

From Learning To Submission: Silenced Pedagogy, AI Dependency, and Chronemic Neglect In Distance Higher Education

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Abstrak

Integrasi cepat Kecerdasan Buatan Generatif (GenAI) ke dalam pendidikan jarak jauh telah menciptakan kontradiksi yang aneh: sementara akses informasi tidak pernah semudah ini, keterlibatan siswa yang tulus tampaknya semakin berkurang. Studi kualitatif ini memperkenalkan konsep Pedagogi yang Dibungkam—suatu kondisi di mana dialog pengajaran yang bermakna memudar bukan karena pengajaran telah berhenti, tetapi karena siswa semakin keluar dari proses pembelajaran melalui ketergantungan AI yang berat dan apa yang kita sebut pengabaian kronemik. Menggunakan Analisis Fenomenologi Interpretatif (IPA), kami mengeksplorasi pengalaman empat belas instruktur daring di Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia. Tiga tema yang saling terkait muncul dari analisis kami. Pertama, instruktur menggambarkan bertemu dengan mahasiswa hantu—siswa yang tugasnya menunjukkan bahasa yang halus tetapi sedikit bukti upaya intelektual yang nyata, refleksi pribadi, atau keterlibatan yang tulus dengan materi. Kedua, guru mengamati apa yang kami sebut negosiasi itikad buruk yang teritualisasi, di mana permintaan perpanjangan tenggat waktu dan akomodasi akademik menjadi semakin bersifat performatif dan transaksional daripada bermakna. Ketiga, para peserta melaporkan erosi agensi pedagogis, yang ditandai dengan kelelahan hermeneutik, berkurangnya kepuasan profesional, dan meningkatnya ketidakpastian tentang apakah penilaian mereka masih memiliki nilai pendidikan. Terdapat tiga isu yang saling terkait yang muncul dalam analisis ini. Pertama, guru menemukan "cendekiawan hantu," artinya siswa yang menyiapkan tugas dengan bantuan AI sepenuhnya dibantu. Temuan kami menunjukkan bahwa ketika ketergantungan AI dan pengabaian kronemik bertemu, masalahnya meluas jauh melampaui masalah integritas akademik. Bersama-sama, faktor-faktor ini melemahkan proses bolak-balik penyelidikan, refleksi, umpan balik, dan pembuatan makna yang menjadi dasar pembelajaran sejati. Untuk menjelaskan fenomena ini, kami mengusulkan kerangka kerja Pedagogi yang Dibungkam, yang menunjukkan bagaimana pelepasan kognitif, pelepasan temporal, dan pendekatan transaksional terhadap pembelajaran berinteraksi untuk merusak hubungan instruktur-siswa dalam pendidikan jarak jauh. Kami membahas implikasi praktis untuk penilaian berorientasi proses, praktik umpan balik yang lebih timbal balik, pengaturan pembelajaran temporal yang fleksibel, dan inisiatif literasi AI institusional dalam konteks pembelajaran terbuka dan jarak jauh.

Kata kunci: Kecerdasan Buatan Generatif, Pedagogi, Kelalaian Kronemik, Pendidikan Jarak Jauh,

Abstract

The rapid integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) into distance education has created a strange contradiction: while accessing information has never been easier, genuine student engagement seems to be slipping away. This qualitative study introduces the concept of Silenced Pedagogy—a condition where meaningful teaching dialogue fades not because instruction has stopped, but because students are increasingly checking out of the learning process through heavy AI reliance and what we call chronemic neglect. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), we explored the experiences of fourteen online instructors at Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia. Three interconnected themes emerged from our analysis. First, instructors described encountering ghost scholars students whose assignments showed polished language but little evidence of real intellectual effort, personal reflection, or genuine engagement with the material. Second, teachers observed what we term ritualized bad-faith negotiations, where requests for deadline extensions and academic accommodations became increasingly performative and transactional rather than meaningful. Third, participants reported an erosion of pedagogical agency, marked by hermeneutic fatigue, diminished professional satisfaction,

