International Journal of Computer Information Systems and Industrial Management Applications
ISSN 2150-7988 Volume 18(20s) 2026 pp. 1660-1671
https://doi.org/10.70917/ijcisim-2026-6077
Article

Academic Integrity in the Age of Generative AI: South African Lecturers Perspectives on AI-Generated Students Assignments

Oluwatosin Bamigboye[1], Sheron Ndlovu[2], Xolile Patience Acheampong[3], Vusumzi Funda[4]

[1]Oluwatosin Bamigboye University of Fort Hare, Department of Business Innovations and Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management and Commerce, South Africa, Email : obamigboye@ufh.ac.za
[2]Sheron Ndlovu University of Fort Hare, Department of Libération studies, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, South Africa, Email : s.ndlovu@ufh.ac.za
[3]Xolile Patience Acheampong University of Fort Hare, Department of Libération studies, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, South Africa, Email : pacheampong@ufh.ac.za
[4]Vusumzi Funda University of Fort Hare, Department of Business Innovations and Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management and Commerce, South Africa, Email : vfunda@ufh.ac.za
Corresponding Author : obamigboye@ufh.ac.za/oluwatosin.bamigboye@gmail.com

Abstract: The rapid adoption of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has transformed higher education by creating new opportunities for learning while simultaneously challenging traditional conceptions of academic integrity. Despite increasing institutional concern, limited empirical evidence exists on how lecturers perceive AI-generated assignments, particularly within the context of developing countries. This study investigates South African lecturers' perceptions of academic integrity in relation to AI-assisted student work through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). A qualitative multi-case study was conducted involving twelve lecturers from two South African universities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis supported by NVivo 12. The findings reveal that lecturers recognise the educational potential of generative AI but remain concerned about declining authenticity, reduced critical thinking, challenges in detecting AI-generated content, and inconsistencies in institutional policies governing AI use. Attitudes toward AI, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control jointly influenced lecturers' intentions to accept, regulate, or discourage AI-assisted assignments. The study further highlights the need to shift from detection-oriented approaches toward authentic assessment practices, AI literacy, institutional policy development, and staff capacity building. The findings extend the application of the Theory of planned Behavior to AI-mediated assessment and provide practical recommendations for universities seeking to balance innovation with academic integrity in higher education

Keywords: Generative artificial intelligence, academic integrity, higher education, authentic assessment, and theory of planned behavior

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT into higher education has sparked global debates about academic integrity, pedagogical transformation, and ethical responsibility. In South Africa, where educational institutions grapple with historical inequities and resource constraints, AI adoption presents unique challenges for lecturers evaluating student work. Students now use tools like ChatGPT to draft essays, literature reviews, and research proposals, creating a detection crisis as AI-generated text becomes indistinguishable from human writing [34]. Generative AI's ability to produce coherent text within seconds has fundamentally altered the academic landscape. While these tools offer opportunities for enhancing learning and productivity, they also raise


Copyright: © 2026 by the authors

concerns about academic integrity. The ease with which students can generate assignments using AI challenges traditional assessment methods and the authenticity of student work [34]. The use of AI-generated content in student assignments introduces complex ethical dilemmas. Lecturers must discern between legitimate use of AI for learning enhancement and instances where AI use constitutes academic dishonesty. This distinction is often blurred, making it difficult to enforce academic integrity policies effectively [34]. To understand lecturers' perceptions and responses to AI-generated student work, this study employs the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Rest's Four-Component Model of ethical decision-making.

The TPB posits that an individual's behavioural intentions are influenced by their attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control [1, 10]. In the context of academic integrity, lecturers' intentions to address AI-generated assignments are shaped by their beliefs about the consequences, social pressures, and their confidence in managing such situations. Rest's Four-Component Model outlines the processes involved in ethical decision-making: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character [29]. Applying this model helps in understanding how lecturers recognize ethical issues related to AI use, make judgments about right and wrong, prioritize ethical values, and take action to uphold academic integrity.

South African higher education institutions, particularly Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs), face unique challenges in maintaining academic integrity amid the rise of AI. Limited resources, large class sizes, and varying levels of digital literacy among staff and students complicate in the detection and management of AI-generated content. Furthermore, existing plagiarism detection tools may not effectively identify AI-generated text, leading to potential undetected academic dishonesty [34].

