EXPLORING THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN COMPLETING SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS FROM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores senior high school students' perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in learning, focusing on how they use, interpret, and reflect on AI when completing school assignments. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected from twenty-four students through open-ended questionnaires and classroom observations. Thematic analysis identified three main themes: (1) AI as a learning support tool, (2) ethical and behavioral awareness, and (3) the role of teachers and institutional rules. Findings reveal that students view AI as a practical assistant for understanding difficult materials and completing tasks efficiently. However, they also show growing ethical awareness, acknowledging that excessive reliance may hinder genuine learning. Moreover, teacher attitudes and school policies strongly influence students' decisions to use AI responsibly or secretly. The study concludes that integrating AI in education requires ethical guidance, consistent institutional policies, and teacher involvement to foster responsible and reflective digital learning among students.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, student perception, ethical awareness, teacher role, senior high school students

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi siswa sekolah menengah atas terhadap Artificial Intelligence (AI) dalam pembelajaran, dengan menyoroti bagaimana mereka menggunakan, menafsirkan, dan merefleksikan AI saat menyelesaikan tugas sekolah. Menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari dua puluh empat siswa melalui kuesioner terbuka dan observasi kelas. Analisis tematik mengidentifikasi tiga tema utama: (1) AI sebagai alat bantu pembelajaran, (2) kesadaran etis dan perilaku, serta (3) peran guru dan kebijakan sekolah. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa siswa memandang AI sebagai asisten praktis yang membantu memahami materi sulit dan menyelesaikan tugas dengan lebih efisien. Namun, mereka juga menunjukkan kesadaran etis yang meningkat, dengan menyadari bahwa ketergantungan berlebihan dapat menghambat pembelajaran yang sesungguhnya. Selain itu, sikap guru dan kebijakan sekolah sangat memengaruhi keputusan siswa dalam menggunakan AI secara bertanggung jawab atau diam-diam. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa integrasi AI dalam pendidikan memerlukan bimbingan etis, kebijakan institusional yang konsisten, serta keterlibatan guru untuk menumbuhkan pembelajaran digital yang reflektif dan bertanggung jawab.

Kata kunci: *kecerdasan buatan, persepsi siswa, kesadaran etis, peran guru, siswa pendidikan menengah atas*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, human activity, including education, has undergone a remarkable transformation under the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI tools ranging from generative text models like ChatGPT to grammar checkers and adaptive learning systems are redefining how students learn, complete assignments, and construct knowledge. Educational discourse increasingly presents AI as a powerful enabler: offering personalized feedback, facilitating idea generation, correcting errors, and reducing cognitive load. Empirical evidence supports this promise; for example, a 2024 meta-analysis by Wang et al. reported that adaptive learning systems, as one class of AI-based pedagogical tools, improved student outcomes by up to 62% over control groups (Wang et al., 2024). However, this dominant narrative often overlooks how students themselves perceive and experience AI in their academic routines.

Globally, AI adoption in learning has become mainstream. Surveys show that 86% of students use AI in their studies, with 24% employing it daily and 54% at least weekly (Prasetiyo, 2025) These statistics indicate that AI has shifted from being a supplementary tool to a central learning partner. Yet, while these aggregate numbers highlight pervasiveness, they do not capture how students experience AI: do they view it as a legitimate learning partner or as a form of academic dishonesty? Does AI deepen understanding or encourage superficial shortcuts? Such questions are especially salient when considering autonomy, academic integrity, and critical thinking in modern education.

Previous research provides valuable but limited perspectives. (Rachman & Donald, 2025) found that university students in Jakarta use AI for practicality and speed but remain uncertain about the ethical boundaries of such use. (Johnston et al., 2024) revealed similar ambivalence in the U.K., where students appreciated AI's support yet worried about weakened independence. (Batubara et al., 2025) reported that Indonesian students value AI for idea generation and efficiency but also express anxiety about fairness and misuse. (Lund et al., 2025) further emphasized that while AI promotes productivity, it can diminish students' sense of ownership and academic integrity. Likewise, highlighted both the pedagogical benefits and the risks of overreliance on AI for cognitive effort.

