

Undergraduate Agency in Artificial Intelligence (AI) During Their Academic Routines

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Abstract

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into education is transforming higher education worldwide. It changes routine educational practices by providing a wide array of information for students. This study aims to examine the use of AI tools among undergraduates, specifically focusing on research writing and exam preparation. Using semi-structured qualitative interviews, the research uncovers students' experiences, motivations, and challenges in adopting tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quillbot. Findings indicate that perceived usefulness and ease of use strongly influence students' engagement with AI. While AI enhances learning efficiency and knowledge acquisition, it also raises concerns about academic responsibility, critical thinking, and ethical use. Students recognize the benefits of AI but emphasize the need for clear guidelines and training to ensure responsible adoption. The study contributes to the growing literature on AI in education and provides practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to integrate AI ethically and effectively.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Educator, Undergraduates, Higher education, Research.*

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept; it is a present-day reality shaping industry, professions, and increasingly, education. With the rising use of technology, students are massively incorporating AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, and Turnitin into their academic routines (Youssef et al., 2024). These tools support writing, research, and understanding complex subjects, often acting as virtual assistants on a student's learning journey. However, while AI is widely discussed in global education contexts (Khan et al, 2025), its actual usage and impact among Sri Lankan undergraduates remain underexplored. AI is increasingly transforming higher education by improving learning outcomes, personalizing study experiences, and streamlining academic tasks. Research highlights that AI tools enhance academic performance and engagement across disciplines, including finance and economics (Garcia-penalvo et al., 2024; Kang & Kim et al., 2024). Tools like ChatGPT provide personalized feedback, diverse perspectives, and writing support, helping students build confidence and independent learning skills (Youssef et al., 2024). However, concerns remain around plagiarism, reduced critical thinking, data privacy, and overreliance, pointing to the need for clear institutional guidelines (Fairouz et al., 2023). In finance education, AI supports practical learning through financial modelling, simulations, and adaptive platforms that allow flexible study (Khan et al, 2025). While students appreciate these benefits, educators caution against fairness and accuracy issues in specialized fields (Gloria et al., 2024). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) explains AI adoption through perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social influence (Dissanayake et al., 2025). In Sri Lanka, AI usage is already widespread, with tools like ChatGPT and Grammarly used for grammar checks and concept clarification (Perera & Fernando, 2024). Overall, the literature suggests that AI has the potential to make learning more efficient, inclusive, and engaging, but only if supported by strong systems that protect academic integrity and promote equal access.

This study aims to understand how students engage with AI in real academic settings by exploring how undergraduates in Sri Lankan universities use AI tools for academic activities, primarily for research and exam preparation, to examine their level of awareness, usage patterns, perceived benefits, and ethical concerns. Further, the study aims to offer insights that inform educators, policymakers, and institutions in better supporting students as they navigate AI-enhanced learning environments.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative design to explore undergraduates' experiences and perceptions of AI tools in their academic activities at Sri Lankan universities. The study adopts an interpretivist philosophy, which emphasizes understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals within their social contexts. Recent research highlights the importance of interpretive approaches in

educational studies, particularly when investigating how students interact with emerging technologies like AI. For example, Chan and Hu et al. (2023) evaluated university students' perceptions of generative AI technologies and stressed the need to understand students' subjective experiences to inform effective integration of AI in higher education. An inductive research approach is employed, appropriate for exploratory studies where existing literature is limited, with the aim of developing conceptual understanding based on participants' experiences. This aligns with the study's objective of revealing how undergraduates in Sri Lanka utilize AI tools in their academic work, given the lack of existing research in this context. The study focuses on undergraduates from selected universities in Sri Lanka to provide a comprehensive understanding of the specific factors influencing the use of AI tools. The universities and students were selected using both convenience and voluntary sampling, and the sample size was limited to 11 due to time constraints. However, the study sought to understand behavior across different universities rather than relying on data from a single institution. The study employs a mono method qualitative design, relying exclusively on qualitative data to gain deep insights into participants' experiences, without resorting to quantitative methods. This approach enables focused exploration of the complex ways in which undergraduates engage with AI tools in academic activities. Data is collected through semi-structured interviews that balance flexibility in questioning with consistency across participants, covering themes such as the types of AI tools used, their frequency, purpose, perceived benefits, and challenges. The sampling method is determined by data saturation; interviews and audio recordings are used as data collection tools, and thematic analysis is employed for analysis.

