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ChatGPT Use and Academic Character among University Students: A Qualitative Study of Moral Knowing, Feeling, and Action

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ABSTRACT

Generative artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT is widely used by university students, yet research has focused mainly on plagiarism, cheating, and learning outcomes, leaving unclear how students' moral knowledge, feelings, and actions shape its use. This study explores students' academic character in ChatGPT use through Lickona's framework of moral knowing, feeling, and action. In this qualitative case study, ten active ChatGPT users from three universities in Semarang, included because they volunteered rather than for institutional comparison, participated in two focus group discussions formed by grade point average to capture varied experiences, and two lecturers were interviewed. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis. The lecturers and some students framed ChatGPT as a supporting tool, most students recognized its limitations, and the lecturers perceived campus rules on AI use as unclear. Awareness of these limitations alone did not ensure responsible use: when accompanied by supportive moral feelings, such as followed-up doubt and resistance to dependence, ChatGPT tended to function as a learning companion; when convenience prevailed, it tended to replace learning effort. These findings are qualitative interpretations, not statistically established relationships. Responsible ChatGPT use requires cultivating moral feelings alongside AI literacy, supported by clear institutional guidelines and assessment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Advances in information and communication technology have brought significant changes to many aspects of life, including education. Artificial intelligence (AI) is a field of computer science that focuses on developing systems and machines capable of performing tasks that generally require human intelligence [1], and it is regarded as a

source of change in higher education, for example through chatbots for academic advising, online learning systems, and automated assessment [2]. One of the most widely discussed applications is ChatGPT, a chatbot based on the Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) model that generates contextual and adaptive text responses. Previous studies have reported that ChatGPT can support learning models that accommodate diverse learning styles and 21st-century skills [3], serve as a virtual tutor that simplifies complex concepts and helps develop writing and speaking skills [4], [5], and provide instant feedback for formative assessment [6], [7].

The application of ChatGPT in education also presents challenges. AI-generated information may contain biases or inaccuracies [8], [9], and its use raises ethical concerns about data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and bias [10], [11], [12]. Several studies have also *associated* heavy reliance on AI with reduced opportunities to practice critical thinking, independent problem-solving, creativity, and literacy [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], and with risks of plagiarism [19]. However, much of this evidence comes from conceptual papers, reviews, or self-reported surveys, so these concerns should be read as potential risks rather than established causal effects. Understanding of AI has also been linked to students' academic norms and ethics [20].

Academic character is understood as an important aspect of higher education that is oriented not only toward cognitive achievement but also toward the development of moral integrity and academic ethics, encompassing values and attitudes such as scientific honesty, discipline, responsibility, critical thinking, and respect for diversity of thought [21]. In the digital era, character formation has become increasingly complex, and without a strong character foundation, mastery of technology may have negative consequences [22]. This study views academic character through the lens of Lickona's character framework, which is oriented toward three components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

In this study, academic character is used as an umbrella concept referring to students' relatively stable dispositions to know, value, and act on academic virtues such as honesty, responsibility, independence, and discipline [21]. Academic character is closely related to academic integrity, which covers not only dishonesty and plagiarism but also a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in academic work [23], [24]; it is therefore one expression of academic character. Self-regulation denotes the processes by which learners plan, monitor, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior toward learning goals [25]; within Lickona's framework it overlaps with self-control (moral feeling) and habit (moral action). Critical thinking is a cognitive competence of evaluating information and arguments; here it is treated mainly as part of moral knowing, particularly critical awareness of AI output. These concepts are thus related but not interchangeable.

Lickona's framework is appropriate for this study for two reasons. First, it treats character as an integration of cognitive (moral knowing), affective (moral feeling), and behavioral (moral action) components [26], allowing ChatGPT use to be examined beyond rule compliance or technical skill. Second, ChatGPT use is largely private and weakly monitored, so whether students act responsibly cannot be explained by knowing the rules

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alone; Lickona's emphasis that knowing the good does not guarantee doing it directly addresses this knowledge–action gap [27]. Applied to generative AI, moral knowing may involve understanding norms and AI limitations, moral feeling may involve doubt, self-control, and the desire to maintain one's own abilities, and moral action may involve verifying, limiting, or over-relying on AI output. Although the framework was originally developed for school settings, this study adapts it to higher education.

Previous research on AI in higher education has largely focused on learning outcomes and learning effectiveness. The implementation of AI has been reported to have a positive effect on curriculum development and on improving students' academic achievement across 50 higher education institutions in Central Java [28]. However, other studies reporting the positive potential of AI generally also express concerns. The literature review by Nadya et al. [1] showed that AI, including ChatGPT, has great potential to improve the quality of education through learning tailored to individual needs and rapid feedback, but highlighted that excessive dependence may diminish the essence of the learning process and students' thinking abilities. In Indonesian higher education, a survey conducted from July to August 2023 among 311 students and 119 lecturers examined awareness and adoption of ChatGPT and found that 89% of students and 97.9% of lecturers had heard of ChatGPT, while 57.5% of students and 84.2% of lecturers had used it [29].

Although numerous studies have discussed the benefits, risks, and ethical implications of AI use in higher education, research on ChatGPT has generally centered on improving academic skills, feedback quality, or learning efficiency, as outlined in the studies above. Few studies have explored how students' use of ChatGPT relates to academic character, such as honesty, learning independence, discipline, and academic responsibility. Studies of academic integrity have also tended to focus on plagiarism and cheating [24], while the dynamics of academic values, attitudes, and norms related to AI use have not been examined in depth, particularly through qualitative approaches that capture students' underlying reasons, experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making. A quantitative study of 422 students found that many students remained skeptical of the capabilities of AI chatbots and doubted their accuracy; the study recommended using qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind students' beliefs and concerns [30]. Perceptions regarding the ethics of ChatGPT use also require further investigation [29]. Existing qualitative and mixed-method studies of ChatGPT in higher education have mostly documented students' perceptions of benefits and concerns [31] or their motivations and integrity risks [32], while lecturer-focused studies have examined educators' perceived risks [33]. These studies typically treat ethics as awareness of rules or as a risk factor, and rarely examine how students' knowledge, emotions, and actions interact in specific decisions to use AI. Consequently, it remains unclear why students who recognize ChatGPT's limitations sometimes still rely heavily on it. By applying Lickona's integrated framework, this study moves beyond cataloguing benefits and risks toward explaining how responsible and problematic ChatGPT use take shape in students' moral experience.

