Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Social Work Education: An Exploratory Study

Authors : Nir Wittenberg, Moshe Farhi

Abstract : This mixed-methods study examines the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in a first-year social work course to assess their potential for enhancing professional knowledge and skills. The incorporation of digital technologies, such as AI, in social work interventions, training, and research has increased, with the expectation that AI will become as commonplace as email and mobile phones. However, policies and ethical guidelines regarding AI, as well as empirical evaluations of its usefulness, are lacking. As AI is gradually being adopted in the field, it is prudent to explore AI thoughtfully in alignment with pedagogical goals. The outcomes assessed include professional identity, course satisfaction, and motivation. AI offers unique reflective learning opportunities through personalized simulations, feedback, and queries to complement face-to-face lessons. For instance, AI simulations provide low-risk practices for situations such as client interactions, enabling students to build skills with less stress. However, it is essential to recognize that AI alone cannot ensure real-world competence or cultural sensitivity. Outcomes related to student learning, experience, and perceptions will help to elucidate the best practices for AI integration, guiding faculty, and advancing pedagogical innovation. This strategic integration of selected AI technologies is expected to diversify course methodology, improve learning outcomes, and generate new evidence on AI's educational utility. The findings will inform faculty seeking to thoughtfully incorporate AI into teaching and learning.
Keywords : artificial intelligence (AI), social work education, students, developing a professional identity, ethical considerations

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