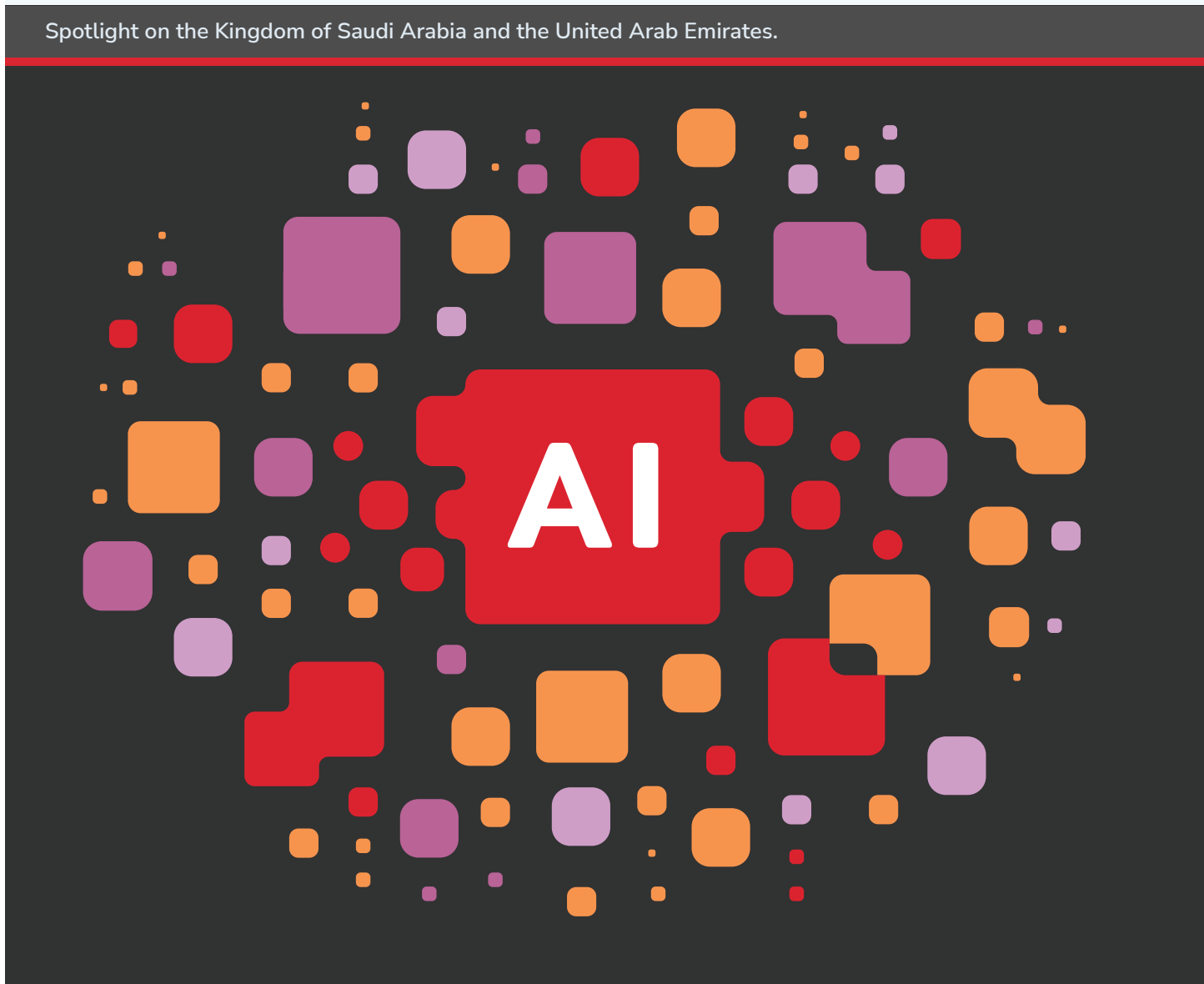




AI in Higher Ed: Hype, Harm, or Help

The perceptions and realities of AI among university leaders and students.

Spotlight on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.



In today's dynamic landscape of higher education, the emergence and integration of artificial intelligence (AI) have brought forth both incredible opportunities and complex challenges. As universities embrace this new age, the intertwining perspectives of students and university leaders on AI's role within academia are paramount to navigating this transformative journey effectively.

Understanding the unique viewpoints of students and university leadership — the key stakeholders — is vital in capitalising on the potential of AI while addressing potential ethical, pedagogical, and operational challenges.

Anthology conducted a global survey of more than 5,000 higher education leaders and current students in eleven countries to provide context and perspective from students and leaders about the opportunities, challenges, adoption, and impact of artificial intelligence across a number of areas.