Given the simultaneously positive and negative impacts of ChatGPT use, Marlin et al. [34] suggest that ChatGPT not only affects the learning process but may also be related to students' academic character, including honesty, independence, and integrity. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' academic character in their use of ChatGPT through Lickona's framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, based on the experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making of students and lecturers. Lecturers' perspectives were included because lecturers design assessments, interpret students' work, and shape the classroom norms within which ChatGPT is used; their accounts therefore complement students' self-reports and help situate students' moral actions within the academic environment. The research questions are: (1) How do students and lecturers understand the norms and limitations of ChatGPT use (moral knowing)? (2) What moral feelings accompany ChatGPT use (moral feeling)? (3) How do students act when using ChatGPT (moral action), and what impacts and environmental conditions accompany these actions? (4) How are these three components interrelated? In line with Lickona's view that good character requires the integration of knowing, desiring, and doing the good, this study proceeds from the working proposition that responsible ChatGPT use cannot be explained by knowledge of AI alone, but also by the moral feelings that accompany it. Consistent with the nature of qualitative research, this proposition serves to guide the exploration rather than as a hypothesis to be tested statistically. This study is expected to contribute theoretically by extending Lickona's framework to generative AI-assisted learning in higher education, and practically by informing institutions and lecturers in developing guidelines on AI use and assessment practices that support students' academic character.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single instrumental case study design [35]. The case is defined as students' use of ChatGPT in academic activities, namely completing assignments, searching for references, preparing presentations, and studying course material, during June-July 2026. The student participants came from three universities in Semarang: Universitas Negeri Semarang, Universitas Diponegoro, and Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo. The universities were not selected for comparison: students from Universitas Diponegoro and Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo were included because they met the criteria and volunteered to take part in the FGDs, which broadened the range of perspectives represented. The three universities were treated as sites within one case rather than as separate cases to be compared. At the time of data collection, none of the three universities had issued a specific institutional guideline on generative AI use.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on criteria relevant to the research objectives [36]. The student criteria were (a) being in the fifth semester or above, (b) actively using ChatGPT for learning and completing assignments, and (c) being willing to serve as informants. Participants were recruited through pamphlets that described the research criteria. Students who met the criteria and were willing to participate contacted the researchers. A total of 10 students from various study programs took part in this study. Their characteristics are presented in Table 1. The students were

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divided into two FGD groups based on grade point average (GPA): group 1 with a GPA > 3.70 (n = 5) and group 2 with a GPA < 3.50 (n = 5). This grouping was not intended to establish a causal effect of ChatGPT use on GPA but to enrich data variation and to explore possible differences in experiences or patterns of ChatGPT use across GPA categories. Grouping students with similar GPAs also helped participants speak more openly among peers of similar academic standing. Students with GPAs between 3.50 and 3.70 were not included in order to make the contrast between groups clearer. Because students volunteered in response to research pamphlets, the sample may over-represent students who are interested in, reflective about, or comfortable discussing AI use. Students with more problematic use may have been less willing to participate. This potential self-selection bias is considered when interpreting the findings.

In addition, the study involved semi-structured interviews with two lecturers to obtain academics' perspectives on ChatGPT use in academic contexts and its relationship with students' academic character. Interviews with the lecturers were semi-structured to allow informants to express their opinions freely and openly [37]. Two lecturers were purposively selected to provide complementary perspectives aligned with the two dimensions examined in this study: academic character and the use of AI in learning. One lecturer was from the Guidance and Counseling study program, a field concerned with students' personal and academic development, and was therefore expected to offer insight into the character dimension of students' ChatGPT use. The other lecturer was from the Educational Technology study program, a field concerned with the use of technology in learning, and was therefore expected to offer insight into how AI is integrated into educational practice. Combining these two perspectives allowed students' accounts to be examined from both the character and the technological sides of the phenomenon. The lecturers were included as a complementary perspective rather than as the primary unit of analysis; therefore, two lecturers were considered sufficient to triangulate students' accounts, although this is acknowledged as a limitation.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

Code	University	Study program	Semester	FGD (GPA)	ChatGPT experience
M1	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Biology	7	1 (> 3.70)	Since semester 1; frequent for practicum reports; summarizing study materials
M2	Universitas Negeri Semarang	English Language Education	7	1 (> 3.70)	Since semester 1; frequent for brainstorming; elaborating ideas; clarifying difficult questions.
M3	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Office Administration Education	7	1 (> 3.70)	Since semester 1; frequent (task-dependent) for research-methods assignments; selected courses.
M4	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Environmental Sciences	7	1 (> 3.70)	Since semester 2; frequent for practicum reports; analyzing and organizing assignment content.
M5	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Guidance and Counseling	7	1 (> 3.70)	Since semester 2; very frequent (almost all tasks) for reports; finding references; paraphrasing.
M6	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Biology Education	9	2 (< 3.50)	Since semester 3; frequent for educational-related assignments; summarizing materials; processing journal articles.
M7	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Architecture	11	2 (< 3.50)	Since semester 9; frequent (almost all tasks) for discussion; brainstorming; clarifying difficult topics.
M8	Universitas Diponegoro	Industrial Electrical Engineering	5	2 (< 3.50)	Since semester 1; frequent (especially for unfamiliar topics) for learning and exploring technical concepts.
M9	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Civil Engineering	9	2 (< 3.50)	Since semester 7; occasional (as needed) for brainstorming; monitoring learning progress.

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Code	University	Study program	Semester	FGD (GPA)	ChatGPT experience
M10	UIN Walisongo Semarang	Islamic Economics	5	2 (< 3.50)	Since semester 2; frequent for brainstorming; research-methods work; summarizing; concept mapping.
D1	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Guidance and Counseling	-	Interview	-
D2	Universitas Negeri Semarang	Educational Technology	-	Interview	-

The data were primary data obtained through FGDs with students and semi-structured interviews with lecturers, guided by an FGD guide and an interview guide, each consisting of eight main questions with follow-up probes on ChatGPT use, its influence on learning and critical thinking, academic honesty and responsibility, and, for lecturers, institutional guidelines and the regulation of AI use. The FGDs were facilitated by the researcher as moderator [38]. The FGDs and interviews were conducted in person, with an average duration of 50 to 60 minutes. All sessions were recorded using a mobile phone and transcribed for analysis. Before data collection, participants were informed of the research objectives and verbally stated their willingness to participate and be recorded. Participants' identities were anonymized using the codes M1-M10 for students, with group 1 coded M1-M5 and group 2 coded M6-M10, and D1-D2 for lecturers.

