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[BALANCING AI INTEGRATION WITH ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH]

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the context of ethical leadership in Pakistan, focusing on its impact on personal and professional growth. As part of the "Digital Pakistan" framework, the research examines key challenges such as algorithmic bias, data privacy, and ethical considerations in AI deployment. Using a qualitative approach, including semi-structured interviews with eight professionals and two focus groups, this research identifies the ethical and developmental implications of AI integration in the country. It highlights issues such as AI opacity, data misuse, and bias, which threaten to exacerbate existing inequalities. While AI presents significant risks, such as job displacement and privacy concerns, it also presents opportunities for personal development, particularly through online learning platforms. Ethical leadership plays a critical role in mitigating these risks, ensuring the fair, transparent, and responsible use of AI in Pakistan. The findings provide actionable recommendations for businesses, educators, and policymakers, emphasizing the need for clear AI protocols, the incorporation of ethics in education, and the establishment of localized regulations. This study contributes to the broader global conversation on AI governance, offering insights into the unique challenges and opportunities posed by AI integration in Pakistan.

Key words: AI Integration, Ethical Leadership, Pakistan, Personal Growth, Professional Growth

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the use of computer systems to perform certain functions that are generally associated with human intelligence recognizing an image, through understanding speech and making decisions to translating languages. Quickly from mere conceptualization, it became something involving revolutionizing the world around it (Markauskaite et al., 2022; Marangoz, 2023; Fitria, 2021). Over the last few years, artificial intelligence technology has been applied in many phases of life. Business services and improved ways of doing business were provided through AI. In education, it builds personalized learning experiences for every student. It assists the physician in diagnosing disease and developing new cures in the healthcare sector (Sai et al., 2024; Akhtar et al., 2021). Pakistan, too, is now beginning to take a further step into the era of technology with AI under the "Digital Pakistan" plan. This was entailing the use of artificial intelligence in government services, finance, agriculture, and technology startups that aspire to grow using AI as a catalyst for development in the country (Nazeer & Gil, 2023). The increasing prevalence of AI brings serious issues, which elevate the need for impactful ethical leadership. Ethical leadership means being a good steward, being nice instead, being fair, being honest and accountable, communicating clearly and thoughtfully, and making good decisions in a timely manner (Adnan et al., 2022; Matli, 2024). Some of the first orders of ethics in this field of inquiry include the bias of AI

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systems that are unfair, the compromise of personal data that leads to unwanted and sometimes outright breaches of privacy, and responsibility for the conclusions of AI systems that are unacceptable (Slavina, 2023). While ethical leadership could easily mitigate these risks and take a leadership role in guiding ethical leadership in schools, without ethical leadership, the risks could outweigh the benefits of AI.

In Pakistan, the effects of AI on both individual and professional growth were starting to come into focus. The broad influence of AI necessitates the demand for other new digital and analytical skills, which reshape the workforce and career paths through displacement, more than simply changing a few traditional roles (Zaman et al., 2024; Imran & Akhtar, 2023). The technology also indicated new opportunities for individuals to develop and grow themselves through new online learning environments and tools that provide personalized career support (Tapalova & Zhiyenbayeva, 2022). This research focused on the manner in which Pakistan must establish a sweet spot between the many positive things AI can provide for personal or professional advancement and the need for ethical boundaries. It examined the complexity of adopting AI, the necessary ways of ethical direction, and the developing career pathways in Pakistan.

Research problem

The rapid growth of AI has not only brought many new opportunities, but also serious challenges for countries like Pakistan. While AI has provided efficiencies and innovation in a number of fields, there are many challenges with use, and one challenge deserves special attention (Channa et al., 2024; Mariani et al., 2022). This study considered one important challenge the ethical challenges of AI use in Pakistan and how these challenges could influence individuals' development (Kausar et al., 2024). The primary challenge revolves around the issue of how to potentially reconcile technological advancement with as humanistic as possible values, since there is no established framework for doing so.

