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Student Interactions with AI Chatbots in Academic Activities: A Qualitative Study at Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, particularly AI chatbots such as ChatGPT, has fundamentally transformed the ways in which students engage with academic activities in Islamic higher education institutions. This study aims to analyze the patterns of interaction and communication experiences of students at Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon (UI BBC) in utilizing AI chatbots for academic purposes, examined through the theoretical lens of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research conducted in-depth interviews with ten purposively selected students. The findings identify four principal interaction modalities: transactional-rapid, elaborative-dialogic, productive-generative, and reflective-critical. A distinctive finding reveals that Islamic values such as amanah (trustworthiness) and thalabul ilmi (the pursuit of knowledge) function as ethical moderators in students' utilization of AI. This study recommends the development of an AI literacy program grounded in Islamic values. In conclusion, AI chatbots have become important communication partners in students' academic activities, offering both opportunities and challenges for higher education. The study implies the importance of developing value-based AI literacy programs, strengthening ethical awareness, and designing pedagogical strategies that integrate AI technology productively while maintaining academic integrity and Islamic educational values.

Keywords: AI chatbot; computer-mediated communication; students; islamic higher education; digital literacy

INTRODUCTION

The exponential pace of digital technological advancement in the second decade of the twenty-first century has produced profound structural implications across nearly every dimension of human life, with higher education being no exception. Universities, which have historically served as centers for the production and transmission of knowledge, are now confronted with mounting pressure to transform themselves in alignment with a continuously evolving digital ecosystem. In this context, the presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer merely a futuristic technological issue but a reality that has already penetrated everyday academic practice. A variety of AI-powered tools ranging from intelligent search engines to natural language-based virtual assistants are now utilized by students as integral components of their learning strategies. According to Selwyn (2022), the integration of AI into higher education has fundamentally altered the relationship between students, knowledge, and educational institutions, as the role of the instructor as the sole authority of knowledge is increasingly distributed among various digital agents accessible at any time and from any location. This transformation demands a deeper and more critical understanding of how students genuinely interact with AI technology within the context of their learning.

One of the most significant manifestations of AI's penetration into students' academic lives is the emergence and rapid adoption of Large Language Model (LLM)-based AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot. Unlike conventional software that operates based on explicitly encoded rules, the latest generation of AI chatbots is capable of

understanding conversational context, generating coherent text, answering complex questions, translating languages, composing essays, and assisting with computer programming all through an intuitive natural language conversational interface. Bates (2022), in his work on teaching in the digital age, affirms that the emergence of these AI tools marks a paradigm shift in the ways students access and process academic information, moving from a passive model of information retrieval toward an active and adaptive model of interactive dialogue. The capacity of AI chatbots to respond in a personal and contextual manner renders them not merely tools for information retrieval, but new communicative entities that enable dialogic and continuous message exchange a characteristic that fundamentally transforms the manner in which students navigate their independent learning processes.

To comprehend the phenomenon of student-AI chatbot interaction in depth, the framework of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), as developed by Joseph Walther in 1990, offers a highly relevant and productive analytical lens. CMC, as explained by Morissan (2013) in Teori Komunikasi: Individu Hingga Massa (Communication Theory: From Individual to Mass), refers to the process of message exchange between two or more parties mediated by computer or digital technology, in which factors such as the absence of nonverbal cues, asynchronicity, and anonymity influence the quality and dynamics of the communication that occurs. While Walther (1996) initially focused on human-to-human communication mediated by computers, the advancement of AI technology has expanded the scope of CMC to encompass interactions between humans and AI-based conversational agents. In this context, AI chatbots function not only as a medium or channel of communication, but also as communicative entities capable of producing, responding to, and adapting messages based on user input. The CMC framework enables researchers to analyze the dynamics of interaction between students and AI chatbots across the dimensions of communication process, relational quality, and the meanings constructed by students regarding their digital communication experiences.

