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The Ethical Concerns and Scientific Integrity Questions That Arise in the Use of ChatGPT in Higher Education

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Abstract:

The increasing use of ChatGPT in academic settings has raised significant ethical concerns and integrity questions about its impact on academic integrity. The objective of the study is to provide information on how academics can use ChatGPT effectively while maintaining academic integrity standards. A rapid literature review (RLR) methodology was used to synthesise the existing literature and guidelines on the ethical implications of using ChatGPT in higher education. The RLR approach allowed for the rapid generation of evidence in a resource-efficient manner, focusing on key themes such as accuracy, responsibility, plagiarism, bias, privacy, and regulatory compliance. The study findings highlight the ethical concerns associated with the use of ChatGPT, including the issues of accuracy, responsibility, plagiarism, bias, privacy, and regulatory compliance. Although ChatGPT offers significant potential to help academics with writing tasks and plagiarism detection, it also poses challenges to scientific integrity in higher education. The study emphasises the importance of maintaining academic integrity in the face of evolving technologies such as ChatGPT. In conclusion, the study underscores the critical role of proper citation practices in maintaining academic integrity and recommends measures for universities to address the ethical dimensions of using ChatGPT responsibly. By promoting responsible usage and raising awareness about the potential risks of Artificial intelligence (AI) tools (AI tools), academic institutions can navigate the complexities of the digital age while safeguarding the core principles of scholarly research and publication ethics.

Keywords:

Academic Integrity, AI Tools, Artificial Intelligence (AI), ChatGPT, Ethical Concerns, Ethical Considerations, Higher Education, Scientific Integrity

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Introduction

The use of ChatGPT in academic settings is increasing. The increase attracts many ethical concerns and integrity questions. According to Stahl and Eke (2024), ethical questions and concerns are rooted in future uncertainty and ethical consequences for users. As ChatGPT offers innovative assistance to academics and students in customising their academic experience, concerns have been raised regarding its potential to facilitate plagiarism and compromise academic integrity. This study aims to explore the advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT in plagiarism detection, ethical considerations surrounding its use, and potential threats to scientific integrity in higher education. This study aims to explore the advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT in plagiarism detection, ethical considerations surrounding its use, and potential threats to scientific integrity in higher education. By examining the existing literature and guidelines, the study seeks to provide insight into how academics can use ChatGPT effectively while upholding academic integrity standards.

Methods - Rapid Literature Review (RLR)

A rapid literature review (RLR) is a streamlined approach to evidence synthesis that accelerates the traditional systematic review process by omitting or simplifying certain methodological steps, allowing for rapid generation of evidence in a resource-efficient manner (Smela, Toumi, Świerk, Francois, Biernikiewicz, Clay & Boyer, 2023). RLRs are designed to be completed within shorter timeframes compared to systematic literature reviews (SLRs) while maintaining a similar level of transparency and minimising bias (Smela et al., 2023; Smela, Toumi, Ś wrinkle, Francois, Biernikiewicz, Clay & Boyer, 2023). These reviews are particularly valuable in situations where there is a need for timely evidence to inform decision-making processes, such as in healthcare policy development or emerging research areas (Smela et al., 2023; Khangura, Konnyu, Cushman, Grimshaw & Moher, 2012). The increasing ethical concerns and scientific integrity questions regarding the use of ChatGPT in higher education demand quick answers and solutions that make RLR ideal for study. The key components of RLRs include a clear research question, a well-defined search protocol that describes search strategies and inclusion criteria, a focused approach to address specific research questions, and an iterative process that allows quick adjustments and updates to the review methodology. Involving multiple sources of evidence, such as systematic reviews, grey literature, and targeted searches, RLRs aim to provide decision-makers with synthesised information in a time-efficient manner (Smela et al., 2023; Godin, Stapleton, Kirkpatrick, Hanning & Leatherdale, 2015). By following structured methodologies and focusing on key components, researchers can develop efficient and effective RLRs to meet the demands of fast-paced decision-making environments.

