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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Empowering ethical ai usage in course assignment: A guide for Islamic revealed knowledge students at centre for foundation studies

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Abstract: The increasing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in higher education has transformed how students access information, particularly for those studying Islamic Revealed Knowledge (IRK) at the Centre for Foundation Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). This shift raises ethical concerns about aligning AI use with Islamic values and academic integrity. While AI can improve learning efficiency, its misuse may lead to plagiarism and an overreliance on technology in Islamic studies. This study aims to create important guidelines that integrate Islamic ethical principles into AI-assisted course assignments. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 160 IRK students from CFS IIUM for this study. Preliminary results from the study indicate significant reliance to AI among IRK students without having proper guideline. The findings indicate that ethical AI use in Islamic academic settings should adhere to principles like *Amānah* (trust), *Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity), and *Taqwā* (God-consciousness), which underpin Tawhidic epistemology. These values help to ensure responsible AI usage that maintains the integrity of Islamic knowledge and academic honesty. The study precisely recommends ethical guidelines specifically tailored for the IRK context to promote responsible AI usage in line with academic and Islamic values. In conclusion, the paper presents strategic recommendations to assist educators in embracing an advanced education system that collaborates AI with Islamic ethics, ultimately preparing Islamic students to meet future need and critical challenges.

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1. Introduction

The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has increasingly transformed a multitude of industries, with education being no exception. AI has the potential to enhance and transform both pedagogical and learning processes, rendering them more efficient, personalised, and engaging. This personalisation, aided by a variety of AI applications, has proven crucial in engaging students and connecting them more deeply to their studies. For instance, Duolingo, a free, gamified language learning app and website, showcases the adaptability of AI to varied learning settings, employing advanced AI systems to enhance the user experience in multiple language learning (Bicknell et al., 2023). Similarly, Khan Academy has launched Khanmigo, an AI-powered personal tutor, designed to provide personalised learning support and intelligent and real-time feedback across subjects, including mathematics, programming, humanities, and language acquisition (Shetye, 2024). Another notable example is ChatGPT, a conversational AI chatbot developed by OpenAI. It features an extensive knowledge repository, quick response capabilities, and content generation proficiency. ChatGPT contributes significantly to fostering interactive learning environments and enhancing student engagement. It can also be used for various purposes, ranging from chat support to a source of information (Jukiewicz, 2024). One of the promising applications of AI in education is in enhancing course assignments.

A course assignment, often referred to as brief academic writing for IRK students at the CFS IIUM, is an essential part of academic studies. It is characterised by the organised expression of ideas, arguments supported by evidence, and logical reasoning in light of the revelation. It does provide challenges, though, such as managing enormous volumes of data and complex ideas. Thus, AI has grown in significance as a means of addressing these issues in completing the course assignment. Enhancing creativity, efficiency, and productivity are just a few of the areas where AI has benefited from its enormous capacity to analyse and forecast data trends (Koppisetti, 2024).

These days, the majority of AI apps are designed to be very focused and proficient in a specific set of tasks. AI tools like Grammarly or QuillBot, which serve as grammar checkers, are becoming more common in academic and professional settings (Giglio & Costa, 2023). As technology expands, the ethical implications of AI are becoming increasingly significant. They include a variety of complex subjects, including potential misuse concerns among students, which could lead to plagiarism, liability, privacy, and bias. Qadir (2023) highlights the risk of students misusing AI-generated tools in dishonest or unauthorised ways, such as using the content to complete course assignments without proper attribution. He also highlights the possibility of AI-powered tools creating nonsensical or inaccurate information, as well as factual errors. Accepting information without proper verification will undermine its reliability and result in the dissemination of inaccuracies. Besides the concern about the accuracy or suitability of AI-generated content, over-reliance on AI, reduced critical thinking, and human interaction are also among the challenges and pitfalls of using AI (Vieriu & Petrea, 2025).

