

Generation Z's Views on the Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Accomplishing Academic Outputs

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Abstract

The advent of technology has served as the fount of the emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, now often used in the field of academe benefiting students with the ease to accomplish academic tasks. While several people are confused about the different risks and benefits of using AI tools, this study highlights how students who are categorized as Generation Z view the ethical use of AI tools in accomplishing their academic outputs. A qualitative research design is used with the participation of the ten (10) AI-experienced students from WVSU - Integrated Laboratory School via purposive sampling. Despite AI's ambivalence, results revealed that they view AI tools as a helpful tool for academic success which has a corresponding responsibility, discipline and orientation. This opens up the necessity for the institutions to provide and strengthen clear ethical guidelines, policies and digital literacy programs to preserve academic integrity as AI tools advance nowadays.

Keywords: Generation Z; artificial intelligence; ai ethics; learning management; educational technology

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Introduction

Education has been rapidly shaped by AI, which has improved productivity and learning for Generation Z (Gen Z) students. However, it raises concerns regarding ethical use, which encompasses academic integrity, responsible use, and abuses brought by the rampant use of AI tools. Although

Gen Z acknowledges the perks of accomplishing an academic output, it is still essential to consider using AI tools, assuring responsible use, which has increased interest in AI ethics in education (Al-Mansouri, 2024). Additionally, while Gen Z students see the value of AI, they also emphasized the necessity of moral standards to guard against abuses (Kyambogo University, Kampala, Uganda. et al., 2020). With this, Filipino Gen Z students prefer to have ethical standards when incorporating AI in academic settings (Jabar et al., 2025).

While there is an increasing number of AI users, views on AI ethics, particularly with regard to matters like academic integrity, honesty, and disinformation, have frequently been ignored in research on the use of AI in education. Although a lot of research highlights how AI might increase productivity, less is known about how students choose to use it responsibly (Nwadiokwu, 2025; Miranda et al., 2024) due to a lack of proper education on AI usage and academic pressure, which makes them ethically uncertain (Chan & Hu, 2023). Students from Cebu's rural colleges report using AI almost universally, but they also point out that they haven't been exposed to many ethical discussions, which suggests that there is a local knowledge gap about responsible adoption (Villarino, 2025). Similarly, senior high school students from De La Salle University, there is the development of worries about an overdependence on ChatGPT, threats to uniqueness and fairness, and an unmistakable call for institutionally driven ethical frameworks (Hendy, 2024). Concerns regarding originality and possible academic misconduct are also raised by AI-generated content; research warns of plagiarism and the decline of critical thinking in students who rely too much on automated outputs (Akbar, 2025). While some Gen Z students see AI as a useful academic tool, others are concerned that it encourages reliance and impairs the ability to think independently (Famaye et al., 2023). According to cross-national research, students expressed worries around misinformation, authorship confusion, and losing personal control over their education while also acknowledging the convenience of using generative AI (Chan & Hu, 2023; Mohideen, 2024). Further, a large UAE survey found that peer influence and academic stress were significant factors in AI adoption, even as students grappled with moral uncertainty and unclear institutional guidance (Swidan et al., 2025). The use of generative AI in the tertiary level of education revealed more general questions regarding human values, equality, and ethics, especially about how students handle their obligations while using these tools (Rudolph et al., 2024). Despite these reservations, most of the research still concentrates on AI's technical aspects, which leaves a knowledge gap on how Gen Z students see and use AI in the classroom in an ethical manner.

This study addresses the knowledge gap in Generation Z's ethical awareness and decision-making by examining their perspectives on the moral application of AI technologies to academic outputs. Although the usage of AI in educational contexts is rising, there is minimal research about how Generation Z students, especially in the Philippines, understand and implement ethical limits in AI utilization. It explores how Gen Z students define and apply ethical concepts while utilizing AI for academic work, with a foundation in Aristotle's Virtue Ethics and Khant's Deontological Ethics. It specifically examines how they determine whether AI technologies are suitable for academic work and what influences their ethical stance. By filling this knowledge gap, the project aims to shed light on how AI should be used responsibly in scholarly settings and provide additional absolute standards for the developmental use of AI in academic settings.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Based on constructivism, an educational philosophy in which personal experience builds knowledge (Munawwaroh & Adeoye, 2024), this study aligns with the learning experience achieved through the assistance of AI devices. Learning is a combination of knowledge and experience (Xu, 2024), which emphasizes the need to adapt to technological advancements, particularly the use of AI devices. As digital natives, Generation Z