Despite these contributions, most studies adopt large-scale or mixed-method approaches that capture general attitudes but lack depth in exploring how moral awareness and self-regulation develop through AI use (Sustaningrum & Haldaka, 2025) mapped nationwide adoption patterns yet offered limited insight into students' ethical reasoning. Moreover, prior research has predominantly focused on higher education contexts, leaving younger learners underexplored. Adolescents at the secondary level still forming academic identity and digital ethics may interpret AI differently from adults (Alkhater et al., 2025).

Therefore, this study explores senior high school students' perceptions of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to complete school assignments. It focuses on how they interpret the benefits, challenges, and ethical implications of AI use in their daily learning. By investigating their authentic experiences and reasoning, the study aims to provide insights that inform schools and teachers in promoting responsible and reflective AI literacy. Building upon existing literature, this research positions itself as a qualitative contribution to the ongoing discourse on AI in education. Unlike prior works that

emphasize university contexts and quantitative measures, this study focuses on secondary-school learners and their moral reflections when using AI. By combining empirical observation with ethical interpretation, it advances the field from describing usage patterns to understanding students' developing sense of academic honesty and responsibility. Thus, this study contributes to the state of the art by framing student perception as a foundation for establishing ethical and human-centered AI practices in school settings.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' perceptions of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in completing school assignments. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth and context sensitive understanding of students' subjective experiences, motivations, and ethical reasoning regarding AI use in learning activities. Rather than quantifying outcomes, this design emphasizes interpretation and meaning construction drawn directly from participants' authentic responses (Creswell, 2018). The participants consisted of 24 senior high school students from Jamblang Senior High School, located in West Java, Indonesia. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that all respondents had prior experience using AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, or QuillBot for completing school assignments. The sample included students from different grades and academic backgrounds, enabling diverse perspectives on the perceived benefits, challenges, and ethical implications of AI-assisted learning.

Data collection was conducted on October 9, 2025 during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school and participants were informed about confidentiality and voluntary participation. The primary data collection instrument was an open-ended questionnaire designed to elicit detailed qualitative responses. The instrument contained 14 items focusing on students' motivations for using AI, usage patterns, perceived advantages and disadvantages, and ethical reflections related to academic integrity. The open-ended format encouraged participants to express their opinions freely without being limited by predefined options, producing richer and more nuanced data.

In addition, the researcher conducted a light observational analysis not through direct classroom observation but through the systematic review of students' written responses to identify patterns in reasoning, language use, and behavioral tendencies toward AI reliance. Data were collected online to maximize accessibility and minimize classroom disruption. Students were first briefed about the purpose of the research and assured that there would be no academic consequences for their answers. They were encouraged to express honest opinions about their experiences with AI. After completion, the responses were reviewed for completeness and clarity before analysis.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following (Braun & Clarke, 2006) six-step framework: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading, (2) generating initial codes to identify recurring words, expressions, or ideas, (3) searching for themes by grouping related codes into conceptual categories such as motivation, learning behavior, and ethical perception, (4) reviewing and refining the themes to ensure clarity

and internal coherence, (5) defining and naming the themes, and (5) synthesizing the themes narratively with direct quotations from participants to illustrate key insights.

The analysis also integrated observational insights, focusing on patterns such as dependence on AI for efficiency, awareness of academic honesty, and negotiation between learning autonomy and convenience. To ensure data credibility and reliability, several validation strategies were applied. Triangulation of interpretation was conducted by cross-checking thematic patterns across different responses. Peer debriefing and reflective journaling were used to minimize researcher bias and enhance analytical rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants' anonymity was strictly maintained, and representative quotations were used to preserve authenticity. These strategies ensured that findings accurately represented students' voices and could be interpreted with transparency and integrity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis of students' responses reveals three overarching themes that capture how high school learners in Cirebon perceive and engage with Artificial Intelligence (AI) in completing their school assignments. Data were obtained from twenty-four students through open-ended questionnaires, supported by classroom observations that contextualized behavioral patterns in AI use. Three major themes emerged: (1) AI as a learning support tool, (2) ethical and behavioral awareness in AI use, and (3) the role of teachers and institutional policies in shaping students' practices.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Learning Support Tool

