Teachers Attitudes towards the Use of AI: A Study of Benefits, Concerns and Support Needs

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of elementary teachers in integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into classroom instruction in selected public schools in Monkayo, Davao de Oro. Anchored on a qualitative phenomenological design, the research aimed to understand how teachers perceive, experience, and utilize AI in their teaching practices. In-depth interviews were conducted with teacher-participants from two school districts, allowing for rich descriptions of their encounters with AI tools such as ChatGPT and other educational technologies. The findings revealed four key themes: AI as an instructional aid, ethical concerns related to student dependence and originality, challenges in implementation due to limited training and access to resources, and the importance of balancing AI integration with sound pedagogical approaches. Teachers recognized AI's potential to enhance teaching efficiency and engagement but emphasized the need for appropriate guidance and institutional support. The study recommends that the Department of Education provide structured training on AI use, develop clear usage guidelines, and improve access to digital tools, especially in underserved areas. It concludes that while AI can be a valuable complement to instruction, its effective use depends on responsible integration, teacher competence, and contextual relevance in the classroom.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Teaching Practices, Elementary Education, Teacher Experiences

INTRODUCTION

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education is increasingly recognized for its potential to enhance instructional delivery, streamline administrative tasks, and personalize learning experiences. Globally, 60% of teachers have already begun using AI tools, and 67% of schools are incorporating AI technologies in various capacities (Gitnux, 2025; Humanize AI, 2025). Teachers cite benefits such as a 40% reduction in grading and administrative workload, a 35% increase in student engagement, and an 18% improvement in learning outcomes (Gitnux, 2025; SEO Sandwitch, 2025). Despite these advantages, many educators remain cautious, particularly in elementary education, where concerns about data privacy, algorithmic bias, and reduced teacher-student interaction are especially pronounced. As young learners depend heavily on human relationships for emotional and social development, the use of AI raises critical questions about the role of technology in foundational learning environments.

Teacher attitudes toward AI are shaped not only by its perceived advantages but also by ethical and professional concerns. The increasing reliance on AI tools in academic tasks has led to worries about academic integrity, particularly in subjects reliant on original thinking and expression, such as the liberal arts (Times of India, 2025). Other concerns include AI bias, the overreliance of students on automated assistance, and fears of diminishing teacher authority and human connection in the classroom. Programs like Estonia's "AI Leap" demonstrate the necessity of teacher training in digital ethics and responsible implementation (The Guardian, 2025). Studies from other countries support this need: in South Korea, elementary teachers fear that AI threatens their emotional support roles (Kim and Kim, 2022), while in Turkey, educators express anxiety over insufficient data protection in AI systems used in schools (Uygun, 2024). These findings reveal that ethical and practical challenges associated with AI are shared globally.

In the Philippines, similar issues are prevalent, particularly in rural areas like Bukidnon and parts of Mindanao, where teachers face significant barriers such as inadequate training and lack of infrastructure (Magno and Lizada, 2021). Although national initiatives like the Department of Education's Digital Rise Program aim to promote AI adoption, many elementary teachers report being ill-equipped to integrate such tools effectively. In Monkayo, Davao de Oro, local educators describe minimal access to internet connectivity and limited digital resources, leading to feelings of frustration and helplessness when faced with expectations to use AI. These localized challenges highlight the gap between policy intentions and on-the-ground realities. Moreover, most research and programs focus on secondary or higher education, overlooking the unique developmental and instructional needs of young learners. This study responds to that gap by exploring the lived experiences of elementary teachers and advocating for context-sensitive, ethically grounded approaches to AI in early education (Holmes et al., 2022; Uygun, 2024).

Purpose of the Study

This study proved to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the teachers towards the use of AI in teaching and enhancing competencies in Elementary Education?

2. What are the benefits that the teachers experience on the use of AI tools in teaching?

3. What are the concerns of participants towards the use of AI tools?

4. What are the support needs of the teachers towards the use of AI in teaching?

5. What are the insights gained by the teachers on the use of AI in teaching?

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to explore elementary teachers' lived experiences with AI integration in the classroom. Phenomenology is appropriate for capturing the emotional, ethical, and practical dimensions of this emerging practice. Data will be collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with teachers who use AI tools such as adaptive platforms, AI tutors, and automated assessments. These methods allow participants to share their insights in a reflective environment, highlighting both the benefits and challenges of AI in elementary education. The study aims to inform future policies and professional development efforts by deepening understanding of how AI influences teaching practices and classroom dynamics.