students are significantly influenced by their ongoing exposure to AI devices and their existing knowledge (Imran et al., 2024). This qualitative approach emphasizes the need for data collection, particularly on the informants' AI experiences (Kong et al., 2024). This approach is designed to build new knowledge through experiences that align with students' thoughts, emotions, and ethical views (Chetry, 2024), providing a clearer understanding of how they navigate the use of AI in academic contexts (Lishmah Dominic et al., 2024).

Informants

Participants were Generation Z students, born between 1997 and 2012 (Torres & Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2024). Specifically, this study focused on ten Grade 9 students from West Visayas State University – Integrated Laboratory School (Table 1). Using purposive sampling, participants were selected based on three criteria: (1) they were ranked in the top 10 academically, (2) they had at least one year of experience using AI tools such as Quillbot or ChatGPT for academic output, and (3) they were able to articulate informed opinions about the ethical use of AI (Antal-Berbecaru et al., 2024). Involving high-achieving students with relevant AI experience ensured the collection of thoughtful and reasoned perspectives. To reduce the risk of recall bias and increase reliability, participants were encouraged to reflect on recent or ongoing academic experiences (Fajar Husain A et al., 2024).

Table 1. Profile of Informants

Informant/s	Birth Year	Years of Experience	AI Tools used	Academic Output
Anna	2010	3 Years	ChatGPT	Essay
Elsa	2010	Over 1 year	ChatGPT	Math Problem Solving
Hans	2010	2 Years	ChatGPT, Grammarly, Quillbot	Math Problem Solving
Kristoff	2010	3 years	ChatGPT, Quillbot	Essay
Olaf	2010	1 year	Quillbot	Research
Sven	2009	1 year	ChatGPT	Situation Analysis
Duke	2009	1 year	ChatGPT, Quillbot	Essay
Marshmallow	2010	1 year	ChatGPT, Quillbot	Quizzes
Pabbie	2010	1 year	ChatGPT	Situation Analysis
Yelena	2010	6 months – 1 year	ChatGPT	Essay

Data Gathering Instrument

For data collection, an interview guide questionnaire was used as the primary instrument. This tool, consisting of structured and semi-structured questions, was designed to gather detailed information from interview respondents (Eppich et al., 2019). This tool facilitated in-depth discussions about Generation Z's views on the ethical use of AI tools to achieve academic outcomes. The use of Gibbs' Reflective Cycle Model (Tusting, 2022), enabled the researchers to systematize the structure of the research guide questionnaire, which consists of six stages: (1) Description, (2) Feelings, (3) Evaluation, (4) Analysis, (5) Conclusion, and (6) Action Plan, ensuring that the collected data is rich, organized, and based on personal insights (Gonsalves, 2025a). In this context, the term

"reflection" aligns with "view," as both refer to an individual's opinion or perspective. Semantic studies support contextual exchange when assessing personal viewpoints (Yilla, 2024).

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process began after obtaining official approval from the Director of the Integrated Laboratory School (ILS) and written consent from the participants. Each respondent was given a letter containing information about the purpose of the study, their role, the option to continue or withdraw during the study, and potential risks (Zou et al., 2020). Interviews were conducted online via Google Meet. Two researchers facilitated each session: one asked questions and managed the recording, while the other provided follow-up instructions. A third researcher discreetly observed and recorded the participants' responses. With the participants' consent, audio recordings were used to ensure accuracy and to capture tone, pauses, and expressions for further analysis (Shetty et al., 2022). Interviews were scheduled at a time that was most convenient for the informants, with each interview lasting 25-30 minutes.

Data Analysis Procedure

This study employed thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which allow researchers to carefully analyze qualitative data for accurate interpretation. To understand how participants perceived AI in academia, interview transcripts were reviewed and reread to accurately classify potential emerging themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Recurring concepts such as speed, influence, fairness, guilt, and fairness revealed initial codes that yielded four main themes: Motivations for Using AI, Ethical Views, Learning Management, and Fairness in Action. These themes were reviewed and refined to ensure the coherence and accuracy of participants' perspectives (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). A synthesis of these themes was then conducted to explore the perspectives of Generation Z learners as they ethically integrate AI into their learning from a constructivist perspective.

