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AI did their homework

According to plagiarism detection platform Turnitin, over 22 million, or about 11% of the more than 200 million papers it reviewed, have at least 20% AI writing present. AI writing tools, such as ChatGPT, have become increasingly popular among Malaysian students. **> Reports on page 5 by GERARD GIMINO and BENJAMIN LEE**

> Over six million had at least 80% AI writing present

> Almost 50% of students surveyed have used generative AI tools

> Of these, 75% said they would use the technology even if it is banned

This visual is human-created, AI-aided

Students rely heavily on AI to excel in coursework

PETALING JAYA: The use of artificial intelligence (AI) writing tools such as ChatGPT has become increasingly popular among students. They find that it is quick to provide and compile information as well as simple to use.

Software engineering diploma student Vincent Ong, 21, said the use of AI writing tools for research has become the norm among most of his friends and peers.

"We mainly use it as a research model to find information, but I personally still find information from actual sources for comparison. The use of AI just makes all the tedious work of finding information from various sources and summarising it so much faster while also providing details that I was not aware of before," he said.

Ong added that while useful, AI writing tools should not be used to do an entire assignment or coursework.

Information and communication technology (ICT) diploma student Jordan Lim, 20, said the use of AI is becoming popular just like the search engine Google among his classmates.

"We use it very frequently and pretty much for everything as the explicit answers and information it provides are usually more thorough than those found in individual articles online. It helps explain certain parts or derive answers for topics that I struggle in, though we do not copy an entire assignment based on the answers it provides," Lim said.

Journalism degree student Christian Chung, 21, said using AI has become common among his peers and friends to generate ideas for their coursework.

"AI writing tools give a good starting point for us to build on as they are much faster at finding and compiling relevant information. They also help me to identify informative relevant links to what I'm writing on," he said.

Chung added that while using AI writing tools for an entire assignment would be unethical, the generated content and information from such tools are fair game as long as they meet assignment requirements.

However, a 22-year old ICT student, Hazeeq, expressed concern over AI as some of his coursemates use it during exams.

"Using ChatGPT has become a daily routine for them when it comes to all coursework, from assignments to quizzes and even during exams at times.

"I'm worried that some of my friends could become lazy and just depend entirely on AI writing tools to solve not just their coursework, but also other matters," he said.

Hazeeq said while he does not use AI to that extreme, he uses it often to help him learn better. He said AI helps to generate ideas and identify issues in his coding coursework.

"When I run out of ideas for a website, ChatGPT helps generate sample code ideas for me to start from, while highlighting and explaining my coding errors clearly so I don't make the same mistakes again," he added.

Balancing academic integrity and AI

The technology has a place in education but needs proper integration, say experts

By GERARD GIMINO
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PETALING JAYA: It's been a year since plagiarism detection platform Turnitin launched its artificial intelligence (AI) writing detection feature, and its findings are astonishing.

Of more than 200 million papers reviewed as at March 21 this year, over 22 million or about 11% had at least 20% of AI writing present.

More surprisingly, over six million or approximately 3% of the over 200 million papers reviewed had at least 80% AI writing, Turnitin said in a recent statement.

The detection feature integrates the AI writing report within the existing Turnitin workflow, providing educators with an overall percentage of the document that AI writing tools, like the ever-popular ChatGPT, may have generated.

Turnitin said the consistent presence of AI writing in their data highlighted a continued need to view the use of AI writing tools in education as a "complex, ever-evolving puzzle".

"Educators and institutions should look at various factors, or puzzle pieces, beyond detection.

"This includes open discussions with students regarding acceptable uses of AI writing in the classroom, reviewing academic policies and revising essay prompts," it said.

Turnitin chief product officer Annie Chechitelli said it is an important juncture in education where technologies transform learning and academic integrity is at stake.

"Everyone in education is looking for resources to enable them to perform at their best, as well as technologies, including our AI writing detection feature, to help advance learning without sacrificing academic integrity," she said in the same statement.

Turnitin also cited a recent study finding that nearly all students surveyed had used generative AI tools such as ChatGPT monthly, weekly or daily.

"The survey found that 75% of those surveyed say they will continue to use the technology even if faculties or institutions ban them," it said, noting generative AI usage's growth over the past year with more to come.

With this revelation, tertiary institutions say that educating students on the ethical use of said technology is crucial.

Noting that AI usage in education is not entirely a "bad thing", they said that integrating it into the curriculum and research could better prepare students for a future where the technology is integrated into jobs.

Vice-Chancellors' Council for Private Universities chairman Prof Mushtak Al-Atabi pointed out the paradox of AI in education, highlighting the potential to both simplify and complicate academic assessment.

He also noted how the advancement of AI tools could make the simplicity of copying and pasting assignments more tempting for students.

"This challenge compels institutions to adopt more human-centric assessment methods.

"The future may see students not merely submitting written work but also defending their ideas before panels of experts, ensuring a deeper engagement with their studies and a move away from rote learning.

"These experts could be drawn from the industry, further enhancing the link between academia and real life and improving the employability prospects for students," he said to *The Star*.

Prof Mushtak, who is also the Heriot-Watt University Malaysia provost and CEO, said plagiarism is often not a sign of laziness but a symptom of students failing to see value in their educational journey.

"They prioritise grades over learning, perhaps because the relevance of their studies to the real world is not apparent.

"The antidote is to cultivate a deep sense of purpose in students and explicitly connect the skills they are learning to the impacts they wish to make in the world," he said.

On the flipside, Prof Mushtak said AI could play a transformative role when it comes to educators' schedules.

"A significant portion of academic time is consumed by administrative duties, grading, and other tasks that, while necessary, do not directly contribute to inspiring students or enhancing learning.

"By automating routine tasks, AI can free educators to focus more on mentoring, coaching and truly engaging with their students," he said.

Sunway Education Group chief executive officer Prof Datuk Elizabeth Lee said they had several measures in place to mitigate the use of AI. This includes academic staff trained to use generative AI in teaching and learning and at the same time detect irresponsible use of it.

"Clear guidelines are in place for staff and students to iterate expectations on boundaries or limitations towards using AI-generative tools in their formative and summative assessments," she said.

Prof Lee, however, added that the group had encouraged the use of AI writing tools since ChatGPT was launched.

"Students must be taught to understand the limitations and boundaries between fair and unfair AI use," she said.

Prof Lee said it isn't solely about minimising AI use, but instead, preparing students for a future where AI-generative tools become job-integrated.

"It is also important for us to promote responsible and ethical AI use," she said, adding that AI can complement and enhance human abilities.

Prof Lee said the continuous evolution of AI has encouraged academicians to stay updated and rethink assessments of relevant learning outcomes.

"We cannot avoid how AI should be seen as a tool for augmenting ability and overcoming challenges.

"Resisting its usage will further enhance the gap between higher education provision and what students are taught as well as skills on demand in future job markets.

"Integrating AI into curriculum and research can better prepare our students," she said.

Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (Mapcu) president Datuk Parmjit Singh said AI writing tools are a positive evolution in technology for education.

"Incorporating them within the correct ethical utilisation is the way forward as AI tools, just like the scientific calculator in 1972, are here for a positive impact and will coexist with teaching and learning of the future.

"Banning these would also be pointless due to them being widely available and their seamless integration into word processing programmes," he said, adding that plagiarism detection tools such as Turnitin or CopyLeaks are helping to keep AI tools in check.

Assisted learning: Students (from left) Batriesya Ahmad Khalil, 20, Lim En Wei, 22, and Hanis Afidah, 20, from University Putra Malaysia's Faculty of Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences demonstrating the use of AI in doing their homework. — AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star

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