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University Students' Cognitive Interactions With AI: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Study

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Abstract

As the integration of artificial intelligence technologies into educational environments continues rapidly, the existing literature focuses primarily on the functional benefits and performance outputs of these tools. However, the subjective nature of students' relationship with AI and the transformative effect of this interaction on the 'learning identity' has not been sufficiently explored. This study aims to deeply analyze, through students' experiences, whether AI is merely an auxiliary tool in students' learning processes or an actor that takes over cognitive processes. To get to the core of the participants' experiences, the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) pattern from qualitative research methods was adopted in the study. The study group consisted of 10 university students who actively use artificial intelligence tools, selected through criterion sampling. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews and analyzed using an inductive approach. The research findings show that students experience artificial intelligence in an ambivalent position, oscillating between a 'time-saving assistant' and an 'authority that creates intellectual laziness'. Consequently, it was determined that artificial intelligence reshapes student autonomy by functioning as a 'digital solution partner' in learning processes; in this context, the necessity of 'cognitive awareness' education, as well as 'technological competence,' for future education policies was discussed.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Learning Processes, Education, University Students, Qualitative Research