and growing uncertainty about whether their assessments still held educational value. There are three interrelated issues occurred with the analysis. First, teacher found “ghost Scholar” it means the students who prepared the assignment with AI completely assisted our findings suggest that when AI dependency and chronemic neglect converge, the problems extend far beyond academic integrity concerns. Together, these factors weaken the back-and-forth processes of inquiry, reflection, feedback, and meaning-making that genuine learning depends on. To explain this phenomenon, we propose the framework of Silenced Pedagogy, showing how cognitive offloading, temporal disengagement, and transactional approaches to learning interact to undermine the instructor-student relationship in distance education. We discuss practical implications for process-oriented assessment, more reciprocal feedback practices, flexible temporal learning arrangements, and institutional AI literacy initiatives in open and distance learning contexts.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence, Silenced Pedagogy, Chronemic Neglect, Distance Education,

1. INTRODUCTION

Transformation on digital higher education has basically transformed on how learning occurred. Distance and open education learning organizations have shifted drastically, lead the door opening toward students who has challenging in context of economic, geographic, and social. In Indonesia, Universitas Terbuka (UT) represents this development well, using technology to offer higher education access to students across the country's diverse regions. Despite these advances, a growing contradiction has appeared. Digital technologies have taken educational resources more accessible, but they haven't necessarily made students more engaged with their learning. Many teachers notice a troubling gap between visible academic contribution and genuine intellectual participation. Sure, learning administration systems display activity, assignments keep coming in, and communication channels stay busy. Yet these surface-level indicators often cover a profounder decline in evocative cognitive engagement.

This concern has intensified with the rapid adoption of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI). Tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude offer unprecedented access to automated content generation and can genuinely support learning through idea development, language assistance, and personalized guidance. But their widespread availability has also raised red flags about the displacement of intellectual effort. More and more, educators see students turning to AI not as a learning aid but as a substitute for essential academic processes—reading, critical analysis, reflection, drafting, and revision. The result? Assignment completion often reflects technological efficiency rather than actual learning.

Alongside, another issue that become a progressively noticeable problem within onloine learning setting are chronemic neglect. As taken form chronemic, the study of time as a communicative resource—chronemic neglect refers to persistent patterns of temporal disengagement. Procrastination chronic thinking, submission on the last- minute, and communication delayed, and deadline extension reactive request. This phenomena portrait not only poor skill on organization, but also show students engagement, responsibility and commitment in the process of learning.

Chronemic neglect and AI interaction dependency leads to dynamic troubling. The students that delay their assignments to the last minute mostly find AI generated content as a more attractive fast track to complete their work swiftly. In turn, by owing these applications available all time could lead to normalize postponement through the reducing the perceived

consequences of delay. Together, this outline could take cognitive engagement to temporal and technological delegation.

Previous research has observed the academics procrastination and education implication from AI generative through separate ways, limited concentration on how AI dependency and temporal chronical inactiveness interact to create pedagogy relationship especially on distance learning context which mediated by technology.

To address this gap, Silenced Pedagogy concept was introduced. The term portrait a situation where dialogue of pedagogic weakens not because teaching has stopped, but because students increasingly evade the intellectual procedures that endure meaningful learning. In these settings, teachers keep teaching, assessing, and providing feedback, yet opportunities for genuine dialogue, reflection, and intellectual growth become increasingly constrained.

To understand how teachers at Open University experience and react towards students who bypass and just rely on AI in learning and also ignoring timelines. The examination of their experience could shed a new insight on the complication of AI use, disengagement temporarily, how higher distance education today look like.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

AI Dependency and Cognitive Offloading

Contemporary learning stress theorize that a meaningful learning is consumed by passive information, rather it's a process occurred through active engagement of the cognitive that create a meaningful learning process. As Vigotsky (1998) stated that Zone Proximal Development (ZPD) impose that support structure enhance students extending their abilities while remain actively. Traditionally, technology of education serves as scaffold, but AI generative has evolved this affiliation by letting students in delegating the development of complex cognitive task to technology system.

