

Living Above The Algorithm: The Intersection of AI, Normalisation and Ethics Research

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Abstract

AI is becoming embedded in organisational and social life, yet MIS scholarship has only begun to explain the ethical consequences of how AI becomes normalised and how AI, in turn, can (de)normalise beliefs, practices, artifacts and arrangements. This paper helps address that gap by reviewing emerging cross-disciplinary literature positioned directly at this intersection to formulate a formative framework of AI's Ethical Normalisation; Epistemic Regimes, Power Relations, Behavioural Design, and Meaning & Identity. Importantly, we distinguish between Normalisation of AI and Normalisation using AI and draw on scholarly work to illuminate how AI's ethical effects arise not only at adoption, but through routinisation, stabilisation, and moral invisibility as AI becomes embedded in practice. The paper's contribution is to advance responsible AI research in MIS through a formative analytical framework of AI's Ethical Normalisation, along with overarching mechanisms of intervention, and research directions for studying AI's ethical normalisation as socio-technical governance challenge.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI, normalization, normalizing, ethics, ethical, moral

Introduction

In the TV series *Pluribus*, protagonists Carol Sturka and Manousos Oviedo are among a small number of deviations from the norm by being immune to an alien virus that has infiltrated the rest of humanity to produce a singular collective mind. Carol and Manousos must wrestle with the consequences and possibilities of their lives and of humanity's fate. While not intended as an AI allegory, subsequent commentary has linked themes in *Pluribus* to warnings about unchecked dangers of AI, and the series invites comparison through its end-credit, "This show was made by humans." Around the time of *Pluribus*'s release, a major cross-country survey found people tended to be either "more concerned" (median 34%) or "equally concerned and excited" (median 42%) about increased use of AI in their lives (Pew Research Center, 2025). *Pluribus* and such public sentiment emerged at a time of AI's rapid integration into many people's everyday routines, infrastructures, and imaginaries. In parallel, public policy and media discourse continue to normalise AI as taken for granted and requiring widespread and inevitable integration into everyday practice (Liebig et al., 2024; Moran & Shaikh, 2022), thereby creating conditions in which ethical concerns can be normalised rather than resolved. Significant commercial organisations have announced moves toward 'AI-first' policies and cultures. However, while discourse and practice around normalising AI is still under way, less attention has been paid to normalising using AI. For, unlike prior technologies in which humans afforded new possibilities for action within technologically imbued/mediated environments (Gibson, 1979), AI is the first technology that also appears to 'afford' of us. By anticipatorily personalising our news, advertising, shopping, social media, and increasingly our queries and learning, our epistemic agency (Schlosser, 2019), embodied knowledge (Bourdieu, 1990) and narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1992) are

increasingly (co)shaped through techno-scientific instruments (Akrich, 1992) served by major platform organisations. We become a functional part of AI infrastructure and agency when we are influenced by, depend on, or are guided in action by AI outputs, and supply contextual and 'ground truth' data for AI's learning and advancement over time.

Whilst recognising the normalisation of AI and the capability to (de)normalise using AI, we may also begin to recognise the possibility of normalising AI with AI. As AI infrastructures become normalised, they can serve as recursive normalising instruments for other social transformations, even for progressively embedding AI more deeply into the social fabric. AI could therefore serve to cultivate (or stigmatise) certain beliefs, practices, artefacts or arrangements as taken for granted, assumed and unquestioned, sought and expected, stabilised and rendered invisible, while demanding conformity and exposing and sanctioning deviations with penalties, distress, exclusion, and stigma (Giddens, 1984; Foucault, 1995; Goffman, 1963). Thus, while we're witnessing structural and institutional imperatives to normalise AI in human life, AI has increasing capability to normalise and denormalise human beliefs and practices across domains ranging from consumer marketing and commerce to health, politics, and security. Indeed, scholars have long warned against succumbing to "technological somnambulism" during the 'process of reconstituting the very conditions of our human existence' (Winner, 1986, p. 10). Acknowledging possible risks and harms of normalising AI and (de)normalising using AI if not carefully managed, recent scholarly attention has turned to informing thoughtful progress. MIS research attention at the intersection of AI, normalisation, and ethics therefore appears timely and paramount, as it can surface how ethical concerns are recognised, contested, resolved, and rendered stable and invisible within organisational and institutional contexts, particularly given some of the most consequential ethical effects of AI arise after initial adoption. Such a research focus can offer a sociotechnical 'cut' to reconciling Responsible AI (Mikalef et al., 2025) by examining how ethical concerns are recognised, stabilised, muted, or made contestable as AI and its use becomes 'normal'. That is to say, given recent calls to center sociotechnical attributes and contexts of AI artefacts (ibid), studying AI's entwinement with (de)normalisation could offer insights for achieving responsible AI.

This study is a formative effort to consolidate emerging scholarship at the intersection of AI, normalisation and ethics for the MIS community. It comes at a time when scholarly interest at this intersection is rapidly accelerating (see the method section), yet MIS research remains nascent. This study uses a systematic literature review method (Okoli, 2015) to identify a paper corpus directly tackling this intersection. The central review question was: *How does existing scholarship help explain the intersection of AI, normalisation, and ethics?* Our analysis was guided by gleaning insights on the nature, process, conditions, and outcomes of normalisation; distinguishing between contributions on the 'Normalisation of AI' and 'Normalisation using AI'; and identifying the theoretical lenses, prescriptive contributions, and unresolved tensions emerging from this corpus. Thematic analysis resulted in 4 overarching themes as a formative analytic framework: (1) *Epistemic Regimes*: comprising a) Epistemic Integrity, and b) Epistemic Legitimacy & Authority. 2) *Power Relations*: comprising c) Power Structures, and d) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, 3) *Behavioural Design*: encompassing e) Privacy and Surveillance, and f) Interaction Design and Intelligibility, and 4) *Meaning and Identity*: encompassing g) Cultural-Symbolic Meaning, and h) Affective Care and Intimacy. These themes can be treated as analytically related entry points rather than mutually exclusive ontological categories. The paper's contribution is threefold: It offers a formative framework through which AI's ethical normalisation can be interrogated. It is not claimed as yet exhaustive or final; the literature is itself emerging and rapidly evolving. It offers a formative structured vocabulary for MIS researchers to help orient and diagnose AI's ethical normalisation. Second, seven overarching mechanisms are abstracted from the wide range of author prescriptions for managing and governing AI's ethical normalisation; (1) Auditing And Accountability; (2) Structural Justice Interventions; (3) Critical Reflexivity And Care; (4) Governance And Disclosure; (5) Privacy And Autonomy; (6) Human Oversight And Task Fit; and (7) Socio-technical Infrastructure And Implementation. These mechanisms are offered as actionable organising categories for practitioners and policymakers. Third, the research territory is mapped in order to chart tractable and pressing future directions, showing both where MIS scholars can make immediate contributions and where the field as a whole remains unresolved.