Theme 1	**Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Learning**
R1	"Using as a Learning makes tasks faster and easier to complete."
R2	"Artificial Intelligence (AI) helps me understand difficult materials because it explained them clearly."
R3	"I use Artificial Intelligence (AI) when there's no explanation in the textbook."
R4	"It's fun and convenient because everything is already Artificial Intelligence (AI) label."
R5	"Artificial Intelligence (AI) gives me ideas for writing and helps summarize materials."

Findings indicate that students primarily perceive Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a supportive and time-saving assistant for completing schoolwork. Many described AI as a shortcut to finding information, clarifying complex topics, and filling instructional gaps left by textbooks or teachers. As one participant stated, "Using AI makes tasks faster and easier to complete," while another noted, "Artificial Intelligence (AI) helps me understand difficult materials because it explained them clearly". This pattern echoes previous studies (Kim et al., 2025), which found that students tend to value AI's instrumental efficiency more than its cognitive depth. In this sense, AI functions as a functional partner rather than a reflective learning companion. (Johnston et al., 2024) describe this as an "effort-reduction phenomenon," where students prioritize immediacy and clarity over deep comprehension. Interestingly, several participants also noted AI's

creative potential particularly its ability to provide writing ideas and summarize key materials suggesting a transition from passive copying to guided productivity.

This aligns with findings by (Lund et al., 2025), who observed that AI enhances engagement when used for ideation rather than replication. Overall, students' engagement with AI reflects both cognitive and emotional dimensions: AI serves as a cognitive scaffold that aids comprehension and an emotional convenience that reduces frustration. However, this reliance risks fostering dependency, a pattern similarly observed by (Johri et al., 2024) among university students. While productivity increases, the intrinsic struggle of learning essential for critical thinking may be diminished. This pattern can be explained through Zimmerman's Self-Regulated Learning Theory, which emphasizes learners' ability to control their motivation, cognition, and behavior. When students rely excessively on AI, they may skip the self-regulatory processes such as planning, monitoring, and reflecting that are essential for meaningful learning (Zimmerman, 2002).

Table 2. Students' Moral Reasoning and Ethical Awareness toward Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Theme 2	**Ethical and Behavioral Awareness in Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
R1	"Artificial Intelligence (AI) should be used wisely, not for cheating."
R2	"Teachers say we can use Artificial Intelligence (AI), but we must understand the answers."
R3	"It's not honest if we just copy all the answers."
R4	"Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) is fine, but we must not depend on it all the time."
R5	"Sometimes I feel guilty when using Artificial Intelligence (AI), like I didn't really learn."

Students' statements reveal a moral tension between AI's usefulness and its ethical implications. Many recognized AI as a legitimate learning aid but expressed concern over potential misuse. Statements such as "AI should be used wisely, not for cheating" and "It's not honest if we just copy all the answers" demonstrate emerging ethical self-awareness among adolescents. This moral balancing mirrors ethical discourses in (Lund et al., 2025) and (Massouti et al., 2024), where students navigate between personal effort and technological dependency. Unlike uncritical users, participants in this study articulated conditional acceptance viewing AI use as ethical when it facilitates understanding, but problematic when it replaces human effort.

Yet, this awareness remains partial. Several respondents admitted feeling "guilty" for relying on AI but continued using it for difficult tasks. Such ambivalence indicates what (Johnston et al., 2024) and (Alkhater et al., 2025) identify as the early stage of digital ethics development a coexistence of moral reasoning and pragmatic self-preservation. Students know what is right, yet convenience often prevails. This moral ambiguity aligns with Kohlberg's stages of moral development, particularly the conventional level, where individuals' ethical decisions are influenced more by external authority and social approval than by internalized moral principles (Kohlberg, 1981). Students' awareness of "right" and "wrong" in using AI is therefore situational rather than fully autonomous.