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The Objectives of Using RLR

The purpose of conducting a rapid review of the study is to provide timely and relevant evidence to inform the policy and programme decision-making processes. Rapid reviews are conducted to quickly synthesise the evidence in the existing literature on a specific topic or question within a shorter timeframe, making them particularly useful when there is an urgent need for evidence-based information. According to Dobbins (2017), there are key objectives of conducting a rapid review that include:

Rapidity: Rapid reviews are designed to be completed in a shorter time frame compared to traditional systematic reviews, allowing decision-makers to quickly access synthesised evidence. The application of ChatGPT in higher education is an emerging tool with many ethical questions. This study is timely in providing answers to questions.

Informed decision-making: By synthesising available evidence in a condensed format, rapid reviews help decision-makers make informed decisions based on the best available evidence within the given time constraints. Higher education should decide on the application of ChatGPT.

Policy and programme development: Rapid reviews support the development of policies, programmes, and interventions by providing a summary of relevant evidence to guide decision-making processes. This study provides information to inform higher education institutions to develop policies and programmes for the effective use of ChatGPT in higher education.

Addressing urgent needs: Rapid reviews are particularly useful in situations where there is an urgent need for evidence to address pressing public health or policy issues. The ethical concerns and academic integrity in the use of ChatGPT in higher education need urgent attention.

Steps in Applying RLR in the Study

The process of conducting a rapid review involves several key steps to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in synthesising evidence promptly (Smela et al., 2023; Nussbaumer-Streit, Mayr, Dobrescu, Chapman, Persad, Klerings & Gartlehner, 2020; Khangura, Konnyu, Cushman, Grimshaw & Moher, 2012).). Here are the steps followed to use rapid review in this study.

Defined research question: An articulate research question or objective of the study was formulated that guided the search process.

Developed a search protocol: A structured search protocol was developed that describes the search strategy, inclusion/exclusion criteria, data sources, and search terms to efficiently retrieve relevant literature related to the research topic.

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Literature search: The search strategy was executed in selected databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and many others that were used to identify studies that address the research question.

Screen selected studies: A screening of the search results was performed based on predefined inclusion/exclusion criteria to select studies that met the questions/objectives.

Data extraction: Extraction of relevant data from the selected studies using a standardised data extraction strategy to capture key information for analysis from the selected studies (Smela et al., 2023).

Evaluation: An assessment of the quality of the included studies was done using appropriate tools or criteria that evaluated the reliability and validity of the studies.

Data synthesis: In the study, the extracted data were analysed by summarising key findings, identifying patterns or themes, and presenting the results clearly and concisely (Smela et al., 2023).

By following the steps above and adapting the RLR to the specific research question and context, researchers can efficiently conduct a rapid review to synthesise evidence and provide timely insights for decision-makers and stakeholders (Smela et al., 2023).

Background of the Study

The Potential Threats of ChatGPT to Scientific Integrity

According to Lingard (2023), potential threats to scientific integrity posed by AI tools such as ChatGPT include ethical, copyright, transparency, and legal issues, the risk of bias, plagiarism, lack of originality, inaccurate content with the risk of hallucination, limited knowledge, incorrect citations, cybersecurity issues, and risk of infodemics. There have also been concerns about the uncredited or fraudulent use of ChatGPT in preprints and peer-reviewed published articles, leading major journals to declare their positions on the issue and requiring researchers to document any use of ChatGPT in their methods or acknowledgements sections. For example, some academic journals guide authors to disclose the use of AI tools in scholarship, describe in a transparent way the nature of that use, and be aware of limitations that affect accuracy and integrity.

How Can Academics Effectively Use ChatGPT While Maintaining Academic Integrity?