Additionally, according to Carobene et al. (2024), academic integrity may be jeopardised if someone claims authorship of something they did not create. Hence, proper guidelines and ethical standards are required to guarantee the proper

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application of AI technology in academics (Sounderajah, et al., 2021). The growing reliance on AI tools among students of Islamic Revealed Knowledge (IRK) at the Centre for Foundation Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), necessitates ethical considerations that correspond to Islamic values and academic integrity. Addressing these issues requires the integration of Islamic ethical principles, such as *Amānah* (trust), *Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity), and *Taqwā* (God-consciousness), into the discourse surrounding AI applications in Islamic studies. Thus, the study advocates for the creation of ethical guidelines tailored explicitly for the IRK context to promote responsible AI usage. It also aims to harmonise advanced technology with Islamic ethics in an education system. These efforts will equip students to navigate future challenges and meet evolving educational needs effectively.

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method to investigate students' perceptions regarding the use and application of AI, as well as to assess the level of ethical and religious awareness among students enrolled in the IRK programme at the CFS IIUM. The findings are intended to inform the development of practical guidelines that incorporate Islamic ethical principles into the responsible use of AI-assisted tools for academic assignments.

2.1 Participants

The participants comprised 160 students enrolled in the IRK programme at CFS IIUM. Of these, 91 were female and 69 were male. A convenience sampling method was employed, with participants selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. The sample specifically consisted of students who had completed their studies at the Centre within the previous year.

2.2 Data Collection Procedure

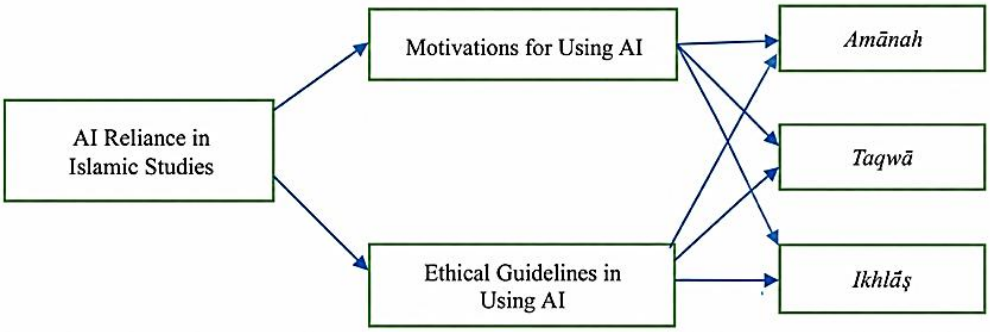
The data collection process was conducted using a self-administered structured questionnaire via a secure Google Form link. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were reviewed and validated by subject matter experts in Islamic ethics and education. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to the completion of the form. The questionnaire remained accessible for a period of two weeks, during which responses were gathered anonymously to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. This approach allowed students to respond at their convenience while minimising potential response bias. The instrument was divided into three main sections:

i. Demographic Information: This section captured basic participant details, including gender and academic background.
ii. Perceptions of AI Use in Education: This section assessed students' perceived benefits of AI tools in academic contexts, particularly their usefulness in completing assignments and supporting learning.
iii. Ethical and Religious Awareness: This section measured students' understanding of academic integrity, concerns regarding plagiarism, and awareness of Islamic ethical principles related to the permissibility of AI use in academic work.

The instruments were employed to examine the relationship between students' use of AI in course assignments and their awareness of the ethical standards they are expected to uphold when using AI responsibly. It was also used to examine how the ethical or unethical use of AI relates to the maintenance of academic integrity in students' completion of course assignments. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Figure 1

Proposed research framework



3. Research Findings

A total of 160 students from the Centre for Foundation Studies at IIUM participated in the survey. The sample consisted of approximately 56.6% female students, and 40.4% male students. Regarding secondary school background, the majority of 66.9 % students came from Religious Secondary Schools (SMA), followed by the 13.7% from National Secondary School (SMK) and Residential/Boarding Schools (SBP) (10%). In terms of academic performances, most students had completed their CFS studies within the past year, whereby most students reported a CGPA ranged of 3.5-4.00 (49.4%), with another substantial group between 3.00-3.49 (39.4%), while the rest had a CGPA ranged of 2.00-2.99 (11.2%).