The major ethical issues associated with using AI in Pakistan. Although issues like algorithmic bias, data protection, and lack of transparency are global (Gilani et al., 2023), those challenges take different forms in Pakistan. AI systems in Pakistan have, at times, exacerbated existing forms of inequality related to gender, ethnicity, and income. One of the primary reasons is the difficulty of obtaining accurate data to represent the entire population (Shah, 2024). Although there are concerns regarding data privacy worldwide, it is particularly acute in Pakistan, where data laws and regulations are still in development (Shahid et al., 2022). Many Pakistanis also struggle with digital literacy, where they do not fully comprehend how AI technology works, especially when it comes to providing consent. For these reasons, we decided to address these ethical issues in the context of the local conditions to enhance the potential for developing fair and responsible uses of AI.

The second and most important element of this issue was to find out how AI impacted

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individuals' personal growth and career development in Pakistan. AI caused a shift in what skills were needed in work and what types of jobs would be available. While automation caused some of the traditional jobs to disappear, new roles arose that required increased digital skills. While the growth of new roles with increased skill requirements benefited some, it left a larger gap in skills and created job insecurity for some workers (Bhargava et al., 2020). Although AI-based platforms had the potential to support people in developing their skills while creating educational pathways, not everyone had access to these digital tools, and opportunities for growth were still limited across different groups (Poquet & De Laat, 2021). Therefore, it was essential to understand how and in what ways AI had an effect on career pathways and skill development, as well as on people's personal growth in Pakistan. If there were not a fair approach to address these issues, inequities would have been compounded and again, this highlights the need for more focus on research about AI's effects.

Significance of the study

The fast-paced expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Pakistan caused significant changes to society and the economy, but it also put pressure on thoughtful and ethical management (Bandwal, 2024). As AI began to enter foray into decisions affecting people's personal lives and careers, it became more and more imperative to find a way to reconcile advances in technology with ethical focus and concern. This research sought to identify how such a balance could be achieved, since AI could never as a field be fully realized without it being developed and purposely leveraged alongside human values and the wellbeing of society.

This research was valuable because it had useful recommendations for everyone and every institution in Pakistan that was trying to use artificial intelligence (AI) in a responsible and ethical manner. Understanding, knowing, and applying AI in ways that are ethical and socially responsible is more than understanding the technology (Coeckelbergh, 2019). Much of the focus in Pakistan is on how individuals and organizations was profit from AI guided by responsible and ethical norms, not how individuals and organizations was be harmed or create additional societal issues (Reisach, 2020). The research considered the interactions between the use of AI, ethical leadership, and sustainability and sought to present helpful advice on ways to make productive actions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding AI and Its Applications

Machines have the capability to resemble human decision-making through Artificial Intelligence (AI) by employing ML and NLP alongside computer vision and DL technologies (Cheema et al., 2023; Ghosh & Thirugnanam, 2021). Systems using machine learning technology within artificial intelligence can learn from data to make predictions

through data-based processes rather than rigid programming instructions. The ability to create recommendation systems alongside predictive analytics tools has emerged from this technology standard to enhance both efficiency and accuracy within multiple applications.

The applications of Artificial Intelligence expand throughout multiple industrial sectors in Pakistan. The emerging fintech industry together with businesses apply AI technology to boost customer interactions while improving supply chain operations and implementing data-based solutions during operations (Andronie et al., 2023). The education sector implements AI to build tailored learning platforms alongside administrative system enhancements which support the digital transformation movement (Ullaha et al., 2024). The application of AI in healthcare enables remote patient monitoring along with medical image analysis and disease outbreak prediction to handle significant system challenges (Alshamrani, 2021. Amber, 2024).

Ethical Leadership in the Age of AI

Ethical leadership is described as when leaders exhibit the appropriate behaviour, modelled through their actions and relationships with others, and influence followers to exhibit the same behaviour through communication, reinforcement, and collective decision-making in group activities (Halbusi et al., 2020; Shiundu, 2024). In the case of AI, ethical leadership would have been even more important in relation to the challenges and potential consequences for society (Uddin, 2023; Imran & Akhtar, 2023). Ethical leaders were important contributors to the promotion of organizational cultures that emphasized the responsible use of AI. They stressed transparency, ensuring AI processes and data usages were clear; fairness, ensuring AI systems were audited for biases and strove for fair outcomes; and accountability, who made the decisions for AI and the consequences of decisions (Bibi, 2024). Ethical leaders promoted proactive thinking in relation to mitigating risks and building trust in AI.