Results

Motivation, ethical views, learning management, and fairness emerged as the four main themes as the students view the ethical use of AI tools as they accomplish their academic outputs which highlights their experiences, moral reflections and motivations.

Motivation in Using AI

Gen Z students often use AI tools to save time and make the tasks easier. While others are using these tools for convenience, many were driven out of curiosity and peer pressure. Many of which were against the use of Artificial Intelligence tools but turned their way back to embracing AI tools for better aid to their academic outputs. Specifically, ChatGPT and Quillbot were the most common tools they use to comfort them from time pressure and make the tasks easier when they feel exhausted from the different academic tasks

Efficiency and Convenience

Many participants pointed out the convenience and time-saving advantages of AI as the main reason for its use in academic outputs. They found AI to be very helpful while under academic pressure, such as short deadlines and mental blocks. Elsa shared, "It helps me create ideas when I'm mentally blocked," Similarly, Marshmallow explained, "I used AI because I need to work efficiently and work smarter considering that my exam was due tomorrow," showing how AI provides academic relief under pressure. It allowed them to generate ideas quickly and complete tasks with less effort,

emphasizing not only efficiency and convenience but also the ease and speed of accomplishing academic work. Anna noted, "It's efficient. It's really fast, no need to research." Likewise, Olaf reflected, "Mas madasig siya kag makasave ka oras kung gapangita ka sang idea" ["It's faster and can save you time when you're looking for ideas."], reinforcing the time-saving aspect of AI in idea generation. Artificial intelligence tools, particularly Quillbot and ChatGPT, are speeding up Gen Z students' workloads.

Peer Pressure and Normalization

Their decisions to use AI were not solely based on personal views. Many of them felt pressured due to their fellow students who already use AI tools. Olaf admitted, "Gin-validate ko self ko kay tanan man nagagamit AI" ["I validate myself because everyone else is also using AI."], suggests that peer use reduces hesitation and fosters acceptance. Yelena commented, "Almost all of us are using AI man and there's nothing wrong with it as long as you don't copy everything.", implying that AI use is socially acceptable if not misused. The more they saw their classmates rely on it, the more they felt reassured in doing the same which made artificial intelligence tools become normalized among the class.

Ethical Views

The use of AI tools should be done carefully and honestly. Many people are afraid of being honest when they turn to integrate AI in their academic outputs. Gen Z students emphasized that the presence of AI tools these days is not to replace human thought but only to work with it. Artificial intelligence tools also make some of them feel guilty when they feel that the output is no longer theirs, doubting the authenticity and creativity of the output. These emotions demonstrate that, despite the use of technologies like artificial intelligence tools, students still worry about acting morally.

Honesty and Integrity

For students, upholding honesty and responsibility is an important aspect in the field of the academy. They believe that AI should only serve as a guide, whereas people who use AI for their academic output should declare it before their teachers or classmates for transparency and to preserve academic integrity. Elsa stressed, "Kinahanglan gid ya honesty kung nagamit ka sang AI", emphasizing the moral obligation to disclose AI use. ["You really need to be honest when you use AI."]. Anna stated, "It shows lack of responsibility if you don't admit you used AI," identifying concealment of AI use as an ethical lapse. Kristoff declared, "Plagiarism is a big issue because ideas are not fully your own," emphasizing the gap between assistance and academic dishonesty. Participants highlighted the importance of the responsible use of AI tools especially when dealing with academic outputs.

Guilt and Moral Conflict

Emotional responses were also acknowledged by the participants as they recognized guilt and doubt, especially when the use of AI made them question their capacity. Pabbie shared, "Sang pag first use ko gid I feel a little guilty bala kay daw feeling ko indi ni siya ang akon honest work" ["The first time I used it, I felt a little guilty because I felt like it wasn't truly my honest work."], describing emotional discomfort from relying on AI. Sven expressed, "Daw ka guilty bala kay daw indi siya imo nga obra" ["It felt guilty because it wasn't my own work."]. Likewise, Hans reflected, "I felt like my originality was stripped away," revealing how AI can undermine feelings of ownership and leave students feeling disconnected from their outputs.