Figure 1 shows the proposed research framework examining the relationship between AI reliance in Islamic Studies and the development of ethical values among students. The framework positions AI reliance in Islamic Studies as the primary independent variable, which influences two key dimensions: motivations for using AI and ethical guidelines in using AI. The model suggests that students' motivations for using AI (such as convenience, efficiency, or academic support) play a significant role in shaping their ethical orientation. At the same time, the establishment of ethical guidelines in using AI acts as a structured mechanism to guide responsible usage. Both motivations for using AI and ethical guidelines are linked to core Islamic ethical values, namely *Amānah* (trustworthiness), *Taqwā* (God-consciousness), and *Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity). These values function as key outcome variables, reflecting the moral and spiritual impact of AI usage within an Islamic educational context. Overall, the framework highlights that while AI reliance is increasing, its ethical implications are mediated by students' motivations and guided by ethical principles, ultimately influencing the internalisation of essential Islamic values.

The Likert-scale findings indicated the major positive perceptions among IRK students related to their AI reliance in their study journey in CFS, IIUM. When asked about their general thoughts on the use of AI in their course assignments, the majority of respondents rated it positively (in Figure 3), with 56.3% find AI very impressive or extremely impressive in educational contexts and they believe that AI will significantly improve the quality of education (54.4%). The majority of the respondents (85%) rate themselves as advanced, expert or intermediate in AI proficiency (in Figure 4). This number later resulted to the finding of most students use AI often (in Figure 5) and always when it comes to completing the course assignments, whereby only a small number reported "Never". Hence, the large number of 80.6% of the respondents offer the strong agreement to note that AI is even useful and helpful in completing the mentioned course assignments (in Figure 6).

On the other hand, the survey conducted led to the responses that manifested the reasons for the AI reliance are to summarise information (70.7%), to brainstorm ideas (60.2%), and check grammar and spelling (54.1%). This suggests that students use AI primarily as a supplementary tool for efficiency and refinement (in Figure 7), rather than for generating complete content. The finding exposed that the AI reliance among IRK students on its moderate level. The most common use is "sometimes" (45.1%), with a significant portion using it "frequently" (28.6%). Only a small percentage (6.0%) reported using it "very often.

Figure 2

What are your general thoughts about the use of AI in education?

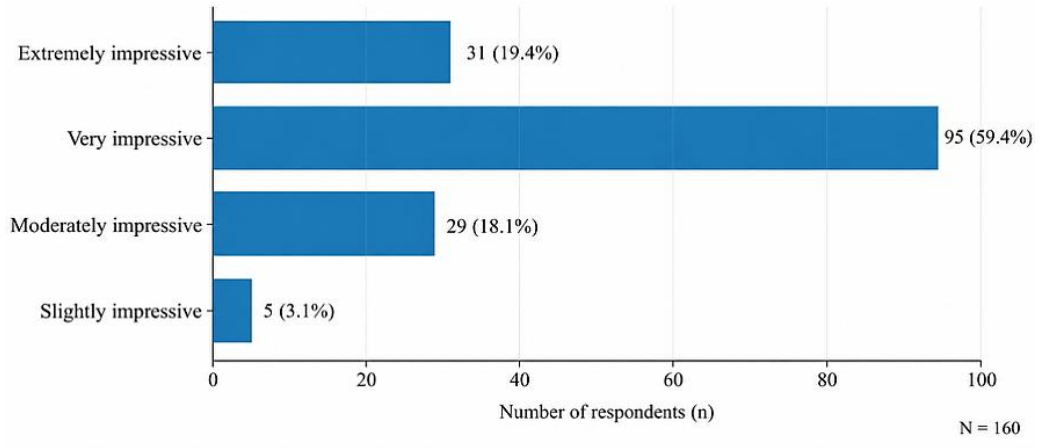


Figure 3

How do you view the role of AI in education?