Within the South African higher education landscape, empirical evidence examining lecturers' responses to AI-assisted assessment remains scarce. Existing studies largely discuss AI from policy, ethical, or student-centred perspectives, providing limited insight into the behavioural factors that influence lecturers' decisions when evaluating AI-generated student work. Moreover, despite the widespread application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in explaining technology adoption and behavioural intentions, its application to academic integrity in AI-mediated assessment has received little empirical attention. Consequently, there is insufficient understanding of how lecturers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control collectively shape their intentions to regulate, accept, or discourage the use of AI-generated assignments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1. Academic Integrity in South Africa Education

Academic integrity is a fundamental concept in higher education, encompassing virtues of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in academic life. Academic integrity is important to the advancement of knowledge and the credibility of institutions of education. Historically, the concept has evolved in response to cultural, historical, and institutional factors, leading to differences in meaning and usage within and across regions and education systems. The subsequent sections outline definitions and evolving interpretations of academic integrity. Academic integrity seems to be a concept that is complex, and it has evolved over time. It encompasses ethical practices in scholarship, education, and research [8]. There is no accepted definition that exists universally; however, the term is generally understood as moral virtue in academic pursuits, emphasising honesty, trust, and responsibility [5, 8].

The definition of academic integrity has transformed, with some researchers advocating for a distinction between cheating acts and mistakes that are textual in nature [23]. Violations of academic integrity include some serious offenses which comprise fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, and others like misusing statistics or deceptive citations [5,9]. The field of academic integrity research grew significantly from the 1990s, and there was an increased focus on research integrity in recent years [5]. A number of codes of conduct, like the European Charter for Researchers, provide guidelines which assist in academic integrity maintenance in line with research practices [5]. Various cultural contexts and educational systems have an influence on how academic integrity is upheld and

understood, and this stresses the need for an ongoing engagement and adaptation to address challenges which are emerging in academia.

2.2. Alignment with South African Higher Education Policy Frameworks

Academic integrity is a foundational principle within South African higher education and is strongly embedded in national quality assurance and governance frameworks. The Council on Higher Education (CHE), through its quality assurance mandate, requires higher education institutions to ensure the credibility, validity, and fairness of assessment practices as a condition for programme accreditation and institutional audits [11, 12, 13, 14]. In the context of AI-generated assignments, these expectations place renewed responsibility on lecturers to interpret and enforce academic integrity in ways that uphold standards while responding to emerging digital practices. This study aligns with CHE priorities by examining how lecturers navigate ethical assessment challenges introduced by AI technologies, thereby contributing evidence to inform quality assurance debates.

The Department of Higher Education and Training [13,14] further emphasises ethical governance, accountability, and professional responsibility within public universities. DHET policy frameworks highlight the role of academic staff in safeguarding the integrity of teaching, learning, and assessment, particularly in digitally mediated environments that expanded rapidly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic [12, 17]. However, current national policies do not yet provide explicit, standardised guidance on the pedagogical and ethical implications of AI-generated student work. This policy gap creates uncertainty and uneven enforcement across institutions, shaping lecturers' subjective norms and influencing how academic integrity is interpreted in practice.

At the institutional level, academic integrity codes, assessment policies, and ethics guidelines operationalise national expectations and directly inform lecturers' day-to-day decision-making. Many South African universities are currently revising these policies to address AI use, shifting from plagiarism-focused approaches toward frameworks that emphasise responsible, transparent, and pedagogically appropriate use of AI tools [22, 26] This evolving policy landscape underscores the importance of understanding lecturers' attitudes toward AI-assisted assignments, as their perceptions play a critical role in translating policy intentions into consistent academic practice. By situating lecturers' views within this policy context, the study provides empirically grounded insights that can support the development of coherent, context-sensitive academic integrity frameworks in South African higher education.

2.3. Challenges of Detecting AI-Generated Text vs Traditional Plagiarism

The presence of open-access online tools purporting to detect AI-generated text has brought another layer of dimension to academic integrity by, but caution must be exercised in the use of this software as the sole basis for punitive actions, given their inherent constraints [33].

According to [4, 19] who asserted that the usage of AI within the education settings while useful can also presents challenges in maintaining academic integrity, prompting a need to revisit established methodologies. The reliability and fidelity of AI detection tools are the subject of ongoing debate and study, and research has identified that they operate inconsistently [33]

These inconsistencies undermine the tools validity especially in high-stakes situations such as investigation into plagiarism [15]. The International Center for Academic Integrity reported that a significant percentage of accepted students said they used AI tools to complete tasks dishonestly, emphasizing the need to resolve such moral problems [31]. procedures on the basis of potential for deterrence and detection.

The misuse of AI tools extends beyond assisting other students utilise them to generate entire assignments, which makes it challenging to distinguish between appropriate tool utilisation and academic dishonesty. According to [6, 7] having to detect AI-generated content is made challenging also by writing aids which are innocuous like Grammarly as they have the potential of creating false positives inadvertently in AI-detection tools. This ambiguity complicates the assessment of academic integrity, and a balanced approach, considering the limitations and benefits

of AI detection tools, is required. Others have begun incorporating AI writing detection tools into their academic integrity procedures on the basis of potential for deterrence and detection.