The FGD and interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke [39]. In the first phase, familiarizing with the data, the researchers transcribed the recordings verbatim and read the transcripts repeatedly while noting initial ideas. In the second phase, generating initial codes, all transcripts were coded line by line to label participants' experiences, perceptions, and actions related to ChatGPT use. These initial codes were derived inductively from the data, yielding 670 coded segments from the FGDs and 358 from the interviews. Of these 1,028 coded segments, 56 coded segments were not included in the final themes because they did not directly address the research questions. In the third phase, searching for themes, codes with related meanings were grouped and connected to form categories, subthemes, and candidate themes. In this phase, Lickona's components of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action [26] served as a deductive lens for organizing the related codes into Themes 2-4. Codes that did not fit these components were grouped inductively into Themes 1, 5, and 6. In the fourth phase, reviewing themes, the candidate themes were checked for internal consistency against the coded extracts and for coherence with the dataset as a whole. Codes were merged, separated, or relocated where necessary. In the fifth phase, defining and naming themes, the scope and core meaning of each theme were specified, resulting in six main themes. The sixth phase, producing the report, involved selecting representative quotations and relating the themes to the research questions and the literature. Coding was conducted by N, and the themes were discussed with I until

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agreement was reached. MAXQDA 2020 was used to organize the transcripts and to store and retrieve codes; it was not used to generate codes or themes automatically.

Trustworthiness was addressed through several strategies. Credibility was supported by source triangulation, comparing students' accounts with lecturers' perspectives, and by verbatim transcription of all sessions. Transferability was supported by describing the participants and research context (Table 1). Dependability was supported by documenting the six analytical phases and storing all codes and coded segments in MAXQDA. Confirmability was supported by discussing the themes among the researchers until agreement was reached and by presenting participants' quotations to ground the interpretations.

The results are presented hierarchically as main themes, subthemes, categories (only for Themes 2-4), and codes. Frequency (f) refers to the number of times a statement was mentioned across all transcripts. Because the same participant could mention a similar statement more than once, f does not indicate how many participants expressed a particular view. Therefore, the number of participants (n) who mentioned each code is also reported, out of ten students and two lecturers; participants who only nodded were not counted. Because a single coded segment could contain the same short verbal response from several participants (e.g., "Sama sih"), n can occasionally exceed f.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The analysis yielded six main themes: (1) learning transformation; (2) moral knowing, with the subthemes of ethical awareness and critical awareness of AI; (3) moral feeling, with the subthemes of emotional dynamics and learning motivation; (4) moral action, with the subthemes of positive, constructive, and negative actions; (5) impacts on habits and character; and (6) environmental conditions and academic challenges. Themes 2-4 were organized using Lickona's components, whereas Themes 1, 5, and 6 emerged inductively from the data. The two FGDs differed in emphasis: dependence, lack of self-confidence, and negative impacts were coded only in FGD 1, whereas ChatGPT as an initial bridge, its interactive language, and the inconsistency of its answers were coded only in FGD 2. Both FGDs reported using ChatGPT in most of their courses and cross-checking its output against other sources. Given the small group sizes, these differences are reported descriptively and are not interpreted as effects of GPA.

3.1.1. Learning Transformation

This theme describes the changes in the learning process reported by participants, including how lecturers respond and adapt to AI use, as well as students' learning challenges and changes.

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Table 2. Findings on the main theme of Learning Transformation

Subtheme	Code	*f*	n students (of 10)	n lecturers (of 2)
Lecturer response and adaptation	Lecturers' detection of AI use	13	0	2
	Assessment to verify understanding	11	0	2
	Lecturer adaptation	4	0	2
Learning challenges and changes	Habits before AI technology	14	5	2
	Challenges to digital literacy	3	0	1
	Challenges to critical thinking	2	0	1

In the subtheme of lecturer response and adaptation, lecturers described recognizing AI use in students' work, using assessment to verify whether students understood what they had submitted, and adjusting their teaching practices to the presence of AI. Regarding the detection of AI use, a lecturer stated, "Kita kan dosen itu kan bisa melihat ya mahasiswa itu apakah bikin PPT menggunakan ChatGPT atau betul-betul bikin secara manual gitu kan." (As lecturers, we can tell, right, whether students made their PPT using ChatGPT or really made it manually.) (D2, interview). In the subtheme of learning challenges and changes, students contrasted their current practices with their learning habits before AI, when they searched books and journals themselves. Participants stated, "Kan kalau kita dulu sebelum ada AI, kita kan cari manual dari apa yang kita baca." (Back before there was AI, we searched manually from what we read.) (M7, FGD) and "Iya manual. Harus cari jurnal sendiri juga [sebelum ada ChatGPT]." (Yes, manually. We had to look for journals ourselves too [before ChatGPT].) (M10, FGD). One lecturer (D1) also identified challenges to students' digital literacy and critical thinking associated with this shift, describing the challenge as "Bagaimana bisa membuat orang [mahasiswa] punya literasi digital yang bagus." (How to enable people [students] to have good digital literacy) (D1, interview).

3.1.2. Moral Knowing

The main theme of moral knowing comprises two subthemes. The ethical awareness subtheme covers participants' knowledge of the rules on AI use on campus and the expectations placed on students. The critical awareness of AI subtheme covers a critical stance toward technological development and participants' understanding of ChatGPT's characteristics, namely its language and features, its ease of access and speed, and its system limitations.

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Table 3. Findings on the main theme of Moral Knowing

Subtheme	Category	Code	*f*	n students (of 10)	n lecturers (of 2)
Ethical awareness of the rules on AI use on campus	Regulation and policy	Standard of AI as a supporting tool	15	3	2
		Risk of academic integrity violations	7	0	2
		Importance of limiting AI use	9	3	2
		Unclear rules on AI use	6	0	2
		Importance of regulations on AI use	5	0	1
	Expectations and field dynamics	Ideal student standard	21	5	2
		Maintaining a balance between technology and culture	8	0	1
		Preserving character based on local wisdom	7	0	1
		Gap between ideals and reality	5	2	2
		Education as a builder of character	5	0	1
		Learning based on individual potential	3	0	1
		Shift in perspectives due to AI development	3	0	1
Critical awareness of AI	Critical stance toward technological development		4	0	1
	Language and feature characteristics	Interactive ChatGPT language	12	3	0
		Two-way communication with ChatGPT	8	3	0
		Personalization of ChatGPT language	7	4	0
		Characteristics of ChatGPT language	5	0	2
		Verbose ChatGPT language	4	4	0
		Insufficient information is misleading	1	1	0
	Ease of access and speed	ChatGPT's speed in finding information	17	5	1
		Ease of access to ChatGPT	5	1	2
	System limitations	Risk of ChatGPT errors	35	6	2
		Need for cross-checking	23	6	2
		Providing fictitious references	19	7	1
		Inconsistency of ChatGPT answers	10	4	0
		ChatGPT accuracy ratio	6	3	2
		Limitations for practice-based disciplines	5	3	0
		Limited access to ChatGPT features	4	0	1
		AI has no feelings	2	0	1
		Cost of using ChatGPT	1	0	1