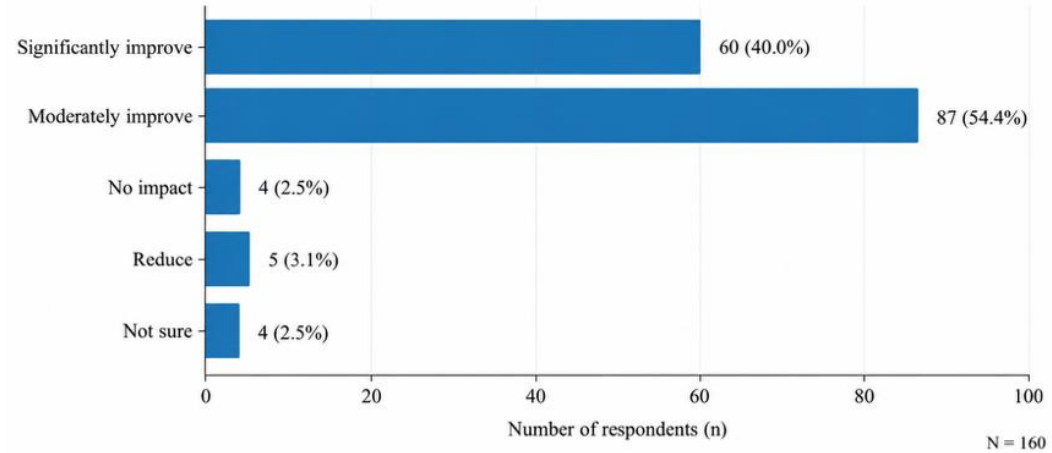


Figure 4

How would you describe your level of proficiency in using the AI technology particularly in completing the course assignment?

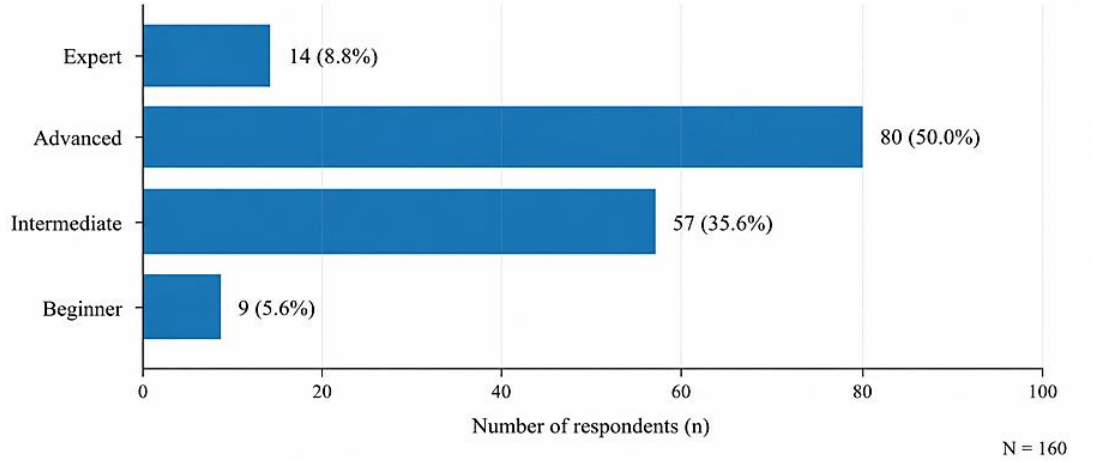


Figure 5

How often do you use the AI technology in completing the course assignment?