Conceptual Background

Defining norms

For the purposes of this study, norms or normal can be understood as the *durable, taken-for-granted, shared; beliefs, practices, artifacts and arrangements that can be simultaneously descriptive, predictive, and prescriptive*. They concern what tends to happen, what is likely to happen, and what ought to happen. E.g. prescriptive(/injunctive) norms concern (perceived) expectations of acceptable(/legitimate) conduct. Through this, norms reduce uncertainty and contribute to ontological security by providing relatively stable expectations through which actors interpret situations and coordinate action (Giddens, 1991). However, norms are historically contingent rather than fixed; they can emerge, be reinterpreted, modified, or displaced through social, political, environmental and technological change. Importantly, norms are related to, but not equivalent to routines (a central focus of MIS). Repeated patterns of behaviour may become routine, but routine alone doesn't determine whether practices become legitimate, aspirational, or deviant within a given setting (Park, 2021), such as when evaluating ordering of behaviour. Across literature, norms are variously defined as standards of appropriate behaviour (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, p. 891), social conventions that create shared expectations of behaviour, and zones or ranges of desirable action over time (Grisold et al., 2025). Norms also work through invisibility. Once embedded, they become taken for granted and appear natural rather than socially produced (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Conformity is secured through soft sanctions, classificatory judgments, diffuse social pressure, and even stigma (Giddens, 1984; Foucault, 1995; Goffman, 1963). Finally, norms usually permit flexibility while delimiting acceptable ranges of action (Grisold et al., 2025). For MIS, understanding norms is important because they shape not only human conduct but also the design and affordances of artefacts and infrastructures that make some behaviours easier, more visible, and more legitimate than others (Akrich, 1992).

Normalisation

For this study, normalisation refers to *contextual conditions in relation with processes, through which beliefs, practices, artifacts and arrangements become normal*. For example, novel, contested, exceptional, resisted, or deviant practices are (gradually) introduced, interpreted, repeated, adjusted, and stabilised until durable, taken for granted, 'invisible' and even deemed 'legitimate'. Normalisation may be deliberately orchestrated or emerge diffusely. It can also unfold through persuasion, social imitation, incentivising, penalising and environmental adaptation etc. Contextual conditions include training supports, emotional insecurity or triggering events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, Selinger and Rhee (2021) caution how emergency uptake can persist beyond emergency, while investment in a technology can intensify pressures for reuse and extension, creating conditions for function creep.

Several process theories help explain normalisation in different domains. In organisational settings, Normalisation Process Theory (NPT) foregrounds the social organisation of implementation work, explaining how practices become normatively embedded through interdependent generative mechanisms: coherence ((collective) sense-making about the practice), cognitive participation (enrolment and commitment to sustain participation), collective action (operational work of enacting the practice), and reflexive monitoring (appraising effects and adapting future use) (May & Finch, 2009). Related to normalisation, Domestication Theory explains how technological artefacts are appropriated, objectified, incorporated, and converted into everyday life becoming routine and taken for granted within a moral economy of practice (Silverstone et al., 1992). Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) Norm Life-Cycle Model explains how norms gain influence in international politics. In the emergence stage, norm entrepreneurs use framing, persuasion, and platforms to promote new standards of appropriate behaviour. Once a critical mass of relevant actors accepts the norm, it may pass a tipping point, cascading into wider adoption driven by socialisation, imitation, reputational concerns, legitimation, and conformity pressures. In the final stage, internalisation, the norm becomes embedded in institutional and routine behaviour, being treated as natural and legitimate. Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink's (2013) Spiral Model of Norms contributes how international norms become domesticated through contested and recursive processes involving; repression (challenger norm actively resisted), denial (external validity of challenger norm rejected), tactical concessions (limited strategic accommodation), prescriptive status (formal norm acceptance), and rule-consistent behaviour (sustained practical compliance). Here, domestic actors may move from active resistance to practical conformity (Risse et al., 2013). Bax's Normalisation Framework adapts Rogers'

Diffusion Theory for digital language learning, proposing a staged process involving: early adopters, ignorance/scepticism, try once, try again, fear/awe, normalising (gradually, seen as something normal) and normalisation (where tech becomes invisible or “normalised”) (Bax, 2003). Contextual conditions include: teachers’ attitudes, learners’ needs, pedagogical fit, training, institutional support etc. (Bax, 2003). Nudge theory highlights the design of choice architectures to steer practice by altering defaults, salience, and friction without formally eliminating choice (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), for single interventions or incrementally achieved outcomes. Finally, Vaughan’s (1996) concept of Normalisation of Deviance highlights consequences of ‘cultural drift’ where repeated anomalies can be reclassified as familiar and acceptable, until a problematic practice gradually emerges as the new normal. Taken together, these and other theories can help examine normalisation as complex socio-technical phenomenon and multilevel process, examinable in multiple ways.

AI’s Ethical Normalisation

AI raises a dual concern: normalisation of AI as a normal in one’s beliefs, practices, artifacts and arrangements, and the use of AI to normalise these. This study seeks to analytically separate but empirically relate both. Here, it is stressed that the ethical issue is not that normalisation is itself undesirable, but rather that ‘descriptive’ normality can be mistaken for ethical legitimacy. While morality and normality are often entangled (Bear & Knobe, 2017), “seeing something as normal does not necessarily entail seeing it as moral” (Selinger & Rhee, 2021) or ethical (e.g. AI cyber-attacks or AI slop), though acknowledging normalising processes often does serve to replace inferior arrangements (Selinger & Durant, 2022). This distinction is important because contemporary AI systems can exert normalising effects through classification, optimisation, and interface design, etc. Therefore, AI does not simply support existing norms; it could potentially narrow our range of thinkable, sayable, and doable options. Similar concerns arise in language-related applications. AI can be imbricated in standardising dialects, speech, and linguistic legitimacy, even while offering countervailing possibilities for diversity (Hohenstein et al., 2023).

The ethical stakes intensify when repeated exposure renders problematic uses acceptable. For example, Hartzog et al. (2024) define “favorably disposed normalisation” as a process in which routine experience of surveillance inclines people to see it as acceptable, even desirable. This is directly relevant to AI-enabled monitoring, scoring, recommendation, and behavioural steering. Once such systems become normal, contestation weakens and their distributive burdens may be obscured, especially where harms fall unevenly across vulnerable groups (Hartzog et al., 2024). At the same time, AI is increasingly imbricated in moral interpretation itself. For example, Grizzard et al. (2025) report that LLMs can produce more extreme moral and immoral ratings than humans. For MIS scholarship, the central implication is that AI’s ethical normalisation should be examined as a socio-technical and governance concern through which certain beliefs, practices, artefacts and arrangements become normal; as rational, efficient and defensible before being adequately justified. The question is not only whether AI is adopted, but how AI is imbricated in reshaping what counts as normal, acceptable, and contestable across organisational domains.

Research Method

This study undertakes a standalone systematic literature review (SLR) following Okoli’s (2015) methodology. The review was designed as concept-centric and problem-driven because the subject matter is conceptually cross-disciplinary and heterogeneous. In the planning phase, the review purpose, scope, and protocol were specified. The review was specified ex-ante as a structured synthesis of an emergent field rather than as a meta-analysis of commensurable empirical effects. The review protocol defined the review question, search boundaries, data sources, eligibility criteria, screening logic, and coding template. The central review question was: *How does existing scholarship help explain the intersection of AI, normalisation, and ethics?* Eligibility criteria required English-language scholarly work explicitly connecting AI, ethics or morality, and normalisation in the title, abstract, or keywords, and whose important or substantive contribution addressed normative routinisation rather than technical data normalisation. Papers were therefore excluded where only concerned with technical data preparation and preprocessing without a substantive ethical discussion. We specifically chose not to widen the scope to ‘norms’, because our central focus was process. Because the field is emergent and dispersed, both empirical and conceptual papers were retained where they made an identifiable contribution. In the extraction phase, papers were coded using a structured template covering phenomenon/nature, level of analysis, whether it treated the normalisation of AI and/or normalisation using AI, the processes and conditions of normalisation, outcomes, prescriptions (governance responses) and theoretical lenses. The execution phase

involved iterative comparison across coded papers to produce the most conceptually coherent thematic synthesis possible from the corpus. This problem-driven formulation is consistent with IS review guidance stressing explicit framing, conceptual organisation, and a clear analytical purpose beyond description alone.