Within the ethical awareness subtheme, the regulation and policy category was drawn mainly from the lecturer interviews. Both lecturers and three students framed AI as a supporting tool rather than as a replacement for students' own work. Participants stated,

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"AI seharusnya dibuat sebagai alat bantu sih." (AI should really just be made a supporting tool.) (M1, FGD) and "Mindsetnya harus bahwa ChatGPT itu hanya saja alat untuk alat bantu." (The mindset has to be that ChatGPT is only a tool, a supporting tool.) (D2, interview). The lecturers also recognized the risk of academic integrity violations and the need for regulations, noting that campus rules on AI use were still unclear, while both lecturers and three students emphasized the importance of limiting AI use. This suggests that the supporting-tool norm was held personally rather than derived from institutional policy. In the expectations and field dynamics category, students and lecturers described standards of what an ideal student should be, while one lecturer emphasized balancing technology with culture and preserving character based on local wisdom. Students and lecturers also acknowledged a gap between these ideals and their actual practice, as one participant stated, "Kayak bukunya terbengkalai, bukanya AI. Seharusnya engga." (It's like the books get neglected, and what we open is AI. It shouldn't be like that.) (M5, FGD).

In the subtheme of critical awareness of AI, participants' knowledge centered on ChatGPT's system limitations: the risk of errors, the need to cross-check its answers, fictitious references, and inconsistent answers across queries. Regarding fictitious references, a participant stated, "Sering juga sih, kalau misal aku minta resources atau referensi atau link jurnal kayak gitu, itu linknya tuh nggak bisa dibuka." (It happens quite often, actually. If I ask for resources or references or journal links, things like that, the links can't be opened.) (M2, FGD). Participants also described ChatGPT's language as interactive, two-way, and personalized, and they valued its speed in finding information and its ease of access. Thus, awareness of ChatGPT's limitations coexisted with positive appraisals of its convenience, a tension examined further in Section 3.2.2.

3.1.3. Moral Feeling

The main theme of moral feeling comprises two subthemes. The emotional dynamics subtheme covers the doubt, lack of self-confidence, trust in ChatGPT, and final decisions when in doubt expressed by participants. The learning motivation subtheme covers learning drive and commitment in the context of AI use, including students' resistance to dependence and the internal factors that a lecturer described as controlling AI use.

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Table 4. Findings on the main theme of Moral Feeling

Subtheme	Category	Code	*f*	n students (of 10)	n lecturers (of 2)
Emotional dynamics	Inner dilemma and self-efficacy	Doubt about ChatGPT/AI	21	7	2
		Final decision when in doubt	14	8	0
		Lack of self-confidence	13	4	1
		Trust in ChatGPT	12	3	2
		Concern about cognitive decline	5	1	2
		Internal factor: self-efficacy	4	0	1
		Increased self-confidence	3	3	0
		Dilemma of AI use	1	0	1
Learning motivation	Learning drive and commitment	Resistance to dependence	16	5	2
		Internal factors as controllers of AI use	10	0	1
		Internal factor: learning motivation	6	0	1
		Reading motivation	4	3	0
		Openness to using AI	4	4	0
		Maintaining self-identity in technology use	2	0	1

In the emotional dynamics subtheme, participants expressed both doubt about ChatGPT's answers and trust in them, sometimes within the same discussion. Regarding doubt, a participant stated, "Nah itu tuh kadang kita sering ragu." (Well, that's the thing, we often have doubts.) (M10, FGD), while regarding trust in ChatGPT, another stated, "Karena kita ngerasa ChatGPT aja ini udah kayaknya udah benar nih." (Because we feel like, it's ChatGPT, so this probably already seems right.) (M5, FGD). Students also described how they made final decisions when in doubt and a lack of confidence in their own abilities, while both lecturers and one student expressed concern about cognitive decline, as one student stated, "Iya, padahal dulu kan kita kayak dari buku bisa nih, kita mengolah kalimat sendiri." (Yes, even though before, using books, we could process sentences on our own.) (M3, FGD). The code dilemma of AI use appeared only once, in a lecturer's account, but it explicitly expresses the tension between keeping up with AI and becoming dependent on it. "Buat saya itu kayak buah simalakama ya. Nggak diberikan, maksudnya nggak belajar AI juga ketinggalan, tapi kalau belajar ya jadi begitu, jadi nyandu, jadi addict banget gitu." (For me, it feels like a dilemma. If we don't learn to use AI, we'll be left behind, but if we do learn, it can end up that way, making us dependent, becoming really addicted to it.) (D1, interview). Within the learning motivation subtheme, students and lecturers emphasized resistance to dependence, while one lecturer described internal factors, such as learning motivation and self-efficacy, as controlling students' AI use. Regarding resistance to dependence, a student stated, "Kita gak boleh ketergantungan." (We mustn't become dependent.) (M1, FGD).

3.1.4. Moral Action

The main theme of moral action consists of three subthemes, namely positive, constructive, and negative actions. Positive actions refer to the responsible use of

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ChatGPT. Constructive actions refer to the use of ChatGPT to support learning. Negative actions refer to ChatGPT use that may give rise to deviant behavior.

Table 5. Findings on the main theme of Moral Action

Subtheme	Category	Code	*f*	n students (of 10)	n lecturers (of 2)
Positive actions: responsible task navigation	Self-regulation strategies	Varying ChatGPT use based on personal needs	17	4	1
		Strategies for limiting ChatGPT use	16	5	2
		Strategies for recovering from dependence	9	5	0
		Strategies for using ChatGPT	8	6	0
		Literacy habituation	4	3	0
		ChatGPT as a last resort	4	2	0
	Validation techniques	Use of other sources	46	10	0
		Keyword searching	4	2	0
		Matching ChatGPT sentences with journals	3	2	0
	Verification and data processing	Avoiding the use of raw ChatGPT output	12	6	2
		Independent verification	10	4	0
		Contribution ratio	10	5	0
		Language style alignment	7	4	0
		Obligation to paraphrase	5	4	0
		Rechecking and re-understanding ChatGPT output	5	2	0
		Benchmark of originality	5	1	1
Constructive actions: utilization for learning support		ChatGPT as an initial bridge	16	4	0
		Helping to understand things	15	8	1
		AI as support for lecturers' work	8	0	2
		Helping to set personal learning targets	4	1	0
		AI as support for exploring topics of study	6	2	1
		AI for planning	3	2	0
		Helping to monitor learning progress	3	1	0
		Arguing with ChatGPT	2	1	0
		Benefits for non-practice-based disciplines	2	1	0
		AI as compensation for limited access to information	2	0	1
		Helping to deepen topics of interest	2	1	0
Negative actions: deviant behavior		Dependence	26	4	2
		Dominance of ChatGPT in academic tasks	19	7	1
		Active participation without content maturity	15	0	2
		Tendency to favor instant results	11	5	1
		Orientation toward convenience	9	1	1
		Taking tasks lightly	6	5	1
		Students becoming passive followers	5	0	1
		Procrastination behavior	3	5	0
		Reading AI answers during presentation discussions	3	0	2