The phenomenon of AI chatbot use among Indonesian students is no longer a marginal trend confined to a small segment of early adopters. Data from the We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023) report indicate that Indonesia is among the countries with the highest AI technology adoption rates in Southeast Asia, with more than 60 percent of active internet users reporting the use of at least one AI-based platform in their daily activities. Among students, this figure is even higher, given that this age group represents the most intensive and adaptive users of digital technology. Rahmawati et al. (2024),in their study on patterns of ChatGPT use among students at Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, found that more than 78 percent of respondents used AI chatbots at least once per week for academic purposes, ranging from sourcing references and assisting with paper writing to clarifying concepts that proved difficult to grasp through conventional lectures. This trend indicates that AI chatbots have transitioned from being optional supplementary tools to increasingly indispensable components of students' learning ecosystems in the digital age.

The interactions that develop between students and AI chatbots in academic contexts possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from other forms of digital communication. Whereas student interactions with lecturers or peers on digital platforms such as discussion forums or messaging groups retain the nuances of human-to-human communication with all its emotional and social complexity, interactions with AI chatbots introduce a markedly different

dynamic: students are faced with an entity that is linguistically responsive yet devoid of consciousness, emotion, or lived experience as possessed by human beings. Sarker et al. (2023), in their research on student interactions with academic virtual assistants, found that students develop distinctive communication strategies when engaging with AI, including the formulation of more explicit and structured questions, tolerance for response ambiguity, and adjustment of expectations regarding the quality and relevance of received information. Furthermore, their research reveals that interaction quality is significantly shaped by students' digital communication competencies specifically, their ability to formulate effective prompts, critically evaluate outputs, and integrate AI-generated information into a broader framework of academic understanding.

From the perspective of communicative purpose, students utilize AI chatbots to fulfill at least four distinct categories of academic needs. First, instrumental needs using AI to complete concrete tasks such as summarizing articles, translating texts, or compiling initial reference lists. Second, cognitive needs using AI as a dialogic partner to understand complex concepts through stepwise and interactive explanations. Third, affective needs using AI to reduce academic anxiety, obtain confirmation of understanding, or simply have an interlocutor that does not pass social judgment when faced with learning difficulties. Fourth, social needs using AI as a simulation of academic discourse when access to peers or lecturers is temporally or physically restricted. Wollny et al. (2021), in their comprehensive review of chatbot use in education, identified that the effectiveness of AI chatbots as academic tools depends significantly on the alignment between system design, purpose of use, and user competence factors that interact dynamically and cannot be reduced to simple cause-and-effect relationships. A comprehensive understanding of these varied purposes and usage patterns is essential for formulating academic policies that are responsive to the realities of AI use on campus.

Beneath the externally observable patterns of use lies a dimension of subjective student experience that is equally important to understand. Students' perceptions of AI chatbots as partners in academic communication are shaped by a range of factors from the level of trust placed in the accuracy of AI-generated information and psychological comfort in interacting with a non-human entity, to beliefs about the ethics of AI use in academic contexts as they relate to issues of originality and intellectual integrity. Kasneci et al. (2023), in their systematic review of ChatGPT's impact on education, found that students display an ambivalent attitude toward AI chatbots: on one hand, they acknowledge its considerable practical benefits in accelerating task completion and broadening access to information; on the other, many express concerns about the potential for over-reliance, which could erode their own capacity for critical thinking and intellectual creativity. This ambivalence reflects the complexity of the relationship between students and AI chatbots a relationship that cannot be adequately understood through quantitative data on frequency or volume of use alone.

This study situates Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon (UI BBC) as its research site, an institution that possesses contextually distinctive and significant characteristics. As an institution of higher education operating within an Islamic ecosystem and bearing the slogan of 'digital campus,' UI BBC integrates Islamic values and scholarly traditions into every aspect of its academic processes. This context raises academically compelling questions: how do students in an Islamic educational environment negotiate their use of AI chatbots against

Islamic values that emphasize intellectual honesty, independent reasoning, and moral responsibility in the pursuit of knowledge? Hamid & Yusoff (2023), in their study on AI technology adoption at Islamic higher education institutions in Malaysia, found that the dimension of religious values plays a significant moderating role in shaping students' attitudes and AI usage behaviors, with students possessing a stronger Islamic orientation tending to be more selective and critical in utilizing AI for academic purposes. This finding suggests that studies on student-AI chatbot interactions at Islamic universities cannot disregard the dimension of religious values and ethics, which constitute an integral part of students' academic identities.

