

**AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)
TOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATES IN THE
FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA, SRI LANKA**

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As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to expand across various sectors, it is essential to understand how students in non-STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields perceive and engage with this technology. This study explored the awareness and perceptions of AI tools among undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Peradeniya. Structured surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of 248 first-year students to explore their initial perceptions and early experiences with AI, providing insights into their foundational awareness and attitudes. The survey, administered online via Google Forms, included questions on demographic information, familiarity with AI concepts, frequency and purpose of AI tool usage, and perceptions of AI's role in academia and future employment. Data was analysed using R software. The majority of respondents were female (92.3%), with significant representation from Geography (14.2%), Sociology (13.7%), and Information Technology (11.0%) departments. The knowledge and awareness of AI were high, with 90.3% having heard of AI and 53.2% possessing some understanding of it. Usage of AI tools was prevalent, particularly for ChatGPT (39.5%) and for tasks such as grammar checking, assignment completion, and note-making. Privacy and data security emerged as the primary concerns (36.3%). Statistical analysis revealed significant associations between the province of the student belongs to and the knowledge of AI ($p = 0.006$). Significant associations were reported between the department, which the students represent and the knowledge and understanding of AI ($p = 0.008$). While the majority of students (82.0%) agreed that AI tools are becoming a new norm, less % of students (16.3%) believe that AI could completely replace human teachers. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts revealed a positive outlook on AI's potential benefits in education and job prospects, though ethical implications and job displacement were notable concerns. Future research should examine the long-term effects of AI literacy programs across different non-STEM faculties.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, AI tools, Awareness, ChatGPT, Non-STEM students