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Digital Ethics in the Quizlet and ChatGPT Era: Balancing Deterrence and Denial

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

An increasing number of students are getting more accustomed to using online academic information sharing resources such as Quizlet, and artificial intelligence (AI)-based platforms such as ChatGPT or Perplexity. There is technology available for plagiarism detection systems using programs such as Turnitin in collaboration with university learning systems to prevent such immoral activities by students. However, these only seem like a battle of spear and shield. As students increasingly utilize a variety of platforms worldwide, emphasizing digital ethics and personal integrity becomes imperative.

Students may argue that they use these resources primarily as learning aids, citing a lack of alternative materials outside of these websites. The evident demand for these resources underscores their popularity among a substantial number of users. As a result, students who prioritize academic integrity may feel disadvantaged when they receive lower scores or have to exert more effort to learn independently. Furthermore, instructors' reluctance to develop teaching materials may increase, as they fear their content will be appropriated and uploaded to these academic resource-sharing websites (Lowry, 2020).

Two issues are present: a lack of resources that students feel comfortable using, and the ease with which these resources can be shared online to information-sharing websites. These two questions raise the research question: *to what extent should technology advance to prevent academic misconduct?* To elaborate, what factors will encourage students to prioritize gaining knowledge over simply obtaining correct answers, despite the pressure to excel in classes?

Deterrence, a preventive control-based perspective, has been one of the key measures in cybersecurity (Cram et al., 2024). Emphasizing the fear of unacceptable damage and the severity of copyright infringement regarding course materials may not be effective when the incentive to gain benefit from the moral hazard outweighs the effort required (Hoffman et al, 2016). Denial, a technology-based preventive control-based measure, relies on technology rather than user morality. Such technology, disallowing user attempts, includes Digital Rights Management (DRM) functions in software, such as watermarks, screenshot prevention functions, or password-locked documents.

We propose a game-theory-based retaliation mechanism approach to finding a balance between deterrence and denial in terms of academic integrity. By finding an equilibrium for deterrence and denial, we investigate at what level the incentive to violate academic integrity diminishes, and to what degree technology should be developed to prepare for the upcoming era of publicly available academic resources.

References

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