Ethical Challenges and Countermeasures in Ideological and Political Education Empowered by Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract. Based on the characteristics of artificial intelligence (AI) development, this paper reveals the inherent identity between AI and its behavioral subjects. By taking AI-empowered ideological and political education as an entry point, it analyzes the connection between AI and ideological and political education. Through examining the diverse manifestations of AI in ideological and political education and the subject alienation factors it presents, as well as the realistic reasons for ethical risks caused by AI responsibility factors, this paper proposes strategies to avoid ethical challenges and enhances the effectiveness of technology-empowered ideological and political education. These strategies involve using principles to govern technology, safeguarding the value stance of ideological and political education; humanizing education through empathy, constructing a flexible empathy resonance mechanism; and establishing clear legal boundaries for AI empowerment.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Ideological and Political Education; Ethical Challenges; Educational Subjects; AI Responsibility

1 Introduction

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, the integration of ideological and political education with AI has become a new trend in educational fields. The application of AI in education, especially in ideological and political education, not only enhances the efficiency and personalization of education but also introduces novel teaching methods and tools. This paper analyzes the ethical judgments of AI technology in ideological and political education practices, the traditional ethical issues arising from AI development, and the ethical norms that AI subjects should follow in virtual spaces. Overall, the application of AI brings both opportunities for the development of ideological and political education and ethical challenges. By analyzing and proposing countermeasures, this study aims to help educators and researchers better understand and address these challenges, promoting the healthy development of AI technology in ideological and political education.

Y. Feng et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Internet, Education and Information Technology (IEIT 2024)*, Atlantis Highlights in Social Sciences, Education and Humanities 26,
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-94-6463-574-4_4

2 The Specific Manifestations of AI-empowered Ideological and Political Education

"The essence of humans and the essence of technology have an intrinsic consistency."[1] As a form of tool technology, AI presents the material, energy, and information of nature in the form of artifacts, like stone tools from ancient times. The initial meaning of technology lies in the active relationship between humans and nature, transforming natural objects into artificial ones. Over time, technology has become a utilitarian tool for achieving ideal life goals and has evolved into a component of social dynamic activities. Thus, AI provides more concrete functional needs for humanized society. With the rapid development of AI technology, the methods, approaches, and contents of ideological and political education have been comprehensively enhanced.

2.1 The Trend Towards Precision in Ideological and Political Education

In the context of the Internet, big data can capture the reading habits and browsing preferences of educational subjects, while deep learning algorithms can extract, filter, and analyze the ideological behavior characteristics and personalized spiritual needs of educational subjects from vast amounts of information, predicting their behaviors to pinpoint the targets of ideological and political education activities, thereby achieving the supply of customized educational contents[2]. For example, educators can use AI technology to generate personalized learning paths and exclusive ideological "portraits" for each student. This personalized customization not only improves the pertinence and effectiveness of education but also helps students better understand and internalize the content of ideological and political education. Additionally, intelligent recommendation systems can push relevant learning resources and activities to students based on their learning progress and interests, helping them deepen their understanding of ideological and political education contents during self-directed learning. This personalized teaching approach helps overcome the drawbacks of the traditional "one-size-fits-all" model, allowing each student to achieve the best learning outcomes at their own pace and in their own way.

2.2 "Immersive" Ideological and Political Education Receives High Attention

The trend towards a holographic approach in ideological and political education is becoming increasingly evident. AI, based on technologies such as big data, cloud computing, and virtual simulation, breaks the traditional spatiotemporal limitations of ideological and political education. With the help of virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR) technologies, AI has transformed the traditional requirement for synchronous presence of educational subjects and objects in linear teaching[3]. This diversification of ideological and political education settings, beyond the main channel of classroom teaching, allows for the online dissemination of ideological and political education contents to be visualized, permeable, and symbolized.