Ethical Issues in AI

The ethical considerations surrounding artificial intelligence were significant. A clear example was algorithmic bias, which arose when AI systems copied biased behaviours that included unfair patterns in the data they were trained on. These biases led to discrimination faced by certain groups during hiring, loan approvals, and even policing (Schwartz et al., 2022; Talati, 2021). The other common ethical issue was the use of the "black box" problem. Many AI systems were complicated enough that even the developers of the algorithms sometimes could not explain the process of deciding an outcome. Building transparency using a black box limited error correction, assignment of fault, and trust (Durán & Jongsma, 2021; Shen, 2022). The further ethical concerns of privacy and data security were also present to consider, due to AI using vast amounts of personal data which could be stolen or misused (Dhirani et al., 2023). Examples globally found as the use of facial recognition tools incorrectly identifying faces of people from

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minority groups and hiring tools that provided unfair bias and discrimination against some applicants (Talati, 2021). In Pakistan, these concerns were not discussed as a focus of global literature, but they were important considerations as AI use continued to grow. Liang et al. (2022) stated that poor data systems create risks of other problems developing locally, and the same issues could have occurred as the use of AI became widespread.

AI and Professional Development

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has dramatically changed labour markets across the globe, and it has undoubtedly borne a substantial impact on job-related advancement in Pakistan. AI has two primary effects: it has replaced base human functions through the automation of repeated procedures to the loss of jobs in some locations, but at the same time created job opportunities and enhanced job offerings (Spring et al., 2022; Hussain & Rizwan, 2024). In Pakistan, areas such as manufacturing, traditional banking, or data entry had their traditional job roles exposed to automation which catalyzed the need for worker re-training (Umair, 2024). Along with the growth in new job opportunities, there has been a significant rise in job roles that require an individual with an understanding of AI product development, data science, machine learning, or the ethics of AI, again, especially in Pakistan, where the IT and services sectors have been rapidly expanding (Karakoylu et al., 2020; Channa et al., 2024). These situations are transforming the previous job search paradigm and the desired skillsets of an employer.

Embracing AI-dominated workplaces requires more than a new set of technical skills. As skills such as programming (e.g., Python), data analysis, and AI model creation have gained prominence (Raschka et al., 2020), so have "soft skills" like critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, emotional intelligence, and collaboration. These human skills are complementary, not competitive, to AI (Nadeem, 2024). In Pakistan, national initiatives were established to improve digital literacy and provide AI training to help people acquire the skills needed to bridge the skills gap and anticipate job demands (Bukartaite & Hooper, 2023). However, access to this talent pipeline for everyone, including those in rural areas or those working in an informal economy, remained a major hurdle worth consideration. The objective was to not only acquire new technical skills but also to acquire lifelong learning and the ability to adapt to this radically changing professional environment as a result of AI (De, 2024).

AI and Personal Development

Outside of work, AI has also been helpful for self-development, but it also has some drawbacks. Most learning platforms, such as Coursera and edX, are sunk in AI. They provide AI-driven learning routes tailored to each learner through curated content. They monitor access and performance of quizzes to provide suggestions for subsequent lessons and follow learners and their progress throughout the course (Saqr et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2020; Akhtar et al., 2021). AI assistants like Siri, Google Assistant, and Alexa

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can help users with immediate, daily tasks, deliver swift answers, and support the learning of new languages, to mention a few, increasing efficiency in users' daily lives (Mastrandrea, 2024; De La Vall & Araya, 2023). AI has entered into mental health as well, with mental health apps, including chatbots that offer simple emotional support or mindfulness guides, which may help individuals look after their mental health (Boucher et al., 2021).