Learning Management

Generation Z students aim to integrate AI tools sensibly and productively. They make sure their own ideas come first, despite their occasional shame. AI is not used to complete all of their labor; Rather, it is used to review, enhance, or clarify their work. Although they are aware that excessive use of AI might lead to laziness and impair cognitive abilities, many students claim that it improves their learning and helps them understand challenging subjects. They impose boundaries for this reason. They want to continue studying independently, maintain their motivation, and ensure that, even with AI's assistance, they continue to advance their skills and knowledge.

Successful Integration and Strategic Use

Despite the concerns of feeling guilty and moral conflicts, Gen Z students made efforts to maintain a balance between their ideas and AI support. Marshmallow explained, "Most of the work was done by me, or about 70% and the AI did about 30%." Pabbie explained, "95% was done by me and 5% was done by AI." Duke noted, "Only use AI to review or improve... then just verify with AI." They described how they still maintained control of their work, using AI only to support or refine what they had already done, often using it for verification rather than creation. This indicates that rather than depending entirely on artificial intelligence, these students made intentional choices to integrate AI tools in a way that still prioritized their own effort and authority

Skill Development and Learning Impact

AI was also recognized for its role in improving understanding. It helped explain difficult topics and provided clarity during the learning process. Still, many participants were reminded that relying too heavily on AI could lead to laziness and weaken critical thinking. Hans stated, "It helps me understand difficult concepts." Pabbie added, "It improved my learning since I used AI to explain the topics further," showing how AI can support deeper comprehension. Duke advised, "Overreliance makes you lazy and affects your motivation." Similarly, Sven commented, "Kung pirmi ka lang rely, indi na mag tupa imo critical thinking" ["If you always rely on it, your critical thinking won't develop or work."], warning against the erosion of analytical skills. Gen Z students are aware of the possible threats and consequences if AI tools are not used properly which according to their critical thinking skills are affected. For them, AI tools are just assistants to understand topics and to give more in-depth explanations.

To Limited Dependence and Boundaries

To prevent this, participants set limits and aim to lessen their dependence. They believed that effort was still necessary and that AI should not take away their initiative. Kristoff said, "Indi ko gusto mag salig gid ya kay mawad-an ko gana mag obra" ["I don't want to rely on it because I might lose the motivation to work."], showing a desire to maintain internal motivation. Elsa declared, "I only use it for ideas and still do it myself," emphasizing the importance of personal effort. Anna concluded, "I don't want to depend on AI because it weakens my skills," reflecting a conscious effort to preserve learning. They described adopting strategies such as using AI only after drafting their own ideas or restricting its use to specific parts of their assignments. By doing so, they hope to preserve their sense of accomplishment and maintain the integrity of their learning process.

Fairness in Actions

Fairness is important to Generation Z students when it comes to AI in the classroom. Gen Z students often consider it unfair when they receive the same grade or score as someone who uses AI.

They feel sorry for those who put forth their best effort because of this. Many people think AI should be used responsibly and not excessively. They advocate teaching students to appropriately use AI tools. According to them, ethical usage of AI is treating people with integrity, decency, and consideration.

Fairness and Inequality

Fairness was a common concern among participants. They saw that some students could benefit from employing AI, particularly when others were attempting to do their work independently. At some point, many felt disappointed and a sense of injustice, raising questions about prejudice and equal appreciation of effort. Kristoff stated, "It's unfair to those who don't have AI," showing empathy for classmates without access. Sven said, "Other students poured effort while some just used AI," contrasting hard work with shortcut reliance. Yelena commented, "Kaluluoy gid lang ya ang nagahatag sang effort with their human thoughts and human ideas and then ang ila classmate mahatag lang sang made by AI and get the same grade", ["I feel sorry for those who gave effort using their own human thoughts and ideas, while their classmates just submitted AI-generated work and got the same grade"] perceived injustice. Hans commented, "Daw indi fair sa iban nga naga-obra gid ya sang maayo" ["Just limit the usage because you might get used to it."], advocating for self-regulation.

