Ethical Ambiguity in the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Curriculum Research

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate ethical ambiguity in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in curriculum research. Adopting a qualitative approach and a phenomenological design, the research population consisted of all curriculum studies faculty members in the academic year 2025–2026. Purposeful sampling was employed and continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, ultimately resulting in 14 faculty members participating in semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that ethical ambiguity in AI use is a multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing 9 overarching themes and 29 organizing themes. These themes pertain to challenges such as scholarly authenticity, researcher accountability, data privacy, fairness and transparency, the impact of AI on thinking and creativity, ambiguity in data interpretation, the absence of clear institutional policies and guidelines, and deficiencies in researcher training and empowerment, as well as faculty strategies for dealing with ethical ambiguity. The results indicate that the lack of transparent ethical frameworks and institutional guidance may undermine the trust, quality, and authenticity of AI-based research. Accordingly, the development of clear ethical policies, strengthening human oversight, ensuring quality control of analyses, and empowering researchers are proposed as key strategies to mitigate ethical ambiguity.

Keywords

Information Technology, Ethical Ambiguity, Artificial Intelligence, AI Ethics, Research Ethics.

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