The intensive use of AI chatbots by students not only affects individual users but also has the potential to more broadly transform patterns of academic communication within higher education institutions. As students grow increasingly accustomed to receiving instant answers, personalized explanations, and round-the-clock feedback from AI chatbots, their expectations regarding the quality and speed of academic communication with lecturers may also begin to shift. Hmelo-Silver & Chinn (2023) caution that over-reliance on AI in the learning process risks eroding fundamental pedagogical values such as patience in the pursuit of understanding, perseverance in the face of cognitive difficulty, and the capacity for deep dialogue with fellow human beings a risk that educational institutions must address proactively through careful curriculum design and evidence-based AI usage policies. On the other hand, Ho et al. (2023) argue that when used wisely and purposefully, AI chatbots can serve as a catalyst that enriches students' learning experiences in ways that conventional instructional methods cannot achieve, particularly in terms of personalized learning and knowledge accessibility unconstrained by geography or time.

Although the body of scholarship on AI use in higher education is growing significantly on a global scale, research that specifically examines the dynamics of student-AI chatbot interactions in the context of Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia particularly using the CMC framework as an analytical lens remains extremely limited. The majority of existing studies are quantitative in nature and focus on measurable variables such as frequency of use, impact on academic performance, or perceived usefulness, without deeply exploring the subjective communicative experiences of students, which are in fact at the heart of the human-AI interaction phenomenon. Abduljawad et al. (2024) identified a similar gap in their literature review and affirmed that qualitative research focused on meaning, experience, and the processes by which students construct understanding in their interactions with AI is urgently needed to generate more holistic and contextually grounded knowledge. It is precisely this gap that the present study seeks to address.

The significance of this study is multilayered, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of the CMC framework in the context of human-AI interactions, extending and contextualizing concepts developed by Walther (1990) and codified by Morissan (2013) into the new reality of digital communication in which AI agents constitute one party in the interaction. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as an empirical basis for the leadership of Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon in formulating a balanced AI usage policy one that promotes the productive utilization of this technology to enhance learning quality while simultaneously building ethical and pedagogical safeguards that protect the integrity of the educational process. Putri & Widodo (2023)

emphasize that AI policies in higher education that are not grounded in empirical understanding of how students actually interact with this technology risk producing regulations that are ineffective whether excessively permissive or excessively restrictive. This research responds to the need for deep empirical data and understanding, with the aspiration that its findings may contribute not only to Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon, but also to the broader development of AI-based education policy at the national level.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to understand student interactions with AI chatbots in academic activities at Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on students' communication experiences, perceptions, and meanings when using AI chatbots in academic activities (Sugiyono, 2022). The study adopts the theoretical perspective of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) as developed by Joseph Walther as the foundational framework for analyzing communication mediated by digital technology (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 10 students selected using purposive sampling. Informants were characterized as active students at Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon who routinely use AI chatbots such as ChatGPT or Gemini in their academic activities. Secondary data were obtained from books, academic journals, and documentation relevant to the research (Moleong, 2021). Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation to establish research validity (Sugiyono, 2022). Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2020).

RESULTS

Patterns of Student Interaction with AI Chatbots in Academic Activities

The first finding to emerge from the series of in-depth interviews with ten active students at Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon (UI BBC) was the diversity of interaction patterns independently developed by each student when engaging with AI chatbots for academic purposes. This diversity was not random in nature; rather, it reflected the differing academic needs and varying levels of digital literacy maturity among the informants. Analytically, these patterns can be mapped onto four principal modalities, each possessing distinctive characteristics in terms of communication process, purpose, and dialogue quality. An understanding of these four modalities is essential for evaluating the extent to which AI chatbot use genuinely contributes to the deepening of students' academic understanding, rather than merely accelerating the superficial completion of tasks.

The first modality is transactional-rapid interaction brief exchanges of one to two conversational turns aimed at obtaining factual answers, term definitions, or concept clarifications instantaneously. Nearly all informants identified this modality as the earliest form of interaction they engaged in with AI chatbots before subsequently developing into more complex forms. Within the framework of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) as developed by Walther (1996) and contextualized for Indonesia by Morissan (2013), this type

of interaction leverages the structural advantages of technology-mediated communication: the ability to transmit and receive messages across space and time without the social pressures typically accompanying face-to-face communication. Students need not worry about a lecturer's reaction to a question they might consider too basic, as the communicative entity before them lacks the capacity for social judgment. This freedom from social pressure is identified by Sarker et al. (2023) as one of the most significant factors driving students to use AI chatbots more openly and expansively than they would when consulting the same confusion with a lecturer or peer.