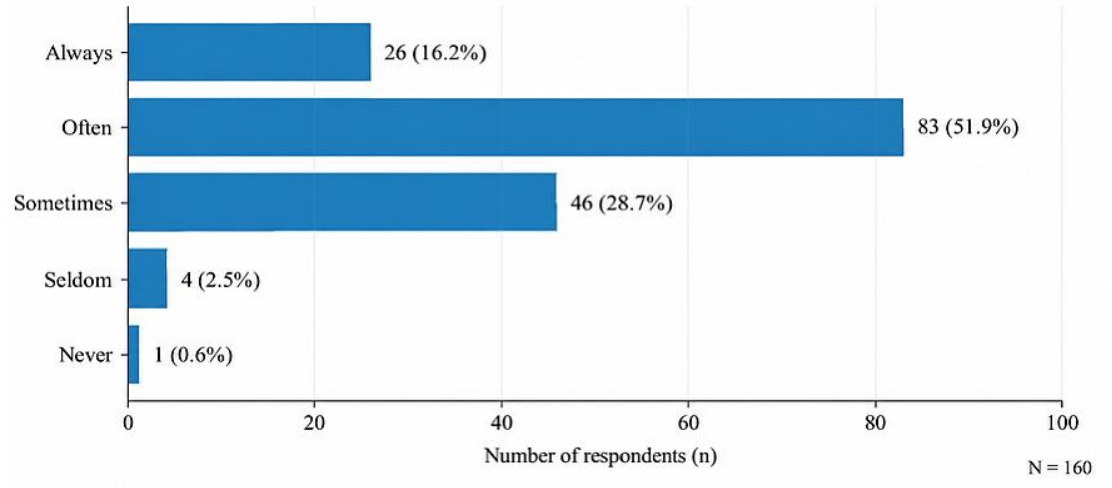


Figure 6

Do you believe AI tools in education compromise student development in general?

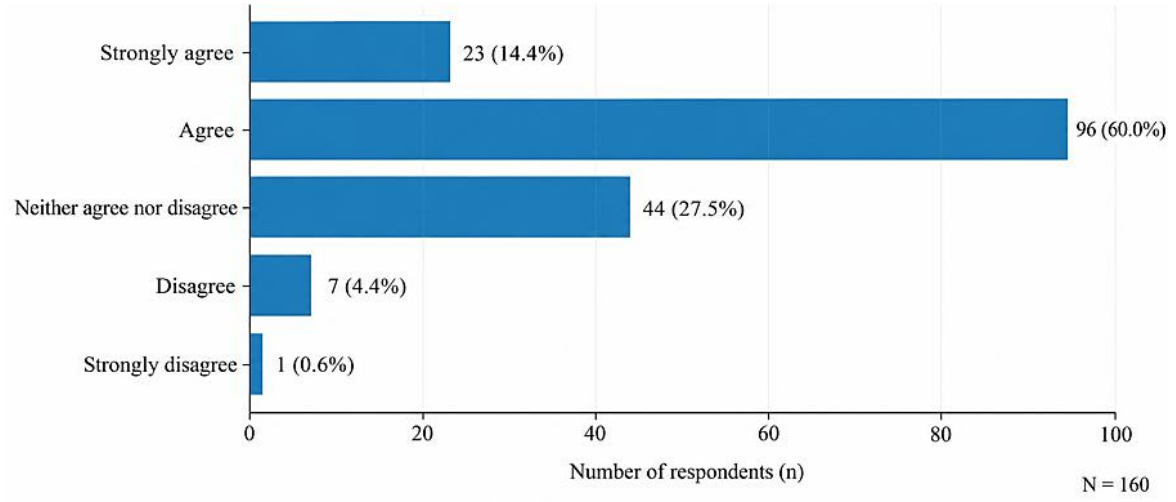


Figure 7

Do you believe using AI tools unethically in completing course assignment can lead to plagiarism?

