data analysis, increasing the efficiency and clarity of papers, but there is also a risk of dependence on AI and reducing critical thinking, which can negatively affect academic integrity.

The benefits of using AI are numerous. Students reported that AI helps save time, organize and structure literature, improve writing style, and clarify complex concepts. This allows students to focus more on critical analysis and data interpretation, improving the quality of academic papers and the efficiency of the research process. Furthermore, these technologies can be used for problem solving and collaborative development (Mohamed, Shaaban, Bakry, Guillén-Gámez, & Strzelecki, 2024).

Ethically, the use of AI should be done with transparency and respect for academic standards. Academic integrity is at risk when students rely on AI to create papers without personal input, take ideas or do not properly cite sources. Results show that critical, ethical and mentored use of AI helps maintain academic integrity and reinforces responsible research practice. Studies show, emphasizing that AI can improve academic work only when used as an auxiliary tool and within the ethical rules of institutions (Triyanto & Handayani, 2025; Michalak, 2023).

Institutional support is key to minimizing risks and maximizing benefits. AI usage policies, citation guidelines, and specific training help students use AI responsibly and effectively, while maintaining the quality and integrity of academic work. This balanced approach contributes to the development of a sustainable and ethical practice of AI use in higher education (Public University "Kadri Zeka", 2025).

Limitations of the study

This research has several limitations that should be considered. First, the sample consisted of only 20 students from the Faculty of Education from two universities in Kosovo, which may limit the generalizability of the results to students in other fields or in other countries. Second, the research was based on semi-structured interviews, which may influence sensitivity to the use of AI and subjective perceptions of its benefits, challenges, and ethics. Furthermore, the use of AI is changing rapidly due to technological advances, so the findings may only reflect the current situation in 2026 and may not reflect future changes in the way AI is used in academic research.

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Appendix

Semi-structured interview

This is a semi-structured interview, with pre-determined main questions, but you will be able to speak freely about your experiences. The purpose of this research is to obtain the experiences of students of the Faculty of Education regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI)

in the academic research process, focusing on the ways and stages where AI is used, such as in writing, analysis or working with scientific literature, as well as analyzing the benefits and challenges they encounter during its use, with a focus on academic integrity and ethical issues related to the use of AI. Participation is voluntary, responses are confidential and will not affect your assessment. Data during the publication of the research are completely anonymous.

1. Tell me about your experiences with using artificial intelligence (AI)?
2. How do you use or have you used artificial intelligence in your academic research?
3. In which stages of research do you use AI (e.g., writing, literature collection, data analysis, writing texts)?
4. Does the use of AI affect the quality of academic papers?
5. What are the main benefits you have encountered from using AI?
6. Tell me about the challenges you have encountered while using AI?
7. How much does the use of AI affect the way you organize and manage your time in research?
8. How does AI affect academic integrity during research?
9. Regarding ethical issues with AI, how do you see this aspect?
10. How can the university provide you with support to maintain academic integrity and ethical issues?

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