Positive actions were evident in self-regulation strategies, such as limiting use and varying use based on personal needs; in validation techniques, such as using other sources;

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and in verification and data processing, such as avoiding the use of raw ChatGPT output. Regarding avoiding the use of raw ChatGPT output, a participant stated, "Terus aku ngembangin pakai bahasaku sendiri." (Then I develop it in my own words.) (M10, FGD); regarding strategies for recovering from dependence, "Aku tulis lagi, kalau udah ditulis, dirangkum." (I write it out again, and once it's written, I summarize it.) (M8, FGD); and regarding the use of other sources, participants stated, "Kadang juga aku tanyain ke dosen sih, biar lebih akurat juga." (Sometimes I also ask the lecturer, so that it's more accurate.) (M10, FGD) and "Kita tanyakan ke teman yang memang lebih tahu gitu." (We ask a friend who actually knows more about it.) (M8, FGD). Constructive actions were evident in the use of ChatGPT as an initial bridge and as an aid to understanding things. Regarding the initial bridge, a participant stated, "Kalau aku penasaran dengan hal baru tuh langsung larinya ke ChatGPT." (When I'm curious about something new, I go straight to ChatGPT.) (M8, FGD).

Negative actions centered on dependence and the dominance of ChatGPT in academic tasks, which students described as a gradual expansion of use from one course to almost all courses. A student stated, "Ketergantungannya di situ sih, jadi kayak yang harusnya mungkin cuma satu matkul malah hampir semua matkul diikutin pake ChatGPT semua." (That's where the dependence is, so it's like, what should probably have been just one course ended up being almost every course done with ChatGPT.) (M5, FGD). From the lecturers' perspective, this was reflected in active participation without content maturity: "Lebih aktif, iya, tapi tidak dibarengi dengan kematangan konten. Mahasiswa justru tidak mencari tahu lebih dalam terkait dengan bidang keilmuannya itu." (More active, yes, but not accompanied by content maturity. Students actually don't look more deeply into their own field of study.) (D1, interview). Students also described a tendency to favor instant results, taking tasks lightly, and procrastination, while the lecturers observed an orientation toward convenience, students becoming passive followers, and students reading AI answers during presentation discussions. Together, these actions describe ChatGPT taking over parts of the learning effort.

3.1.5. Impacts on Habits and Character

This theme covers the impacts of AI use mentioned by participants, both positive and negative, as well as changes in learning habits, social interaction, and character.

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Table 6. Findings on the main theme of Impacts on Habits and Character

Subtheme	Code	*f*	n students (of 10)	n lecturers (of 2)
Positive impacts	For brainstorming	26	6	1
	Time efficiency	20	7	1
	Supporting learning	17	5	1
	Practicing critical thinking	15	4	1
	Summarizing material	9	3	0
	For paraphrasing	9	3	0
	Completeness of AI information	8	0	1
	For finding references	7	3	0
	Report writing	6	3	0
	Student activeness	4	0	1
	Practicing creativity	3	2	0
Negative impacts	Reduced critical thinking	10	2	2
	Confusion when asked spontaneously	6	0	2
	Reduced creativity	6	1	1
	Reduced cognitive ability	4	2	0
	Reduced literacy	4	2	0
	Mismatch between written answers and oral ability	4	0	2
	Reduced problem-solving ability	3	1	1
	Time inefficiency	2	2	0
	Decreased motivation	1	1	0
	Academic decline	1	0	1
Abandonment of physical books and e-books		8	5	0
Impact of technology on social behavior		5	0	1
Changes in learning habits		4	3	0
Impact of technology on social interaction		2	0	1
Influence of AI on character		2	0	1

This theme comprises the impacts of ChatGPT use, divided into positive impacts, negative impacts, and impacts on habits and character. Positive impacts were evident in the use of ChatGPT for brainstorming, time efficiency, supporting learning, and practicing critical thinking. Regarding support for learning, a student stated, “Ternyata ada yang bahas juga kalo ChatGPT tuh membantu banget buat belajar. Terutama karena aku abis cuti juga kan, aku merasa tertinggal banyak hal. Ternyata memang membantu banget.” (It turns out others were also saying that ChatGPT really helps with studying. Especially because I had just come back from a leave of absence, I felt I had fallen behind on a lot of things. It turned out to really help.) (M7, FGD). Negative impacts were evident in reduced critical thinking and creativity, and the lecturers also observed students’ confusion when asked spontaneously. Students stated, “Jadi nggak mikir terlalu dalam sih lebih condong ke situ karena keinstant yang ditawarkan memang memudahkan.” (So we don’t think too deeply; it leans more toward that, because the instant results it offers really do make things easier.) (M4, FGD) and “Apapun masalahnya kita pasti tanya di AI jadi menurutku kayak

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problem solving dan kreativitasnya itu kurang." (Whatever the problem is, we always ask AI, so in my opinion our problem solving and creativity are kind of lacking.) (M3, FGD).

Furthermore, within the theme of impacts on habits and character, there were the subthemes of abandonment of physical books and e-books, impact on social behavior, changes in learning habits, and influence of AI on character. Regarding the abandonment of physical books and e-books, a student stated, "Jadi walaupun ada buku fisiknya pun kayak nggak pernah dibuka. Jadi maksudnya kayak bukunya terbengkalai." (So even when there are physical books, they're kind of never opened. I mean, the books just get neglected.) (M5, FGD), and regarding changes in learning habits, "Kita lebih ke teknologi banget, AI banget gitu dari yang sebelumnya." (We've become much more into technology, really into AI, compared to before.) (M3, FGD). Regarding the influence of AI on character, a lecturer stated, "Selama AI ini membentuk orang untuk bisa mempunyai karakter yang unggul seperti punya kreatifitas, inovasi, optimis, tanggung jawab, itu oke." (As long as AI shapes people to have excellent character, such as creativity, innovation, optimism, and responsibility, that's fine.) (D1, interview).

3.1.6. Environmental Conditions and Academic Challenges

This theme describes the external factors accompanying AI use, namely social influence and the digital era, as well as academic pressures and challenges.