Future Intentions and Recommendations

Students recommend that educational institutions implement a program that emphasizes the responsible use of AI, particularly when it comes to completing school work. Sven suggested, "Limit lang ang paggamit kay basi masanay ka" ["Just limit the usage because you might get used to it."], advocating for self-regulation. Yelena urged, "Please limit your usage of AI because there are some students who always give their best efforts on that work while you're being unfair," calling attention to the need for discipline. Elsa proposed, "There should be programs to teach students how to use AI properly," emphasizing the role of education in promoting responsible use. Olaf concluded, "Use AI just to help, not to cheat," highlighting AI as an aid, not a substitute. Results revealed that AI tools are both beneficial and crucial as students integrate these tools when accomplishing academic outputs. As they treasure its effect on the speedy aid and convenience AI provides, they also emphasize the risk or potential abuse affecting one's honesty, fairness and responsibility. Their reflections show a clear effort to use AI with intention, balancing its benefits while staying true to genuine learning and ethical values.

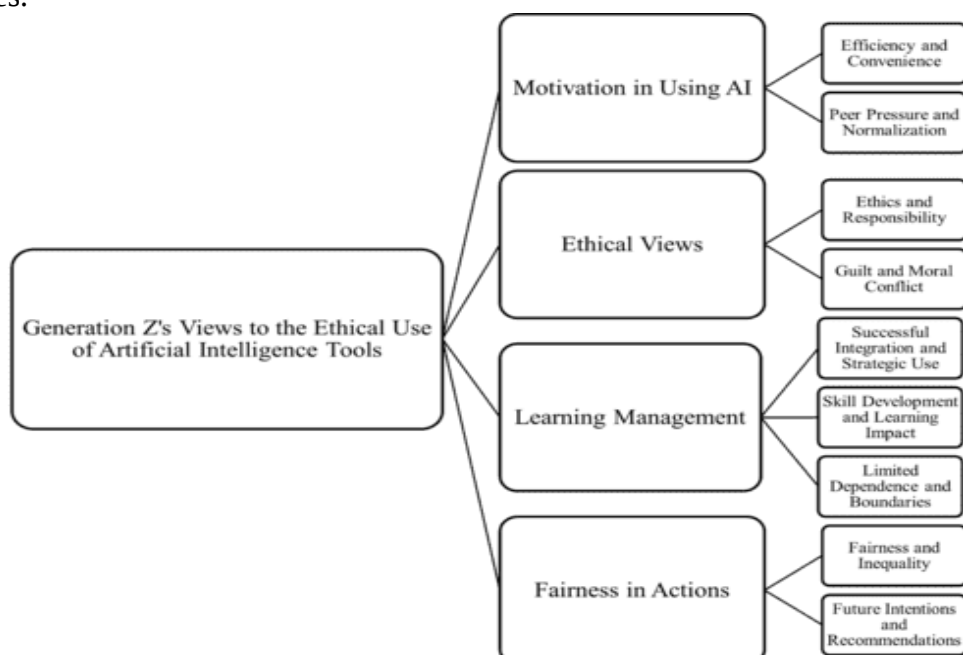


Figure 1. Demonstration of Meaningful Categories of the Study

Note: This diagram illustrates the themes and key concepts on how Generation Z views the ethical use of AI tools in accomplishing academic outputs. Figure by (Ros & Samuel, 2024).