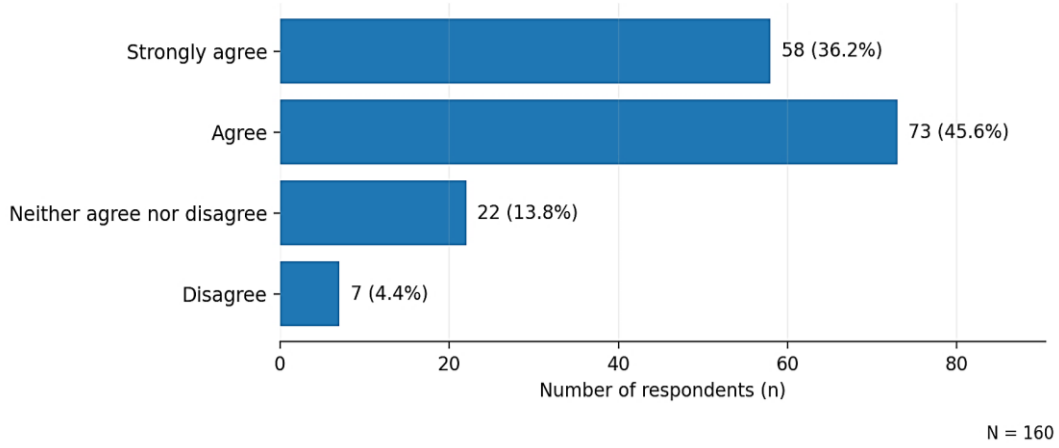


Figure 8

Have you encountered any situations where you felt an AI tool was used unethically in completing your course assignment?

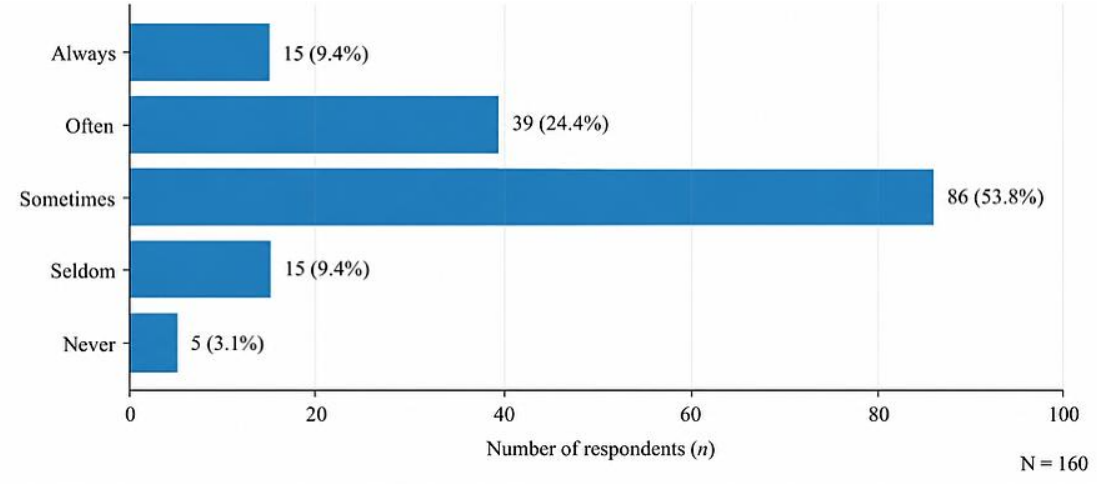


Figure 9

Have you been given any guidelines on how to use AI tools ethically in your studies?