Although recent studies have examined the implications of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) for higher education, most have primarily focused on AI detection technologies, student adoption, ethical concerns, or policy recommendations [21, 25, 31]. Existing research also highlights the limitations of AI-detection tools and the growing need to redesign assessment practices rather than relying solely on technological solutions [15, 33]. However, there remains limited empirical evidence on how lecturers interpret and respond to AI-generated assignments within developing-country contexts, particularly in South African higher education institutions where institutional policies, digital readiness, and resource constraints continue to evolve. Furthermore, few studies have examined lecturers' behavioural intentions toward AI-assisted student work through established behavioural theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior [1, 2]. Consequently, there is insufficient understanding of how lecturers' attitudes, perceived institutional norms, and perceived behavioural control collectively influence decisions regarding academic integrity in AI-mediated assessment environments.

To address this gap, this study investigates South African lecturers' perceptions of academic integrity in relation to AI-generated assignments using the Theory of Planned Behavior as its analytical lens. Drawing on qualitative evidence from two South African universities, the study contributes to the emerging literature in three important ways. First, it extends the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior by explaining how lecturers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control shape behavioural intentions toward AI-assisted assessments within higher education. Second, it provides context-specific empirical evidence from a developing-country setting, thereby enriching the predominantly Global North discourse on generative AI and academic integrity. Finally, the study offers practical recommendations for higher education institutions by advocating authentic assessment design, institutional AI governance, staff capacity development, and AI literacy initiatives that promote responsible AI adoption while safeguarding academic integrity. These contributions provide both theoretical and practical insights for universities seeking to balance educational innovation with ethical assessment practices in the age of generative artificial intelligence.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in the Context of Academic Integrity and AI-Generated Assignments

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), proposed by [1], provides a robust framework for explaining how individuals' beliefs and social contexts shape their intentions and behaviours. TPB posits that behavioural intention, which is the most immediate predictor of behaviour, is influenced by three key constructs: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of this study, TPB offers a valuable lens for understanding how South African lecturers respond to academic integrity challenges arising from AI-generated assignments. The application of the Theory of Planned Behavior in this study is further strengthened by its alignment with South African higher education policy frameworks, particularly those articulated by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). These bodies emphasise academic integrity, ethical scholarship, and quality assurance as core principles guiding teaching, learning, and assessment.

Attitude toward behaviour refers to lecturers' positive or negative evaluations of allowing, regulating, or rejecting AI-assisted student work. In this study, attitudes are shaped by lecturers' beliefs about whether AI enhances learning, undermines originality, or threatens assessment credibility. Lecturers who perceive AI as a legitimate pedagogical support tool are more likely to adopt accommodative or regulatory approaches, while those who associate AI with plagiarism and misconduct may favour restrictive practices [1, 16].

Subjective norms capture the perceived social pressures that influence lecturers' decisions regarding AI use in assessments. These norms emerge from institutional policies, departmental cultures, peer expectations, professional

ethics, and national quality assurance frameworks. In South African higher education, where formal guidelines on AI use are still evolving, inconsistent subjective norms may result in varied and fragmented responses to AI-generated assignments across institutions and disciplines. Research shows that unclear or weak normative guidance can reduce consistency in academic integrity enforcement [2, 27].

Although this study foregrounds attitudes and subjective norms, TPB remains particularly suitable because it acknowledges that behaviour is socially situated and shaped by both personal beliefs and collective expectations. By applying TPB, this study moves beyond describing lecturers' opinions to explain why certain integrity-related practices emerge in response to AI. The framework therefore enables a systematic analysis of how lecturers' perceptions translate into behavioural intentions regarding the acceptance, regulation, or sanctioning of AI-assisted student work.

4. RESEARCH AIM

This study explores South African lecturers' perceptions of academic integrity in the age of AI, with specific emphasis on attitudes toward behaviour and subjective norms shaping responses to AI-assisted student work. In achieving this, the following research question is addressed.

1. How do South African lecturers perceive academic integrity in the context of AI-assisted student work ?
2. What attitudes toward behaviour do lecturers hold regarding the use of AI tools in student assessments ?
3. Which subjective norms (institutional policies, disciplinary cultures, peer expectations, and professional standards) influence lecturers' responses to AI-assisted student work?
4. How do attitudes toward behaviour and subjective norms jointly shape lecturers' decisions and practices related to academic integrity in the age of AI?

5. METHODOLOGY

The adopted methodology for this study is qualitative approach method which involves interviewing lecturers on the view on exploring Academic Integrity in the Age of AI: Views of South African Lecturers on AI- Generated Assignments across two institutions. The qualitative method is the approach where researchers seek people's opinion on certain phenomena of a situation or want to know their perception in-terms of feelings with less generalisation [28]. Literature has shown that a qualitative research approach is consistent with the interpretivism paradigm as it allows participants to tell their stories [18]. In achieving the main objective of the study, an interpretive paradigm is adopted. It is chosen because it is suitable for a study that examines individuals or small groups in realistic environments (Caga, 2020). According to [28] an interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of participants. As mentioned by [3] they assert that interpretivism is more concerned with in depth variables and factors related to context, it considers humans as different from physical phenomena as they create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena.