Table 1 : Interview details of Participation.

No.	University	Year of Study	Interview duration (Minutes)
01.	NSBM Green University	4 th year	08 minutes 07 seconds
02.	University of Jaffna	4 th year	27 minutes 08 Seconds
03.	University of Ruhuna	2 nd year	15 minutes 23 Seconds
04.	AMDT University	1 st year	11 minutes 34 Seconds
05.	University of Moratuwa	1 st year	16 minutes 24 Seconds
06.	SLTC University	1 st year	13 minutes 05 seconds
07.	E- Soft University	4 th year	20minuts 40 Seconds
08.	University of Kelaniya	4 th year	15minuts 32 Seconds
09.	Eastern University	3 rd year	13 minutes
10.	BCAS University	4 th year	07 minutes 42 Seconds
11.	ICBT University	3 rd year	15 minutes 22 seconds

3. Results and Discussion

The purpose of the data analysis is to explore undergraduates' perspectives and experiences with AI tools in their academic activities. In this research, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eleven students from 11 different universities in Sri Lanka. The analysis process involved carefully reviewing the responses, identifying common patterns, and categorizing the findings into key themes aligned with the research objectives.

3.1. Knowledge

3.1.1. Familiarity with fundamental AI concepts

Perera and Fernando (2024) found that 99% of SLIIT undergraduates use AI tools, with ChatGPT (94%), Quillbot (88%), and Grammarly (79%) being the most popular for grammar checking (73%), enhancing knowledge (68%), and summarizing content (67%). Interviews with students from local and private universities revealed that, despite having only a basic understanding of AI, they value its practical benefits for data analysis, content structuring, and improving written work. For example, one student from Jaffna University stated, *“Yes, I have a basic understanding of what AI is and how it works. I know it involves machines performing tasks that usually require human intelligence, like language processing or decision-making. In my subject area, it can help with analysing data, generating ideas, and improving the quality of written work, but I’m not deeply familiar with the technical side.”* Similarly, a student from BCAS University explained, *“I only know the basics of AI. I understand that it involves machines performing intelligent tasks like analysing patterns or generating language. In my field, I mainly see it as a helpful tool to make studying easier, but I don’t understand the deeper technical aspects.”* Another student from ICBT University shared, *“I have a basic understanding of AI. I know it involves using technology to help machines act intelligently. This includes solving problems or generating text. In my studies, I see AI mainly as a learning assistant, not as something I fully grasp.”* The findings from the interviews complement the results of Perera and Fernando et al. (2024), highlighting that undergraduates across various Sri Lankan universities possess a general awareness of AI and its functionalities. While most students do not have advanced technical knowledge, they recognize AI’s practical benefits in supporting academic tasks, including data analysis, idea generation and improving the quality of written work. Overall, AI is perceived as a valuable tool for enhancing learning and assignment-related activities, even at a basic level of understanding.

3.1.2. Sources of learning and updates on AI tools.

Fitria (2023) stated that students often learn about AI tools through informal channels such as social media, YouTube tutorials, and peer recommendations, while structured learning is available through

MOOCs and platforms like Udemy, Google AI, Khan Academy, edX, and Coursera. In line with this, interviews with Sri Lankan undergraduates revealed that most have not received formal university training but instead explore free online courses or experiment with AI tools independently. This combination of limited formal instruction and strong self-directed learning enables students to apply AI effectively in their academic work, despite gaps in structured guidance. As one student from Jaffna University shared, “I usually find out about AI tools through social media, YouTube tutorials, and recommendations from my friends. Sometimes I join free online courses or try the tools myself to learn how they work. I haven’t received much formal training from the university.” Similarly, a student from BCAS University explained, “Most of the time, I hear about AI tools from my friends or see them on TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube. When I find one interesting, I try it out myself. Sometimes, I read blog posts or watch tutorials. My university hasn’t offered any structured training yet.” The findings show that undergraduates primarily rely on informal, self-directed learning to keep up with AI tools. Social media platforms, YouTube tutorials, peer recommendations, and free online courses are their primary sources of information and practical learning. Most students have not received formal training from their universities, but they build a basic understanding and practical skills through experimentation and self-initiated exploration. This reveals a gap in structured AI education within the university curriculum. It underscores the need to combine formal guidance with self-directed learning to improve students’ ability to use AI for academic purposes.