Consistent with Okoli's (2015) recommendation to combine general and domain-specific sources, searches were run in Scopus and the AIS eLibrary in Jan 2026 with the search string: (ai OR "artificial Intelligence" OR "machine learning" OR "gen ai" OR "generative AI" OR "gen-ai" OR "generative artificial" OR "large language model") AND (ethics OR ethical OR moral OR morals) AND (normalising OR normalizing OR normalise OR normalize OR normalizes OR normalises OR normalization OR normalisation). Given the formative nature of the study, it was deemed that the quality of selected databases (and thus articles) sufficient for the study's goal. Further, to ensure conceptual precision, interest was restricted to normalisation rather than widening to related though different concepts such as domestication and institutionalization. Scopus returned 149 records and the AIS eLibrary returned 1. Titles and abstracts were screened against the eligibility criteria. Papers whose focus was data normalisation for AI training or other technical preprocessing were excluded. This process removed n=98, leaving n=52 for detailed analysis, which resulted in a n=46 paper corpus for coding. Screening and coding were conducted iteratively by the author, with repeated return to full texts and a decision log testing borderline inclusions against the protocol and consistency across categories. The aim was not exhaustive coverage of every adjacent debate on norms, but a focused and defensible corpus in which AI, ethics, and normalisation were all substantively present. The retained literature was concentrated in 2024 (n = 8), 2025 (n = 30), and 2026 (n = 7), illustrating the recent acceleration of scholarship in this area. Across selected articles, the most frequent author keywords were surveillance (n = 11), bias (n = 6), and learning (n = 6). Counting each country only once per paper, affiliations were concentrated in the USA (n = 11), Canada (n = 6), the UK (n = 4), Italy (n = 4), the Netherlands (n = 3), and Norway (n = 3). By publication category, the corpus was concentrated in computer science/AI (n = 11), ethics/philosophy (n = 9), education (n = 7), social sciences (n = 7), health/medicine (n = 3), and law/policy (n = 3), with only two direct MIS publications: Data Base for Advances in Information Systems and PACIS. That distribution reinforces the paper's relevance for MIS by showing the topic is consequential but underdeveloped within core MIS outlets.

Findings

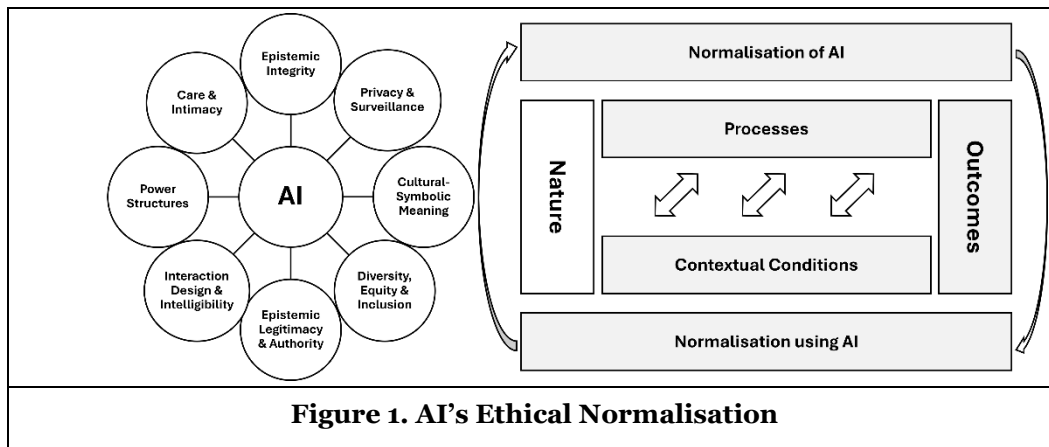


Figure 1. AI's Ethical Normalisation

Across reviewed literature, normalisation appears as configurations of *conditions in relation with processes through which beliefs, practices, artifacts and arrangements involving AI and using AI; become normal*. In some themes, the dominant concern is the Normalisation of AI: *how AI becomes accepted as normal in one's beliefs and practices, artifacts and arrangements*. E.g. classed as legitimate or inevitable. In others, the emphasis is on Normalisation using AI: *how AI is used to normalise beliefs, practices, artifacts and arrangements*. E.g. render subjects, practices, or institutions normatively reconfigured. Many studies involve both, but to different degrees. To preserve that distinction, each theme below identifies the nature of the phenomenon being explored, the contextual conditions, processes, and (possible) outcomes of normalisation cited, as-well as illuminates the normalisation of AI and normalisation using AI distinction.

Themes collectively caution the reconfiguration of the social conditions through which knowledge, authority, care, identity, fairness, and power become taken for granted, durable and legitimate. Analysis found most reviewed articles didn't draw on normalisation theory. Just two papers operationalised one: NPT (May & Finch, 2009) and Bax's Framework (Bax, 2003). Instead, the corpus drew selectively on adjacent lenses such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Discourse Analysis, Actor Network Theory etc. The field is therefore analytically active but theoretically fragmented. Three reviewed contributions proposed normalisation-oriented conceptual resources: Selinger and Rhee's (2021) framework of normalising surveillance, Kumar's (2025) postplagiarism framework, and Tomicic's (2025) process account of labour platform degradation & exploitation. Studies did reflect constructs and concepts of normalisation theories in a hybrid manner, such as processes of peer diffusion (May & Finch, 2009; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Bax, 2003), framing and persuasive discourse (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998), nudging (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), experimentation (Bax, 2003) and ethical drift (Vaughan, 1996) etc. They also collectively add to existing theory by highlighting processes of covert and invisible normalisation, media saturation, norm transference, misdirection, moral rationalisation and weak structural conditions, dependency and low visibility etc. Finally, only 3 papers explicitly examined normalisation as a staged process, though most of the papers explicitly or implicitly discussed normalisation in term of concerns, dangers and/or evidence of ethical/cultural drift (n=31) over time.

Epistemic Regimes: Integrity

This theme concerns pressuring, destabilising and reconfiguring the meaning and standards of integrity; in how knowledge is produced, validated, and attributed, along with new evaluative measures. This is most visible in education where Gen-AI challenges established assumptions about authorship, originality, misconduct, assessment, disclosure and responsibility. Studies here supplement existing normalisation theory by highlighting processes of moral rationalisation/neutralisation, covert normalisation (widespread undisclosed, evasive and unsanctioned practices) and weaknesses in underlying conditions. It primarily concerns normalisation of AI, insofar as it examines how AI use becomes normal within scholarly practice. It also concerns normalisation using AI where for instance proctoring systems, learning analytics, detection and evaluation technologies are positioned as responses to integrity concerns.