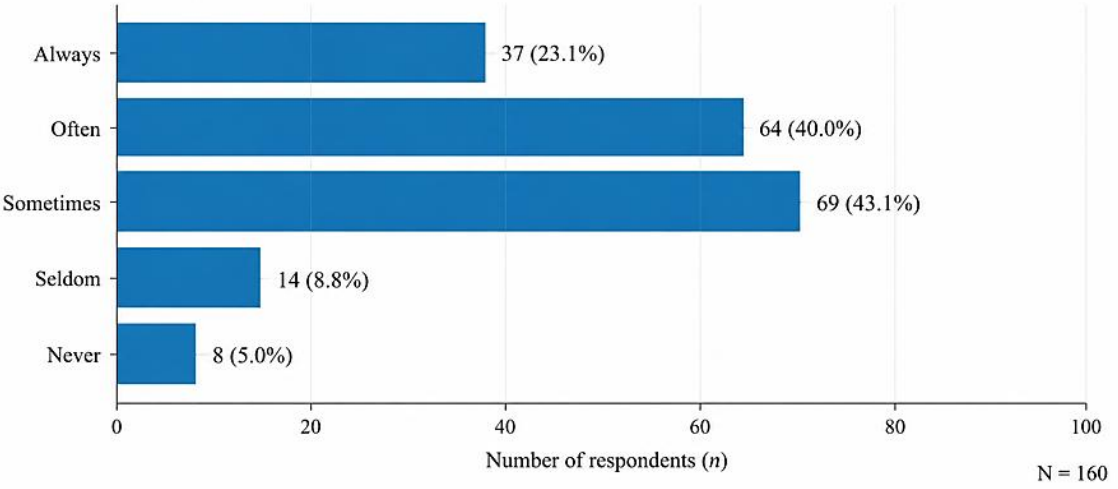
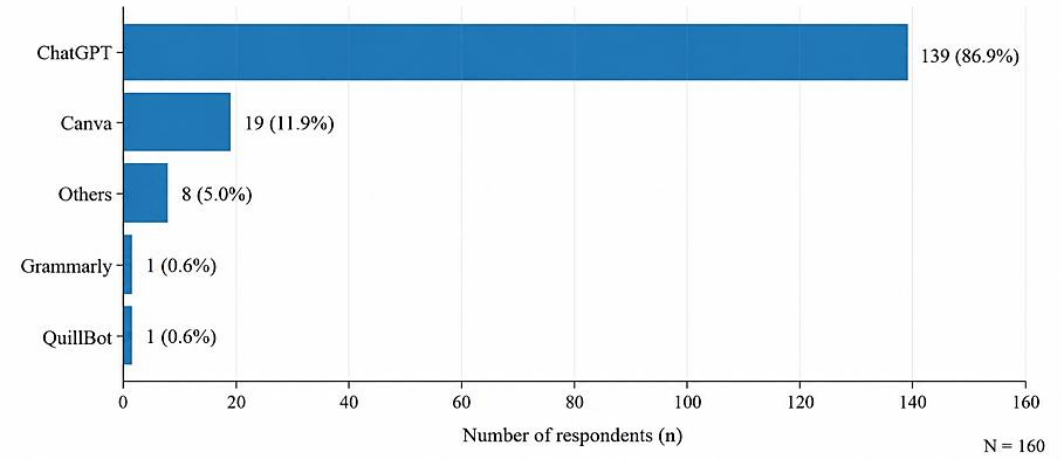


Figure 10

Which AI tools do you use the most in completing your course assignment?



4. Results and Discussion

With respect to guidance, majority of respondents (78.2%) perceived that the use of AI may contribute to ethical concerns, particularly in relation to plagiarism (in Figure 8). However, rather than attributing these issues solely to AI itself, the findings suggest that AI functions as a facilitating tool that may amplify pre-existing student tendencies, such as procrastination, lack of critical engagement, and insufficient academic discipline. This is reflected in the data, where 81.9% of respondents reported encountering unethical AI use in course assignments, including inauthentic referencing, misinterpretation or distortion of facts, and over-reliance on generated content. Therefore, the ethical challenges observed are not merely a direct consequence of AI technology but rather arise from the interaction between AI accessibility and students' personal characteristics, particularly in the absence of proper ethical guidance and self-regulation.

Mixed responses on whether students have received ethical guidelines for AI use, as the respondents mainly preferred to use ChatGPT (84.4%) over the Grammarly, QuillBot, Canva, Unschooler and other existing AI applications (in Figure 9). Overall, data concluded a high level of awareness of AI tools among students, though their understanding of ethical implications varies, as the awareness of AI showed an overwhelming 97.7% of students are aware of AI tools like ChatGPT (in Figure 10). Most students (75.2%) use AI tools for their course assignments and academic work. This highlights the relevance of addressing ethical usage. The majority of students (76.7%) believe that AI can be beneficial for academic assignments. This positive perception indicates a willingness to integrate AI into their studies. Based on the research analysis of the survey data, here are some clear policies (UNESCO, 2021; Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, 2023) that can be implemented as outcomes of the study as follows:

4.1 AI Usage in Assignments

Students are permitted to use AI as a tool for brainstorming, outlining, checking grammar and spelling, and summarising research only. These uses should be clearly defined and examples provided. Submitting any unedited, full-length content generated by AI as one's own work is strictly forbidden and will be treated as plagiarism. Students are also obligated to cite and attribute all AI-generated content or ideas used in their course assignments. A clear citation style for AI should be established and standardised according to respective courses or subjects, for instance the need to specify the AI model and date of access.