3.1.3. AI tools usage expertise in academic learning

Youssef et al. (2024) emphasize that ChatGPT supports students in achieving academic goals, boosting confidence, and providing personalized assistance. Similarly, Fadillah et al. (2024) found that ChatGPT improves grammar, clarity, and vocabulary, aligning closely with the functions of tools such as Grammarly and Turnitin that many students already use for writing support. The data collected in this study reinforces these findings, showing that undergraduates frequently rely on ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, and Turnitin for summarizing, paraphrasing, and enhancing written work. However, the results also indicate that many students are still developing skills in crafting effective prompts, highlighting the need for further practice and structured guidance to maximize the benefits of these tools. As one student from Ruhuna University explained, ***“I mostly use ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot because they are free or affordable and very convenient for academic writing. I did rate my knowledge as good level. I can manage basic tasks like grammar checks, paraphrasing, or summarizing, but I’m still improving at creating strong prompts for better results.”*** Similarly, a student from NSBM Green University noted, ***“ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot are free or reasonably priced and very practical for academic writing, I primarily use them. I thought I knew a lot. Although I can handle simple tasks like summarizing, paraphrasing, and grammar checks, I’m still getting better at coming up with compelling prompts for better outcomes.”*** The findings show that undergraduates mainly use ChatGPT, followed by Grammarly, QuillBot, and Turnitin for academic

tasks like summarizing, paraphrasing, and checking grammar. They prefer these tools because they are easy to access and affordable. This supports the research by Youssef et al. (2024) and Fadillah et al. (2023), which points out AI's effectiveness in improving learning outcomes, writing quality, and student confidence. However, the data also indicates that students are still learning how to create effective prompts. This suggests that they need structured guidance and practice to fully benefit from AI tools in their academic work.

3.1.4. Potential of AI to enhance university education

Sajja et al. (2023) found that AI learning assistants provide timely feedback and help with self regulated learning. This allows students to handle their workloads more efficiently. This directly connects with undergraduates' responses. They emphasized that AI makes learning more personalized, reduces time spent on repetitive tasks, and simplifies complex topics. Students also highlighted that AI supports assignments, improves writing quality, and offers quick feedback. This shows that they experience the same benefits identified by earlier research. As one student from Jaffna University noted, ***“Yes, definitely. AI can make learning more personalized, save time when doing research, and help us understand complex topics more easily. It can also assist in preparing assignments, improving writing, and giving quick feedback.”*** Similarly, a student from NSBM Green University stated, ***“In fact, without a doubt. AI can simplify complex subjects, reduce time spent on tedious tasks, and personalize learning. Additionally, it can boost overall learning efficiency, improve assignments, and offer prompt feedback.”*** A student from BCAS University added, ***“Yes, I think AI can make education more engaging and personalized. For example, it can provide instant feedback, suggest additional learning materials, and reduce the time spent looking for information. It could also assist students who have difficulty with certain subjects to keep up.”*** overall the findings show that AI significantly improves higher education by supporting earlier research and student views. Both sources emphasize its ability to personalize learning, simplify complex subjects, reduce workload, and provide timely feedback. This, in turn, leads to better learning outcomes and greater academic efficiency.

3.2. Use

3.2.1. AI tool usage process and intensity

Jiang et al. (2023) and Sajja et al. (2023) found that students mainly use AI to refine, correct, or enhance their work rather than complete tasks entirely. Similarly, undergraduates in this study reported using AI after drafting their work to improve language, rephrase sentences, or get examples. Use is generally occasional but increases during exams and major assignments. As one student from Eastern University explained, ***“I mostly used AI at the final stage of my assignments. First, I prepared a draft on my own. Then, I used AI tools to improve clarity, fix grammar, and restructure some points. I didn't use it very often; only when I felt it was necessary. However, during deadlines, I relied on it more.”***

Similarly, a student from ICBT University stated, ***“I don’t use AI all the time. My process is simple. I prepare my own notes first, then use AI to check grammar, find examples, or summarize difficult concepts. I would say I use it occasionally, mainly during assignments or revisions.”*** Overall, the results show that students use AI tools to support, not replace, their academic work, mainly after drafting assignments or presentations. Key uses include grammar correction, paraphrasing, clarity improvement, and generating examples. Usage is occasional during regular study but rises near exams and deadlines, helping students save time and enhance quality while maintaining ownership of their work.