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Policies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Regulation

Theme 3	**The Role of Teachers and Institutional Rules**
R1	"Some teachers allow Artificial Intelligence (AI), others don't."
R2	"Teachers Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used if we rewrite in our own words."
R3	"Teachers forbid Artificial Intelligence (AI) because they want to see our own ability."
R4	"It should be allowed but with limits."
R5	"If the teacher is kind, we can use it; if not, we hide it."

Teacher attitudes and institutional rules significantly shape how students use AI. Respondents repeatedly mentioned inconsistency among teachers some allowing AI for references, others forbidding it altogether. One student commented, "Some teachers allow AI, others don't," while another explained, "Teachers say AI can be used if we rewrite it in our own words". This inconsistency creates a gray zone in which students navigate ambiguous expectations rather than adhere to shared ethical principles. Similar institutional inconsistency has been observed in (Kim et al., 2025). Consequently, students develop adaptive behaviors such as "hidden use," balancing between technological utility and fear of reprimand. Statements like "If the teacher is kind, we can use it; if not, we hide it" reveal compliance based on authority perception rather than moral understanding. Such adaptation highlights the absence of clear AI literacy frameworks in schools.

According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), human learning and moral behavior are shaped through observation and imitation of significant role models. In this context, teachers' attitudes toward AI become a form of social modeling that directly influences how students justify and regulate their own AI use (Bandura, 1986). Taken together, these findings illustrate that students' perceptions of AI are deeply intertwined with their stages of moral reasoning, self-regulation skills, and social learning contexts. Integrating these theoretical perspectives strengthens the interpretation that AI use in learning is not purely technological but also psychological and ethical.

Alkhater et al. (2025), warn that this ambiguity undermines both academic integrity and digital autonomy. Therefore, consistent pedagogical policies and AI-integrated teaching strategies are crucial to ensure that innovation aligns with ethical learning. This study explored how high school students in Cirebon perceive and use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in completing academic tasks. Findings underscore that understanding students' perspectives is vital for developing ethical AI integration strategies that mirror real classroom practices. Rather than viewing AI merely as a shortcut, many participants positioned it as a supportive learning partner one that aids comprehension, stimulates creativity, and enhances productivity.

These results align with who argue that AI integration promotes personalized and reflective learning when guided appropriately. Similarly, (Fu & Weng, 2024) emphasized that embedding AI use within ethical frameworks sustains skill development and prevents technological overdependence. Students' reflections also reveal growing moral awareness. They differentiate between responsible and irresponsible use, signaling self-

regulated learning and emerging digital ethics. This resonates with findings by (Chan, 2025), who found that learners are redefining originality and academic honesty in the era of generative AI.

Institutional context further shapes these attitudes. Where teachers discuss AI openly, students report more responsible use; where rules are inconsistent or absent, hidden practices proliferate. This aligns with (Aashish Ghimire, 2024), who found that policy silence often forces students to develop their own ethical heuristics. In sum, the interplay between cognitive, ethical, and institutional factors reveals that students' perceptions of AI are not merely technological but deeply social and moral. For adolescents still forming academic identities, AI becomes both a cognitive scaffold and a mirror of evolving educational ethics. This study thus extends AI-in-education discourse by foregrounding the voices of secondary students capturing the formative stage at which artificial intelligence is being normalized within everyday learning.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how senior high school students in Cirebon perceive and use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their learning. The findings showed that students see AI as a helpful tool that makes studying easier and faster. They also demonstrate growing awareness of ethical issues, such as honesty and responsibility when using AI. Moreover, teachers' attitudes and school policies strongly influence how students understand and apply AI in their studies. These results suggest that AI is not only a technological aid but also an ethical challenge in education. Students are learning to balance convenience with moral responsibility. Therefore, schools should guide them in developing digital ethics and AI literacy. Teachers play a key role in shaping this awareness by encouraging responsible use rather than restriction or punishment. Clear and consistent school policies are also essential to help students use AI wisely and productively. In short, integrating AI into learning requires more than technology it needs ethical guidance, teacher support, and institutional consistency to ensure that students grow as independent and responsible digital learners.

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