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Research Article

EXPLORING THE USE AND IMPACT OF AI TOOLS ON GRADE 9 STUDENTS' LEARNING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use and impact of AI tools on Grade 9 students' learning, focusing on their experiences, challenges, and ethical concerns. Through a combination of survey questionnaires and interviews, data were collected from Grade 9 students to assess the extent to which AI tools are utilized for academic tasks and their perceived effectiveness. The results revealed that most students have positive experiences using AI tools, citing improved understanding of class topics and increased efficiency in completing assignments. However, concerns about the potential erosion of critical thinking skills and maintaining academic integrity were raised, aligning with research by Cornell University and Turnitin. Additionally, students highlighted the need for clearer guidelines, AI literacy training, and better integration of AI tools into the classroom, echoing recommendations from Wiley (2024). The study also uncovered challenges such as over-reliance on AI tools and a lack of understanding of ethical practices, underscoring the importance of fostering responsible AI use. Based on these findings, recommendations were made to establish clear policies, incorporate AI literacy into the curriculum, and provide teacher training on AI integration. This study contributes valuable insights into the role of AI tools in modern education and offers practical strategies for promoting their responsible use in academic settings.

I. Introduction

The use of AI tools like Grammarly, QuillBot, and Microsoft Copilot has transformed how students approach academic tasks, offering quick solutions, explanations, and personalized feedback. Grade 9 students frequently use these tools for generating ideas, summarizing content, and solving problems, but their growing reliance raises concerns about critical thinking, academic integrity, and overall effectiveness.

This action research explores the types of AI tools used, their frequency and purpose, and how students perceive their impact on academic performance. It also identifies challenges students face and gathers insights on improving AI tool usage in the classroom. The findings

aim to help teachers promote responsible AI use while maintaining academic integrity and fostering critical thinking.

AI tools that the students used –

Table 1. AI tools that the respondents used in completing their assignments

AI Tool(s) Used	Frequency	Percent
ChatGPT	85	48.57%
Grammarly	38	21.71%
Google Bard/Gemini	22	12.57%
ChatGPT and Grammarly	10	5.71%
Grammarly and ChatGPT	9	5.14%
QuillBot	14	8.00%
Total	175	100%

The analysis of AI tools used by Grade 9 students to complete their assignments reveals that ChatGPT emerged as the most frequently used AI tool, with 85 respondents (48.57%) reporting its use. This finding aligns with the growing popularity of ChatGPT in providing detailed responses and assistance in various academic tasks (Center for Teaching Innovation, n.d.). Grammarly followed, with 38 students (21.71%) utilizing it to improve grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, ensuring polished and well-written outputs.

Google Bard/Gemini was used by 22 respondents (12.57%), suggesting a growing awareness of alternative AI platforms for research and content generation. A small number of students opted to use both ChatGPT and Grammarly simultaneously, accounting for 10 students (5.71%), while 9 students (5.14%) reported using Grammarly and ChatGPT in combination, possibly to refine content generated by AI. QuillBot, a paraphrasing and rewriting tool, was used by 14 students (8.00%), indicating its utility in helping students rephrase content for better comprehension and originality.

The diversity of tools used suggests that students are exploring a range of AI resources to aid their academic tasks, with a strong inclination towards ChatGPT and Grammarly. This trend highlights the need for educators to guide students in the ethical and responsible use of AI technologies to enhance learning outcomes (Wiley, 2024).

Table 2. Perceived Helpfulness of AI Tools

Purpose	Frequency	Percent
Research	131	34.93%
Summarizing or paraphrasing texts	103	27.47%
Writing essays/reports	59	15.73%
Creating presentations	35	9.33%
Solving math problems	24	6.4%
Coding or programming help	11	2.93%
None / Not Applicable	12	3.3%
Total	375	100%

The responses regarding the perceived helpfulness of AI tools reveal diverse ways in which Grade 9 students utilize these technologies for academic purposes. The majority of respondents (131 out of 233 students) identified research as the primary use of AI tools. This suggests that students often rely on AI to gather information and deepen their understanding of various topics, indicating that AI has become an essential aid in academic inquiry.

Following closely, 103 students reported using AI tools for summarizing or paraphrasing texts, highlighting that AI is also leveraged to condense information or rephrase complex ideas in more comprehensible formats. This use indicates that students utilize AI to enhance their comprehension and improve the clarity of their learning materials.

Additionally, 59 students mentioned using AI tools for writing essays or reports, suggesting that AI assists in drafting and structuring written assignments. A smaller but notable group of 35 students relied on AI for creating presentations, which implies that AI tools support not only written tasks but also the visual representation of information.

Moreover, 24 students indicated that they used AI tools for solving math problems, showcasing AI's role in facilitating problem-solving and computational tasks. A smaller number of respondents (11 students) utilized AI for coding or programming help, reflecting the growing interest in integrating AI in technology-related tasks.

Interestingly, a small subset of responses (12 combined) indicated that some students either did not use AI tools or did not find them helpful. This suggests that while AI tools offer numerous benefits, their usage and perceived helpfulness may not be universally recognized by all students.