Research Participants

The study involved seven elementary school teachers from public and private schools in Monkayo, Philippines, each with at least five years of teaching experience and active use of AI tools in their instruction or assessment practices. Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling to ensure firsthand engagement with AI integration. Data were gathered via semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to capture their insights on the opportunities, challenges, and ethical concerns of AI use in rural classrooms. Ethical research protocols—including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed.

Data Gathering and Analysis Method

The study employed in-depth interviews (IDIs) as the primary method for collecting qualitative data from elementary school teachers with direct experience in using AI tools in classroom instruction and assessment. This approach enabled participants to share rich, reflective narratives on the opportunities, challenges, and ethical implications of AI integration in education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All interviews were conducted in person, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of responses. Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to analyze the data through a systematic

six-phase process: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Coding was conducted manually and supported by qualitative analysis software to enhance accuracy. Themes were identified and refined iteratively to ensure they captured the essence of participants' experiences and aligned with the study's objectives. Data reduction techniques and thematic mapping facilitated organization and interpretation of the dataset (Boyatzis, 1998), while ongoing reflection helped maintain credibility and trustworthiness throughout the analysis process (Holloway & Todres, 2003).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the study based on the research questions and relevant literature. The discussion is anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989), which emphasizes that technology adoption depends largely on two factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

Experiences of Teachers in Using Artificial Intelligence to Enhance Competencies in Elementary Education

The study revealed that teachers had practical and constructive experiences using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching. They described AI tools such as ChatGPT and Cici as helpful companions in lesson planning, content development, and managing class activities. The themes identified from their responses included organizing tasks more efficiently, finding AI tools easy to use, and appreciating them as valuable aids in teaching. These experiences reflect the core principles of the Technology Acceptance Model, where teachers acknowledged that AI tools were both useful and easy to navigate (Davis, 1989).

Teachers also shared how AI contributed to improving student performance in key learning competencies. By providing supplementary explanations, generating sample activities, and helping differentiate instruction, AI supported teachers in delivering clearer and more responsive lessons. This finding is supported by Kim and Kim (2025), who emphasized the role of AI in facilitating more focused and competency-driven instruction. The experiences of teachers in this study demonstrate how AI can serve as a strategic support tool in achieving curriculum standards while reducing instructional burdens.

Benefits That Teachers Experience in the Use of AI Tools in Teaching

Participants described multiple benefits resulting from their use of AI tools in the classroom. These benefits included better access to teaching strategies, reduced workload, and greater convenience in preparing and presenting lessons. AI platforms like ChatGPT were seen as reliable tools that offered instant suggestions, lesson examples, and content customization, which allowed teachers to spend more time focusing on student engagement. These findings support those of Rodriguez (2025) and Diliberti, Lake, and Weiner (2025), who reported that AI increases teacher productivity and improves the overall efficiency of instruction.

Students also benefited from AI integration. Teachers observed improvements in classroom engagement, clearer understanding of lessons, and enhanced student motivation. The themes gathered from their narratives highlighted how AI made classes more interactive and helped students become more confident in expressing their ideas. These outcomes are consistent with the findings of Filiz, Kaya, and Adiguzel (2025), who emphasized AI's ability to enrich student participation and support personalized learning. The positive experiences of both teachers and students confirm the importance of AI tools in promoting inclusive and effective teaching practices.

Concerns of Participants Toward the Use of AI Tools

While the benefits of AI were widely acknowledged, teachers also expressed critical concerns. One major concern was the risk of overdependence. Some teachers noticed that both students and fellow educators were becoming too reliant on AI-generated content, which raised fears about diminishing student creativity and reducing opportunities for independent thinking. This concern reflects the findings of Saputra et al. (2023), who warned that overuse of AI may compromise the development of higher-order thinking skills.