The nature of normalisation is primarily normative redefinition of integrity. AI is imbricated in destabilising inherited boundaries between original human authorship and external assistance (e.g. AI-assisted work), misconduct versus legitimate support. It also unsettles who gets to authorise legitimate use (Sutherland, 2024), as disciplinary and institutional standards remain in flux even while older integrity boundaries become less stable (Giray et al., 2026; Maleki, 2026; Sutherland, 2024). Reported conditions in studies are; high AI accessibility (Giray et al., 2026), academic and workload pressures (Giray et al., 2026; Maleki, 2026), unclear assessment purposes or poor assessment design (Maleki, 2026), particular disciplinary identity (Qu et al. 2025), technological and generational gaps (Giray et al. 2026) and institutional weakness, ambiguity, or inconsistency (Giray et al., 2026; Sutherland, 2024; Qu et al., 2025; Maleki, 2026). Processes are described as through peer diffusion (Giray et al., 2026), strategic rationalisation and moral disengagement (Giray et al., 2026; Yusuf et al., 2026), covert or undisclosed practices (Qu et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2026), policy and assessment redesign (Maleki, 2026; Deng & Joshi, 2024), pedagogical reframing (Giray et al., 2026; Deng & Joshi, 2024), and emergence of contested disclosure norms (Qu et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2026). Possible outcomes include normalisation of hybrid human-AI writing (Kumar, 2025), changed expectations around disclosure and attribution (Kumar, 2025; Qu et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2026), risks to learning quality, creativity, and epistemic agency (Kumar, 2025; Qu et al., 2025; Deng & Joshi, 2024), and institutional movement toward process-oriented assessment (Maleki, 2026), AI literacy and ethical capacity-building (Giray et al., 2026; Deng & Joshi, 2024), procedural fairness and appeals (Qu et al., 2025; Grebenschikova, 2025), and ethical system design (Maleki, 2026). These dynamics extend beyond student assessment into scholarly publishing and peer review (Grebenschikova, 2025). In that domain, AI-assisted manuscript evaluation raises parallel concerns about transparency, human epistemic authority, standards and guidelines, and trust in scientific knowledge certification (Grebenschikova, 2025; Sutherland, 2024). Poorly governed AI-enabled academic practice may weaken trust in scholarly production and science overall. In terms of governing normalisation, authors prescribes institutional guidance, assessment redesign, responsible disclosure norms, stronger ethical framing around authorship and authenticity, and closer attention to the moral-psychological conditions under which scholars justify

AI use. Across these studies, governance (rather than prohibition) that makes responsible disclosure, clearer boundaries, and ethically reflexive use normal, was prioritised.

Epistemic Regimes: Legitimacy & Authority

This related theme concerns AI supporting, structuring, or (partially) substituting human interpretation, analysis, classification, and judgement in domains, where ambiguity, expertise, and care have traditionally been central. Beyond existing normalisation theory, studies highlight processes of shifting (expertise) role relations, as well as success driven drift, under conditions of convenience and incentives alignment. The cluster is concerned primarily with the normalisation of AI in augmentation and delegation, specifically the normalisation of AI as an epistemic assistant, interpreter, co-analyst, or decision-support tool. It also concerns normalisation using AI where AI begins to stabilise what counts as a valid interpretation, classification, diagnosis, or recommendation, even for evaluating or certifying knowledge.

The nature of normalisation is augmentation and (partial) delegation of epistemic legitimacy and authority. AI is increasingly participating in what counts as adequate interpretation, analysis, or diagnosis. Normalisation is reported as enabled by conditions of cost, time and workload pressures (Duke, 2026; Grebenshchikova, 2025), achievable scale and efficiency (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024; Tona, 2025; Grebenshchikova, 2025), organisational support (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024), convenience and ease of use (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024; Tona, 2025), commercial influence (Tona, 2025; Gattiglia, 2025) and feasibility (Tona, 2025), especially where ethical assurances help reduce adoption barriers (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024; Grebenshchikova, 2025). Processes include experimentation (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024), peer recommendations (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024), AI recommendations (Grebenshchikova, 2025) along with feedback-based adaptation (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024). Skill development (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024), collaborative learning (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024), routinising uptake of “good-enough” outputs (Duke, 2026). Possible outcomes include shifting decision weight from situated human judgement toward automated outputs (Tona, 2025; Grebenshchikova, 2025; Gattiglia, 2025), greater operational efficiency (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024; Grebenshchikova, 2025), and expanded access to analytic capability for non-experts (Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024). The papers give stronger emphasis to risks including thinner human engagement with interpretive material (Duke, 2026), lower epistemic thresholds (through good-enough engagement) (Duke, 2026), human dependency on AI-mediated interpretation (Gattiglia, 2025; Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024), de-skilling of analytic practice (Duke, 2026), displaced situated expertise (Duke, 2026; Tona, 2025), opaque accountability (Gattiglia, 2025; Grebenshchikova, 2025), weakened mentorship (Grebenshchikova, 2025), loss of expert curiosity (Tona, 2025) and the risk that provisional computational classifications take on unwarranted authority (Gattiglia, 2025), particularly where simplified archaeological categories are treated as immutable truths rather than situated and contestable classifications. In terms of governing normalisation, authors prescribe proactive ethical guidelines, organisational support structures, critical skepticism, retention of human interpretive responsibility, and frameworks explicitly designed to ensure that AI enhances rather than replaces professional judgement. The preferred ethical response across the cluster is to normalise AI use only alongside strong human oversight, interpretive depth, and domain-specific critical reflexivity.

Power Relations: Power Structures

This cluster examines AI as a sociotechnical apparatus through which asymmetries of power (e.g. influence, control, domination) including labour exploitation, ecological harm; can become naturalised or depoliticised. Studies add to existing normalisation theory by highlighting processes of misdirecting attention and encouraging the invisibility of problematic conditions through ‘sequestration of experience’ (Giddens, 1991), as-well as the saturation of framing symbols/discourse/rhetoric, especially within conditions of citizen fatigue or complacency. For example, ethical attention can be redirected when abstract or misdirected debates displace or obfuscate immediate questions of welfare, labour, and social harm. Here, the literature is concerned with both normalisation of AI and normalisation using AI. Normalisation of AI is actor(s)-controlled/asymmetry of AI’s development, deployment and expansion as infrastructure and ideology, and efforts at depoliticising and naturalising these asymmetries. This is while AI is simultaneously being used to reproduce, extend and obscure asymmetrical relations of power.