This phenomenon is commonly called cognitive offloading where individuals transfer cognitive responsibilities to external tools (Risko & Gilbert, 2016). While cognitive offloading can boost efficiency, excessive AI reliance may actually reduce opportunities for critical thinking, reflection, and problem-solving. Unlike earlier educational technologies, GenAI can generate complete academic products, enabling students to bypass the intellectual processes through which understanding develops (Dessus & Besse, 2024). Such practices conflict with the notion of productive struggle, which argues that learning is strengthened when students actively wrestle with challenges before receiving solutions (Kapur, 2016). So AI dependency isn't just about technology use—it's about the displacement of essential learning processes.

Chronemic Neglect and Academic Engagement

The second perspective regarding meaningful learning coming from chronemics perspective which study time in regards of communication and relational resource. It emphasize that temporal behaviour mostly communicate priorities, commitments, and level of engagement in the context of social and institutional (Ballard & Seibold, 2020). In educational settings, procrastination, delayed communication, and last-minute submissions may therefore reflect more than poor organizational skills; they may signal disengagement from academic responsibilities

Research steadily connects academic procrastination with the reduced learning results and weaker self-regulation (Steel & Klingsieck, 2016). These challenges might be augmented in environment of online learning, where flexibility often minimize outside structures that support the management of time (Svartdal et al., 2022). Building on this literature, we present the idea of “chronemic neglect” which is a persistent ignorance of temporal responsibility and mutual expectation that endure the relationship of pedagogy. Chronemic neglect encompasses beyond ineffective time management by stressing its consequences and communicative relation in education context.

Transactional Learning Orientations

The coexistence of AI dependency and chronemic neglect can be further understood through transactional learning orientations. Achievement goal theory distinguishes between mastery-oriented learners, who prioritize understanding and competence, and performance-oriented learners, who focus primarily on outcomes and evaluation (Elliot & Hulleman, 2017). In increasingly digitalized educational environments, some students may adopt a transactional view of learning where efficiency, grades, and credential attainment become more important than intellectual development.

Research suggests that product-focused assessment systems can encourage surface learning strategies and reinforce outcome-oriented behaviors (Kember et al., 2022). The availability of AI-generated content further strengthens these tendencies by offering rapid pathways to task completion. As a result, both AI dependency and chronemic neglect may be viewed as manifestations of a broader emphasis on performance outcomes rather than meaningful engagement.

Silenced Pedagogy as a Dialogic Crisis

This study draws upon dialogic perspectives of education developed by Freire (1970/2018) and Bakhtin (1981), both of whom view learning as a process of interaction, reflection, and co-construction of meaning. From this perspective, the educational implications of AI dependency and chronemic neglect extend beyond academic integrity concerns. When students increasingly rely on AI-generated outputs and disengage from the learning process, opportunities for authentic dialogue between learners and instructors become constrained. We conceptualize this condition as Silenced Pedagogy—a state where educational activities continue, yet meaningful pedagogical dialogue gradually weakens. Assignments are submitted, feedback is provided, and institutional processes remain active, but the reciprocal exchange of ideas that underpins learning becomes increasingly absent. Within this framework, AI dependency, chronemic neglect, and transactional learning orientations are understood as interconnected dimensions of a broader pedagogical crisis that threatens the dialogic foundations of higher education.

METHOD

The present study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to investigate online professors' lived experience with students who are bypassing learning through an overreliance on AI and who practice chronemic neglect. We used IPA because it is specifically linked to examining individuals' personal meaning-making of experiences that are important to them in the context of their work (Smith et al., 2009). Instead of just looking at the existing

behaviours, we wanted to understand how instructors are experiencing emerging educational practices, and their perceptions about what is learning, teaching and scholarly engagement.