The diversity in the perceived helpfulness of AI tools demonstrates that students incorporate these technologies in various aspects of their learning, making AI an increasingly integral part of their academic experience. As AI continues to evolve, its impact on enhancing learning outcomes and supporting diverse academic tasks is likely to grow.

Table 3. Summary Table of Perceptions on AI and Academic Integrity

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	83	35.62 %
No	150	64.37 %
Total	233	100 %

The responses from Grade 9 students regarding whether their teachers provide guidelines on using AI tools for academic work reveal a notable gap in guidance. A majority of the respondents (150 students) reported that their teachers do not provide guidelines on how to properly use AI tools in completing their assignments. This lack of formal instruction leaves students without a clear understanding of the appropriate and ethical use of AI, potentially leading to misuse or over-reliance on these tools. Without adequate guidance, students may struggle to differentiate between leveraging AI as a learning aid and relying on it to complete tasks in ways that undermine their own academic growth.

Conversely, 83 students indicated that their teachers provide guidelines on AI tool usage. These students are likely better equipped to use AI responsibly, as they have received the necessary instructions to navigate the balance between using AI for academic support and maintaining academic integrity. Providing explicit guidelines empowers students to use AI as an enhancement to their learning experience rather than a substitute for critical thinking and problem-solving.

The disparity in responses highlights the need for teachers to take a more proactive approach in educating students on the ethical and effective use of AI tools. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into educational practices, it is essential for educators to establish clear expectations and offer guidelines that foster responsible AI use. Through structured instruction and open dialogue, educators can help students harness the benefits of AI while safeguarding academic integrity and promoting lifelong learning.

Table 4. Summary Table of Belief on AI Integration in Classroom Learning

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	164	70.39 %
No	69	29.61 %
Total	233	100 %

The responses from Grade 9 students regarding the integration of AI tools into classroom learning reflect a positive inclination toward embracing technology in education. A significant majority of the respondents (164 students) expressed their belief that AI tools should be integrated more into classroom learning. These students likely recognize the potential of AI to enhance the learning process by offering personal assistance, automating repetitive tasks, and providing quick feedback on assignments. AI tools can also adapt to different learning styles and paces, making learning more engaging and effective for diverse groups of students.

On the other hand, 69 students indicated that they do not believe AI tools should be integrated more into classroom learning. This reluctance may stem from concerns about over-reliance technology, the possible reduction in critical thinking, or the fear that AI could replace traditional teaching methods. These students may also perceive AI as a threat to the personal connection between teachers and students, which is vital for effective learning.

The majority preference for greater AI integration highlights a growing acceptance of technology in education. However, the concerns expressed by some students underscore the need for a balanced approach that blends AI tools with traditional teaching methodologies. By incorporating AI in a way that complements, rather than replaces, teacher-student interactions, educators can maximize the benefits of AI while addressing the concerns of students who are hesitant to embrace this technological shift.

Conclusion

The findings of this study shed light on the growing reliance of Grade 9 students on AI tools for completing assignments and enhancing their understanding of classroom topics. While the majority of students reported positive experiences using AI tools, they also highlighted

challenges related to maintaining academic integrity and the potential erosion of critical thinking skills. These concerns align with research by the Center for Teaching Innovation (n.d.) and Turnitin (n.d.), which emphasize the need for clear guidelines and ethical practices when using AI in academic settings. Furthermore, the study revealed that students believe AI tools should be better integrated into classroom learning, with a focus on providing clear policies, enhancing AI literacy, and incorporating AI into daily lessons. These insights suggest that while AI tools offer numerous benefits, their effective and responsible use requires structured integration and continuous evaluation.

Recommendations

The researchers have arrived at the following recommendations:

1. Develop Clear Guidelines and Policies on AI Use. Schools should establish explicit guidelines outlining the ethical and appropriate use of AI tools in academic work. These guidelines should emphasize maintaining academic integrity while using AI assistance, as highlighted by Turnitin (n.d.).
2. Integrate AI Literacy into the Curriculum. AI literacy should be incorporated into the curriculum to equip students with the knowledge to understand AI's capabilities, limitations, and potential ethical concerns. This aligns with recommendations from Cornell University (n.d.), emphasizing the importance of fostering AI literacy.
3. Provide Teacher Training on AI Tools. Educators should receive comprehensive training on AI tools to effectively guide students on their responsible use. Teacher training programs should focus on integrating AI tools into lesson plans while promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
4. Use AI to Enhance Collaborative Learning. AI can be used to facilitate group projects, encourage peer discussions, and provide personalized feedback. As suggested by Wiley (2024), collaborative learning with AI can foster a more engaging and interactive learning environment.
5. Conduct Regular Evaluations of AI Tool Effectiveness. Schools should establish a system for continuously assessing the effectiveness of AI integration in the classroom. Regular feedback sessions with students and teachers can help refine the use of AI tools and address any emerging challenges.
6. Promote Ethical Use of AI Through Awareness Campaigns. Awareness campaigns should be conducted to emphasize the importance of ethical AI use, helping students understand the potential consequences of misuse and reinforcing the value of maintaining academic integrity.

By implementing these recommendations, schools can ensure that AI tools are utilized responsibly and effectively, promoting an environment where technology enhances learning while preserving ethical standards and critical thinking skills.

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