

Examining Law Students' Intention to Use GenAI Systems for Professional Purposes Using PLS Modelling

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Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence systems (GenAI systems), and within them large language models (LLMs), have become increasingly important in recent years. Their rapid development and growing societal impact also have significant implications for the legal profession and legal education.

In 2026, we conducted a survey among 162 primarily first-year law students at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the University of Szeged, Hungary, to examine their attitudes, patterns, and use purposes related to the use of GenAI systems. The study focused on how frequently and for what purposes law students use different GenAI systems; the extent to which they are reluctant to use these tools in general, academic, and legal-professional contexts; how willing and able they are to develop their competences in these areas; and how they assess their own digital competences.

The relationships among these factors were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), a method that combines factor analysis and regression modelling in a simultaneous analytical framework. The presentation reports the main findings of this empirical study.

The results indicate that GenAI systems are playing an increasingly important role in students' learning processes. The main modelling results show that the intention to use GenAI systems for legal studies and future legal work is most strongly and negatively influenced by reluctance towards the use of GenAI systems. At the same time, the frequency of GenAI systems use and openness towards these systems have positive, although moderate, effects on usage intention. Perceived digital competence does not appear to have a direct overall effect on usage intention; however, this result reflects the combined effect of a moderate direct negative relationship and a moderate indirect positive relationship mediated by openness towards GenAI systems.

Keywords

generative AI systems, legal education, PLS-SEM.