Academics can effectively use ChatGPT while maintaining academic integrity by following certain guidelines. Lingard (2023) suggested that academics need to understand ChatGPT's strengths and weaknesses. It is better at structure than it is at content, and it can be used as a brainstorming tool for titles, outlines, and counter-arguments. However, everything it suggests should be double-checked,

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especially if academia is outside its domain of expertise. However, it is important to train ChatGPT to focus on the specific areas of subject and prompts relevant to academia's work.

Furthermore, Lingard (2023) notes that most examples involve putting academia's writing into ChatGPT and asking it to make suggestions, structure, perform labour-intensive tasks, or illustrate grammatical changes. It is advised to view what ChatGPT generates as a first draft that the academics will refine and rework, infusing it with their unique voice and style. Additionally, academia should use ChatGPT as a tool to assist in the writing process, but they should not rely solely on its output. It is important to critically evaluate and verify the suggestions provided by ChatGPT and to ensure that the final work reflects the voice and expertise of academia.

What Are the Potential Threats to Scientific Integrity Posed by ChatGPT?

An artificial intelligence (AI) tool such as ChatGPT challenges scientific integrity (Currie, 2023). ChatGPT has the potential to generate human-like content and respond to questions across disciplines and languages. ChatGPT presents many positive potentials; however, its negative potentials are major threats to scientific integrity. According to Lingard (2023) and Nam and Bai (2023), ChatGPT poses potential threats to scientific integrity in higher education in different ways.

- **Ethical concerns:** There are ethical considerations regarding the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, including issues related to plagiarism, lack of originality, and the risk of bias in generated content.
- **Training and support:** Academics and students may require training to effectively use AI chatbots such as ChatGPT in educational settings. The lack of training and support is a major threat to higher education. However, providing adequate training, support, and resources for users is essential for successful integration.
- **Impact on teaching and learning:** The use of AI chatbots like ChatGPT can affect traditional teaching methods and student learning experiences. There is a concern that over-reliance on AI tools could hinder the effectiveness of teaching and learning, jeopardising academic integrity and the actual learning experience and goal.
- **Adaptation and evolution:** Higher education institutions need to adapt and evolve with AI technologies to remain relevant and effective. Failure to evolve with advances in AI may pose a threat to traditional educational practices.
- **Copyright and legal issues:** The use of AI tools raises questions about copyright ownership of the generated content and the legal implications of using such tools in academic writing.
- **Transparency:** There may be challenges in ensuring transparency in the writing process when using AI tools, as it may be difficult to trace the origin of specific ideas or content.

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- **Risk of inaccurate content:** AI tools like ChatGPT may produce inaccurate or misleading content, leading to potential errors in academic writing and research.
- **Limited knowledge and incorrect citations:** ChatGPT's knowledge is limited to the data it was trained on, which may result in incorrect citations or information in academic writing.
- **Cybersecurity issues:** There is a risk of cybersecurity threats when using AI tools, including data breaches or unauthorised access to sensitive information.
- **Risk of infodemics:** The use of AI tools without proper verification and fact-checking may contribute to the spread of misinformation and disinformation, leading to potential infodemics in academic discourse.

What Are Some of the Ethical Considerations Associated With Using ChatGPT in Academic and Research Settings?

The use of ChatGPT in higher education has brought many opportunities, but there are ethical considerations that must be considered and addressed for its effective use (Vaccino-Salvadore, 2023). Failure to address ethical considerations will jeopardise potential opportunities. Using ChatGPT in academic and research settings raises several ethical considerations, including (Guleria, Krishan, Sharma & Kanchan, 2023):

- **Accuracy and reliability:** ChatGPT can provide inaccurate information, leading to potential errors in research findings and publications.
- **Responsibility and accountability:** There is concern about attribution of authorship and responsibility for the content generated by AI tools like ChatGPT. It is essential to ensure transparency and integrity in research publications.
- **Plagiarism and originality:** There is a risk of unintentional plagiarism when using AI-generated content. Researchers must ensure that the generated text is original and properly cited.
- **Bias and fairness:** ChatGPT can inherit biases present in the training data, potentially leading to biased output in research publications. Researchers should be cautious about the fairness and impartiality of ChatGPT-generated content.
- **Privacy and data security:** The use of ChatGPT raises concerns about data privacy and security, especially when sensitive information is processed or shared. Safeguards must be in place to protect confidential data.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Researchers must adhere to ethical guidelines and regulations governing the use of ChatGPT and any other AI chatbot in research. It is crucial to ensure compliance with institutional policies and industry standards.