The second modality, found more frequently among students from analytically oriented programs such as Islamic Family Law and Islamic Education Management, is elaborative-dialogic interaction. In this pattern, students construct a series of layered and interconnected questions, prompting the AI chatbot to expand its explanations, present alternative perspectives, or simplify concepts through analogies and contextual examples. This process structurally resembles a Socratic tutoring session in which understanding is built incrementally through continuously deepening dialogue. Wollny et al. (2021), in their comprehensive systematic review of chatbot use in education, affirm that this elaborative modality holds the greatest pedagogical potential among all forms of AI chatbot interaction, as it keeps students cognitively active throughout the process. Compared to simply receiving a final answer, the process of posing follow-up questions and progressively synthesizing the received responses activates a mechanism of understanding construction that is far deeper and more durable in long-term memory.

The third modality is productive-generative interaction, in which students explicitly use AI chatbots as assistants in producing textual outputs such as essay outlines, draft opening paragraphs, translations of academic texts, or literature summaries. This modality generated the most ambivalence among informants. On one hand, they candidly acknowledged the efficiency it offered in the face of tight deadlines. On the other, a number of informants expressed considerable concern about the boundary between using AI as a legitimate auxiliary tool and using it in ways that potentially violate academic integrity. Kasneci et al. (2023), in their systematic review drawing on more than one hundred studies of ChatGPT's impact on education, found that similar ambivalence appears consistently across diverse global higher education contexts, indicating that the tension between efficiency and integrity is a structurally inherent challenge in the adoption of generative AI chatbots in academic settings not merely a matter of individual user maturity.

The fourth modality the least common yet intellectually most rich is reflective-critical interaction, in which students use AI chatbots as partners to test and strengthen arguments they are developing, identify logical gaps in their own thinking, or explore the implications of an intellectual position more systematically. In this modality, students do not position themselves as passive recipients of information, but rather as active thinkers who use AI chatbots as a mirror to reflect and clarify their own frameworks of thought. Hmelo-Silver and Chinn (2023) argue that this represents the most authentic alignment between AI chatbot use and the fundamental purposes of higher education: not as a substitute for the thinking process, but as a catalyst that sharpens and enriches it. The fact that only a small proportion of informants consistently employ this modality demonstrates that the development of students' capacity to

use AI chatbots in a reflective and critical manner must become part of a planned institutional pedagogical agenda it cannot be left to develop organically on its own.

The Computer-Mediated Communication Dimension and the Construction of Meaning Regarding AI Chatbot Identity

A more in-depth analysis through the CMC framework reveals three dimensions that simultaneously shape the quality and character of students' interactions with AI chatbots. The first dimension can be described as paradoxical communicative depersonalization. Although AI chatbots fundamentally lack a genuine personal identity, lived experience, and the capacity for emotion, the majority of informants reported the development of a sense resembling relational comfort in their interactions with it. They felt more at ease asking questions, more willing to admit ignorance, and more open in expressing confusion compared to when they were faced with a lecturer or even fellow students. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of hyperpersonal communication proposed by Walther (1996), in which the absence of nonverbal cues in computer-mediated communication paradoxically enables users to construct a communication experience that is more comfortable and open than what might occur in face-to-face interaction. Bates (2022) notes that this kind of psychological comfort, when leveraged intelligently, can create a productive space for students to explore intellectually without the burden of social judgment that frequently inhibits communication in conventional academic settings.