Discussion

Four (4) main themes emerged of how they view their ethical use in academic outputs which includes: (1) motivation, (2) ethical views, (3) learning management, and (4) fairness in actions. This shows that they are knowledgeable enough regarding the risks and benefits of AI use particularly when accomplishing academic outputs. They also consider ethical practices in using AI tools and view them as an important aspect in terms of fairness, integrity, and equality. Several research may have addressed similar topics, but this study focuses specifically on how the Generation Z students view ethical AI use and its implications for their academic life. In this study, efficiency and convenience serve as the pioneer motivations for Gen Z students in using AI tools, which are useful in reducing stress and meeting academic demands ahead of time. This is in relation to (Pratiwi et al., 2025), where students benefit from the efficient use of accomplishing schoolwork with the use of AI, providing ease to AI users as well as improving the quality of the output. However, AI-helped quality work may diminish the learning quality of the students and teacher expertise (Puche, 2024), considering AI's replication of the emotional and cognitive functions of a human educator. Artificial intelligence tools are viewed by the informants as being beneficial, especially for students who are mentally blocked from accomplishing their academic outputs quickly. This supports the study of (Chan & Lee, 2023) that what keeps the students motivated to use AI tools is the efficiency, where they can rely on these tools to lessen academic pressure. While teachers are concerned about the risk of misuse of these tools as this generation gradually embraces modern technology (Zastudil et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Gen Z students value AI to save time and quality, especially during deadlines, and this aligns the necessity to complete a task fast and the need for faster work completion aligns with the findings that students value AI for its time-saving quality (Jabar et al., 2025b). Some students, particularly those who are scrupulous and enforce rigorous self-discipline, do not engage with AI technologies in order to prevent overdependence (Nur Fitria, 2023), conserving their critical thinking skills and upholding more integrity in the academe. Beyond efficiency and convenience, peer pressure also influences AI use. Several participants stated that seeing classmates use AI normalized its use and made them feel validated in doing the same. This normalization of AI use demonstrates peer validation, and group classroom behavior influences students' moral limits and study habits. One way to influence the use of AI tools was how social acceptance can normalize technology use among students, even when ethical concerns exist (Wang, 2024). In contrast, more recent studies indicate that many students consciously limit AI use based on personal values, ethics, or academic integrity. While students appreciate generative AI for tasks like summarizing or brainstorming, they remain cautious, especially about plagiarism and weakening learning quality, and actively verify outputs (Johri et al., 2024). This suggests that while peer and convenience-based motivations are strong, many students still exercise moral judgment and independent thinking in how they use AI tools. This supports the application of Virtue Ethics and Deontological Ethics, the study's theoretical views, which highlight responsibility and moral character over convenience and external validation.

Ethical views reflect Generation Z students' awareness of the moral obligations as they incorporate AI in their academic outputs. Many responses believe that using AI is not only a practical decision but also an ethical choice that must be handled with caution, honesty, and accountability. Students expressed their desire to maintain academic integrity by emphasizing that AI should be used as a guide rather than a replacement. They believed that it could be considered dishonest or irresponsible to hide AI use. These reflections align with Virtue Ethics and Deontological Ethics, the theoretical grounding of this study, which indicates an emphasis on acting based on moral duty rather

than for convenience or reward. This view is supported by findings that there is no guarantee that misconduct will be avoided during their use of AI tools, even when these tools are used only for assistance, (Hosseini & Resnik, 2025). Similarly, to encourage responsible digital behavior Gen Z students in the Philippines called for transparency and formal ethics education (Kaebnick et al., 2023). Students in this study also expressed emotional discomfort, including feelings of guilt, doubt, and unease, especially when using AI caused them to doubt the originality of their work. Their reactions reflect the moral concerns experienced by learners who strive to be honest while using new technologies. AI overuse can prevent students from thinking critically and weaken their confidence in their ideas (Črček & Patekar, 2023). Excessive reliance on AI may also reduce critical thinking as well as student autonomy (Nadim & Di Fuccio, 2025). Yet, despite their strong ethical stance, 74% of students in other contexts admitted they did not reveal AI use even when required (Gonsalves, 2025b), and over half confessed to using AI against school policy (Perkins, 2023), suggesting a gap between principle and practice. When peers skip revelation, students are more likely to do the same (Gonsalves, 2024), normalizing disobedience. In morally difficult tasks, AI users tend to decline the ethical use of AI and have become more excessively dependent weakening their cognitive skills over time and losing confidence especially in decision-making processes (Mircioiu, 2024), and while students often experience guilt, they continue to use AI selectively—deciding out of complex tasks that triggers stronger unease (Chan, 2024). Experimental evidence shows fully AI-generated work can reduce comprehension by 25%, yet does not significantly increase guilt when framed as support (Ju, 2023), highlighting how controlled AI use can mitigate moral discomfort. The students' goal to find a balance between innovation and ethical use is shown by their unwillingness and feelings of guilt, not by their rejection of AI.