Utilizing intelligent technology to create three-dimensional, specific educational scenarios has become possible, with a greater emphasis on the "embodied" experience of the educational subjects in the process of ideological and political education. For example, the Chongqing Hongyan Revolutionary History Museum launched the "Hongyan Prison" exhibit, using VR technology to recreate the genuine scenes of revolutionaries' dedication and perseverance under the threat of the terrorism then in Chongqing. This revolutionary story is designed as an immersive experience, blending reality and virtual interactions to evoke empathy and identification among participants. While AI promotes innovative development in ideological and political education, it also generates complex ethical issues that erode the ethical values of ideological and political education.

2.3 Intelligent Q&A and Auxiliary Teaching in Ideological and Political Education

AI technology can also support ideological and political education through intelligent question answering systems and auxiliary teaching tools. The intelligent question answering system based on natural language processing technology can answer various questions students encounter during their learning process, providing timely and accurate feedback[4]. For instance, when students face questions they do not understand, they can use this system to get instant answers, preventing momentary confusion from affecting their overall learning progress. Furthermore, AI-assisted teaching tools can help teachers reduce their workload and improve teaching efficiency. Functions such as automatic grading of assignments and analyzing student learning data allow professors to focus more on the design and implementation of educational contents, enhancing the quality of teaching. This intelligent assistance not only increases the precision and efficiency of teaching but also provides more opportunities for interaction and communication between professors and students, promoting the deepening of ideological and political education.

3 Ethical Challenges in AI-empowered Ideological and Political Education

Ethics points towards social order, "focusing on the just order of social life and its realization"[5]. The realistic representation of ethics mainly lies in the social relationships of humans as ethical entities, namely the ethical relationships between people, between people and society, and between people and nature. In the context of AI, where virtual and real coexist, ethics no longer solely refers to the real society but also the relationships between real people and virtual people, people and machines, and virtual people and real society in the blend of virtual and real. AI has the power to revolutionize ideological and political education, but the reflexive power of technology in this field may eliminate human initiatives and values, leading to ethical risks on individual, relational, and social dimensions.

3.1 Subject Alienation Factors

AI in ideological and political education poses significant ethical threats, notably an identity crisis for subjects. This crisis is evident in the "super panoramic prison" perspective, where users, to protect privacy and conceal online behaviors, hide true motives through interactions with big data and algorithms. It also reflects in the continual shaping of symbolic identities, leading individuals to adopt symbolic roles and lose true personalities. "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation." [6] However, in the AI era, technologies like big data and cloud computing are pervasive, placing people in a "super panoramic prison" with diminished control over personal information, constantly monitored by big data.

Despite a consensus on privacy protection, the contradiction between precise intelligent services and user privacy remains. For personalized ideological and political education, understanding users' social software, online comments, and browsing habits is essential. Analyzing massive user data generates exclusive ideological portraits, with precision linked to user exposure. Users may hide their online traces by avoiding likes, shares, comments, or using "small accounts," disguising their persona, diverging from their offline true personality. Over time, this leads to dual identities, adversely affecting personality development. In the intelligent era, digital existence subjects ideological and political education increasingly rely on user portraits for personalized education, enhancing effectiveness but reducing individuals to lower-dimensional entities. This process overlooks the unity of physical, social, spiritual, and symbolic selves, viewing people as purely digitized "symbolic people." As users shape virtual identities under constant exposure, their portraits get distorted. Educators reinforcing these features may neglect humanistic care, leading subjects to immerse in digital roles, replacing comprehensive human essence with "simple, abstract information, numbers, and symbols." [7]This contradicts the ultimate goal of ideological and political education.