The second dimension concerns the unique experience of temporality in interactions with AI chatbots. Unlike computer-mediated communication between human beings, which is generally asynchronous with varying temporal gaps between message and response, interaction with AI chatbots combines the temporal flexibility of asynchronous communication with the response speed that resembles synchronous conversation. Students can interact at any time including in the middle of the night before a submission deadline without the need to wait for another party's availability or willingness. Some informants perceived this combination as a primary advantage that no conventional academic communication mode could match. However, a number of other informants identified the drawbacks of this immediacy in a more critical manner: the ease of obtaining instant answers had, by their own admission, reduced their intrinsic motivation to struggle independently with academic problems before seeking assistance. This finding aligns with the cautions of Ho et al. (2023) regarding the importance of distinguishing between productive struggle the kind of cognitive effort that produces deep and meaningful learning and unproductive frustration that genuinely needs to be addressed through external assistance. Wise AI chatbot use is that which eliminates the latter without sacrificing the former.

The third and most complex dimension is the variation in how students construct meaning regarding the identity of AI chatbots as communicative entities. A fairly wide spectrum was evident among informants. At one end of the spectrum, a small number of students tended to anthropomorphize AI chatbots significantly: they interacted with it in ways resembling conversations with a human tutor, using informal forms of address, expressing gratitude, and occasionally soliciting AI chatbot's 'opinion' on evaluative matters. This type of identity construction carries concerning pedagogical implications, as students who excessively anthropomorphize AI chatbots tend to accept its output without adequate critical scrutiny. They

unconsciously treat AI chatbot responses in the same way they would treat statements from a human being who possesses knowledge and moral responsibility for the truth of what is said whereas AI chatbots possess neither. Kasneci et al. (2023) refer to this tendency as epistemic overreliance and identify it as one of the most serious risks of AI chatbot use in educational contexts.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, only a small number of informants possessed a more accurate and critical understanding of the nature of AI chatbots as computational systems that generate text based on statistical patterns within an extremely large language corpus not based on genuine understanding or knowledge. Students in this group developed consistently more effective and critical utilization strategies: they used AI chatbots as starting points for exploration, then actively verified specific claims through primary sources. They were also more skilled in formulating prompts that yielded higher-quality outputs, as they understood that the clarity and specificity of a question directly influence the relevance and accuracy of the answers obtained. This competency in formulating effective prompts known in contemporary literature as prompt engineering literacy has been identified by Rahmawati et al. (2024) as a crucial new digital competency for students in the generative AI era and serves as one of the most reliable indicators of maturity in academic AI utilization.

Students' Academic Needs and a Typology of AI Chatbot Utilization

Analysis of the interview data identified four categories of academic needs that drive students to turn to AI chatbots, each carrying different pedagogical implications. The first category is instrumental in nature: students use AI chatbots to complete concrete and measurable tasks such as summarizing articles in foreign languages, finding equivalents for technical terms, or compiling initial reference lists. This instrumental use is the easiest to evaluate for effectiveness, yet is also the most susceptible to the risk of excessive cognitive offloading a condition in which students delegate their thinking processes to a tool to the point where they no longer process, verify, or internalize the information obtained. Selwyn (2022) warns that excessive dependence on digital tools for the completion of intellectual tasks risks eroding students' cognitive capacities over the long term an irony that educational institutions must be conscious of when responding to AI chatbot adoption among their students.

The second category is cognitive in nature: students use AI chatbots as dialogic partners to build understanding of complex concepts through stepwise and interactive explanations. This is the category of use that most consistently correlates with meaningful and satisfying learning experiences, based on informants' reports. Students who used AI chatbots in a cognitive capacity reported genuine intellectual satisfaction not merely the satisfaction of having completed a task. This finding aligns with the principles of scaffolded learning within the Vygotskian tradition of the Zone of Proximal Development: when AI chatbots are employed as scaffolding that helps students reach levels of understanding not yet attainable independently, while still requiring them to actively think, synthesize, and construct meaning, the technology functions as a genuine pedagogical partner (Hmelo-Silver & Chinn, 2023). Ideally, all academic AI chatbot use would be directed toward this cognitive modality.

The third category is affective in nature, and this represents a finding that is rarely discussed in the literature yet was highly prominent in this study's data. A number of informants honestly acknowledged that they use AI chatbots not only to obtain information, but also to

reduce academic anxiety: the fear of negative evaluation for questions perceived as 'unintelligent,' concern about the inability to complete tasks to the required standard, or simply the need to confirm that their existing understanding is correct before risking it in class discussion. AI chatbots provide a psychologically safe space free from the risk of negative social consequences. Although this affective function may, in the short term, help students overcome barriers in the learning process, in the long term there is a risk that dependence on this artificial safe space may in fact prevent students from developing the intellectual resilience and academic courage required in genuine professional and scholarly life.