Our study reveals intriguing insights that spotlight the need for a collaborative approach regarding AI to help enrich the educational experience and ensure future-ready graduates.

This report focuses on the responses from students and university leaders in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, including where there are significant differences compared to their counterparts in other countries.

Students, Leaders, and Artificial Intelligence

Students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are among the most active users of generative AI tools — 32% of students in both countries report being frequent users of the tools (e.g., at least weekly). This rate is more than three times as high compared to students in the United Kingdom and the United States. And nearly eight in ten students in the KSA and the UAE anticipate their use of these tools will continue to increase. Students in Saudi Arabia are among the most keen to further adopt AI, with 49% reporting they will significantly increase their use of generative AI tools in the next six months — second only to students in Brazil.

Unlike students, university leaders in the KSA have been slower to incorporate the use of generative AI into their routines, with 21% reporting at least occasionally using AI tools. This is a significant contrast with their counterparts in the UAE, who are among the highest users of AI among countries surveyed. Fifty-four percent of university leaders in the UAE use generative AI tools at least occasionally, and 30% believe they will significantly increase their use of AI in the next six months.

While university leaders in the KSA have been slower to incorporate AI, 70% anticipate they will increase their use of AI in the next six months, which was second highest among the countries surveyed — highlighting a willingness and an interest to get more engaged with AI.

Despite the strong adoption of AI by students in the KSA and the UAE, they ranked in the top three amongst countries surveyed to believe AI is unethical and should not be allowed in higher education (28% of students in UAE and 26% of students in the KSA reported the concern).

The Role of AI in Higher Education

While students and leaders in the KSA and the UAE have concerns about its ethical use, they also see the positive role AI can play in higher education.

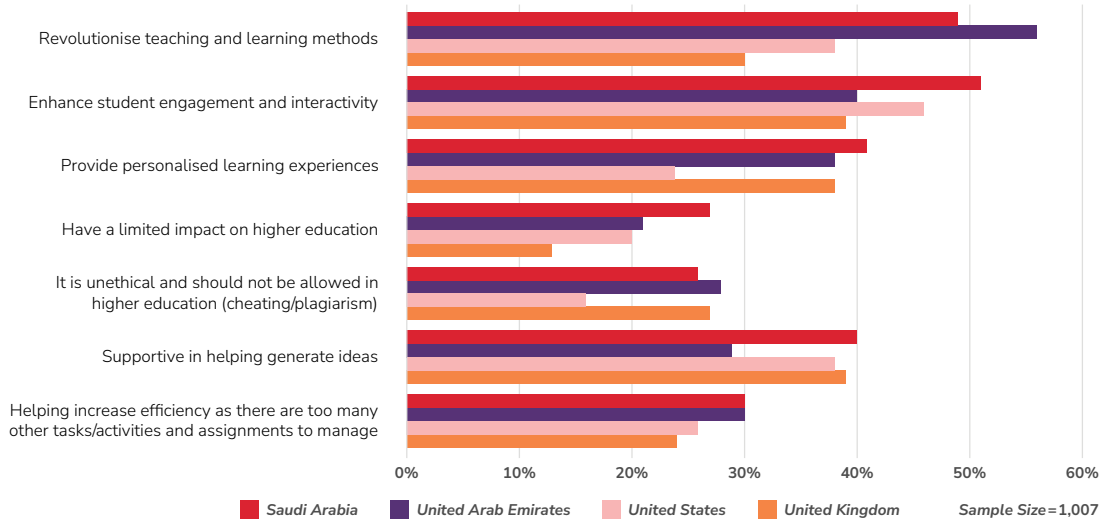
In fact, 56% of students in the UAE and 49% of students in the KSA believe AI will revolutionise teaching and learning methods. This is in significant contrast to their peers in the UK and the USA, who have lower expectations for AI's role in revolutionising higher education (30% and 38%, respectively).

In addition to believing in AI's ability to revolutionise higher education, KSA students feel that AI can enhance student engagement and interactivity (51%), provide personalised learning experiences (41%), and support idea generation (40%). Across the board, students in the KSA placed the benefits of AI in education higher than their peers in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Students in the UAE indicate similar benefits, with 40% pointing to the opportunity for AI to enhance student engagement and interactivity, while 38% are looking to AI to help provide personalised learning experiences. This continues to highlight the overall positive view of AI among students and the opportunities for enhancements to the student experience.