Table 7. Findings on the main theme of Environmental Conditions and Academic Challenges

Subtheme	Code	*f*	n students (of 10)	n lecturers (of 2)
Social influence and the digital era	Inevitability of AI use in education	15	0	2
	Digital era: AI use across various fields	6	0	2
	External factor: surrounding support	4	0	1
	Lecturer recommendation	1	1	0
Pressures and limitations	Task difficulty as a determinant of ChatGPT use	5	6	0
	Limitations of physical books	5	2	0
	Academic workload	1	1	0

This theme covers the external factors accompanying ChatGPT use, divided into social influence and the digital era, and pressures and challenges. In the subtheme of social influence and the digital era, the lecturers mentioned the inevitability of AI use in education, AI use across various fields in the digital era, and surrounding support. Regarding the inevitability of AI use in education, a lecturer stated, "Karena memang dunianya seperti itu ya, perkembangan zaman sekarang semua orang menggunakan ChatGPT, terutama dalam konteks pendidikan." (Because that's just how the world is now; with the way things have developed, everyone uses ChatGPT, especially in the context of education.) (D2, interview), and regarding surrounding support, "Faktor dukungan dari sekitar, atau environment support, atau peer support, atau family support misalnya. Itu bisa membuat orang untuk melakukan yang bijak, yang wise dalam mengaplikasikan ChatGPT, AI tadi atau yang tidak." (Support from those around them, or environment support, or

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peer support, or family support, for example. That can determine whether people act wisely in applying ChatGPT, or AI, or not.) (D1, interview). In the subtheme of pressures and limitations, participants mentioned task difficulty as a determinant of ChatGPT use and the limitations of physical books. Students stated, "Iya, tergantung level kesusahan." (Yes, it depends on the level of difficulty.) (M2, FGD) and "Karena menurut kita sekarang kalau buka buku tuh emang lama memakan waktu yang banyak." (Because for us now, opening books really takes long; it takes up a lot of time.) (M3, FGD).

3.1.7. Connections Across Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, and Moral Action in Individual Accounts

Tracing each participant's accounts across the three components revealed two patterns, which could also coexist within the same student. In the first, awareness of ChatGPT's limitations was accompanied by doubt and by verification. M10 expressed doubt about ChatGPT's answers, developed them in their own words, and asked the lecturer to check their accuracy. In the second pattern, students recognized ChatGPT's limitations or the value of independent learning but continued to rely heavily on it. M5 acknowledged that books should not be neglected, yet felt that ChatGPT's answers "probably already seem right" and described returning to it, "Jadinya kita besoknya lagi pun pakai ChatGPT lagi." (So the next day we use ChatGPT again.) (M5, FGD), eventually in almost every course. M3 recognized that relying on AI had reduced their problem solving and creativity, yet stated that "Whatever the problem is, we always ask AI," and M4 admitted not thinking deeply because ChatGPT's instant results, "Really do make things easier." M8 showed both patterns: M8 rewrote and summarized ChatGPT's output and consulted a more knowledgeable peer, yet, while noting, "Memang ChatGPT gak konsisten gitulah." (ChatGPT really isn't consistent.) and "Kalau di ChatGPT memang itu ya, kadang dia bodong." (With ChatGPT, that's how it is, sometimes it's bogus.), also stated, "Lagi ngelaprak, itu pasti, aku pake ChatGPT." (When I'm doing a lab report, I definitely use ChatGPT.) (M8, FGD). In the second pattern, awareness of limitations did not translate into verification; instead, trust in ChatGPT's output and a preference for instant results accompanied continued reliance.

In summary, ChatGPT has become part of students' everyday academic practice. Most students recognized its limitations, such as errors and fictitious references, while the lecturers perceived campus rules on AI use as unclear. Its use was accompanied by both doubt and trust, and students' reported actions ranged from verification and selective use to dependence. Individual accounts showed that awareness of ChatGPT's limitations alone did not distinguish responsible from problematic use; what differed was whether this awareness was accompanied by supportive moral feelings.

3.2. Discussion

This study shows that ChatGPT use is understood not merely as a technical learning matter but as a matter of habits and moral considerations in everyday academic life related to academic character. Through the framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action [26], the findings reveal that what is noteworthy is not simply

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how often ChatGPT is used, but how participants' knowledge, feelings, and actions appear to be interrelated.

3.2.1. From Manual Searching to the Need to Verify Understanding: A Shift in Academic Practice

Before ChatGPT came into widespread use, participants were accustomed to opening books and searching for references themselves. Now, they are accustomed to opening ChatGPT for academic purposes. This shift in habits is accompanied by a lecturer's concerns about students' digital literacy and critical thinking, in line with previous research associating dependence on AI with declining literacy and critical thinking skills [16], [17], [40]. Therefore, maintaining digital literacy and critical thinking becomes a challenge amid the convenience offered by ChatGPT.

Lecturers responded to this shift by adjusting how they assess rather than by prohibiting AI use. They observed students' work and used assessment to test understanding. This response is consistent with the idea that academic integrity is better maintained through pedagogical approaches than through policing alone [23] and with recommendations to develop clear guidelines on AI use [41]. The lecturers' belief that AI use can be recognized is consistent with students' perception in Fošner and Aver's [30] study that lecturers can easily detect AI-generated content. Assessment to verify understanding is also consistent with the findings regarding students who were confused when asked spontaneously and whose written answers did not match their oral ability.

The lecturers' attitude in this study tended to be pragmatic: AI was accepted as inevitable and positioned as a supporting tool. This attitude differs from that of the lecturers in Pikhart and Al-Obaydi's [33] study, who tended to be skeptical and emphasized ethical guidelines and a balance with human involvement. Despite these differing attitudes, the need for clear rules was evident in both studies.

3.2.2. Moral Knowing: The Norm of ChatGPT as a Supporting Tool and Critical Awareness

The lecturers and some students explicitly framed AI as a supporting tool, while the lecturers perceived campus rules on AI use as unclear. This combination indicates that the norm of using ChatGPT only as a supporting tool still rests on personal judgment and community habits rather than on official institutional policy. This is in line with literature emphasizing the need for regulations and ethical guidelines in the use of AI in education [12], [11], [10] and the importance of dialogue among stakeholders [34]. Haris et al. [20] also linked understanding of AI with academic norms and ethics, consistent with the finding that participants' ethical awareness went hand in hand with their understanding of how ChatGPT works and its limitations. Unlike studies that frame ChatGPT ethics mainly as awareness of rules or integrity risks [31], [32], the students in this study rarely referred to formal rules; rules and integrity risks were raised mainly by the lecturers, whereas the students' moral knowing centered on ChatGPT's limitations.