Learning Management shows that Generation Z students view artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT and Quillbot as assistants in accomplishing academic outputs. Many of them describe AI use as an aid to understanding complex ideas and deepening students' knowledge instead of replacing their own thinking skills, ensuring that their own input remains focused on their outputs. This makes their implementation of AI tools both strategic and successful. In complex learning settings, students take the initiative to deepen their understanding and are conscious of what strategies they make which include the integration of AI tools (Panadero, 2017). This deliberate balance between AI-generated and human labor indicates learners' willingness to retain control over their education. Some students demonstrate their appreciation for AI's use without becoming overly dependent on it by employing AI to edit or validate their writings. However, in order to enable meaningful, responsible academic work, learners must acquire the skills necessary to utilize AI tools critically, ethically, and strategically. These abilities include assessing outputs, comprehending AI's limits, and maintaining human judgment (West University of Timisoara, Romania, financial auditor & Deliu, 2024). Additionally, Gen Z students often consider their boundaries and limit their AI dependence to uphold integrity, preserve originality, and conserve their critical thinking skills. Therefore, students' use of AI in tertiary education requires clearly defined boundaries, such as limiting its role to support tasks like brainstorming or grammar assistance. This approach aids the call of (Kopalle et al., 2024), to uphold academic integrity through clear guidelines avoiding the risk of plagiarism. Similarly, others view ethical AI use as requiring personal boundaries, such as avoiding full content dependence and ensuring that AI supports rather than replaces their own thinking, thereby upholding responsibility and academic honesty (American College of Higher Education, Sri Lanka & Hussain, 2024). They are concerned about becoming overly dependent on AI-generated content and stress the importance of setting personal limits to preserve originality, critical thinking, and meaningful learning engagement (Kovari, 2025). On the other hand, some researchers believe that AI should be more actively integrated into learning to enhance creativity, collaboration, and deeper engagement with content, as long as students are guided to use it responsibly (Ogalo & Mtenzi, 2024). In contrast to this cautious and self-directed use, a systematic literature review noted that despite AI's benefits in assisting academic tasks, it frequently presents risks of violating fundamental principles of academic integrity when boundaries are not clearly enforced (Balalle & Pannilage,

2025). Further complicating this issue is the institutional context, as 69.6% of teachers expressed concern over AI's ethical implications, particularly its alignment with academic dishonesty, and 65.2% reported a lack of support from different institutions and proper orientation in integrating AI into pedagogy (Budin-Ljøsne et al., 2024). Finally, skill development of Gen Z students as part of their learning management also has an important role in how they view the ethical use of AI tools. AI can help students learn new skills by creating learning paths that adapt to their progress, thereby enhancing critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Kalyani, 2023). Smart educational tools use interactive and flexible systems to accelerate student learning and skill-building. Skill development means that AI supports students in practicing problem-solving, deep thinking, and self-awareness through personalized guidance and feedback (Türker & Öztürk, 2024).

Fairness in Action highlights the concern of Generation Z students regarding fairness and equality in AI use. They expressed their deep concerns, which, according to them, the credits that some students who take advantage of using AI may not be favorable for others. Many of them feel that students who heavily rely on AI often receive the same grades as those who invest in their critical thinking skills, time, and effort, which they consider unfair. While many AI systems promote fairness, they can also perpetuate group-level inequalities when not carefully managed (Binns, 2020). Artificial Intelligence may seem fair by its personalized support to individuals, but it is still technically unfair to those who have more and easier access to technology (Binns, 2020). For Gen Z students, AI has more advantages for some, while undervaluing the hard work of those who have truly put in their own effort. Furthermore, unequal access to AI boosts this problem, which may be due to socioeconomic backgrounds and does not have the same opportunities to use AI tools, which leads to feelings of disadvantage and frustration (Yu, 2024). Additionally, many of the students believe that AI can erode the value of the original human thought and critical thinking if one becomes AI-dependent, this aligns to (Famaye et al., 2023), that AI use should not only focus on its benefits for technological advancement but also consider human limitations and regulation on AI use. As the normalization of AI tools in education is gradually embraced, guiding students in terms of responsible and ethical use to prevent misuse and to avoid unfairness and inequality is important (Zhang, 2024). These heightened fairness concerns reflect the collective desire of the students as they uphold integrity in the field of academe and for the protection of the essence of authentic work. Additionally, they recommend limiting the use of AI tools, upholding strict evaluation standards, promoting openness, and demonstrating a proactive approach to establish an equitable learning environment (Kizilcec & Lee, 2020). Therefore, addressing these concerns is essential for educators and institutions to ensure that AI integration supports inclusive and just learning environments. By establishing clear guidelines and fostering open discussions, schools can help create spaces where all students feel valued for their genuine contributions and are encouraged to develop both technological and critical thinking skills (Özer et al., 2024).