Data Collection

The study was carried out at Universitas Terbuka (UT), an open and distance learning university in Indonesia. UT is one of Southeast Asia's largest distance education institutions and thus provides a relevant backdrop for exploring the overlapping issues between artificial intelligence use, temporal disengagement and online teaching. At the institutional level, interactions in a technology-mediated learning environment (TMLE), such as assignment submissions or communication with faculty and peers, can be tracked systematically.

Data collection was done through purposive sampling. Participants were required to be at least three years into their Online teaching career within UT, have been responsible for courses that included a written component in the assessment to some extent, direct experience of using AI-assist assignments together with chronic last-minute submissions and willingness to assist with in-depth interviews. Within this profession, 14 instructors from various disciplines (Education, Sociology and Law, Management and Psychology, literature and social sciences) were participated in the study. They taught from three to fifteen years.

We have collected different, complementary data. The main data source were semi-structured interviews of about 60 to 90 minutes in duration. Participants responded to questions in interviews about their experience with AI-generated assignments, their perceptions of student effort, negotiations for deadline extensions, emotional responses and reflections on teaching practice. We also looked at anonymized digital artifacts (e.g., student assignments, email correspondence, discussion forum messages, and extension requests) to give some more context. Finally, I kept a reflexive journal over the duration of the study to note how those decisions about methodology were made & analytical reflections with emerging interpretations.

Data were analysed in accordance with the six-stage IPA framework outlined by Smith et al. (2009). The transcripts were read and re-read, exploratory comments made, emergent themes identified, related themes clustered together, cross-case analyses conducted and superordinate themes developed. Analysis was iterative—going back and forth between the participants' accounts, interpretation notes and theory.

For further credibility, we used methodological triangulation, member checking and an audit trail. Finally, reflexive engagement was also so emphasized to reduce researcher bias and improve interpretative rigor. Ethical considerations Ethics approval was obtained from the appropriate board, following standard institutional protocols. The study was voluntary, all subjects signed an informed consent and confidentiality procedures were followed. Pseudonyms were used throughout, with all identifying information redacted from transcripts and supporting materials to protect participants' anonymity.

Findings and Discussion

Through the analysis of interview transcripts, digital artifacts and reflective notes, three interrelated superordinate themes emerged bringing clarity to the phenomenon of Silenced Pedagogy. A further common theme, across all three groups of participants was a perception that there is increasingly less connection between educational participation and actual learning. Students kept turning things in, logging into learning management systems, and generally

meeting their obligations, but instructors were left asking themselves whether there was really any significant intellectual work taking place.

Across the interviews, we identified three superordinate themes: (1) Ghost Scholars: Encounters with Fabricated Academic Identities; (2) Ritualized Bad-Faith Negotiations; and (3) The Erosion of Pedagogical Agency. Together, these interrelated themes highlight the way in which both a reliance on AI, and associated neglect of chronemic patterns are changing the educational experience both for instructors, as well as potentiating the erosion of dialogic foundations around and within teaching and learning.

Ghost Scholars: Encounters with Fabricated Academic Identities

The first and overarching theme dealt with participants' experiences of what many referred to as "ghost scholars"—students whose submitted work seemed academically proficient but showed few signs of genuine intellectual engagement. Scores of participants noted that submissions read as grammatically sophisticated, structurally coherent, and technically sound but eerily divorced from classroom conversations, course content, and students' prior work.

One participant explained:

I read the essay and immediately had the sense that > LZ's own personal experience felt strangely incomplete. It was beautiful language; articulation of a logical train of thought; but it had nothing to do with what we had been talking about. I knew this student. I had consumed their writing before. This was not their voice." (P7, Sociology)

Participants in the interviews consistently pointed out that they were not just concerned about "may use" of AI. Their greatest concern was the lack of evidence that students had wrestled with the intellectual challenge that is central to learning. The work itself seemed developed, but there was this missing, hidden cognitive journey that should have created it.