While AI had many benefits for personal development, there were also some very real concerns. The more people relied on AI for decision-making and learning new skills, the less critical thinking they employed and used their own judgment (Muthmainnah et al., 2022). Privacy was another huge concern about using AI, as these tools automatically gathered sensitive personal data, including users' habits, preferences, and emotions. Because of this, there was a lot of emphasis on data protection and clear user permission (Wang & Li, 2024; Timan & Mann, 2021). In Pakistan, the social issues mentioned previously about the digital divide made it harder to use AI technology for personal development. Since not everyone had equal access to AI tools, existing gaps in personal development became more pronounced (Waqar et al., 2024). For this reason, it was extremely important to improve digital literacy and have people be aware of these risks so that they can be educated and responsible when using AI tools.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The researcher employed a qualitative approach to investigate the relationship between ethical leadership and artificial intelligence (AI) in Pakistan. The researcher utilized semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to obtain rich and valuable data from research participants and created an opportunity for the researcher to provide context about people's individual experiences and gain group perspectives.

Participants & Sampling

The research selected experts who combine knowledge of AI with leadership expertise directing the survey toward Pakistani business leaders alongside educators and technology professionals. A total of twelve participants were selected intentionally for full representation across three groups: business leaders, teachers, and technology specialists. The research study included four business leaders and four teachers alongside four technology specialists. The study featured various points of view regarding AI's effects on ethical leadership. Twelve participants included eight individual interviewees and four focus group participants who split into two groups of two individuals each.

Data collection method

Data was collected using two different methods. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 total participants drawn from the three professional groups. The interviews explored their lived experiences and thoughts about AI and ethical leadership.

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Second, two focus groups were conducted with 2 participants in each group. For the focus groups, group participants could have a more dynamic exchange involving engagement and the researcher could gain a better understanding of the group's perceptions as a whole.

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis of the data collected in the focus groups and interviews. The thematic analysis was used to structure the data to identify themes, patterns and connections in the participants' responses. Thematic analysis also enabled the researcher to summarize the results, and summarize the research themes pertaining to AI and ethical leadership across various fields of practice.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ethical Challenges in AI Implementation

Participants reported strong hesitations around the lack of transparency in AI systems. As the expert in technology identified, AI's "black box" quality presents ethical dilemmas: *"We use AI to sort massive amounts of data, but no one really understands how (or why) the algorithm weighs the data producing outcomes. So, this creates blind spots."* This phenomenon aligns with the outcomes identified in Gilani et al., (2023) that warned that, when it comes to algorithmic opacity, accountability is minimized; this is especially true if AI systems are used to make decisions that have significantly high stakes, like hiring, credit scoring, or healthcare.

Along with the factor of opacity, participants in both the education and business sector referenced the issue of data misuse. A business leader referenced that, *"Our customer data is being used via AI tools, but there are no standard protocols. That's a big risk to privacy."* This view is consistent with Dhirani et al., (2023), who pointed out that many AI systems collect sensitive personal data with inadequate oversight, especially in countries without privacy-protective legislation. Algorithmic bias was another ethical issue of concern. One educator provided an example of testing an AI system for grading assignments that appeared to discriminate against students from rural locations. This finding aligns with Gilani et al., (2023) who demonstrated it is possible to get disparate impact due to AI systems being trained by datasets and was present a biased Discriminatory result unless checked for accuracy by a human steward.

All the participants also pointed out that there are possible solutions for enhancing ethical digesting and leadership action to overcome these challenges. In the words of one technology expert, *"If leadership does not bring their ethical check, then AI is only going to amplify those problems at a faster rate."* This is similar to the views of Jobin et al., (2019) which machinery that ethical leadership should not only be applied at the implementation stage to reduce the harm but at the design stage as well.

Role of Ethical Leadership

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Ethical leadership was deemed crucial in the process of managing and implementing AI rightfully. The latter is noteworthy, especially in light of the fact that representatives of various fields all highlighted the necessity of steadfast leaders who respect such postulates such as openness, responsibility, and the human being. According to one breakdown by business leaders, it was described this way: *“AI should work hand in hand with the human decision-making process not substitute human decision making. That is why ethical leadership was help us to stay agents”*. This view partially agrees with Matli (2024) who posit that ethical leadership is critical to the way that organizations was deploy and regulate AI. Concerning specifics, educators especially pointed out ethical leadership in their assessment of what the institution demonstrated as a model of behavior. One educator stated, if our institution's leadership models ethics, our students and staff was model our approach to using AI. This aligns with Channa et al., (2024), who found that ethical leadership in educational contexts fosters awareness, and consequently responsible use of AI, from faculty and students by creating a ripple effect.

