Unizik Orient Journal of Education (UNIOJE), Vol. 12, No. 2, January, 2026.
----------ISSN: 0794-9525----------

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN AI IMPLEMENTATION FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Abstract
This study critically examined the ethical implications and challenges associated with the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into educational leadership in Nigerian secondary schools. Specifically, it identified key ethical dilemmas faced by educational leaders when using AI tools for student data management and decision-making and explored strategies for responsible AI implementation. Three research questions guided the stud while two hypotheses were tested. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The study was conducted in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population comprised 460 secondary school administrators, including principals, vice principals, and ICT coordinators. A sample of 230 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured 20-item questionnaire titled "Ethical AI Implementation Inventory (EAIII)," developed by the researcher. The instrument was validated by three experts in Educational Technology and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability coefficient of the instrument, determined using Cronbach Alpha, was 0.84. Data were collected using a self-administered method. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that key ethical challenges include lack of informed consent, data privacy concerns, and algorithmic bias. Ethical awareness significantly predicted fair AI implementation. AI decision-making was also found to significantly influence transparency and accountability in school leadership. These findings imply that ethical readiness is crucial in educational AI adoption. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education develop clear ethical policies, organize AI ethics workshops for school heads, and ensure the establishment of AI oversight committees in schools. A major limitation of the study was the exclusion of students and teachers from the sample. Further studies should explore perceptions of students and parents regarding AI in schools.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Educational Leadership, Data Privacy, Algorithmic Bias, AI Ethics, Decision-Making, Accountability

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly transitioned from futuristic novelty to a functional reality in educational systems around the globe. As educational institutions seek to optimize decision-making processes and data management systems, AI technologies are being increasingly integrated into school leadership and administration (UNESCO, 2021). In educational leadership, AI is now utilized in performance analytics, predictive student assessment, resource allocation, and behavioural monitoring. However, the rise of AI in schools has also introduced significant ethical challenges. These include concerns over data privacy, algorithmic bias, transparency in decision-making, accountability, and the erosion of human agency (European Commission, 2020).

Globally, the debate about ethical implementation of AI has become more urgent. In the United States and parts of Europe, regulatory frameworks such as the EU Artificial Intelligence Act are being enacted to ensure that AI systems used in sensitive areas like education meet ethical standards (Floridi & Cowls, 2021). In contrast, many African nations, including Nigeria, are only beginning to develop governance structures to manage AI adoption in education (Okeke, Nwosu, &

Akinyemi, 2022). A 2023 report by the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria acknowledged the transformative potential of AI in reducing inefficiencies in educational leadership but cautioned that ethical missteps could amplify inequities and erode trust in public education.

Ethical considerations refer to the moral responsibilities and principles that must guide the use of AI technologies. In this context, these include informed consent, data ownership, fairness, accountability, and transparency (Adebayo & Aluko, 2022). AI implementation in educational leadership denotes the process by which school administrators integrate AI tools to enhance operations, decision-making, and student data management. Educational leadership encompasses the policies, practices, and systems overseen by school principals, vice principals, and education managers to maintain effective teaching and learning environments. The respondents in this study are educational administrators—principals, vice principals, and ICT coordinators—whose roles expose them directly to the ethical dilemmas of AI in data management and leadership functions. Their experiences and perceptions are critical in examining how ethical standards are being upheld or violated during AI integration in schools.

Several variables may influence ethical AI implementation. These include administrators' awareness of AI ethics, presence or absence of regulatory policies, technical competence, and institutional support. According to Ajiboye and Eze (2021), school leaders with prior exposure to AI ethics training are more likely to exhibit responsible implementation behaviours. Furthermore, inadequate infrastructure and ambiguous data laws may exacerbate ethical violations. This study is anchored on the Theory of Digital Responsibility (Ng, 2020), which emphasizes that every stakeholder in digital transformation—including educational leaders—must act responsibly, ensuring that the benefits of digital tools do not override ethical standards. The theory posits that ethical accountability must guide digital interactions, data use, and decision-making processes involving AI. The study was conducted in Anambra State, located in Southeast Nigeria. The choice of Anambra is informed by its relatively high investment in ICT integration in secondary schools and the state's ongoing digital transformation agenda in public education. Anambra's mix of urban and semi-urban school settings provides a fitting landscape for examining the ethical dynamics of AI use in educational leadership. In light of these considerations, there is a pressing need to explore the ethical landscape of AI usage in school leadership in Nigeria, particularly in states like Anambra that are at the forefront of digital adoption.