4.2 Academic Integrity & Islamic Ethics

Reinforcement of *Amānah* is utmost needed. The use of AI must be approached with *Amānah* (trust). This means students are trusted to use these tools responsibly and with intellectual honesty. This needs to be well aligned with the presence of *Ikhlāṣ*. Course assignments should encourage *Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity). Students should use AI to deepen their understanding, not to override genuine effort. Uphold Tawhidic Epistemology: the ultimate goal is to seek knowledge for the sake of God (*Taqwā*). Using AI should not undermine this principle by promoting laziness or intellectual dishonesty.

4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

Students are accountable for ensuring all work submitted is their own. They must understand the difference between using AI as an assistant and as a shortcut. While for the educators, they are required to provide explicit, detailed guidelines on AI usage for each course and assignment. They should also design assignments that require critical thinking and application of knowledge, making it difficult for students to rely solely on AI, thus curbing the issue on total reliance on AI among students. The university or institution should also provide regular workshops and resources for both students and staff on ethical AI usage. The academic integrity policy must be updated to include specific clauses on AI misuse, to the latest guidelines. The research shows that students at the Centre for Foundation Studies, IIUM, use technology in a thoughtful and responsible manner. They remain mindful of its ethical and religious implications, while acknowledging

its role in improving academic productivity. However, they caution against excessive reliance, especially in areas that demand critical thinking and religious sensitivity.
This reflects the Quranic reminder:

"And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it]."
(Qur'ān, 2:42)

and the Prophet's S.A.W. saying:

"Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt."
(*Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth* 2518)

These guide students to uphold integrity and clarity in learning, ensuring that convenience never overrides truth and Islamic ethical values.

5. Conclusions

This study reveals that students at the Centre for Foundation Studies (CFS), IIUM demonstrate a high level of awareness and engagement with AI tools, alongside a generally sound understanding of academic integrity, plagiarism, and proper attribution. Nevertheless, concerns regarding over-reliance on AI and the need for clearer academic guidance remain evident. The findings suggest that ethical challenges associated with AI usage are not solely attributable to the technology itself but rather arise from the interaction between AI accessibility and students' learning behaviours, including dependency, procrastination, and limited critical engagement. This underscores the importance of strengthening both self-regulation and pedagogical support in navigating AI-assisted learning. These findings are consistent with global and national policy directions, which emphasise the need for ethical, human-centred AI integration in education (UNESCO, 2021; Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, 2023). Within the context of Islamic education, the study further highlights the continued relevance of values such as *Amānah* (trustworthiness), *Ikhlāṣ* (sincerity), and *Taqwā* (God-consciousness) in ensuring that the use of AI remains aligned with integrity and the higher purpose of knowledge.

In conclusion, while AI presents valuable opportunities to enhance learning, its integration must be guided by ethical awareness, institutional support, and value-based education. Future research should explore structured and contextually grounded frameworks for ethical AI integration and examine their long-term impact on students' intellectual and moral development.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Author Contribution

Tuan Nor Shazni Tuan Muda served as the corresponding author, overseeing the paper's design and data analysis.
Shapizan Johari developed the survey questionnaires used in the study.
Kazzman Kamaruzzaman and Wan Radziah Wan Abdullah contributed to the literature reviews essential to the research.
Ezny Yahya finalised the Methodology section of the paper.
All authors contributed to the paper's conceptualisation and participated in writing the original draft, editing and proofreading the complete manuscript.

Availability of Data and Materials

The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Ethics Statement

This study was conducted within the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge, Centre for Foundation Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), in accordance with established ethical principles for educational research involving human participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all 160 respondents prior to data collection. Data were collected anonymously through an online questionnaire, with participants' privacy and confidentiality maintained throughout the research process.

Statements of AI Disclosure

Language editing only: AI-based tools were used solely for language editing, paraphrasing, and grammar refinement. No AI content generation or data interpretation was performed.

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