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- **Human oversight and critical Thinking:** While ChatGPT can assist in generating the content, human oversight and critical thinking are essential to evaluate and validate the information provided by ChatGPT. Researchers should not rely solely on ChatGPT-generated text without verification.

How Can Policies and Guidelines Be Developed to Regulate the Use of ChatGPT in Scientific Writing?

Academics and students can regulate their research and learning experience through the use of ChatGPT, which offers them the opportunity to customise the kind of information and content to access online. According to Farhi, Jeljeli, Aburezeq, Dweikat, Al-shami, and Slamene (2023), ChatGPT provides the ability for academics and students to customise their academic experience with innovative assistance and help accessing human-like content. However, policies and guidelines should be in place to regulate the kind of content academics and students generate and how they use it. Policies and guidelines can be developed to regulate the use of ChatGPT in scientific writing by considering the following measures (Guleria, Krishan, Sharma & Kanchan, 2023):

1. **Ethical frameworks:** Higher education institutions should establish clear ethical frameworks that outline the responsible use of ChatGPT and any other AI tools in teaching and learning, and research and publication. These frameworks should address issues such as accuracy, transparency, attribution, and fairness.
2. **Authorship guidelines:** Define guidelines for attributing authorship of AI-generated content in research publications and student assessments. Clarify the roles of researchers (academics), students, AI tools, and other contributors to ensure proper credit and accountability.
3. **Plagiarism detection:** Implement advanced tools and software to detect and prevent plagiarism of ChatGPT and other AI-generated text and content. Academics (researchers) and students should be encouraged to verify the originality of the content and provide proper citations.
4. **Data privacy and security:** Develop protocols to safeguard data privacy and ensure the secure handling of information processed by ChatGPT and other AI tools. Academics (researchers) and students must adhere to data protection regulations and best practices.
5. **Transparency and disclosure:** Require academics (researchers) to disclose the use of ChatGPT and other AI tools in their publications and assessments. Transparency in the methods and tools used in research and assessments promotes accountability and trust.
6. **Training and education:** Provide training and education on the ethical use of ChatGPT and any other AI tools in scientific writing. Academics (researchers) and students should be

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informed about the potential risks, limitations, and best practices associated with AI chatbots.

7. **Peer review process:** Incorporate AI-specific evaluation criteria into the peer review process to assess the quality and integrity of AI-generated content. Peer reviewers should be equipped to evaluate the use of AI tools in research manuscripts and student assessments.
8. **Continuous monitoring and updates:** Review and update policies and guidelines regularly to adapt to evolving AI chatbots and technologies with regard to large and ethical considerations. Stay informed about industry standards and best practices in AI ethics.

How Can Academics Modify Their Teaching Strategies to Seamlessly Integrate ChatGPT and Other AI Technologies Into Their Teaching and Learning?

The evolution of technology in the modern educational environment is continuous, and the disruptiveness of AI technologies in the sector cannot be underrated. The adoption of AI technologies in higher education is becoming more sophisticated (Grassini, 2023). However, strategies must be changed to accommodate emerging AI technologies in higher education. According to Ng, Leung, Su, Ng and Chu (2023), academics need to adjust their teaching and learning strategies to integrate the current AI chatbots in higher education. Academics can adapt their teaching strategies to effectively incorporate ChatGPT and other AI chatbots into their teaching and learning (curriculum) by following these key principles (University of Pretoria, 2023):