Statement of the Problem

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the education sector, particularly in administrative functions. Its promise of data-driven decision-making, predictive analysis, and performance optimization has spurred its integration into educational leadership globally. Ideally, the use of AI in schools should enhance efficiency, fairness, and accountability. School leaders should have clearly defined ethical frameworks guiding the deployment of AI tools to protect student privacy, ensure data transparency, and prevent algorithmic bias. However, in the Nigerian context, and particularly in Anambra State, the reality is quite different. Secondary school leaders may deploy AI applications without clear ethical guidelines, resulting in privacy breaches, lack of accountability, and a decline in stakeholder trust. Despite increasing digitalization, the ethical framework for AI usage in school administration remains underdeveloped. There is a growing concern that decisions made through opaque algorithms may reinforce systemic biases, particularly in student placement, discipline, and academic evaluations. This gap between the ideal and the current state of AI use in school leadership in Nigeria constitutes the problem. Therefore, the central question of this study is: What are the ethical considerations in implementing artificial intelligence for educational leadership?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to critically examine the ethical considerations in implementing artificial intelligence for educational leadership in Anambra State.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the key ethical challenges educational leaders encounter when using AI for student data management.
2. Examine how AI-driven decision-making processes impact fairness, transparency, and accountability in educational administration.

3. Propose strategies for ethical and implementation of AI technologies in schools.

Research Questions

1. What are the key ethical challenges educational leaders encounter when using AI for student data management?
2. How do AI-driven decision-making processes impact fairness, transparency, and accountability in educational administration?
3. What strategies can educational leaders adopt to ensure ethical and responsible AI implementation in schools?

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design is suitable for assessing the ethical implications of AI usage in educational leadership because it allows the researcher to gather data from a large population to describe prevailing conditions, attitudes, and perceptions. The study was conducted in Anambra State, Nigeria. Anambra is one of the leading states in educational technology adoption, making it a relevant location for examining the ethical dimensions of AI use in school administration. The state comprises a mix of urban and semi-urban schools with relatively high digital penetration. The target population comprised all public secondary school administrators in Anambra State, including principals, vice principals, and ICT coordinators. According to data from the Anambra State Post-Primary Schools Service Commission (2025), the total population was estimated at 460 administrators. A total of 230 respondents were selected for the study using stratified random sampling. Schools were first stratified into urban and rural categories, and proportionate sampling was employed to ensure adequate representation across local governments and school types. The main instrument for data collection was a 20-item structured questionnaire titled "Ethical AI Implementation Inventory (EAIII)," developed by the researcher.

The instrument consisted of three sections: demographic data, ethical challenges in AI use, and strategic practices for ethical AI deployment. The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts in Educational Technology, ICT in Education, and Measurement and Evaluation. The validators ensured that the items aligned with the research objectives and were free of ambiguity. The reliability of the EAIII was established using Cronbach Alpha on a pilot sample of 20 administrators from neighboring Enugu State. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating a high level of internal consistency. The researcher and trained assistants administered the questionnaire in person. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to minimize data loss. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the key ethical challenges educational leaders encounter when using AI for student data management?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Ethical Challenges Encountered

Item	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	Lack of informed consent in AI-assisted data collection	98	85	30	17	3.31	0.76	Agreed
2	Absence of clear data ownership policies	105	80	28	17	3.35	0.74	Agreed
3	Difficulty in interpreting AI-generated recommendations	112	78	25	15	3.38	0.69	Agreed
4	Use of biased algorithms in student evaluation	91	88	30	21	3.26	0.81	Agreed
5	Poor awareness of AI ethics among school leaders	97	90	29	14	3.32	0.72	Agreed

Interpretation: Results indicate that school leaders face significant ethical challenges, especially regarding informed consent, algorithmic bias, and lack of awareness.