5.1 Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants sampling for this study comprises of 12 lectures across the two institutions at University of Fort Hare within the Eastern Cape and University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. The participating lecturers are randomly selected across the faculties within the two universities. This study was conducted through structured interview questions around the Exploring Academic Integrity in the Age of AI: Views of South African Lecturers on AI- Generated Assignments. lecturers were invited to take part in the project through recorded guided for each participant across the two institutions. The participants discussions were recorded, and the recordings were transcribed and analysed using NVivo 12 software to generate themes of findings for this research study.

5.2 Ethical Consideration

Ethical clearance was obtained from University of Fort Hare Inter-Faculty Human Research Ethics Committee (IFHREC) with ethics clearance reference number **FUN002-24 (Project).** A written informed consent form was obtained. The participants, UFH and UKZN participants, gave their consent after being informed about the study. Participants were well informed that their involvement in the study was non-compulsory.

5.3. Demographic Information

This study on exploring academic integrity in the age of AI presents a structured distribution of participants across two institutional case studies, namely UFH and UKZN, indicating a balanced comparative research design. Firstly, the data shows a total of 12 participants, equally divided between the two institutions. UFH (Case 1) accounts for participants P1–P6, while UKZN (Case 2) includes participants P7–P12. This equal allocation (6 participants per institution) suggests a deliberate sampling strategy aimed at ensuring fairness and comparability between the two cases. Such balance strengthens the validity of cross-case analysis, allowing the study to identify similarities and differences in perspectives across institutional contexts.

Secondly, the use of case numbers (1 and 2) and participant codes (P1 and P2) reflect a systematic approach to data organisation. While all participants within each institution share the same use code (P1 for UFH and P2 for UKZN), the numbering from 1 to 12 ensures individual differentiation and anonymity, which is essential for ethical research practices. This coding approach also facilitates easier data analysis, particularly in qualitative or mixed-method studies where responses are grouped by case. Furthermore, the dataset reflects a multi-case study design, which enhances the depth and richness of findings. By including participants from two different institutions, the study is positioned to capture contextual variations, such as differences in institutional practices, technological adoption, or curriculum implementation strategies.

In summary, the demographic information demonstrates a well-balanced, ethically structured, and methodologically sound sampling framework. Equal representation across UFH and UKZN improves the credibility, transferability, and robustness of the study findings, making it suitable for comparative analysis and broader generalisation within similar higher education contexts. See below the demographic information table 1.

Table 1. Anonymous Codes for Participants Interviewees

Institution Case Study	Case Number	Use Code	Participants
UFH	1	P1	1
	1	P1	2
	1	P1	3
	1	P1	4
	1	P1	5
	1	P1	6
UKZN	2	P2	7
	2	P2	8
	2	P2	9
	2	P2	10
	2	P2	11
	2	P2	12

6. RESULTS FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The findings below show the analysis is outlined using two themes: Theme 1: *Attitude towards Behavior*, and Theme 2: *Subjective Norms.* Then, under each of the themes, the findings are mapped accordingly to the sub-themes are AI authenticity, and student perception on AI tools usage for Attitude towards behavior. While lecturers' views on AI tools usage by students, Institutional policies or academic standards regard AI usage and social pressure in accepting or rejection of AI usage fall under the Subjective norms.

Theme 1 : Attitude Towards Behavior

Sub-Themes: AI Authenticity

<Case Number 1> - § 10 references coded [23.42% Coverage]

"No. Authenticity involves personal effort, contextual understanding, and the ability to reflect and defend one's work. AI can generate surface-level responses but lacks the student's unique academic voice and real intellectual engagement. Even when the output is factually correct, it does not reflect a genuine learning journey P1". "AI-generated work can maintain the same level of authenticity. This can take place if students are trained in the use of prompts and cite AI for any work produced through platform P2". "No. In Social Work, authenticity comes from lived experience, personal growth, and reflection. AI-generated content might be grammatically correct but emotionally flat and disconnected from the student's voice P3". "Yes, provided that students use it as a supplemental tool and that it does not replace the ability to synthesis and critically analyses information P5". "Authenticity isn't just about writing from scratch. If a student can explain the work and the reasoning behind it, even if AI helped with the writing, I consider that authentic enough in Engineering P4". "Not yet. Authenticity requires reflection, context, and personal voice—AI lacks that nuance P6".