This study had several strengths. First, it provided insight into how Generation Z students view the ethical use of AI tools in accomplishing academic outputs, an area that remains underexplored in current literature. Second, it used a qualitative design that gathered rich, in-depth reflections from participants focusing on the use of AI tools ethically, their relationship to others who use AI, and how they were driven by AI emotionally. Third, it grounded the analysis in constructivist learning theory, which helped contextualize how students develop information and values through online involvement and peer influence. However, this study also had limitations. First, it focused on high-performing junior high school students in a particular university, which may limit the broadness of the findings. Second, the sample size was small, and the study used solely qualitative methods, which gave detailed insights but lacked quantitative data. Third, this study focuses on the ethical AI in making academic outputs, excluding other areas such as collaboration, assessment, or long-term learning impacts. Lastly, it only captured the views of the students based on the gathered. Teachers, parents, and administrators' views about the education system's AI use framework, teaching dynamics, and overarching school policies is also important.

These study findings suggest that future research should have a wider range of participants by including students from different grade levels, different types of school, and varying academic performance to produce a richer variety of experiences. Employing mixed-method or quantitative approaches to complement qualitative findings with results that resonate with larger participants is also recommended. Furthermore, investigating the role of AI in various frameworks of effective teaching and learning beyond just the result of academic experiences is suggested for future studies, such as collaboration, assessments, and personal learning management. Gathering views from multiple stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and administrators, will also provide a more comprehensive understanding of problems in ethical and institutional practices related to AI in education. Following these recommendations can improve the process of creating responsive policies, ethical guidelines, and digital literacy programs for today's AI-integrated learning environments.

Conclusion

The Generation Z students viewed artificial intelligence as a guiding but sensitive tool in their education, for efficiency, speed, and ability to ease academic pressure, but handled with carefulness and critical thinking. While enjoying the convenience of using AI, they are aware of its limits and the ethical boundaries of assistance and cheating, and are concerned with fairness, uniqueness, and personal responsibility. Their reflections show that they do not just use AI indiscriminately but set personal limitations and apply it strategically with respect while preserving authorship, work, and integrity in their work. Peer influence, institutional context, and internal values all influenced their decisions, revealing that Gen Z learners are not merely reacting to AI but are actively shaping how it should be used in education. Most significantly, their engagement is of a generation that is not only concerned with academic achievement but also with accountability, openness, and ethical use of emerging technology. The advent of technology has served as the fount of the emerging Artificial Intelligence tools, now often used in the field of academe benefiting students with the ease to accomplish academic tasks. While several people are confused about the different risks and benefits of using AI tools, this study highlights how students who are categorized as Generation Z view the ethical use of AI tools in accomplishing their academic outputs. A qualitative research design is used with the participation of the ten (10) AI-experienced students from WVSU - Integrated Laboratory School via purposive sampling. Despite AI's ambivalence, results revealed that they view AI tools as a helpful tool for academic success which has a corresponding responsibility, discipline and orientation. This opens up the necessity for the institutions to provide and strengthen clear ethical guidelines, policies and digital literacy programs to preserve academic integrity as AI tools advance nowadays. This study faces generalizability limitations because it focuses only on Generation Z in a specific academic context, potentially excluding the views of older generations or professionals. The self-reported data on sensitive ethical issues is prone to social desirability bias. Furthermore, the findings are context-specific and may not account for diverse institutional policies on academic integrity and AI across different global settings. Future research should conduct comparative studies contrasting Gen Z's ethical views with those of faculty and administrators to better inform policy. A mixed-methods approach combining qualitative reports with quantitative behavioral analysis (e.g., tracking anonymized AI usage) is also necessary to validate self-reported data. Crucially, longitudinal research should track how ethical perceptions evolve as AI tools become more integrated into students' future professional lives.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest

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