The fourth category is social in nature: students use AI chatbots as a simulation of academic discussion forums when access to peers or lecturers is restricted temporally or physically. Several informants who lived in boarding houses far from campus and lacked a strong academic peer network stated that AI chatbots had become the only interlocutor available to them outside class hours. This finding reveals a dimension of accessibility that is frequently overlooked in debates about AI in education: for some students, AI chatbots are not merely a more convenient alternative to consultations with lecturers or peers, but the only available channel through which to fulfill their dialogic academic needs at critical moments in the learning process. Abduljawad et al. (2024) cite this dimension of equitable access as one of the strongest arguments for the planned integration of AI chatbots into the higher education ecosystem, particularly in developing countries where high student-to-faculty ratios frequently limit the quality and quantity of individual academic interactions.

Islamic Values as Ethical Moderators in AI Chatbot Utilization

One of the most distinctive findings that differentiates this study from comparable investigations conducted in general higher education contexts is the prominent emergence of Islamic ethics as a factor that actively and significantly moderates UI BBC students' AI chatbot usage behavior. Far from the naive assumption that religious values function as barriers to technology adoption, the findings of this study demonstrate the contrary: internalized Islamic values serve as an ethical navigation system that helps students identify the moral limits of AI utilization they can justify, and in many cases drives them toward more critical and responsible patterns of use. Hamid & Yusoff (2023), in their study of AI technology adoption at Islamic higher education institutions in Malaysia, identified a similar pattern and concluded that a strong Islamic orientation correlates positively with selectivity and circumspection in AI use not with its rejection.

Concretely, the value of amanah (trustworthiness and moral responsibility) appeared most frequently in informants' narratives as the principle limiting unethical AI chatbot use. One informant from the Islamic Education Management Program disclosed that he consciously restrained himself from asking AI chatbots to write his entire paper, as he regarded such an act as a betrayal of the trust placed in him by his lecturer and institution. The value of thalabul ilmi (earnestness in the pursuit of knowledge) was also explicitly cited by several informants as the principle motivating them not to take shortcuts that sacrifice the learning process itself for the sake of merely producing a final product to submit. These values operate not as external prohibitions imposed from without, but as an internal moral compass already internalized as part of their academic identities as students in an Islamic educational environment.

Equally compelling is the emergence of an informal ethical discourse developing organically among students themselves regarding the justifiable limits of AI chatbot use. Several informants mentioned the existence of a kind of 'unwritten rule' that circulates and is generally accepted among fellow students for example, that using AI chatbots to understand concepts and deepen knowledge is academically 'permissible,' while using it to produce written work subsequently claimed as one's own intellectual output is 'impermissible.' The emergence of this informal normative discourse reflects an active process of normalization undertaken by the student community in responding to new technology a phenomenon Selwyn (2022) terms the vernacular ethics of AI use. More significantly, the fact that this discourse employs Islamic conceptual frameworks (the halal-haram categories) demonstrates that students' religious identity is not merely a personal attribute separate from their academic lives, but an active cultural resource deployed to give meaning and direction to the use of new technology.

This values dimension also carries significant implications for how students approach the phenomenon of hallucination the tendency of AI chatbots to produce information that appears linguistically convincing yet is factually inaccurate, including the citation of academic references that do not exist. Several informants with a stronger Islamic orientation demonstrated a higher degree of skepticism toward AI chatbot outputs, as within the Islamic scholarly tradition, the verification of sources and the authenticity of information constitute a fundamental methodological obligation. The tradition of hadith scholarship with its rigorous methodology of transmission and chain-of-authority (sanad) verification can be viewed as a cultural precursor to the critical stance toward information sources that is precisely the most urgently needed competency in the generative AI era. Putri and Widodo (2023) emphasize that AI literacy programs developed at Islamic higher education institutions can and should leverage this epistemological cultural capital as a foundation for cultivating a critical disposition toward AI-generated information.