3.2.2. Potential Academic Applications of AI tools

Holmes et al. (2023) noted that AI can support personalized learning, simplify complex concepts, create practice exercises, and help with project ideas or study tools such as flashcards. Likewise, undergraduates mentioned that AI could assist with study plans, quizzes, data analysis, draft feedback, presentations, and interview practice. The data are shown below. For instance, a student from Moratuwa University noted, ***“AI is helpful for creating study plans and practice quizzes, helping with data analysis, and even giving feedback on drafts before submitting assignments. It could also help me prepare for interviews or presentations by simulating questions.”*** Likewise, a student from Eastern University stated, ***“I think AI could help generate sample case studies, create revision quizzes, and explain theories in simpler terms. It could also assist with presentation designs and mock interview preparation.”*** Overall, the findings show that AI can effectively support understanding and academic tasks. Holmes et al. (2023) and Chen & Xie (2022) highlight its role in personalizing learning, simplifying concepts, and creating practice exercises or study tools. Undergraduates reported that AI helps with study plans, quizzes, data analysis, drafts, presentations, and interview preparation, showing its value for enhancing learning efficiency, comprehension, and academic skills.

3.2.3. AI tools in academic Assessments

Kasneji et al. (2023) note that students frequently rely on AI to generate outlines, structure their work, and provide illustrative examples to strengthen their writing. The interviews conducted in this study reflected similar patterns, showing that undergraduates used AI in a supportive role rather than as a substitute for their own effort. Participants explained that AI helped them clarify difficult topics, generate practice questions, and draft essay formats, but the final answers remained their own. This indicates that students view AI primarily as a guide or facilitator that assists them in completing academic tasks, rather than a tool that performs the work on their behalf. For example, a student from Ruhuna University stated, ***“Yes, I’ve used AI for exam preparation by asking it to explain difficult topics, create practice questions, and suggest essay outlines. Still, I avoid relying on it to produce full answers because I want to keep my work original,”*** a student from Kelaniya University shared. ***“Yes, but I don’t use it to answer questions directly. I use AI for brainstorming ideas, checking if my answers are logically organized, and creating practice essay outlines. I don’t depend on AI to do my***

assessments, but I find it helpful as a guide,” another student from ICBT University added. “Yes, I sometimes use AI to create sample essay structures or practice multiple-choice questions. I don’t copy directly; I use it as a reference to understand how to frame my answers better.” Overall, the findings show that students use AI as a supportive tool rather than a replacement, helping them clarify concepts, create practice questions, and structure essays while keeping the final work their own. This balanced approach enhances organization and learning without compromising academic honesty, aligning with Kasneci et al. (2023), and demonstrates that AI aids understanding and skill development while preserving students’ personal effort and originality.

3.2.4. Benefits and challenges of AI in academics

Holmes et al. (2023) highlight that AI can personalize learning and save time, while Jiang et al. (2023) caution that overreliance may weaken critical thinking. Similarly, students in this study appreciated AI for improving writing, saving time, and providing quick explanations, but they also noted challenges such as inaccuracies and potential overdependence. For example, a student from Jaffna University said, *“Overall, it’s been positive. AI saves me time, helps me improve my writing, and gives me quick access to explanations. But sometimes it gives wrong or outdated information, so I have to double-check everything. Another challenge is that if I rely too much on it, I feel like I’m learning less.”* Another student from Eastern University added, *“My experience has been mostly positive. AI helps me save time, improves the presentation of my work, and provides alternative explanations. However, the main issues are over-reliance, potential plagiarism, and the risk of incorrect information if I don’t verify it.”* A student from ICBT University stated, *“My experience has been helpful but uneven. The main benefit is that it saves time and improves clarity in my work. However, I encounter challenges because AI can sometimes give vague or irrelevant answers. This forces me to double-check everything.”* Overall, students see AI as a useful, supportive tool that enhances learning while preserving independent thinking and active engagement.