3.2 AI Responsibility Factors

The application of AI in ideological and political education brings numerous advantages of technological empowerment but also poses significant challenges in terms of responsibility ethics. Specifically, these challenges manifest as follows:

Firstly, the illusion of technological neutrality. AI, as a technological tool, is often perceived as neutral. However, in reality, the design and application of technology inevitably incorporate the values and preferences of its designers and users. Algorithmic biases, data biases, and system design flaws can all affect the fairness and justice of ideological and political education. Secondly, the ambiguity of responsibility attribution. In traditional education, professors bear direct responsibility for all activities within the educational process. However, in AI-empowered ideological and political education, responsibility attribution becomes complex. If technological misuse or biases occur during data processing, behavior analysis, or personalized content generation by AI systems, who should be held accountable? Is it the technology provider, the education administrator, or the teacher? This ambiguity in responsibility attribution

increases ethical risks. Moreover, issues of privacy protection and data security. In the process of ideological and political education, AI needs to collect and process a large amount of personal data from students. Protecting and using this data poses major ethical challenges. How to fully utilize data to enhance educational effectiveness while protecting students' privacy is an urgent issue to be addressed. If privacy protection measures are inadequate, data breaches or misuse can severely impact students' personal lives, undermining their rights and trust.

3.3 Lack of Humanistic Care

In the process of AI-empowered ideological and political education, the high degree of automation and intelligence of technology can lead to a lack of humanistic care. Firstly, the alienation of teacher-student relationships. While the application of AI systems can alleviate professors' workload and improve teaching efficiency to some extent, it may also reduce interactions between professors and students, leading to a more distant relationship. Education is not only about the transmission of knowledge but also about emotional exchange and personality development. Over-reliance on technology can weaken the humanistic care within the educational process. Secondly, the marginalization of educational subjects. As AI plays an increasingly important role in the educational process, the status of students as the primary subjects of education may be marginalized. The excessive involvement of AI technology may turn students into passive recipients of knowledge, lacking opportunities for autonomous learning and independent thinking, thus affecting their holistic development and personality shaping. Furthermore, the homogenization of educational contents. Although AI can generate personalized educational contents based on big data analysis and algorithmic recommendations, its foundation still lies in big data and algorithmic models, which may lead to the homogenization of educational contents, neglecting individual differences and diversity. The purpose of education is to cultivate well-rounded individuals, not standardized "products."

4 Strategies for Addressing Ethical Risks in AI-Empowered Ideological and Political Education

Effectively mitigating the ethical risks associated with AI-empowered ideological and political education and establishing a correct ethical orientation is a crucial issue in the digital transformation of ideological and political education. Based on the analysis of the factors influencing ethical risks, it is essential to leverage morality, culture, and the rule of lawl. This approach ensures self-regulation within ideological and political education and optimizes external constraints.

4.1 Constrain Technology with Morality, Uphold the Dominance of Ideological and Political Education

In the process of ideological and political education, all technological applications should serve the fundamental purpose of fostering and educating individuals. The extensive content of ideological and political education encompasses ethical requirements of modern society, including worldviews, political views, life views, legal views, and moral views. Thus, ideological and political education itself is a "remedy" for addressing ethical risks posed by AI.

The ethical risks arising from the integration of AI and ideological and political education remind us that AI empowerment is not a simple addition of the two but a relationship where one must dominate the other. Ethical risks appear when AI overshadows ideological and political education, reversing their intended roles. Therefore, in integrating AI into ideological and political education, it is crucial to uphold the dominance of ideological and political education. This can be achieved by embedding the Marxist outlooks and methodology within the logic of intelligent algorithms and correcting the instrumental rationality of technology with core socialist values. Ideological and political education should maintain a degree of "independence," prioritizing human development while using technology as a tool. It is essential to carefully balance the integration of intelligent technology, considering its utility in ideological and political education dialectically. Clear ethical boundaries and appropriate applications for AI in ideological and political education should be defined to prevent the subjugation and manipulation of ideological and political education by intelligent technology.

4.2 Cultivating Values Through Culture, Building an Ethical Community to Optimize Embodied Experience

In Marxist theory, "real people" are the focus, and this is also the starting point for ideological and political education. To address the ethical risks at the individual and relational levels arising from the coupling of AI and ideological and political education, it is essential to emphasize emotional connections between educators and learners. By infusing cultural values into education, we can reshape the ethical community and enhance the embodied cognition of both parties[8].