Implications for Academic Policy and Curriculum Development

The totality of this study's findings collectively generates a series of concrete and actionable implications for the academic policies of UI BBC and comparable Islamic higher education institutions. The first and most urgent implication is the need to develop a structured AI literacy program integrated into the curriculum. The wide variation in AI literacy maturity identified among informants demonstrates that students cannot be expected to develop this competency independently through an unguided trial-and-error process. Such a process is not only inefficient but also risks generating maladaptive usage patterns including epistemic overreliance and unethical use before correction can be made. The intended AI literacy program should encompass a basic technical understanding of how large language models function, the competency to formulate effective prompts, skills in critically verifying AI outputs, and an ethical framework for evaluating the limits of use that can be justified both academically and morally. Abduljawad et al. (2024) identify similar components as key elements of an effective AI literacy program in higher education.

The second implication concerns academic task design. The findings of this study suggest that the most productive institutional approach is not to impose a blanket prohibition on AI chatbot use, but rather to design academic tasks that pedagogically and intelligently integrate the potential of AI chatbots while still demanding critical thinking processes that cannot be

delegated to a machine. Assignments that require students to critically evaluate AI-generated outputs, identify errors within them, compare them with primary source perspectives, or use them as starting points to be substantially developed and critiqued are examples of approaches that position AI chatbots as stimuli for thought rather than substitutes for thinking. Bates (2022) argues that this kind of adaptation of instructional design is the most realistic and constructive pedagogical response to the reality of AI use among students a reality that cannot be technically contained.

The third implication is the need for active student involvement as partners in the formulation of AI chatbot usage norms on campus. The finding of an informal ethical discourse that has already developed organically among students provides a strong foundation for this approach. UI BBC students are not wholly passive in their response to new technology; they actively construct meanings and usage norms through Islamic value frameworks they already possess. A wise institution will harness this normative energy by involving students in open dialogue forums on the ethics of AI use from an Islamic perspective, so that the resulting policies carry stronger social legitimacy and are more likely to be voluntarily observed being experienced as the product of a shared reflective process rather than regulations imposed from above. This participatory approach is also in alignment with the Islamic pedagogical tradition that emphasizes the formation of intrinsic moral consciousness through a genuine process of tarbiyah (moral formation), rather than mere external compliance with rules.

The fourth implication touches on the dimension of human resources specifically, the development of lecturers' capacity to integrate AI chatbots in a pedagogically intelligent manner into their teaching practice. Lecturers who lack adequate understanding of AI chatbot capabilities and limitations will be unable to design academic tasks that effectively harness its positive potential while mitigating its risks. Professional training and development for lecturers in the area of AI literacy should be an institutional priority of no lesser importance than the development of AI literacy programs for students (Sundar et al., 2023). Rahmawati et al. (2024) emphasize that a healthy AI utilization ecosystem in higher education requires adequate competency from all stakeholders not only from students as direct users.

CONCLUSION

This study has successfully illuminated the complexity and richness of the communication experiences of students at Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon in their interactions with AI chatbots for academic purposes. Through the lens of Computer-Mediated Communication, four principal interaction modalities were identified reflecting diverse academic needs: transactional-rapid, elaborative-dialogic, productive-generative, and reflective-critical. The four dimensions of need driving this utilization instrumental, cognitive, affective, and social provide a useful analytical framework for understanding why students turn to AI chatbots and how the quality of the resulting learning experiences varies significantly according to the modality employed.

The most distinctive and original finding of this study is the active moderating role of Islamic values in shaping the ethical limits of AI chatbot utilization a finding that suggests Islamic higher education institutions not only face distinctive challenges in confronting the AI revolution, but also possess unique and valuable cultural capital with which to respond to it constructively. The values of amanah, intellectual honesty, and earnestness in the pursuit of

knowledge have been demonstrated to operate not as barriers to technology adoption, but as a moral compass that directs utilization toward patterns that are more critical, responsible, and pedagogically meaningful. The most important implication for academic policy is the need for an approach that positions the development of values-based AI literacy as an institutional priority, engages students as active partners in the formulation of usage norms, and designs a teaching-learning ecosystem that leverages the potential of AI chatbots intelligently without sacrificing the fundamental pedagogical goals that constitute the very heart of the Islamic higher education mission.

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