<Case Number 2> - § 17 references coded [18.42% Coverage]

"I do not believe AI-generated work can entirely replace human generated authenticity, as it may lack personal insights and critical engagement that come from human effort, and contextual depth that come from a student's independent thinking P7". "No, because with authenticated created assignment to get to hear the student's voices and you are able to intervene or applaud where it is due. Yet now with AI it also demoralizes the lecturer because it now shows there was no effort put into the assignment P9". "No, because students tend to copy and paste as is.. they don't synthesise the information they get from the robots P10" "Yes, because it will help students to understand the use of programing and be quick about it P8". "To an extent if one knows how to "teach" AI. Unfortunately, there is a long pattern of investing more time and effort in trying to "beat the system" - previously using paraphrasing apps and now AI - then actually engaging with the material P12". "Not really because some AI generated content is not factual. It alters information and dates to suit the question being asked. No. Authenticity in theology involves voice, conviction, and often vulnerability, which AI cannot produce P11".

Sub-Themes : Student Perception of AI tools Usage for Attitude Towards Behavior

<Case Number 1> - § 16 references coded [21.92% Coverage]

"I have mixed feelings. On one hand, AI tools can support learning particularly for students who struggle with language, structure, or accessing resources. On the other hand, when used unethically, they undermine academic integrity and the development of critical thinking and independent scholarship. My concern is not about the tools themselves, but how they are used P1". "I don't feel good when they use AI to generate original drafts. However, I am happy when they use it to improve their writing P2". "I feel uneasy. In Social Work, our focus is on personal reflection, empathy, and real-world application. AI may help with language or structure, but it risks removing the student's personal engagement, which is central to our discipline P3". "It can be a valuable tool, provided that it is used responsibly and does not replace critical thinking P4"."I understand why they do it. Many of my students struggle with academic English, yet they're brilliant in their technical thinking. If AI helps them express themselves better, I can't dismiss that outright P6". "I see AI as a powerful learning aid when used ethically. It can deepen engagement if integrated thoughtfully P5".

<Case Number 2> - § 15 references coded [12.12% Coverage]

"I feel that AI tools can be useful for enhancing productivity, understanding, learning, etc. Proper guidance is needed to ensure students engage meaningfully with AI-generated content. I believe that the use of AI tools must be carefully monitored to ensure they do not undermine students' understanding and critical thinking skills P7". "I feel that their use of AI tools to generate assignments has resulted in their dependency on those tools P9". "I think it's a

great tool for students to have. It saves time. The issue comes only when they decide to copy and paste from Chat gpt. I strongly agree with the same idea P8". "Recent studies suggest that use of AI to complete tasks and ensuing reliance has a negative impact on critical thinking skills. This is particularly worrisome, where one of the outcomes of university is to learn to reason critically P10". "I feel it is not ethical and it is a violation of ethics and academic integrity P11". "I am concerned. In my department of theology requires deep personal engagement, interpretation, and ethical reasoning, none of which AI can replicateP12".

Theme 2: Subjective Norms

Sub-Themes : Lecturers' Views on AI Tools Usage by Students

<Case Number 1> - § 18 references coded [18.92% Coverage]

"Views are quite mixed. Some are curious and exploring ethical integration into teaching. Others are deeply skeptical, especially where AI is used to replace the students' own work. There's a growing awareness, but also a lot of uncertainty and frustration, especially due to the lack of institutional guidance P1". "There is still a high level of skepticism among colleagues P2". "We're still figuring it out. Some colleagues are open to its use as a learning support, especially for second-language students. Others are very concerned about ethical implications and the dilution of reflective practice P3". "Some are supportive, especially those who see how it helps underprepared students. Others still think it's cheating. It's definitely a live debate in our department P4". "Many are cautiously optimistic. We're exploring how to guide its ethical integration into learning P5. "Opinions among colleagues vary; some embrace AI as a tool for its efficiency and innovation, while others worry about academic integrity and student over-reliance P6".

<Case Number 2> - § 11 references coded [12.12% Coverage]

"We share the same views that these tools deprive both us and the student's authentic views and opinions about a given topic P7". "They hate it Interested P8". "Grammarly is an acceptable proofreading tool. However, AI-generated essays are viewed negatively for pedagogical reasons cited previously P9". "They are worried and concerned that there will be no critical thinking P10". "There is broad skepticism. Most believe that AI disrupts the relational and interpretive nature of theological inquiry P12".

Sub-Themes : Social Pressure in Acception or Rejection of AI Usage

<Case Number 1> - § 18 references coded [18.92% Coverage]

"Yes, there is both pressures to innovate and to maintain academic standards. On the one hand, we're encouraged to embrace technology and modernise pedagogy. On the other hand, there's an unspoken expectation to reject anything that appears inauthentic or unearned. This tension places lecturers in a difficult position P1". "No, there is no pressure at all P2". "There's more uncertainty than pressure. We are all trying to protect academic integrity while also recognizing that students are under immense pressure to perform P3". "Yes, I believe that currently there is pressure to reject AI generated work P4". "There's pressure in both ways. Some staff want to be strict; others are more open. I think the pressure is more about clarity, we need collective guidance P5". "There is more pressure to adapt than to reject resistance is fading as literacy improves P6".