1. **Define the purpose:** Ensure that the use of ChatGPT aligns with the goals of teaching and learning. Clearly define the purpose of integrating ChatGPT into teaching and learning as a tool to enhance the learning and research process, experience, and results and provide additional support to academics and students, rather than replacing human interaction.
2. **Underline critical thinking:** Encourage students to engage in critical thinking alongside using AI chatbots. Although ChatGPT can provide valuable information, it should not replace the development of the student's own ideas and perspectives. Emphasise the importance of evaluating the information received and fostering independent thinking.
3. **Provide guidance and communication:** Guide students on how to effectively use ChatGPT. This includes teaching them how to interpret the results, how to cross-check information from other sources, and how to acknowledge the use of AI chatbots and tools in their work. Communicate the rules and guidelines for using ChatGPT in the curriculum.
4. **Ensure transparency:** Be transparent about the use of AI technologies such as ChatGPT with students. Explain how the technology works, what data is being collected, and how it

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will be used. By maintaining transparency, academics can build trust with students and ensure the ethical use of AI chatbots (tools) in the learning process.

5. **Encourage cross-checking information:** Encourage students to verify the accuracy and credibility of ChatGPT-generated answers by cross-checking information from other reliable sources. Emphasise the importance of using ChatGPT as a complementary tool alongside traditional research methods, rather than relying solely on AI-generated content.

What Strategies Can Higher Education Institutions Implement to Prevent Academic Dishonesty When Using ChatGPT?

Higher education institutions can implement several strategies to prevent academic dishonesty when using ChatGPT (Cotton, Cotton & Shipway, 2023):

1. **Clear instructions and rubrics:** Providing clear and detailed instructions to students on how to structure their assignments can help ensure that the work is coherent and original. In addition, using a rubric to evaluate the quality of student work can help assess their understanding and effort.
2. **Provide plagiarism education:** Educating students about what plagiarism is and why it is wrong is an effective way to prevent academic dishonesty.
3. **Open-ended assessments:** Designing assessments that encourage originality and creativity, such as asking students to develop their own research questions or arguments, can make it more difficult for students to use AI language models to complete their assignments.
4. **Real-time or proctored exams:** Using real-time or proctored exams can help ensure that students are not using AI language models during assessments.
5. **Policies and procedures:** Developing clear policies and procedures for the use of ChatGPT can help ensure its ethical and responsible use.
6. **Monitoring student work:** Close monitoring of student work is essential, especially when using tools like ChatGPT that can generate realistic text. This can involve reading student work carefully, asking students to present their work, or using plagiarism detection tools to identify potential instances of plagiarism.
7. **Using plagiarism detection tools:** Higher education can use plagiarism detection software to scan student work for similarities to existing sources. These tools can help identify instances of plagiarism that may not be easily detectable by human readers. Additionally, investing in advanced technology and techniques, such as natural language processing algorithms, can help analyse the language and style of the submitted work to identify anomalies that may indicate the use of AI language models such as ChatGPT.

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8. **Detection of machine-generated writing:** Look for patterns or irregularities in the language used in student work, as chatbots may exhibit limited language abilities that can help identify text likely written by a chatbot.
9. **Setting clear guidelines:** Setting clear guidelines for the appropriate use of GPT-3 and other resources, including when and how they can be used, proper citation, and attribution of generated text, is crucial.
10. **Training and support:** Providing training and support for both students and faculty on the ethical use of ChatGPT can help raise awareness and promote responsible use.
11. **Using various methods:** Employing a variety of methods to detect and prevent cheating, such as combining automated and manual assessment techniques, can help ensure the integrity of assessments and educational programmes.

How Does ChatGPT Affect Plagiarism Detection in Academic Writing?

ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence tool, has a significant impact on plagiarism detection in academic writing. Although ChatGPT itself can be used to generate text, it also poses challenges in maintaining academic integrity due to its potential to facilitate plagiarism. This section of the study provides the advantages and disadvantages of ChatGPT in plagiarism detection and ethical concerns (Singh, 2023):

Advantages of ChatGPT in plagiarism detection:

- ChatGPT can be used as a tool to detect plagiarism by comparing student submissions with a vast database of existing texts.
- Universities have adapted their assessment methods to make them less susceptible to students using ChatGPT for plagiarism.