The lecturers recognized the risk of academic integrity violations and the need for limits. Because this awareness exists in the absence of clear rules, its application may

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depend on individual will. Critical awareness of AI, namely the risk of errors, the need for cross-checking, fictitious references, and inconsistent answers, is consistent with concerns about accuracy in previous research [8], [9]. This knowledge coexists with a positive assessment of the ease and speed of access and with trust in ChatGPT's output. Awareness of these limitations appears to be related to students' habit of validating ChatGPT's output. Participants also considered ChatGPT more useful for non-practice-based disciplines and limited for practice-based disciplines. This distinction indicates that participants' moral knowledge consists not only of general rules but also of contextual considerations about when ChatGPT can be used.

3.2.3. Moral Feeling: The Dilemma between Awareness of Dependence and the Need to Use

In Lickona's theory of character education [26], moral feeling includes, among other things, self-esteem and self-control, and participants' emotional dynamics fall within this domain. Students and lecturers rejected dependence, and the lecturers and one student expressed concern about cognitive decline; yet students continued to use ChatGPT, and some expressed trust in its output. This trust appears to contradict the critical awareness discussed earlier. ChatGPT's interactive and personalizable language may be one of the reasons students continue to use ChatGPT despite its limitations, in line with the view that language personalization is one of AI's strengths in learning [42].

ChatGPT use was also associated with self-confidence in two directions. Some students said that ChatGPT increased their self-confidence, yet a lack of self-confidence also emerged alongside its use. The increased self-confidence among some students is consistent with the findings of Ramadian and Rahman [43]. Meanwhile, the lack of self-confidence suggests that the affective experiences accompanying ChatGPT use are not unidirectional. A lack of self-confidence emerged when students felt that their abilities were no longer the same as before ChatGPT technology existed, so that their self-confidence declined along with their perceived abilities.

From the lecturers' perspective, internal factors such as self-efficacy and learning motivation were viewed as controlling AI use. This view aligns with the emphasis on self-regulation as part of character strengths [44], [45]. In addition to internal factors, environmental influence or support was described by a lecturer as an external factor that shapes whether a person uses AI wisely. The link between self-efficacy and AI use is consistent with the finding that students with higher self-efficacy tend to be more adaptive in using AI chatbots as a supplementary learning resource [46].

Taken together, these feelings were related to students' reported academic decisions in different ways. Doubt about ChatGPT's answers was often followed by checking or by asking lecturers and peers, whereas trust in its output, as in M5's account, appeared alongside repeated reliance. A lack of self-confidence appeared alongside returning to ChatGPT, as students who felt unsure of their own answers described turning back to it. Learning motivation and self-control were described by a lecturer as internal factors that keep AI use in check. These relationships reflect how participants described their decisions and are not presented as causal effects.

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This dilemma is important because it shows that moral feeling cannot be understood solely as guilt or discomfort. Moral feeling can also take the form of doubt, the desire to maintain one's self-identity when using technology, and resistance to dependence, all three of which are related to everyday practical decisions.

3.2.4. Moral Action: Positive, Constructive, and Negative Actions

According to Lickona's theory, moral action is a manifestation of a person's competence, will, and habit, which are related to moral knowing and moral feeling. In this study, three forms of action patterns were identified: positive, constructive, and negative.

Positive and constructive actions were associated with sound moral knowing and supportive moral feeling. This is evident from the codes that emerged, such as awareness of ChatGPT's limitations, doubt followed by checking, and resistance to dependence, which appeared together with self-regulation strategies, namely limiting use, using ChatGPT as a last resort, and using it according to need. These strategies were accompanied by validation techniques and output processing, namely not using raw output, rechecking, and writing in one's own words. Constructive utilization, which uses ChatGPT to support learning, such as using ChatGPT as an initial bridge, deepening topics of interest, or arguing with ChatGPT, emerged within the same framework. This pattern is visible in students' statements expressing doubt, developing answers in their own words, and asking lecturers or peers about matters they were unsure of. These strategies reflect the planning, monitoring, and control processes that define self-regulation [25]. In this study, however, they appeared together with moral feelings such as doubt and resistance to dependence, suggesting that self-regulation in ChatGPT use also has a moral-affective dimension.

Conversely, awareness that is not followed by supportive moral feeling may be associated with negative moral action. Rules perceived as unclear, the belief that ChatGPT's output is already correct, and a tendency to favor instant results appeared to coincide with dependence, the dominance of ChatGPT across many courses, and procrastination, while the lecturers observed an orientation toward convenience and students reading AI answers during presentation discussions. The lecturers described this situation as active participation without content maturity. This pattern is consistent with reports associating dependence with less in-depth searching [16], [18], [15] and a review associating excessive dependence with weakened cognitive abilities [40]. In terms of academic character, these actions are most closely related to the values of independence, discipline, and responsibility [21].

Conceptually, this pattern is consistent with Lickona's understanding that moral feelings such as self-control and self-esteem are related to moral action [47], [48]. In the first pattern, ChatGPT was used as a virtual tutor that simplifies complex concepts and helped students understand difficult material, accompanied by the recommendation that it be used wisely and critically [4], [43]. This is also consistent with the finding that only a few students used chatbots without editing [30]. Thus, in this pattern, ChatGPT tended to be positioned as a learning companion followed by checking rather than as a substitute for learning effort, as seen, for example, in M10, who expressed doubt, developed answers in

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their own words, and asked the lecturer. The second pattern was evident in M5, who was aware that books should not be abandoned but felt that ChatGPT's output was 'udah benar' (already right) and used it in almost all courses. Thus, the second pattern emerged not merely because of limited awareness, but when awareness was not followed by sufficiently strong moral feeling and convenience was prioritized.

The students who recognized ChatGPT's limitations but continued prioritizing convenience illustrate a gap between knowing and doing rather than a lack of knowledge, which Lickona's framework anticipates in emphasizing that knowing the good does not guarantee doing it [26]. In participants' accounts, this gap appeared when general awareness met immediate demands: opening books was described as time-consuming, task difficulty determined when ChatGPT was used, and ChatGPT's output was trusted as already correct. Under these conditions, convenience appeared to outweigh awareness of limitations in students' reported decisions.

Overall, participants' moral actions showed two patterns related to the quality of moral knowing and moral feeling. When awareness of ChatGPT's limitations was accompanied by supportive moral feelings, such as doubt that was followed up, resistance to dependence, and learning motivation, the reported actions tended to be positive and constructive, with ChatGPT as a learning companion. When awareness was not followed by supportive moral feeling and convenience was prioritized, the reported actions tended to be negative, with ChatGPT taking over learning effort. Thus, the quality of moral action is related to how students know, feel about, and position ChatGPT in their learning. This relationship is understood as an interpretive pattern rather than a cause-and-effect relationship.