Many instructors noted a waning capacity to identify their students in writing. In its traditional form, a written assignment was a window into students' thinking — an opportunity for instruction to see the evolution of ideas grappled with misconception wrestled and new understandings. On the other hand, however, participants increasingly recorded that they were also receiving disembodied texts with no discernible learner.

As one instructor noted:

"In the past, I could tell who was writing. Every student had a different way of thinking, a different style of argument. Now I often feel as though everyone is speaking with the same voice." (P9, Education)

Participants frequently used metaphors associated with absence, emptiness, and invisibility when describing these experiences. Terms such as "ghost," "shell," "simulation," and "facade" emerged repeatedly throughout the interviews. These metaphors suggest that instructors perceived not merely a technological issue but an existential disruption of educational relationships.

A particularly significant dimension of this theme concerned feedback. Participants expressed frustration and sadness when providing detailed comments on assignments they believed students hadn't genuinely produced themselves.

One instructor reflected:

"I spent nearly an hour writing personalized feedback on an essay. Afterwards, I realized that the person receiving my comments probably never wrote the text. It felt as though I was speaking into a void." (P11, Management)

The emotional consequences of these encounters extended beyond concerns about academic integrity. Participants described feelings of disappointment, alienation, and futility. Rather than perceiving themselves as educators engaged in dialogue with learners, they increasingly felt disconnected from the individuals they were attempting to teach.

These findings expand Selwyn's (2024) concept of phantom learners by revealing its emotional and pedagogical consequences. Participants weren't merely encountering students who were cognitively absent; they were confronting the gradual disappearance of authentic academic voices from the educational process.

Ritualized Bad-Faith Negotiations

The second superordinate theme was about the communication patterns about deadlines, assignment submissions, and requests for academic accommodations. Participants noted these interactions were becoming more and more ritualistic, and more and more performative by having predictable narratives, unspecific explanations, and little personal responsibility.

Many instructors noted students submitted requests for extensions immediately or just before deadlines. These requests showed a generic explanation, were unspecific, and seemed to show no effort to reach out before the deadline. One participant recalled:

"At 11:47 p.m., thirteen minutes before the deadline, I received a message asking for an extension because the student was 'very busy.' There was no explanation of what that meant. The next morning, a 2,000-word essay appeared. It was difficult to believe that someone who had been too busy to communicate properly had suddenly produced that amount of work overnight." (P2, Law)

Participants interpreted such interactions not merely as examples of poor time management but as indications of deeper disengagement from academic responsibilities. Several instructors suggested that extension requests had become procedural performances rather than genuine attempts to negotiate academic challenges.

Interestingly, participants also observed that many messages themselves appeared AI-generated. Similar wording, identical sentence structures, and highly standardized expressions appeared across different courses and student groups.

One instructor commented:

"The irony is remarkable. Students use AI to write assignments, and then they use AI to apologize for using AI-generated assignments." (P5, Economics)

Analysis of digital artifacts supported these observations. Messages frequently lacked appropriate greetings, self-identification, or contextual information. Instead, they often resembled formulaic requests designed to maximize the likelihood of receiving favorable responses while minimizing effort.

Many participants saw the lack of engagement with the relational and responsibility aspects of academic communication as a form of "bad-faith negotiation." Instead of solving problems with instructors as a group, many students viewed negotiating with instructors as a process of getting past a gatekeeper whom they needed to gain approval from.

The same was said for the shifts that have been occurring in academia as a whole. Some instructors said that creating a more flexible and accommodating culture for students, while

good on the surface, may have ingrained a culture where students view deadlines as negotiable and academic responsibilities are optional for them.

As a result, communications and interactions became more transactional and less relational. Participants said that this shifted the purpose of the communication away from teaching and learning toward fulfilling requests for the administration. This meant instructors were often spending large amounts of time meeting requests from the administration while simultaneously enduring an increasing lack of academic discourse.