The nature of normalisation is power asymmetry. Normalisation is reported as through conditions of profit pressure (Tomičić, 2025; Birhane & van Dijk, 2025), platform dependence (Tomičić, 2025), concentrated corporate power (Erfani, 2026; Tomičić, 2025), weak labour protections and regulatory gaps (Tomičić,

2025), low visibility into the social and environmental conditions of AI production (Araújo, 2026; Birhane & van Dijk, 2025; Tomičić, 2025). Processes concern ethical drift in AI production and behaviour (Tomičić, 2025), discursive legitimisation and framing (Araújo, 2026; Erfani, 2026) including misdirected attention (Birhane & van Dijk, 2025), informational saturation (Puczyńska & Djenouri, 2024), computational propaganda (Black, 2025), algorithmically mediated information distribution (Black, 2025), algorithmic management (Tomičić, 2025), infrastructural embedding (Erfani, 2026), and obscuration of labour and ecological cost (Birhane & van Dijk, 2025; Tomičić, 2025; Araújo, 2026). (Possible) outcomes include ethical narrowing (Tomičić, 2025; Erfani, 2026), epistemic manipulation (Black, 2025; Puczyńska & Djenouri, 2024), normalised exploitation of labour e.g. AI trainers (Tomičić, 2025), ecological denial (Araújo, 2026), climate invisibility (Araújo, 2026) and production of certain hierarchies through algorithmic governance (Erfani, 2026; Black, 2025; Dos Reis Peron et al., 2025; Araújo, 2026). In terms of governing normalisation, authors prescribe fairwork principles as counter-normalisation strategy; infrastructural reclamation, critical appropriation, and policy interventions aimed at power asymmetries rather than narrow performance metrics; cradle-to-grave ethics of techno care; surveillance heuristics to interrogate justificatory discourse; and education/literacy to counter propaganda. Across the cluster, the preferred response is to interrupt normalisation by making labour, ecology, ownership, and power newly visible and politically contestable.

Power Relations: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

This cluster addresses how AI can reproduce exclusion and inequality, fosters homogeneity, while also calling for normalising more reflexive, justice-centred, and context-sensitive forms of governance. Studies inform normalisation theorising by highlighting the power of AI's affirmative and repetitive normative discourse, obscuration through distributed burden/effect, the shifting of (authority) role relations from local, situated and community authority to AI (platforms), and AI's imbrication in (co)shaping the conditions upon which norms come to be known, such as through categories and measures etc. It's concerned with normalisation of AI, where biased or exclusionary systems come to be treated as normal, but it is more strongly concerned with normalisation using AI, insofar as AI can be imbricated in rendering discrimination, oppression, categorisation, and exclusion operational, normal, and legitimate. The object or nature of normalisation is governance practice itself: i.e. what institutions treat as fair, trustworthy, accountable, or inclusive. These dynamics arise under reported conditions of pre-existing inequality, biased data and model training (Masinde et al., 2024; Iordache & Siminiuc, 2025; Yim, 2025; Khan & El-Lahib, 2025), weakened cultural transmission of moral norms (Afunugo et al., 2025), technical AI limitations/choices such as in dealing with nuance and ambiguity (Yim, 2025), underrepresentation of local or marginalised perspectives (Nkwo & Adamu, 2025), and narrow technical framings of fairness with consideration needed for locally situated moral orders rather than assumed universal norms. Processes include; repeated circulation of biased outputs, peer endorsement (Afunugo et al., 2025); Affirmative biased model behaviour/discourse (Iordache & Siminiuc, 2025), "fairness" recalibrations (Balestri, 2025). Ameliorating processes cited include situated reframing, diffusion of justice-centred critique, and challenges to abstract or imported ethical frameworks overlooking context and structural power. (Possible) outcomes include acceptance of controversial and extremist content (Afunugo et al., 2025), narrowing of acceptable beliefs and practices around gender, identity, social worth, morality (Iordache & Siminiuc (2025), invisibility of vulnerable people (Masinde et al., 2024), marginalisation of disabled communities (Khan & El-Lahib, 2025). Or, where interventions are adopted, redirection of normalisation toward more reflexive, situated, and accountable forms of governance. In terms of governing normalisation, authors prescribe routine auditing, disability justice frameworks (Khan and El-Lahib, 2025), situated and local value-sensitive governance, careful alignment work, and stronger attention to how systems operationalise structural power. The aim was not to eliminate all norm formation, but ensure that what becomes normal is more accountable to marginalised groups, local contexts, and broader justice concerns.

Behavioural Design: Privacy and Surveillance

This theme focuses on the gradual acceptance and infrastructural embedding of AI-powered monitoring, classification, and behavioural analytics in education, work, care, governance etc. Studies here identify that AI surveillance enables process visibility, capture and legibility; serving to control and transform processes and norms themselves whilst being invisible or ambient in the process. Rather than just a new belief or

practice norm, AI helps normalise the human subject, as-well as existing/new asymmetries of power through inclusion or exclusion of surveillance techniques. Studies add that in addition to ‘function creep’, ‘boundary creep’ extends the boundaries of initial settings, meaning classrooms start to function also as laboratory etc. Further, ‘norm transference’, means subjects normalised to certain beliefs or practices in one setting can be more amenable to normalisation in another, due to familiarity and distinction erosion. This cluster is concerned primarily with normalisation using AI, because AI is deployed to make subjects more visible, comparable, and governable. At the same time, it also concerns the normalisation of AI, since surveillance AI itself increasingly can become a taken-for-granted solution to institutional problems.

The nature of normalisation here is forms of AI surveillance for data value extraction, behavioural design and disciplinary governance. Processes are both discursive and infrastructural. They include security and integrity ‘framing’ (Dos Reis Peron et al., 2025), discourse (Lubin & Fan, 2025) including narratives of techno-solutionism, gradual implementation and habituation (Lutz et al., 2025), function creep (Selinger & Rhee, 2021.; Plate & Hutson, 2025), boundary creep (Sinha, 2024) and stopgap solutionism (Selinger & Rhee, 2021; Dos Reis Peron et al., 2025), invisibility of surveillance practice (Koutropoulos et al., 2025; Young et al., 2025), recursive process capture, feedback and modification (Koutropoulos et al., 2025; Prinsloo et al., 2023; Young et al., 2025; Plate & Hutson, 2025), norm transference (Young et al., 2025) and technological embedding. Additional work suggests this normalisation can also be culturally ‘rehearsed’ or primed through gaming, interactive and entertainment environments in ways that make tracking and behavioural adaptation feel familiar or desirable (Young et al., 2025) allowing for norm transference. These dynamics are facilitated by conditions of institutional and civil anxiety around safety (Dos Reis Peron et al., 2025), crisis events (Selinger & Rhee, 2021), weak institutional protections (Sinha, 2024; Young et al., 2025), reducing cost and increasing capability of AI (Selinger & Rhee, 2021), regulatory gaps (ibid), workplace authority (Plate & Hutson, 2025), and infrastructures difficult to reverse once installed. (Possible) outcomes include erosion of ‘privacy by default’ (Selinger & Rhee, 2021.; Prinsloo et al., 2023), intensified data extraction (Koutropoulos et al., 2025; Prinsloo et al., 2023; Young et al., 2025), lowered thresholds for further problematic practices (Lutz et al., 2025), weakened civil trust (Selinger & Rhee, 2021.; Dos Reis Peron et al., 2025), and disproportionate harms for already vulnerable populations (Sinha, 2024). In terms of governing normalisation, literature prescribes governance frameworks, privacy-by-default protections, transparency, enforceable rights, ethics-of-care approaches, resistance to function creep, and accountability models that preserve spaces of discretion and process privacy. Across the cluster, the preferred response is not merely to regulate data use after the fact, but to shape the institutional defaults determining what forms of AI surveillance become normal.