<Case Number 2> - § 11 references coded [12.12% Coverage]

"Yes, there is social pressure to align with prevailing views. AI landscape is an ever changing and increasingly influencing our daily life both as teachers and learners. So, somehow, we will have to adapt to technology or be left behind P7". "Too much pressure because once you are not fully for AI you are seen as being backwards or not moving with times. Yet you see that if this dependency on AI tools is allowed, we will not have students who can critically think or come up with authentic documentations P8". Sometimes, Yes P9". "Yes. There is a drive to push AI-generated student work. There is pressure of rejecting AI generated student work P10". "There is a shared resistance. Many colleagues are still discerning how to respond, but the preference leans toward critical caution P12".

7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal a complex and evolving landscape regarding academic integrity in the age of artificial intelligence within South African higher education. The balanced representation of participants across the two institutional case studies (UFH and UKZN) enabled a comparative understanding of lecturers' perceptions, highlighting both shared concerns and contextual nuances. Across both institutions, lecturers expressed growing awareness of AI-generated assignments and their implications for teaching, assessment, and academic honesty. A dominant theme emerging from the data is the tension between innovation and integrity, where AI tools are recognised as valuable for learning support, yet simultaneously perceived as a potential threat to authentic student work and fair assessment practices.

The findings demonstrate that South African lecturers perceive generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) as both an educational opportunity and a significant challenge to academic integrity. While participants acknowledged the potential of AI to improve learning, writing support, and student productivity, they also expressed concerns regarding authenticity, over-reliance on AI, declining critical thinking, and the difficulty of distinguishing AI-generated from human-authored work. These findings reinforce the growing international consensus that GenAI is transforming higher education by challenging conventional understandings of authorship, originality, and assessment validity rather than simply introducing a new form of plagiarism [20, 30].

One of the strongest findings concerns lecturers' concerns about the authenticity of AI-generated assignments. Participants consistently argued that authentic academic work should demonstrate personal reflection, critical engagement, and disciplinary reasoning, attributes they perceived as difficult to verify when students rely heavily on generative AI. These findings corroborate [24], who argues that GenAI fundamentally challenges authentic assessment because conventional coursework can increasingly be completed without demonstrating genuine learning. Similarly, [30] argues that educational integrity should shift from verifying authorship toward making students' judgement, reasoning, and learning processes more visible through assessment design rather than relying on detection technologies alone.

The findings also revealed widespread scepticism regarding AI-detection technologies. Participants questioned their reliability and indicated that identifying AI-generated assignments has become increasingly difficult. This supports earlier work by [33] who demonstrated that existing AI-detection tools frequently generate inconsistent results and false positives. More recent international scholarship similarly argues that higher education institutions should move beyond technological surveillance and instead redesign assessment practices to promote authentic learning and transparency [20, 30]. Rather than relying exclusively on AI detection software, universities are increasingly encouraged to adopt assessment approaches that require students to demonstrate critical thinking, reflection, oral defence, iterative drafting, and contextual application of knowledge.

Another important finding concerns the tension between embracing AI innovation and preserving academic integrity. Lecturers recognised that AI can improve academic writing, support multilingual students, and enhance learning efficiency when used responsibly. However, they also warned that unrestricted AI use may reduce students' independent thinking and intellectual development. These findings align with [32] guidance on generative AI, which advocates responsible, human-centred AI integration supported by institutional governance, AI literacy, and ethical policy frameworks rather than outright prohibition. Likewise, recent assessment research argues that universities should transition from AI avoidance to responsible AI integration through clearly defined assessment expectations and transparent disclosure of AI use.

Lecturers consistently raised concerns about the difficulty in detecting AI-generated content, which challenges traditional assessment methods. This aligns with existing literature that suggests AI tools are increasingly capable of producing sophisticated academic outputs that are difficult to distinguish from human-authored work. Consequently, participants emphasised the need to rethink assessment design, shifting towards more application-based, reflective, and process-oriented tasks that are less susceptible to AI misuse. At the same time, some lecturers acknowledged the pedagogical potential of AI, suggesting that, if properly integrated, it could enhance learning rather than undermine

it. This reflects a growing discourse in higher education that advocates for AI literacy and ethical use rather than outright prohibition.

Another key finding relates to institutional preparedness and policy gaps. Participants highlighted a lack of clear guidelines and consistent policies on the use of AI in student work, leading to uncertainty and varied practices across departments. This indicates a critical gap between technological advancement and institutional governance. Additionally, concerns about equity and access were raised, with some lecturers noting that unequal access to AI tools may create disparities among students, further complicating issues of fairness and inclusion.