Disadvantages of ChatGPT in plagiarism detection:

- Concerns have been raised about the ease with which students can use ChatGPT to cheat on assignments and exams, leading to academic dishonesty.
- The simplicity, accessibility, and convenience of ChatGPT may encourage new methods of cheating and plagiarism, which pose a threat to academic integrity.

Ethical concerns:

- The use of ChatGPT raises ethical concerns about academic honesty, especially at the university level, since the tool essentially conducts research for users, potentially undermining the integrity of academic work.
- Universities must address the ethical implications of using ChatGPT to ensure academic integrity is maintained.

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Although ChatGPT can be a valuable tool in detecting plagiarism through text comparison, its ease of use and potential to facilitate academic dishonesty highlight the importance of implementing measures to uphold academic integrity in the face of evolving technologies like ChatGPT.

Academic Integrity of ChatGPT

Academic integrity is a fundamental aspect of academic research and publication ethics. It encompasses the principles of honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct in all aspects of academic work. A crucial component of academic integrity is proper citation practices. By upholding rigorous citation practices, researchers contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of academic publications. Proper citation not only demonstrates respect for intellectual property but also fosters a culture of academic honesty and integrity within the scholarly community.

Citation serves multiple purposes in academic writing (Mijwil, Hiran, Doshi, Dadhich, Al-Mistarehi & Bala, 2023):

- **Sources acknowledgement:** Citations give credit to original authors and researchers whose work has been used or referenced in a new study. This is essential to recognise the intellectual contributions of others.
- **Supporting evidence:** Citations provide evidence to support the arguments, claims, or findings presented in a research paper. They demonstrate that the information presented is based on credible sources.
- **Avoiding plagiarism:** Proper citation helps avoid plagiarism, which is the act of presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own. Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity and can have severe consequences.
- **Building on existing knowledge:** Citations show how a new study is connected to existing literature and research. They help situate the current work within a broader academic context.

To maintain academic integrity in citation practices, researchers should:

- **Follow citation styles:** Different academic disciplines use specific citation styles (for example, APA, MLA, Chicago) to format citations. Researchers should adhere to the required style guidelines.
- **Cite all sources:** All sources that have contributed to the research, including direct quotes, paraphrased information, and ideas, should be properly cited.
- **Avoid self-plagiarism:** Researchers should not reuse their own previously published work without proper citation. Self-plagiarism can undermine the integrity of research.

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- **Cheque for accuracy:** Ensure that the citations are accurate and correctly formatted. Inaccurate or incomplete citations can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the sources.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the study delves into the intricate relationship between ChatGPT and academic integrity, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges presented by this advanced AI tool. Although ChatGPT offers significant potential to help academics with writing tasks and plagiarism detection, it also poses ethical concerns and threats to scientific integrity in higher education. The findings underscore the importance of maintaining academic integrity in the face of evolving technologies such as ChatGPT. Ethical considerations, such as plagiarism, lack of originality, and bias in generated content, necessitate a vigilant approach towards utilising AI tools responsibly. By providing adequate training, support, and resources for users, universities can empower academics and students to navigate the ethical implications of using ChatGPT effectively.

In addition, the study emphasises the critical role of proper citation practices in maintaining academic integrity. By adhering to rigorous citation standards, researchers contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of academic publications while also fostering a culture of honesty and transparency within the scholarly community. Moving forward, academic institutions must address the ethical dimensions of using ChatGPT and implement measures to ensure academic integrity is maintained. By promoting responsible usage, raising awareness about the potential risks of AI tools, and thoughtfully integrating technology into academic practices, universities can navigate the complexities of the digital age while safeguarding the core principles of scholarly research and publication ethics.

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