Behavioural Design: Interaction Design and Intelligibility

This theme explains how AI can move rapidly from novelty to normal through behavioural design, interactional intelligibility and steering. It concerns the design of AI interactions themselves: using prompts, defaults, recommendations, autocomplete, dashboards, feedback loops, ranking systems, voice tone, salience cues, progress indicators, and conversational scaffolding. Studies here add to existing normalisation theory by emphasising forms of ‘dynamic’ and adaptive choice and ‘attention’ architecture; shaping what and when users notice, what feels easy and appears authoritative, and which actions become the path of least resistance. It’s concerned primarily with the normalisation of AI for now, but cautions the power of AI to shape minds and practice through interactions if not carefully governed.

The nature of normalisation here is behavioural and interactional. AI-assisted work becomes normal through AI (interfaces) being intelligible, compelling, convenient, frictionless and compatible with existing routines/norms. The enabling conditions include routine compatibility (Zimotti et al., 2024; Izhar et al., 2025), perceived usefulness (Izhar et al., 2025), positive attitudes (García et al., 2024; Izhar et al., 2025), institutional support (Izhar et al., 2025) and digitalisation pressure (Shi & Wan, 2024). Normalisation here occurs through systems of instrumental intelligibility (Erfani, 2026; Izhar et al., 2025) (i.e. optimal communication). This helps AI become normal even when ethical concerns remain unresolved. The process involves practical experimentation (Zimotti et al., 2024), repeated use (Zimotti et al., 2024; Iordache & Siminiuc, 2025), behavioural adaptation (Young et al., 2025; Zimotti et al., 2024; Izhar et al., 2025) ease and effort reduction (Izhar et al., 2025), statistical mimicry (Erfani, 2026) where AI produces fluent, rhythmic, cadent and coherent communication (Erfani, 2026), with neutral and objective sounding information (Iordache & Siminiuc, 2025) that brings user satisfaction. Processes also include metric guidance (Young et al., 2025). Here, Young et al. (2025) offer an account of procedural normalisation

through what they call “procedural rhetoric”: games make ethical and political arguments through mechanics, rules, constraints and feedback systems, not only through narrative. Further, feedback habituation (Young et al., 2025), and growing dependency on AI-mediated outputs (Iordache & Siminiuc, 2025; Izhar et al., 2025) cultivates new norms. The possible outcome is that AI ceases to appear exceptional and becomes default infrastructure (Shi & Wan, 2024; Erfani, 2026) across organisational (Izhar et al., 2025) and educational practice (Zimotti et al., 2024; Shi & Wan, 2024), including potentially decision-making (Iordache & Siminiuc, 2025; Erfani, 2026). This may produce productivity gains (Izhar et al., 2025), learning support (Zimotti et al., 2024; García et al., 2024), and digital maturity (Shi & Wan, 2024), but also risks bias reproduction (Iordache & Siminiuc, 2025), surveillance habituation (Young et al., 2025), procedural objectivity (Erfani, 2026), over-reliance (Izhar et al., 2025), and the quiet normalisation of AI that is convenient and relied upon before being fully accountable. In terms of governing normalisation, studies do not primarily advocate rejection; rather, they point toward careful design, institutional support, and awareness that usability itself is an ethical force because it lowers resistance and accelerates normalisation. The implication is that institutions should not confuse frictionless adoption with ethically settled adoption, and should pair usability gains with explicit ethical guidance.

Meaning and Identity: Cultural-Symbolic Meaning

This theme highlights that AI is normalised through aesthetics, representation, anthropomorphism, cultural narratives and symbolism (Sianturi, 2025; Arora & Natale, 2025), reshaping what counts as authentic, creative, socially/culturally desirable, acceptable and human. Studies enriches theorising by highlighting AI becoming normal through conditions and processes of fashion, cultural prestige, spectacle and anthropomorphic aesthetics, even taking on ‘aesthetic authority’ and role representation where AI is used to normalise. E.g. normalising unrealistic beauty standards and speech, as-well as representation as journalistic persona, cinematic performer or artistic curator etc. Further, normalisation can occur through culturally localised; anthropomorphism, aesthetics and representation. The cluster is concerned with normalisation of AI such as in role representation as ‘virtual influencer’, but also cultural normalisation of AI as creative presence, symbolic actor, or inevitable feature of cultural production. Secondly, it concerns normalisation using AI, where AI mediates representation, moderation and curation etc., and thereby helps reconfigure norms of authorship, embodiment, creativity, aesthetics, morals/ethics and personhood. The nature of normalisation is cultural and ontological boundary shifting between human and machine, involving synthetic personhood (Sianturi, 2025) and algorithmic; mediation (Young et al., 2025), curation, moderation (Grba, 2022), and performance (López, 2025). These dynamics are enabled by conditions of commercial incentives and efficiency (Sianturi, 2025; López, 2025), media novelty (Sianturi, 2025), production efficiency (Sianturi, 2025; López, 2025), artworld prestige (Grba, 2022), platform visibility (Afunugo et al., 2025), available digital production infrastructures (Young et al., 2025), and uneven cultural framings (Arora & Natale, 2025). Processes work through symbolic mediation (Sianturi, 2025; Arora & Natale, 2025), aesthetic familiarisation (Grba, 2022; Sianturi, 2025), anthropomorphic framing (Grba, 2022; Sianturi, 2025) anthropomorphic representation and rhetoric (Grba, 2022), cultural localisation (Arora & Natale, 2025), platform enabled circulation (Afunugo et al., 2025), media visibility and saturation (Grba, 2022; Sianturi, 2025; Afunugo et al. 2025), aesthetic preference shaping (Grba, 2022) and discourses of inevitability (López, 2025). (Possible) outcomes include broader acceptance of AI creativity, labour displacement (López, 2025), posthumous reuse (López, 2025), authorship instability (Grba, 2022), cultural conformity (Grba, 2022), local marginalisation (Arora & Natale, 2025), AI dependency (Sianturi, 2025), cultural erosion (Afunugo et al., 2025) and synthetic media presence. In terms of governing normalisation, authors prescribe critical cultural scrutiny, stronger governance and auditing of creative AI use, attention to embodiment and consent, and greater sensitivity to situated cultural difference.

Meaning & Identity: Affective Care and Intimacy

This final cluster examines how AI becomes normal within and through; care, companionship, emotional support and ambient monitoring, in contexts marked by loneliness, vulnerability, dependency, or constrained human support. These studies inform existing theorising on normalisation by highlighting emotional (affective) tuning/regulation and dependence forming, benevolent framing of discourse, denormalisation of alternatives, and conditions of unmet needs and unrecognised or hidden loss or failures of care. It concerns both the normalisation of AI and normalisation using AI. The normalisation of AI

appears in the acceptance of AI companions, interpreters, care assistants, and emotion-recognition systems as normal relational technologies. Normalisation using AI appears where AI is used to monitor behaviour, categorise emotions, and reshape care practice itself.