The present study further identified substantial uncertainty arising from inconsistent institutional policies governing AI-assisted assessment. Participants indicated that the absence of clear institutional guidance contributes to inconsistent assessment practices and uncertainty regarding acceptable AI use. Similar observations have emerged internationally, where universities continue to develop institution-wide governance frameworks balancing innovation, academic integrity, equity, and ethical AI adoption. Recent international evidence demonstrates that effective institutional responses increasingly depend on coordinated governance, staff development, and discipline-specific AI policies rather than isolated technological interventions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the Theory of Planned Behavior by demonstrating that lecturers' behavioural intentions regarding AI-generated assignments are jointly influenced by their attitudes toward AI, perceived institutional and professional norms, and perceived behavioural control. While previous studies have largely examined AI adoption from the perspective of students or institutional policy, this study explains the behavioural mechanisms underpinning lecturers' assessment decisions. The findings suggest that positive attitudes toward AI do not necessarily translate into acceptance unless lecturers possess sufficient confidence, institutional support, and clear policy guidance. This extends the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior beyond technology adoption to explain behavioural responses to AI-mediated academic integrity within higher education.

The South African context also contributes important insights to the international literature. Unlike studies conducted in well-resourced educational systems, participants highlighted challenges associated with uneven institutional preparedness, limited staff training, varying levels of AI literacy, and the absence of comprehensive governance frameworks. These contextual factors shape lecturers' perceptions of academic integrity and illustrate how behavioural responses to AI are influenced not only by individual beliefs but also by organisational capacity and policy readiness. These findings reinforce recent calls for developing-country universities to strengthen AI governance, invest in professional development, and redesign assessments that promote authentic learning while recognising contextual resource constraints.

Overall, the findings suggest that academic integrity in the AI era cannot be addressed through detection and control alone. Instead, there is a need for a holistic approach that includes curriculum redesign, staff training, student awareness, and the development of clear institutional policies. The study contributes to the literature by providing context-specific insights from South African lecturers, highlighting the urgent need for higher education institutions to proactively adapt to the realities of AI in teaching and learning while safeguarding academic standards.

8. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATION AND FUTURE WORK

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that academic integrity in the age of AI is not solely a compliance issue, but a behavioural and pedagogical challenge shaped by lecturers' beliefs, perceived control, and institutional context. Interpreted through the Theory of Planned Behavior, the findings show that lecturers' attitudes toward AI (both enabling and threatening), prevailing subjective norms within departments, and their perceived behavioural control (confidence in detecting AI use and redesigning assessments) jointly influence how they respond to AI-generated assignments. While many participants are open to leveraging AI for learning, limited policy guidance and uneven digital competence constrain consistent, integrity-preserving practices. The study therefore extends the theoretical framework by evidencing that, in AI-rich environments, behavioural intention must be supported by institutional

structures clear policies, shared norms, and capacity-building if it is to translate into effective practice. However, the following recommendations are suggested as follows:

1. A reconfiguration of assessment practices to better align with the realities of AI-enabled learning. Lecturers should adopt authentic, process-oriented, and application-based assessments that require students to demonstrate critical thinking, reflection, and contextual understanding elements that are less susceptible to AI-generated substitution.
2. A second key recommendation is the development of clear institutional policies and guidelines on AI use
3. There is a strong need for capacity building and professional development. Institutions should provide ongoing training for lecturers on AI literacy, assessment redesign, and ethical considerations in AI use.

Looking ahead, future work should focus on designing and evaluating interventions that operationalise these behavioural components. This includes developing assessment models less vulnerable to AI misuse (e.g., authentic, iterative, and process-based tasks), piloting AI-integrated pedagogy that teaches ethical use, and creating staff development programmes to strengthen perceived control. Further research should also explore policy standardisation across institutions, the equity implications of differential AI access, and the effectiveness of AI-detection and disclosure frameworks. Longitudinal and multi-institutional studies can provide deeper insight into how norms evolve over time and how sustained interventions impact integrity outcomes. Collectively, these directions will help align behavioural intentions with practice, ensuring that AI is harnessed to enhance learning while upholding academic standards.