The Erosion of Pedagogical Agency

The third superordinate theme captured participants' perceptions of declining professional agency and diminishing confidence in the educational significance of their work. Among all themes identified, this was the most emotionally charged.

Participants frequently described feeling powerless in the face of rapidly changing technological realities. Although they remained committed to teaching, many questioned whether their pedagogical efforts continued to have meaningful impact.

One instructor stated:

"I used to love grading essays because I could see students developing as thinkers. Now I often feel like I am evaluating outputs rather than engaging with people." (P1, Psychology)

Several participants employed vivid metaphors to articulate their experiences. One described feeling like "a lighthouse keeper illuminating an empty sea." Another compared teaching to "judging a race where the participants send machines to run on their behalf." Such imagery reflects a profound sense of separation between educators and learners.

A recurring concern involved the growing transformation of instructors into investigators rather than educators. Participants reported spending increasing amounts of time attempting to determine whether assignments reflected genuine student work.

As one participant explained:

"My mental energy is no longer devoted primarily to teaching. Instead, I spend much of it trying to figure out whether what I am reading actually belongs to the student." (P4, Literature)

This change led to what participants reported as emotional exhaustion as well as professional disillusionment. This fatigue was unlike what is classically thought of as occupational burnout. Burnout is typically identified with a person being overwhelmed by the amount of work. Instructors, on the other hand, experienced fatigue from the ambiguity about why and if the work they are doing is valuable.

This phenomenon was described as hermeneutic fatigue. This is a description of the exhaustion that is characterized by the interpretation of texts that have questionable authorship, authenticity, and are of a questionable value in the educational spectrum. In the study, participants thought that their work in providing feedback was meaningless and would not support learning.

The adaptive coping mechanisms that developed accompanied the greatest concern. Many of the instructors who believed that a student's work should ideally be a reflection of learning were disappointed and said that, over time, their expectations of the students' work have come

to be more realistic. Rather than deeply engaging with the student work, they began to work with students to support work that met the basic rubric-defined requirements.

One participant acknowledged:

"I have become less demanding. If the assignment meets the basic requirements, I simply assign a passing grade. Otherwise, I would spend countless hours questioning everything I read." (P13, Public Administration)

Such responses illustrate how Silenced Pedagogy affects not only students but also educators. As instructors lose confidence in the authenticity of student engagement, pedagogical aspirations become progressively constrained. The result is a downward spiral in which diminished student engagement weakens instructional commitment, which in turn reduces opportunities for meaningful educational interaction.

Taken together, the three themes reveal a complex pedagogical crisis. Participants' experiences suggest that AI dependency and chronemic neglect don't merely influence individual assignments or isolated acts of academic misconduct. Rather, they alter the relational foundations of education itself. The emergence of ghost scholars, the normalization of bad-faith negotiations, and the erosion of pedagogical agency collectively contribute to a learning environment where educational activity remains visible, yet pedagogical dialogue becomes increasingly silent.

The concept of Silenced Pedagogy establishes a framework for dialogue-centered learning within the context of artificial intelligence in higher education. It identifies a condition in which the reciprocal exchanges necessary for meaningful learning erode over time, while the activities of teaching and learning, the submission of assignments, and the fulfillment of administrative processes continue. This condition is distinguishable from the more typical problems of student disengagement and cheating.

The Triangle of Crisis describes the interrelated phenomena of AI dependency, neglect of time, and an instrumental view of learning. Together, these phenomena describe the new reality of learning engagement within the context of distance education and fundamentally alter the nature of teaching and learning relationships.

AI dependency enables offloading of cognitive effort to a significant degree. Generative AI applications allow students to perform a task (that, in the absence of AI, would involve a significant investment of time to complete reading, thinking, writing, and editing tasks) in a matter of minutes. While educational technologies have the potential to enhance learning, a reliance on didactic forms of AI to the exclusion of all other forms of teaching create a context in which students do not engage in productive struggle, thinking, and the active creation of knowledge.