To further increase ethical practices, some participants suggested embedding ethics into institutional policy and oversight frameworks. A technology expert shared, *“Ethics shouldn’t be something glued on at the end, it should be in every aspect of our AI acquisition and implementation strategy.”* This suggestion aligns with global standards, including the documented recommendations by Jobin et al., (2019), which recommended having binding ethical principles be part of AI governance.

AI’s Impact on Professional Growth

As participants recognized AI as a double-edged sword for the future of professional development, it offered some positive opportunities with respect to data analysis, automation, and software development. One technology expert noted there was a growing demand in Pakistan for AI-related skills, telling participants, *“And those (young people) who can adapt quickest was benefit.”* This point goes along with the findings of Tapalova & Zhiyenbayeva, (2022), who noted that AI has the ability to create high-value jobs, while also disrupting current organizational structures. Concerns about jobs disappearing also emerged, particularly in low-skilled or routine work, another business leader noted, *“We’ve automated customer service functions, and this means we need less entry-level jobs.”* The underlying tension and concern align with Javed et al., (2018), who cautioned that while AI improves productivity, workers can find themselves displaced if reskilling does not become the priority.

To mitigate this risk, many participants called for comprehensive reskilling and upskilling opportunities. One educator stated, *“We need training at the national level and ensure the workforce moves into new AI-compatible roles.”* This viewpoint aligns with Zaman et al (2024), that reskilling the workforce is one core component of effective and sustainable integration of AI.

AI’s Role in Personal Development

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Participants talked about the increasing role of AI in personal development through self-learning, building skills, and working on time management. A teacher remarked, "Now students use AI-powered platforms to learn languages and to even prepare for competitive exams. It is so effective." This backs up the claims of De La Vall & Araya, (2023) who showed that personalized AI learning platforms could help develop educational outcomes and learner autonomy. However, despite the advantages AI offers, the participants expressed concerns about privacy, overreliance, and the possibility of unethical use. A technology expert cautioned, *"Apps that claim to support mental health by collecting emotional data but there is no transparency around what happens to that data and how it is used."* This echoed (Nadeem, 2024) who cautioned that personal development through AI tools lacks regulations that would protect users from data exploitation.

Beyond that, there was more general concern about an over-dependence on digital technologies and the potential loss of critical thinking. As one business leader stated, *"I think AI is really helping us with managing time, but at the same time I worry we are losing critical thinking in the process."* In order to mitigate these risks, the participants suggested embedding digital ethics in educational programs. One educator stated "We should teach ethical AI use in the same way we teach digital literacy. It is very important for the future citizens."

CONCLUSION

This research examines how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and ethical leadership affect personal and professional development in Pakistan's burgeoning technology sector. This study finds that while AI has considerable potential benefits, it raises significant ethical dilemmas. Professionals from business, education, and technology reported substantial concerns with the provision of an AI system such as Transparency, Data processing and privacy, Consciousness and social justice.

One tech specialist mentioned in a longer speech the "black box" problem the issue of not understanding or explaining how the AI is deciding something. It can be end-users, but also the areas of hiring and healthcare and for this, caution must be taken. Also, a few negative comments about poor data management and AI widening social divide especially with respect to gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status. In the case of Pakistan and its specific social and legal frameworks, the issues are more severe.

Ethical leadership was viewed as a significant predictor for managing the challenges presented by AI. Participants believed that ethical leaders who are authentic, fair, and accountable are significant players in ensuring appropriate AI use. Ethical leaders are role models not only for those in their organizations, but help shape the societal use of AI, particularly in schools, where students and teachers can model their behaviour after them.