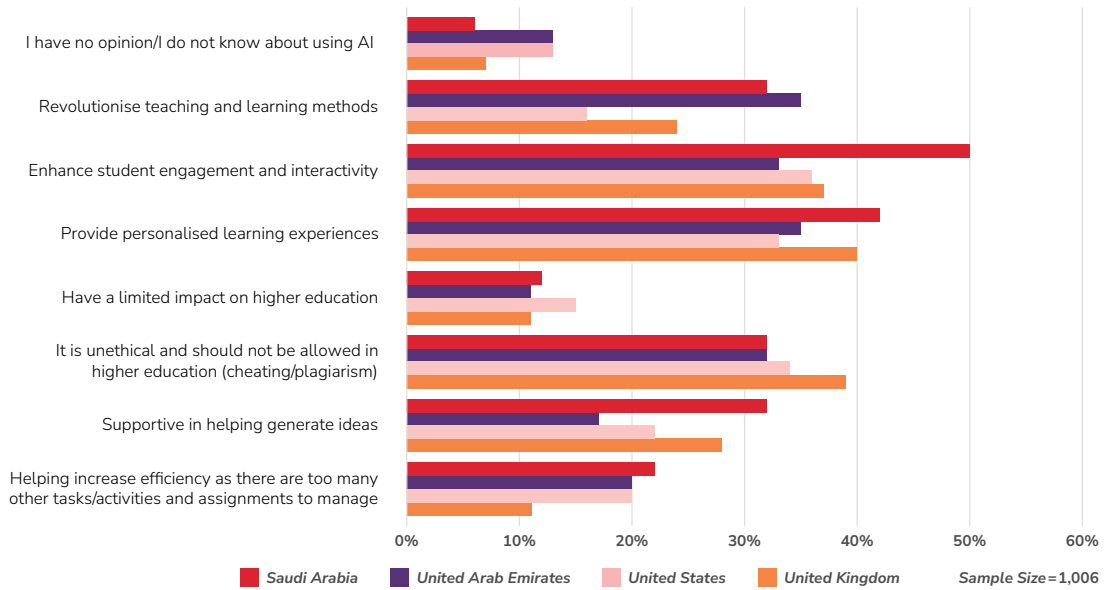
Student view of role of AI in higher education

What role do you think artificial intelligence will play in higher education?



University leader view of role of AI in higher education

What role do you think artificial intelligence will play in higher education?



While it is to be expected that students more quickly adopt new technology, including generative AI, it is especially important that university leaders and faculty members familiarise themselves with this technology as there are opportunities to adjust the approach to teaching.

Both the KSA and the UAE have taken a proactive approach to addressing the potential implications of AI. Saudi Arabia leads their global counterparts in having developed and rolled out university-wide policies with respect to generative AI writing tools like ChatGPT (77% of university leaders in Saudi Arabia have rolled out a policy). The UAE follows closely, with 69% of university leaders reporting that their institution has rolled out a policy.

The use of AI tools among university leaders differs widely across the countries surveyed. Leaders in the KSA report the second lowest usage across countries, with only 21% using AI tools at least occasionally. In contrast, university leaders in the UAE have one of the highest rates of using AI tools at 54%, second only to leaders in Singapore.

An interesting finding was on the disparate perceptions leaders in the KSA and the UAE have regarding using AI to enhance student engagement. While the KSA found this to be one of the most significant opportunities at 50%, leaders in the UAE found it to be one of the least significant opportunities at 33%, bookending all the other countries surveyed.

When asked to anticipate the most significant ways AI tools will impact higher education and university operations, a third of the leaders in both the KSA and the UAE indicated course building. However, when it came to using AI to draft assessment questions aligned to learning outcomes, leaders in the KSA were among the most positive from the countries surveyed, with 31% identifying this as an opportunity. In comparison, only 18% of leaders in the UAE thought it would have a significant impact in that area, the lowest percentage of all countries surveyed.

Regardless of AI use or their beliefs in how AI will impact higher education, the consensus is that it will. Only 12% of university leaders around the world believe AI will have a limited impact on education.

Recommendations

- Develop an institutional policy related to the use of AI
- Identify opportunities to familiarize university leaders with AI
- Review ways that AI can help enhance the student experience based on student sentiment
- Consider and implement ways that AI can be used to enhance the educational experience inside and outside of the classroom

Methodology

Data collection was conducted online among university leaders and students across eleven countries in August 2023, including Australia, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. Separate questionnaires with similar questions were utilised to enable comparisons. To qualify, student respondents had to indicate that they were currently enrolled at a higher education institution and pursuing a degree or diploma. University leader respondents had to indicate that they were currently senior leaders (dean, provost, rector, etc.) at a higher education institution. In total, 2,617 university leaders and 2,728 students qualified for and completed the survey.

About Anthology

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