The nature of normalisation here is the emergence of machine mediated intimacy and care relations (Buzila & Gil, 2025; Hartmann et al., 2024), AI companionship (Novozhilova et al., 2025), AI assisted living (Lutz et al., 2025), ambient monitoring (Hartmann et al. 2024; Lutz et al., 2025), AI medical interpreting (Lopez-Vera, 2026) and emotion recognition (Hartmann et al., 2024). These dynamics are within conditions of ageing populations (Lutz et al., 2025), loneliness and unmet needs (Buzila & Gil, 2025; Novozhilova et al., 2025), limited human support (Lutz et al., 2025), the attractiveness of scalable care (Lopez Vera, 2026), power asymmetries in care relations (Lutz et al., 2025) and accessibility of companion technologies. The processes involve intimate embedding (Novozhilova et al., 2025; Lutz et al., 2025), nudging (Buzila & Gil, 2025), background monitoring and automation (Lutz et al., 2025), therapeutic and emotional solution framing (Novozhilova et al., 2025; Hartmann et al., 2024) as supplemental instead of substitutional support (Novozhilova et al., 2025), AI powered emotional tuning or regulation (Hartmann et al., 2024), and gradual social erosion of stigma (Novozhilova et al., 2025). The possible outcomes are mixed. AI may supplement care and companionship (Novozhilova et al., 2025), but it may also normalise emotional capture and regulation (Hartmann et al., 2024), privacy erosion (Buzila & Gil, 2025; Hartmann et al., 2024; Lutz et al., 2025), reduced human contact (Buzila & Gil, 2025), and, in some contexts, lower standards of care (Lopez-Vera, 2026) for already disadvantaged groups. In terms of governing normalisation, author prescriptions include multidisciplinary governance, stronger safeguards for privacy and autonomy, careful ethical oversight of emotional and behavioural monitoring, and protection against replacing human care with lower-quality automated substitutes where vulnerable populations are concerned. Across the cluster, the implication is that care-oriented AI should not be normalised without simultaneous attention and protection of dignity, privacy, human contact, and differential vulnerability.

Discussion

The thematic findings together act as a formative analytic framework for interrogating issues of AI's Ethical Normalisation. See Table 1. The framework is intentionally heuristic rather than formally taxonomic: themes do not operate at a single ontological level and are not presented as mutually exclusive. Instead, they capture overlapping domains of ethical concern, pre-theoretical mechanisms through which normalisation unfolds, and sociotechnical sites where these dynamics become visible. This is appropriate for an emergent literature in which authors often mix substantive harms, organisational processes, and governance responses within the same analysis. Accordingly, framework's value lies less in strict classification than in helping MIS scholars ask better questions about how AI becomes normal, who benefits, who is exposed, and which configurations stabilise those outcomes. For example, Interaction Design and intelligibility relates to Power Relations, because interface design and behavioural steering may facilitate 'dark' patterns of platform control or exclusion (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; Hohenstein et al., 2023; Plate & Hutson, 2025). In relation to existing normalisation theories, Thaler & Sunstein's Nudge theory (2008) clearly has relevance to studies in the Behavioural Design theme. Nudge theory offers a lens to highlight 'dark patterns' of AI design such as in the instrumental addition and removal of friction in AI interactions to steer behaviour. However, findings highlighted that AI becomes normal and can normalise; not only through use, but also through discourse, rhetoric and narratives, aesthetics, and symbolic framing etc. Such processes encompass and intersect themes of 'Power Structures' with 'Cultural-Symbolic meaning'. Here, Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) Norm Life-Cycle model is well suited to offer insights on discursive and framing processes of normalisation. Further, Vaughan's (1996) 'Normalisation of Deviance' is particularly relevant to illuminating 'Epistemic Regimes' of integrity, legitimacy and authority, particularly as studies found much of these epistemic changes taking place remain in flux and unsettled.

Several cross-cutting implications are particularly salient for MIS: AI can become normal through convenience and dependency without any settled ethical consensus, and is often most consequential when normalisation of AI is coupled with normalisation using AI. Such hybrid cases appear in education, healthcare, media, and work etc., and show adoption and infrastructural embedding are mutually reinforcing rather than separate in practice. Third, normalisation can be a recursive process co-shaping more favorable conditions for certain (de)normalisation. Thus, AI is imbricated in shaping the conditions/realities (Faraj et al., 2018) within which certain norms can emerge or be recognised. E.g. through classification. Fourth, the corpus complicates the view that ethical improvement can be secured through

principles or technical controls alone when AI is tied to changing labour relations, ecological extraction, political asymmetries, and symbolic regimes. The question is therefore not only whether an AI system is fair, but what social and organisational order its (de)normalisation, (re)produces. This makes AI's ethical normalisation a substantive MIS concern within research on digital responsibility, sociotechnical design, and organisational governance.

Table 1. Formative Analytic Framework of AI's Ethical Normalisation				
	Theme	Analytic Description	E.g. Analytic questions	E.g. Research to-date
Epistemic Regimes	Epistemic Integrity	Understand norm reconfiguration of how authorship, originality, disclosure, legitimacy & responsibility are judged in academic work as older integrity boundaries become less stable and standards remain unsettled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is AI use reshaping what counts as both legitimate and taken-for-granted academic and research practice? • Through what mechanisms do AI-assisted practices become normalised, contested, or differentiated across contexts? 	Grebenshchikova et al. (2025); Giray et al. (2026); Maleki (2026); Kumar (2025); Sutherland (2024); Yusuf et al. (2026); Qu et al. (2025); Koutropoulos et al. (2025);
	Epistemic Legitimacy & Authority	Capture the redistribution of interpretive, analytic, diagnostic, and moral authority between humans and AI, especially where expertise, contextual judgment, and care are central to practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what kinds of tasks and under what conditions is epistemic authority being delegated to AI? • When and how does AI begin to displace interpretive depth, curiosity, care, or responsibility? 	Grebenshchikova et al. (2025); Perera Muthupolittotage (2024); Duke (2026); Gattiglia (2025); Tona (2025)
Power Relations	Power Structures	Reveal where AI functions as naturalising unequal power relations. Surface when AI framed as neutral, technical, and inevitable while obscuring forms of exploitation, domination, harm, and political asymmetry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is AI framed discursively, institutionally, or technically so that ethically contentious arrangements appear objective, necessary, or unavoidable? • What forms of domination are obscured as AI becomes normalised? 	Birhane and van Dijk (2025); Tomicic (2025); Erfani (2026); Araújo (2026); Lubin & Fan (2025); Black (2025); Puczyńska & Djenouri (2024);
	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Interrogate how AI becomes encoded and (de)legitimises norms around identity, ability, value, and acceptable difference, while also opening space for auditing, situated fairness, and justice-centred redesign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whose identities, values, bodies, and behaviours are being treated as (ab)normal in AI systems and governance? • How can auditing, situated culturing, and justice-centred critique redirect AI normalisation toward equitable arrangements? 	Khan & El-Lahib (2025); Nkwo & Adamu (2025); Balestri (2025); Iordache & Siminiuc (2025); Yim (2025); Masinde et al. (2024); Afunugo et al. (2025); (Lopez Vera, 2026)
Behavioural Design	Privacy and Surveillance	Explain how AI-powered monitoring, classification, and behavioural scrutiny becomes legitimate and normal, through for example; security rhetoric, institutional embedding, and expanding function creep etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through what pathways does AI surveillance become accepted as reasonable, necessary, or inevitable? • How does normalisation, function creep, and technological embedding reshape expectations of privacy, autonomy, trust, and monitoring? 	Koutropoulos et al. (2025); Selinger & Rhee (2021); Sinha (2024); Lutz et al. (2025); Dos Reis Peron et al. (2025); Plate & Hutson (2025); Sanghavi et al. (2024);
	Interaction Design and Intelligibility	Account for the normalisation of AI through usability, familiarity, workflow fit, intelligibility, anthropomorphising, and reduced cognitive effort, making adoption appear practical, normal, and difficult to contest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which design features, user experiences, and organisational conditions make AI feel intuitive, useful, and easy to absorb? • How does repeated use change AI from a novel tool to accepted and expected background infrastructure? 	García et al. (2024); Zimotti et al. (2024); Izhar et al. (2025); Shi & Wan (2024); Young et al. (2025); Erfani (2026); Iordache & Siminiuc (2025)
Meaning and Identity	Cultural-Symbolic Meaning	Examine how AI becomes culturally legitimate through aesthetics, representation, anthropomorphism, and boundary work around authenticity, creativity, personhood, and dignity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do aesthetic forms, symbolic cues, and anthropomorphic representations help render AI culturally acceptable and desirable? • What assumptions on authenticity, creativity, personhood, performance or dignity are being changed? 	Grba (2022); Yim (2025); Sianturi (2025); López-Vera (2026); Arora & Natale (2025); Afunugo et al. (2025); Young et al. (2025)
	Affective Care and Intimacy	Explore affective pathways through which AI is normalised in care, companionship, therapeutic settings, often alongside new dependencies, visibility demands, and altered standards of human support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does AI become normalised as caring, companionate, therapeutic, or assistive in emotional contexts? • What new dependencies, visibility demands, or altered standards of care emerge with delegated AI? 	Hartmann et al. (2024); Buzila & Gil (2025); Novozhilova et al. (2025); Lutz et al. (2025); Lopez-Vera (2026); Tona (2025)