3.2.5. Use of AI to enhance personalized learning

Chen and Xie et al. (2022) define AI as capable of simplifying complex concepts, providing step-by-step explanations, and offering targeted support for peer learning or collaborative study. In our data, students reported using AI to create personalized exam revision plans and to assist classmates in better understanding difficult content. Therefore, AI supports learning. In addition, also supports peer support and collaborative learning activities. For example, a student from Jaffna University said, *“Yes, I once used AI to create a personalized revision plan for my exams based on the topics I found most difficult. I also helped a friend by using AI to break down complex concepts and definition into simpler explanations for them.”* a student from Eastern University explained, *“Yes, I used AI to create a revision timetable that matched my exam schedule and my weaker areas. I also made flashcards for my friend to help them remember key definitions more easily.”* In conclusion, AI is a valuable tool for

both individual and collaborative learning. Students used it to create personalized revision plans, clarify difficult concepts, and support peers in understanding challenging topics. These findings highlight that AI not only enhances personal study efficiency but also fosters peer learning and collaborative academic engagement when used thoughtfully.

3.2.6. Use of AI to enhance personalized learning

Jiang et al. (2023) caution that AI-generated content can be inaccurate or misleading, requiring careful verification. This aligns with interview findings, where students identified accuracy as their biggest concern. Many noted that AI sometimes provides convincing but incorrect answers, while others pointed to the cost of advanced features as a barrier. Students also expressed worry that overreliance on AI could weaken critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. These insights suggest that although AI is a valuable learning aid, it must be used responsibly to preserve independent thinking and academic integrity. For example, a student from SLTC University explained, ***“Main challenges are accuracy of information and cost, since not all tools are free. Another concern is becoming too dependent on AI, which might reduce critical thinking skills.”*** similarly, a student from Eastern University stated, ***“The challenges I face include limited access to high-level features because of cost, doubts about the reliability of responses, and the danger of becoming too reliant on the technology.”*** In summary, Students find AI tools helpful for learning, especially for organizing information and supporting studies. However, concerns about accuracy, cost, and over-reliance are common. These challenges suggest that AI is most effective when used thoughtfully, combined with independent verification, critical thinking, and active engagement with the material.

3.2.7. Importance of AI training in students' learning

Research shows that while AI can ease repetitive tasks, it cannot replace creativity, critical thinking, or deep understanding (Holmes et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2023). (Chen and Xie et al., 2022) stress the importance of teaching students how to use AI effectively, so they benefit without compromising learning quality. Our interviews show this: students valued AI as support but not as a substitute, and many said they would commit 2–4 hours weekly to structured training to use it more responsibly. For example, a student from AMDT University said, ***“I think AI can take over certain repetitive tasks, such as grammar checking or summarization, but it cannot substitute human creativity and understanding. Learning to use AI effectively is very important. I would be willing to spend about 2–3 hours per week on proper training.”*** similarly, a student from Eastern University noted, ***“AI can automate routine parts of learning, such as correcting grammar or summarizing readings. However, it cannot replace students' creativity or critical thinking. Training is very important. I would be open to spending 2 to 4 hours each week on structured AI workshops.”*** In summary, AI can help with repetitive tasks but cannot replace human creativity or critical thinking. Students see proper training as

essential and are willing to spend time learning to use AI effectively, viewing it as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for their own thinking.

3.3. Ethics and Safety in the use of AI

3.3.1. Ethical and Safety concerns of AI in education

Jiang et al. (2023) and Sajja et al. (2023) note that AI in education raises ethical and safety concerns, particularly around plagiarism, accuracy, and privacy. Interview data echoed these worries: students feared copying AI content without understanding it, being misled by inaccurate outputs, and not knowing how their data is handled. These insights highlight the need to use AI carefully to protect academic integrity, data security, and learning quality. for example, a student from Jaffna University said, *“My biggest concern is plagiarism. some students might just copy AI-generated answers without understanding the content. I also worry about incorrect or biased information, and how it might affect my work if I don’t check it carefully. Privacy is another concern because we don’t really know how AI tools store or use the data we type in.”* similarly, a student from Ruhuna University stated, *“I worry about plagiarism, as some students may copy AI answers without truly learning. I’m also concerned about unchecked false or biased information that could affect academic work. Data privacy is another issue, since it’s unclear how these tools collect and store personal information.* Literature and undergraduate feedback highlight plagiarism, accuracy, and data privacy as the main concerns when using AI in education. Students may copy AI-generated content without understanding it, risk relying on misleading or biased information, and face uncertainty about how their personal data is handled. These findings underscore the need for careful and responsible use of AI to protect academic integrity, ensure accurate learning, and safeguard privacy.