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This reveals that AI is a current driving force that affects work and life activities. In the field of employment, artificial intelligence is changing the nature of the labor market in Pakistan, allowing it to embrace new technology-oriented positions and threatening traditional jobs. Thus, the need to learn new skills arises, and this is because of the dynamic change in the environment. At the personal level, the applications of AI are in the form of improved learning through online learning platforms and better productivity through smart personal assistants. However, these tools also have drawbacks, such as privacy concerns, over-dependency on the technology, and even cognitive loss. In general, the research concludes that a more comprehensive approach should be taken. We should learn how to use the positive aspects of artificial intelligence but avoid or minimize the negative impacts using the set ethical considerations.

Practical Implications for Pakistan

This study, therefore, offers a useful roadmap to the people of Pakistan, investors, schools, and government experts to give them ideas on how to organize AI structures more responsibly and fairly. In the case of businesses, there's a need to ensure that ethical principles are incorporated into AI. Businesses must explain how they use AI and implement procedures to handle the data to prevent violation of customers' rights Matli (2024; Ullaha et al., 2024). This is particularly the case in Pakistan since it is still an emerging field in this country. Another thing that businesses can do is routinely perform what is called 'bias audits' to check on their AI systems to rectify any biased functions, such as in situations where job offers or credit is being offered (Murikah et al., 2024). Ethical leadership is something that can help the companies gain trust and make it clear to the audience that they are responsible and progressive in the context of developing Pakistan's IT market (Bibi, 2024).

Schools and universities have a critical responsibility to equip students to live in a society that is full of artificial intelligence. This means that these institutions should ensure that students are trained in the principles of AI ethics, knowledge of how the AI tools function, and their influence on society's needs to be accorded to the students (Nguyen et al., 2022). In this case, it may be about providing education on issues such as digital literacy, data protection, or AI equity and non-bias, tailored to the context of Pakistan and innovative possibilities (Waqar et al., 2024). Schools should also cooperate with companies to develop training programs to provide those who lack the IT background, especially in rural and remote areas, an equal chance to compete for AI-related jobs. This means they need to set a strong value-based example and guide students on using AI in service of people.

Recommendations

Lack of guidelines for its implementation has been pointed by many critics, and this is why Pakistani businesses should set several general principles for the use of AI that are based on equality, openness and accountability. This means continually auditing the AI

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systems for bias in general and specifically for bias in those areas that have an adverse impact on vulnerable populations. This is why companies should make proper measures to ensure that customer information is safe with them by coming up with policies concerning the acquisition, storage and utilization of data. They should also make their employees undergo training to increase their knowledge on Artificial Intelligence to enable them compete with the robots in the market place. By advocating for ethical leadership, organizations will be in a position to encourage responsible usage of the AI to boost its sustainability.

It is, therefore, important for schools and universities to incorporate the teaching of ethical issues to do with artificial intelligence in their curriculum since these students will be the leaders of tomorrow. It is still possible that these lessons combine technical concepts of artificial intelligence with discussions on crucial issues such as bias, privacy, and accountability. School should also partner with companies to offer practical training opportunities, especially to learners in the different disadvantaged zones in order to attain adequate skills in the use of technology. Certainly, educators play an important role in teaching and modeling ethical behaviour and through this way, they will be able to manage the expectations of the other stakeholders in the community regarding the usage of AI.

Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of this study can be informative, though it is also possible to point to certain limitations. It has limited population, which is only 12 participants. In terms of gender, the group was intentionally mixed and covered different opinions, but the sample might not be very diverse across the provinces of Pakistan.

The study targets business leaders, educators, and technologists, which is useful, but generalizing the results to a certain sector, such as government or community, is somehow limiting. It would have made the results even more insightful to get their perspective as well and understand well how students in plain air arrangements relate to theirs.

There is potential to look into how AI ethics function within industries that have been affected by such technologies such as finance, health, and government. For instance, it is possible to examine how specific tears of AI approaches applied to hospitals address issues such as privacy and or fairness. These would go a long way in enhancing the application of artificial intelligence in Pakistan's health sector. Similarly, the knowledge of how it is applied in the government can assist in building fair and more accessible digital services.

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