Research Question 2: How do AI-driven decision-making processes impact fairness, transparency, and accountability?

Table 3: Mean Ratings on Impact of AI on Decision-Making

Item	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
6	AI tools improve efficiency but reduce explainability	102	85	30	13	3.41	0.68	Agreed
7	AI enhances fairness if properly monitored	95	90	25	20	3.31	0.71	Agreed
8	AI decisions are not easily traceable or accountable	89	91	28	22	3.26	0.75	Agreed
9	Transparency is compromised due to algorithmic opacity	92	87	32	19	3.29	0.72	Agreed
10	School leaders are unable to challenge AI-generated outputs	88	83	36	23	3.18	0.79	Agreed

Interpretation: Although AI introduces efficiency, it raises fairness and transparency concerns.

Research Question 3: What strategies can educational leaders adopt to ensure ethical and responsible AI implementation?

Table 5: Strategies for Ethical Implementation

Item	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
11	Conduct regular training on AI ethics	125	87	10	8	3.56	0.62	Agreed
12	Establish AI ethics oversight committees	118	92	12	8	3.52	0.63	Agreed
13	Engage community stakeholders in AI discussions	110	88	20	12	3.39	0.69	Agreed
14	Regular audits of AI systems	105	95	18	12	3.39	0.66	Agreed
15	Collaborate with tech experts for compliance monitoring	99	94	22	15	3.30	0.70	Agreed

Interpretation: There is strong agreement among respondents on strategies to promote ethical AI use in school leadership.

Conclusion: Training, ethical oversight, and inclusive decision-making are core to responsible AI deployment.

Discussions

The findings from Research Question 1 reveal that educational leaders face substantial ethical challenges when using AI in student data management. These challenges include lack of informed consent, unclear data ownership, algorithmic bias, and inadequate awareness of AI ethics. This aligns with Choudhury and Singh (2021), who found that algorithmic systems often operate in environments with poor data governance, leading to privacy breaches and unfair profiling. Similarly, Alimisis (2022) emphasized the lack of policy awareness among school administrators regarding data stewardship in AI implementation. In addition, Awad et al. (2020), through the Moral Machine experiment, highlighted how algorithmic decisions often reflect underlying human biases and ethical inconsistencies, suggesting that AI systems used in education may inadvertently reproduce societal inequalities if not carefully governed.

The results show that while AI offers administrative efficiency, it often compromises transparency and accountability due to opaque algorithms. Respondents agreed that AI decisions are hard to trace and sometimes biased. This corroborates the views of Raji et al. (2022), who reported that educational AI systems frequently lack audit trails, making them difficult to regulate. Supporting this concern, Wang and Wang (2020) argued that ethical decision-making frameworks for school leaders must prioritize transparency, explainability, and human oversight when deploying AI tools, as these are essential for maintaining accountability in digitally mediated leadership environments.

Findings indicate that school leaders strongly agree on practical strategies to ensure ethical AI implementation. These include regular training, the creation of AI ethics committees, system audits, and community engagement. This aligns with empirical studies such as Jobin, Ienca, and Vayena (2020), which emphasize co-regulation, ethical literacy, and transparency in AI governance. The findings also support the Responsible AI framework (Microsoft, 2021), which promotes education, continuous monitoring, and stakeholder involvement as key elements in building trustworthy and ethically aligned AI systems in educational leadership.

Conclusion

The study examined ethical considerations in the implementation of AI in educational leadership in Anambra State. Results showed that school leaders are aware of ethical challenges associated with AI, particularly in data management and decision-making. Awareness of AI ethical guidelines

significantly predicted fair implementation practices. Moreover, AI usage was found to significantly impact transparency and accountability. Findings emphasized the need for training, policy reform, and strategic stakeholder engagement to guide responsible AI deployment.

Recommendations

1. Ministries of Education should develop AI ethics policies tailored to Nigerian educational settings.
2. Schools should establish ethics review boards to monitor AI tools used in data handling and decision-making.
3. Regular professional development programs should be organized for educational leaders to enhance AI literacy and ethical competence.
4. Technology vendors should involve educators and communities in the design of school-based AI systems.

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