3.3.2. Standards for Transparent use of AI

Holmes et al. (2023) note that students who verify AI outputs, paraphrase content, and acknowledge AI use are better able to maintain originality and integrity. Interview data supported this, showing that students often treat AI as a reference, cross-check answers with reliable sources, and rewrite suggestions in their own words. Some even acknowledged AI’s role in their work. These practices help keep assignments authentic while allowing students to responsibly benefit from AI. For example, a student from Jaffna University said, *“Yes, I have set some personal rules for myself. I always cross-check AI answers with other sources, and if I use AI to help with an assignment, I rephrase it in my own words and sometimes mention that AI assisted me. This way, I am confident the final work is mine, and I avoid copying directly.*

These rules have helped me stay original while still using AI as a support tool.” Similarly, a student from NSBM Green University explained, *“Yes, I have set some personal guidelines when using AI. I*

don't rely on the content directly. Instead, I cross-check the information with textbooks, lecture notes, or reliable online sources. If I use it for assignments, I make sure to rephrase everything in my own style and add my own thoughts. Sometimes I also acknowledge that I used AI as a support tool." The findings suggest that students can use AI as a helpful tool while maintaining the authenticity of their work. By setting simple personal rules. Like checking AI information against reliable sources, rewriting it in their own words, and acknowledging AI's support, they stay in control of their assignments. The interviews show that these practices not only prevent plagiarism but also give students confidence that their work is original and trustworthy, allowing them to benefit from AI without compromising their learning.

3.3.3. Responsible AI use in studies

Kasneci et al. (2023) and Holmes et al. (2023) emphasize that students should treat AI suggestions as starting points, expanding or rewriting them in their own words. This was showed in the interviews, where students described using AI mainly for guidance such as checking grammar, improving phrasing, or generating ideas while ensuring the final content reflected their own understanding. For instance, a student from Ruhuna University stated, ***"I make sure not to depend on AI to write my assignments. I use it only for suggestions or examples. Then, I rewrite everything in my own words to show my understanding."*** a student from E-Soft University explained, ***"To prevent dishonest use, I write my first draft myself. AI is only used afterward for minor improvements, and I make sure to rewrite everything in my own way."*** similarly, a student from Eastern University said, ***"I avoid directly using AI answers. I only refer to it for structure or examples, then I rewrite the material so that it reflects my own effort."*** Overall, the findings show that students view AI as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for their own thinking. They consistently emphasize using AI to guide ideas, check grammar, or improve phrasing, while ensuring that all content is rewritten in their own words. By doing so, students maintain academic integrity, demonstrate their true understanding, and prevent over-reliance on AI in their learning process. This reflects a thoughtful, responsible approach to integrating AI into academic work.

4. Conclusion

This study explored how Sri Lankan undergraduates are engaging with AI tools in their academic lives, with tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Turnitin becoming part of their daily routines and supporting writing, research, and understanding complex topics, emphasizing that Sri Lankan students are more inclined to use AI for practical aspects, such as grammar checking, paraphrasing than for conceptualizations through AI. The data revealed that students mainly used AI during high-pressure situations, such as exams or assignment deadlines, but most preferred drafting their own work first and

then relying on AI for grammar checking, paraphrasing, or generating ideas, indicating a conscious effort to maintain originality. Many also demonstrated ethical awareness by setting boundaries to avoid plagiarism and used AI collaboratively to support peers. These findings suggest that AI is reshaping academic behaviour by enhancing efficiency, creativity, and collaboration, which highlights the importance of universities providing clear guidelines, structured training, and equitable access to ensure responsible adoption while preparing students with essential digital skills. However, the study has limitations: the sample size was small and drawn from a limited number of universities, focusing only on undergraduates, which may not fully represent the wider student population in Sri Lanka. This research explored how undergraduates in Sri Lanka across both private and local universities use AI in their academic lives. Moving beyond assumptions, we found that students are integrating AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quillbot into their workflows to enhance efficiency. They use AI to brainstorm ideas, draft assignments, and summarize complex materials, seeing it as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for effort. The study highlights the need to examine AI's long-term effects on critical thinking and academic integrity. While limited to certain universities, the findings provide valuable insights and point to future research directions, including broader student samples and strategies for responsible AI integration in higher education.

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