Second, chronemic neglect reinforces this pattern. Students who habitually postpone academic work often perceive AI tools as efficient solutions for meeting imminent deadlines. The availability of AI-generated content, in turn, reduces the perceived consequences of procrastination, encouraging further temporal disengagement. As a result, technological delegation and poor time management become mutually reinforcing behaviors.

Third, transactional learning orientations provide the motivational context that legitimizes both practices. When academic success is primarily defined in terms of grades, credentials, or task completion, students may view AI-assisted assignments and deadline negotiations as

rational strategies for achieving desired outcomes with minimal effort. Under such conditions, learning becomes increasingly product-oriented rather than process-oriented.

These findings extend Freire's critique of the banking model of education and resonate with Bakhtin's conception of dialogue as the foundation of meaning-making. Instructors in this study frequently described encountering assignments that appeared technically competent but lacked evidence of personal reflection, intellectual struggle, or authentic engagement. Consequently, feedback often became detached from genuine dialogue, transforming pedagogical interaction into a largely procedural exercise. Students remained institutionally present, yet their intellectual presence became increasingly difficult to discern.

The findings here suggest that traditional ideas about academic integrity are starting to show their age. For decades, the conversation centered on plagiarism, copying, and getting help you weren't supposed to get. Pretty straightforward stuff. But generative AI has scrambled those assumptions in ways that are genuinely hard to untangle.

Here's the tricky part: AI-produced work is often technically original. No copied sentences, no lifted paragraphs. And yet it can reflect almost no real intellectual involvement from the student who submitted it. So the problem isn't just about authorship anymore. It's about whether students are actually thinking, wrestling with ideas, building understanding, or just outsourcing that whole process to a language model.

That shift matters. Academic integrity shouldn't be reduced to a checklist of rules students follow to stay out of trouble. It's better understood as active participation in something, asking real questions, reflecting critically, constructing knowledge rather than just receiving it. That's what higher education is actually for. When a student skips that process entirely, something is lost, even if no policy was technically violated.

The study also points to some practical consequences for institutions. Assessment design is probably the biggest one. If grades are tied almost entirely to final products, there's a huge incentive to game the system, and AI makes gaming it easier than ever. But if instructors look for evidence of the learning process itself, that's a lot harder to fake. Drafts, revision histories, in-class discussions, reflective writing... these things leave traces that a generated essay simply doesn't.

4. Conclusion

This study explored a growing concern among online instructors: the perception that students increasingly bypass the learning process through a combination of AI dependency and chronemic neglect. Drawing on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of fourteen online instructors at Universitas Terbuka, the study examined how educators experience, interpret, and respond to this emerging challenge in distance higher education. The findings identified three interconnected dimensions of the phenomenon: encounters with ghost scholars whose work exhibited technical sophistication but limited evidence of authentic intellectual engagement; ritualized bad-faith negotiations surrounding deadlines and academic responsibilities; and the erosion of pedagogical agency, reflected in hermeneutic fatigue and declining professional fulfillment. Collectively, these experiences suggest that the challenge extends beyond academic misconduct and points to a deeper disruption of educational relationships. To explain this phenomenon, the study introduced the concept of Silenced Pedagogy, referring to a condition where pedagogical dialogue becomes weakened despite the

continued appearance of educational participation. It further proposed a Triangle of Crisis comprising AI dependency, chronemic neglect, and transactional learning orientations. Together, these factors create a self-reinforcing cycle that reduces cognitive engagement and weakens meaningful dialogue between students and instructors. The study argues that technological surveillance alone cannot resolve this challenge. Instead, higher education institutions should prioritize pedagogical redesign through process-oriented assessment, reciprocal feedback practices, flexible temporal structures, and comprehensive AI literacy initiatives. Ultimately, the issue is not whether AI should be used in education, but how institutions can ensure that human inquiry, reflection, and intellectual agency remain at the center of learning in an increasingly AI-mediated world.

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