Other concerns included instances of plagiarism, misinformation, and a perceived loss of professional identity. Some teachers felt that their role might become less valued as AI tools took over certain aspects of instructional planning and delivery. Infrastructural issues such as weak internet connectivity were also repeatedly mentioned as challenges, especially in rural areas like Monkayo. These concerns are consistent with the observations of Williamson and Eynon (2020), Yim and Wegerif (2024), and Sibug et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of strong infrastructure and ethical safeguards in any educational system adopting AI. These findings suggest that responsible and well-supported AI use is necessary to maintain both the quality and integrity of teaching and learning.

Support Needs of Teachers Toward the Use of AI in Teaching

The participants expressed a strong need for professional development programs that provide guidance on using AI tools effectively and ethically. They preferred hands-on training that allows them to explore the tools in real classroom scenarios, build confidence, and understand both the functions and limitations of AI. These preferences are supported by Rodriguez (2023) and Santos and Barrozo (2023), who noted that practical and contextualized training programs are essential for successful AI integration.

Teachers also recommended that the Department of Education create official programs that support AI adoption, including the provision of approved tools tailored to basic education. Some participants suggested that AI use should be limited to teachers only, particularly in content creation and lesson development, to reduce the risk of misuse among learners. This position aligns with the findings of Yim and Wegerif (2024), who advocated for policy controls that guide the ethical use of AI in K to 12 education. Teachers further emphasized the need for stakeholder support, including the role of parents and school administrators in creating an environment where AI is used responsibly and constructively. As noted by Brewer (2024) and Brown (2023), stakeholder involvement is a key factor in the sustainable implementation of digital innovations in schools.

Insights Gained by Teachers on the Use of AI in Teaching

Through their experiences, teachers developed valuable insights about the integration of AI in the teaching profession. They expressed appreciation for the advantages of AI tools, particularly in improving lesson quality, simplifying preparation, and making instruction more engaging. The theme “Preparation Made Easier” illustrates how AI reduced the time and effort needed to plan and design learning activities. This aligns with the findings of Clemente, Dizon, and Mercado (2023), who observed that teachers using AI felt more prepared and less burdened by repetitive tasks.

At the same time, teachers recognized the need to use AI responsibly. They highlighted the importance of verifying AI-generated content, avoiding overdependence, and maintaining professional judgment. These insights reflect the recommendations of Chen and Hwang (2020), who emphasized that ethical considerations must accompany any technology integration in the classroom. Teachers encouraged their peers to remain open to adapting new tools while maintaining awareness of the potential risks. These reflections confirm that successful AI integration depends not only on access to tools but also on the teacher’s ability to think critically, apply sound pedagogy, and foster responsible digital behavior among learners.

RECOMMENDATION

To ensure the responsible and effective integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in elementary education, the study recommends that AI tools be used strictly as instructional aids rather than as replacements for teacher expertise. Educators and stakeholders must promote a balanced use of AI by blending it with traditional teaching strategies and teacher-designed materials. Teachers emphasized that both students and parents should receive proper orientation on AI tools to prevent misuse, dependency, and a decline in critical thinking skills. Establishing ethical boundaries and ensuring that learners are guided rather than left to explore AI independently are key steps in maintaining the integrity of the learning process.

In addition, the study recommends that the Department of Education and school administrators provide continuous professional development programs focused on the ethical and pedagogical use of AI. These should include hands-on training, institutional support, and the development of AI-based programs specifically designed for classroom instruction. Teachers also highlighted the need for inclusive stakeholder engagement, where parents, school leaders, and community members work together to support AI integration. Embracing AI with the right support systems, policies, and training initiatives will ensure that its use remains aligned with educational goals while enhancing teaching quality and student outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in Monkayo, Davao de Oro in integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into their teaching practices. The findings revealed that teachers generally viewed AI tools as helpful in improving instructional delivery, reducing workload, and enhancing student engagement. Anchored in the Technology Acceptance Model, the study showed that teachers' acceptance of AI was shaped by how useful and easy to use they perceived the tools to be. While recognizing the advantages, teachers also raised concerns about overreliance, misinformation, plagiarism, and the lack of stable internet connectivity. These insights affirm that meaningful AI integration requires not only access to technology but also professional development, ethical guidance, and strong institutional support. Teachers emphasized the importance of using AI as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, professional judgment and pedagogical expertise. With the active involvement of stakeholders such as school leaders, parents, and policymakers, AI has the potential to support inclusive, efficient, and learner-centered education when implemented with responsibility and care.

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