3.2.5. Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, and Moral Action as Interconnected Processes

These findings suggest that, in generative AI-assisted learning, moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action are better understood as dynamically interconnected processes than as separate dimensions. Lickona describes good character as the integration of knowing, desiring, and doing the good [26], and the findings show how this integration operates in ChatGPT use. Knowledge of ChatGPT's limitations, such as errors and fictitious references, was expressed in both FGDs but did not by itself distinguish the two patterns of action; what differed was the moral feeling accompanying that knowledge. Moral feeling therefore appeared as a link between knowing and acting, although the design of this study does not allow it to be interpreted as a causal mechanism. Moral action also appeared to feed back into moral feeling: students who relied on ChatGPT described feeling less confident in abilities they believed they had before. This extends Lickona's framework to generative AI-assisted learning in two ways. First, it identifies AI-specific forms of moral knowing, such as awareness of fictitious references and inconsistent answers, and of moral feeling, such as trust in or doubt about AI output. Second, it suggests that where institutional rules are unclear, personal norms and moral feelings carry greater weight in translating knowledge into action.

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3.2.6. Impacts of ChatGPT Use on Learning Habits and Character

The positive impacts, such as time efficiency, brainstorming, and help in understanding material, are consistent with the literature on the benefits of ChatGPT and AI for students [28], [1], [49]. Critical thinking and creativity appeared on both sides, as something that can be trained and as something that declines through ChatGPT use. Their appearance on both sides need not be read as a contradiction. This is consistent with the earlier interpretation (Section 3.2.4) that the impacts that may arise depend on how ChatGPT is used. ChatGPT also serves a compensatory function, for example in the case of a participant who felt left behind after taking a leave of absence and found it helpful for learning, making it beneficial for students with limited access or time.

Negative impacts were reflected in the lecturers' observations of students who were confused when asked spontaneously and whose written answers did not match their oral ability. These impacts point to the concern raised in previous research that when AI takes over thinking tasks, opportunities to practice independent problem-solving diminish [17], [40]. Meanwhile, the impacts on habits, namely the abandonment of physical books and e-books and the shift in learning patterns toward technology, indicate that the shift does not stop at assignments but extends to how students build their learning habits. Lecturers interpreted these changes within a character frame: AI is acceptable as long as it can form excellent character traits such as creativity, responsibility, and optimism. This interpretation aligns with the view that character formation should not focus solely on cognitive aspects [50]. These impacts, including students' reports of reduced critical thinking and creativity, reflect participants' perceptions rather than objectively measured changes in academic ability.

3.2.7. External Conditions: The Context Accompanying Use

The external factors identified in this study consist of several interrelated conditions, such as the inevitability of AI use in the digital era, lecturers' recommendations, and surrounding support, which form a situation that normalizes ChatGPT use. In this situation, task difficulty and the limitations of physical books, including the time needed to open books, as well as academic workload and pressure, were described by students as reasons for using ChatGPT.

The dilemmas and negative actions discussed earlier cannot be fully explained by individual factors. A lecturer mentioned environmental support as a factor that shapes whether AI is used wisely, and the role of lecturers in guiding students in a humane manner was emphasized by Marlin et al. [34]. The environment, including peer interaction, has a considerable influence on learners' moral actions [51]. Under these conditions, lecturers' recommendations to use AI would be more beneficial if accompanied by clear rules and assessment so that its use is more directed.

These findings have several practical implications. First, because the norm that ChatGPT should serve only as a supporting tool was expressed by the lecturers and some students, while the lecturers perceived campus rules as unclear, higher education institutions need to formulate explicit guidelines on AI use so that this norm does not rest solely on personal judgment. Such guidelines could clarify the acceptable scope of AI use

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in learning and assignments, thereby addressing the risk of academic integrity violations that the lecturers themselves recognized. Second, lecturers already used assessment to verify understanding, and they observed that some students were confused when asked spontaneously or gave written answers that did not match their oral ability. Taken together, these findings suggest that assessment should not rely solely on written products. Formats that require students to explain their work, such as oral questioning or process-based assessment, may help position ChatGPT as a learning companion rather than a substitute for learning effort. Third, the two patterns of action differed less in students' knowledge of ChatGPT's limitations than in whether this awareness was accompanied by supportive moral feelings. Efforts to foster academic character should therefore go beyond AI literacy. Learning activities can deliberately cultivate self-control and verification habits, such as cross-checking ChatGPT's output against other sources, rewriting content in one's own words, and consulting lecturers or peers when in doubt, practices that participants in the positive and constructive pattern already demonstrated.

This study has several limitations. The participants consisted of 10 students and 2 lecturers from three higher education institutions in one city; therefore, the findings are not intended to be generalized. The differences between the two FGDs should be interpreted with caution because each group consisted of only five students. Because students volunteered to participate, those with more problematic ChatGPT use may be under-represented. The FGD data are self-reported and may be influenced by participants' desire to appear in line with norms in front of their peers and the moderator.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored students' academic character in ChatGPT use through Lickona's framework. Regarding moral knowing (RQ1), the lecturers and some students framed ChatGPT as a supporting tool, most students recognized its limitations, such as errors and fictitious references, and the lecturers perceived campus rules on AI use as unclear, leaving this norm dependent on personal judgment. Regarding moral feeling (RQ2), ChatGPT use was accompanied by doubt, trust, fluctuating self-confidence, and resistance to dependence. Regarding moral action (RQ3), students' reported actions ranged from verification and selective use to dependence, accompanied by both positive and negative perceived impacts and by external conditions that normalize AI use. Regarding the interrelation of the three components (RQ4), when awareness of ChatGPT's limitations was accompanied by supportive moral feelings, ChatGPT tended to be positioned as a learning companion; when convenience prevailed, it tended to replace learning effort. Awareness of AI limitations, therefore, did not necessarily translate into responsible practice.

Theoretically, the study shows that Lickona's framework helps interpret both responsible and problematic ChatGPT use when knowing, feeling, and acting are treated as interconnected, with moral feeling appearing as a link between knowledge and action, particularly where institutional rules are unclear. These findings extend previous research focusing on benefits, challenges, and learning outcomes by showing that academic character in the AI era is more than compliance with rules or the ability to use technology.

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However, they are qualitative interpretations from a small group of participants and do not establish causal relationships or generalizable behavioral patterns. Likewise, the dependence and cognitive difficulties described by participants are self-reported perceptions, not objectively measured reductions in academic ability. Practically, responsible ChatGPT use requires combining students' ethical judgment with clear institutional guidelines and assessment practices that require students to explain their work. Future research could examine the interrelationships among moral knowledge, feeling, and action using quantitative or mixed-methods designs with larger and more diverse samples, including more lecturers and institutions with different AI policies.

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