REFERENCES

1. Ajzen, I. 1991. The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50*(2), 179–211.
2. Ajzen, I. 2020. The theory of planned behavior: Frequently asked questions. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies, 2*(4), 314–324.
3. Alharahsheh, H.H. and Pius, A., 2020. A review of key paradigms: Positivism VS interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, *2*(3), pp.39-43.
4. Ardito, C. G. 2025. Generative AI detection in higher education assessments. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2025(182), 11-28.
5. Aronson, J. K. 2024. When I use a word . . . Academic integrity principles and definitions. BMJ, q2864. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.q2864
6. Birks, D., & Clare, J. 2023. Linking artificial intelligence facilitated academic misconduct to existing prevention frameworks. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, *19*(1), 20. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-023-00142-3
7. Bordalejo, B., Pafumi, D., Onuh, F., Khalid, A. I., Pearce, M. S., & O'Donnell, D. P. 2025. "Scarlet Cloak and the Forest Adventure": a preliminary study of the impact of AI on commonly used writing tools. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 22(1), 6.
8. Bretag, T. 2015. Defining Academic Integrity – International Perspectives: Introduction. https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-981-287-079-7_76-1.pdf
9. Bretag, T., Harper, R., Rundle, K., Newton, P. M., Ellis, C., Saddiqui, S., & van Haeringen, K. 2020. Contract cheating in Australian higher education: a comparison of non-university higher education providers and universities. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*.
10. Caga, N.P., 2020. LECTURERS'PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF BLACKBOARD AS A LEARNING SUPPORT TOOL: A CASE OF A UNIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICA. In *EDULEARN20 Proceedings* pp. 9089-9093. IATED.
11. Council on Higher Education (CHE). 2016. *National standards for the accreditation of undergraduate programmes*. Pretoria: CHE.
12. Council on Higher Education (CHE). 2022. *Quality assurance framework for higher education*. Pretoria: CHE.
13. Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). 2013. *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training*. Pretoria: DHET. https://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/Latest%20News/White%20paper%20for%20post-school%20education%20and%20training.pdf
14. Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). 2021. *Revised policy guidelines on distance and digital learning*. Pretoria: DHET. https://www.dhet.gov.za/2021%20Research%20Colloquium/2021%20DHET%20Research%20Colloquium%20on%20Open%20Learning_Flexible%20and%20Blended%20Learning%20in%20PSET.pdf
15. Elkhatat, A. M., Elsaid, K., & Almeer, S. 2023. Evaluating the efficacy of AI content detection tools in differentiating between human and AI-generated text. International Journal for Educational Integrity, 19(1), 17.

16. Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. 2010. *Predicting and changing behavior: The reasoned action approach*. Psychology Press.
17. Fishbein, Martin & Ajzen, Icek. 2010. Predicting and Changing Behavior: The Reasoned Action Approach. 10.4324/9780203838020.
18. Funda, V., Bamigboye, O., & Bamigboye, F. 2025. Artificial Intelligence: Experiences of Students on AI tools Usage for Educational Development. *EDUCATIO: Journal of Education*, *9*(1), 1-14.
19. Hafizha, R. (2022). Pentingnya Integritas Akademik. Journal of Education and Counseling (JECO). https://doi.org/10.32627/jeco.v1i2.56
20. Gallant, T. B., Davis, M., & Khan, Z. R. 2026. *Academic Integrity in the Age of AI*. Cambridge University Press.
21. Holmes, W., & Miao, F. 2023. *Guidance for generative AI in education and research*. Unesco Publishing.
22. Jacobs-Basadien, M., & Pather, S. 2026. Assessing AI policy and guideline progress within the South African public higher education system: insights from documented policies. Universal Access in the Information Society, 25(2), 71.
23. Jamieson, S., & Howard, R. M. 2019. Rethinking the relationship between plagiarism and academic integrity. *Revue internationale des technologies en pédagogie universitaire*, *16*(2), 69-85.
24. Kofinas, A. K. 2025. *The impact of generative AI on academic integrity of authentic assessments within a higher education context*. *British Journal of Educational Technology*.
25. Ndlovu, S., & Acheampong, P. X. 2025. Artificial intelligence adoption for academic purposes: a systematic review of selected university students' perspectives in South Africa. *Innovation: journal of appropriate librarianship and information work in Southern Africa*, *2025*(71), 4-22.
26. Niloy, A. C., Hafiz, R., Hossain, B. M. T., Gulmeher, F., Sultana, N., Islam, K. F., ... & Kabir, S. 2024. AI chatbots: A disguised enemy for academic integrity?. International Journal of Educational Research Open, 7, 100396. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2024.100396
27. Perkins, G. 2026. Resilient assessment in the age of AI: authentic design and the case for verbal examinations in business education. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2026.2644516
28. Peterson, J.S., 2019. Presenting a qualitative study: A reviewer's perspective. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *63*(3), pp.147-158.
29. Rest, J. R. 1986. Moral development: Advances in research and theory.
30. Sharma, S. 2026. *Educational integrity in GenAI-augmented assessment: Making judgement visible*. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, 22, 6.
31. Tan, M. J. T., & Maravilla, N. M. A. T. 2024. Shaping integrity: why generative artificial intelligence does not have to undermine education. Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence, 7, 1471224.
32. UNESCO. 2023. *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research*. UNESCO Publishing. Updated guidance remains relevant to institutional AI governance.
33. Weber-Wulff, D., Anohina-Naumeca, A., Bjelobaba, S., Foltýnek, T., Guerrero-Dib, J., Popoola, O., ... & Waddington, L. 2023. Testing of detection tools for AI-generated text. International Journal for Educational Integrity, 19(1), 1-39. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-023-00146-z
34. Waltzer, T., Pilegard, C., & Heyman, G. D. 2024. Can you spot the bot? Identifying AI-generated writing in college essays. *International Journal for Educational Integrity, 20*, 11. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-024-00158-3