In a digital environment where educators, AI, and learners coexist, educators delegate some of their work to AI, but their personalities and emotions cannot be replaced by machines. The essence of teaching remains where the essence of the professor exists. While educators are liberated from mundane tasks through AI, they highlight their irreplaceable values. Unlike the emotionless AI, educators can strengthen flexible guidance through cultural value education, allowing learners to feel respected and a sense of belonging. This helps learners transition from "I" to "we," adapting to the cultural core, and overcoming the tendency towards symbolization and computation[9]. Educators should guide learners to engage in practice and perception within their cultural contexts, thereby avoiding the ethical risks of losing the true self and neglecting emotions brought by AI empowerment.

4.3 Defining Legal Boundaries, Establishing Ethical Safeguards to Clarify Baseline Requirements

Addressing the ethical risks of AI-empowered ideological and political education requires not only corrections from the educational logic of ideological and political education but also measures from the technology itself. This includes establishing standards and norms suitable for AI-empowered ideological and political education to address the ethical deficiencies in algorithm operation, or reconstructing ethical boundaries that have been breached by intelligent forces. This reconstruction necessitates a consensus on technical ethical principles to clarify the value orientation of technology and the rigid guarantee of laws and regulations to specify what technology can and cannot do.

On one hand, national-level planning should be utilized to promptly improve and introduce laws and regulations regarding data collection and data application boundaries. This includes establishing robust regulatory and accountability mechanisms for algorithm usage, regulating the behavior of technical personnel in the development process, and avoiding biases and discrimination in algorithm design to prevent ethical issues due to a lack of supervision. On the other hand, it is essential to continuously enhance the moral and ethical awareness of ideological and political educators and technical personnel, especially the sensitivity of technical personnel to ethical risks. Ideological and political educators and technical personnel should work collaboratively to promote the "positive" integration of AI and ideological and political education, ensuring strict control and prevention measures. They should actively focus on the formulation and generation of algorithm rules applicable to ideological and political education, scientifically assess the effects and significance of AI, and avoid misuse, misunderstanding, and blind faith in AI. The ultimate goal is to harness and control technology, achieving an ideal state where ethical risks are effectively mitigated.

5 Limitations and Future Directions

5.1 Limitations

Despite the significant potential discussed in this paper regarding AI applications in ideological and political education, several limitations remain. Firstly, the exploration of ethical risks associated with AI technology, particularly concerning data privacy and user identity, is insufficient. Secondly, while the enhancement of educators' competence is proposed, the paper lacks detailed discussion on the implementation methods. Additionally, the adaptation of existing laws and regulations to the rapid development of AI technology has not been thoroughly analyzed.

5.2 Future Directions

In the future, we should further explore AI applications in ideological and political education and address the ethical risks and challenges that arise. Research and practice should focus on the following areas:

Balancing Technology and Ethics: It is crucial to find a balance between AI technology application and ethical risks, preventing technological misuse and ethical misconduct.

Integration of Diverse Cultures: Utilizing AI to promote cultural exchange helps students establish correct worldviews, values, and life perspectives in a globalized context.

Improvement of Laws and Regulations: Enhancing relevant laws and regulations can better regulate AI technology applications and protect students' rights and privacy.

Enhancement of Educators' Competence: Ideological and political educators need to improve their technical proficiency and ethical awareness under the empowerment of "new productive forces" to ensure the effectiveness and proper direction of education.

Ongoing research and practice can lead to innovations and breakthroughs in ideological and political education with the assistance of AI technology, providing higher quality educational services.

6 Conclusion

The application of AI in ideological and political education brings opportunities for technological advancement and educational innovation, as well as complex ethical challenges. To fully leverage the empowering role of AI while mitigating ethical risks, it is essential to adhere to ethical principles throughout the technological application process. This includes addressing individual diverse needs, ensuring privacy and data security, clarifying responsibility attribution, and enhancing humanistic care. Through rational technological application and ethical norms, we can promote the healthy development of ideological and political education and achieve comprehensive enhancement of educational objectives. By addressing these aspects, we can ensure that AI technology serves as a beneficial tool for ideological and political education while maintaining ethical integrity and promoting educational fairness and humanistic care.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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