On the matter of trust, norms are foundational because trust is sustained through expected patterns of behaviour and institutionalised assurances (Omran et al., 2022), with desirable and problematic norms to consider (Grisold et al., 2025). Normalisation perspectives therefore help MIS move beyond adoption-centric accounts toward richer explanations of how AI becomes morally taken-for-granted, and who is rendered (in)visible, (in)comparable, (un)governable, (un)augmentable, or (in)disposable in the process, and whose dignity, autonomy, and voice are protected or diminished.

A practice contribution is the synthesis of seven complementary governance mechanisms abstracted from author prescriptions (we extracted and grouped N=587 prescriptions across papers). These mechanisms should be understood as overlapping modes of intervention in relation to our proposed framework. We illustrate here examples of specific types of interventions according to each. They comprise: *Auditing And Accountability* (n=190) through bias audits, surveillance scrutiny, fairwork-style standards, and other mechanisms for making harms visible and actionable (e.g., Masinde et al., 2024; Tomicic, 2025; Plate & Hutson, 2025); *Structural Justice Interventions* (n=165) through disability justice, situated trustworthy AI, local value reconciliation, and policy responses aimed at asymmetries of power rather than narrow technical performance alone (e.g., Khan & El-Lahib, 2025; Nkwo & Adamu, 2025; Erfani, 2026); *Critical Reflexivity And Care* (n=61) through scepticism toward AI hype, education and literacy, multidisciplinary oversight, and ethics-of-care approaches that keep labour, ecology, vulnerability, and human well-being in view as normalisation unfolds (e.g., Gattiglia, 2025; Black, 2025; Araújo, 2026); *Governance And Disclosure* (n=60) through clearer policy articulation, assessment redesign, transparency norms, and explicit guidance for responsible use (e.g., Maleki, 2026; Yusuf et al., 2026; Giray et al., 2026); *Privacy And Autonomy* (n=60) through privacy-by-default protections, enforceable rights, and safeguards against normalised over-collection, coerced disclosure, and continuous monitoring (e.g., Plate & Hutson, 2025; Lutz et al., 2025); *Human Oversight And Task Fit* (n=32) through preserving professional judgement, interpretive depth, and appropriate people–AI alignment rather than allowing AI to displace reflective expertise (e.g., Deng & Joshi, 2024; Duke, 2026; Tona, 2025); and *Socio-technical Infrastructure And Implementation* (n=19) through shaping the material, ownership, resource and organisational conditions of AI becoming embedded in routine practice, including cross-institutional coordination (e.g., Erfani, 2026; Shi & Wan, 2024; Perera Muthupoltotage, 2024). Taken together, these prescriptions suggest that ethical normalisation is best understood not as the passive acceptance of AI, but as an actively governed process in which disclosure, scrutiny, judgement, rights protection, justice, reflexive care and digital sovereignty must be institutionally cultivated if normalisation is to remain ethically defensible.

In terms of future MIS research trajectories, a notable corpus absence was scholarly attention directed to understanding ethically (in)appropriate speed and cadence of (de)normalisation unfolding. Such research is timely, particularly in relation to different age categories and vulnerable groups. Further, studies offer little direct work on methods for detecting (de)normalisation unfolding, including AI-assisted detection of pattern shifts in; discourse, behavioural expectations, or institutional defaults etc. Additionally, related work on (algorithmically) identifying facilitating conditions and (establishing) inhospitable conditions for (de)normalisation processes, would be beneficial. This appears especially important for research in domains such as computational propaganda, platform governance, automated decision-making, and bot-mediated amplification, where normalisation may occur gradually and at scale before easily contestable. Whilst direct evidence wasn't apparent, some studies highlighted AI appropriation for detection of 'abnormal' behaviour from financial transactions to elder care supervision. In particular, future work is timely for algorithmically identifying normalisation processes of political ideology using computational propaganda and AI bots for amplifying and suppressing discourse. Finally, the review finds that whilst a suite of normalisation theories exist, the same is not true for theories of denormalisation. Existing scholarly contributions are limited to public health strategies (e.g. smoking). Future research is needed to develop denormalisation theory, as-well as adapt theories of normalisation for explaining denormalisation. For example, theorising how AI's capacity to personalise experiences and individuate, could also serve to denormalise. Finally, theorising dual processes and conditions of normalisation and denormalisation or counter-normalisation at work is timely, including evidence of successful denormalisation mechanisms etc.

Conclusion

This study sought to contribute to MIS a formative consolidation and synthesis of emerging scholarship at the intersection of AI, normalisation, and ethics research. Using a systematic literature review, a cross-

disciplinary corpus was analysed to arrive at 4 overarching themes to organise findings as a formative analytic framework: (1) *Epistemic Regimes*: comprising a) Epistemic Integrity, and b) Epistemic Legitimacy and Authority. 2) *Power Relations*: comprising c) Power Structures, and d) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, 3) *Behavioural Design*: encompassing e) Privacy and Surveillance, and f) Interaction Design and Intelligibility, 4) *Meaning and Identity*: encompassing g) Cultural-Symbolic Meaning, and h) Affective Care and Intimacy. Findings were organised according to the nature, processes, conditions, and outcomes of normalisation, while distinguishing work on *Normalisation of AI* from *Normalisation using AI*. The contribution is a preliminary framework for researching AI's ethical normalisation, further synthesising seven overarching governance mechanisms of benefit to practice through which normalisation can be managed, redirected, or resisted; (1) Auditing And Accountability; (2) Structural Justice Interventions; (3) Critical Reflexivity And Care; (4) Governance And Disclosure; (5) Privacy And Autonomy; (6) Human Oversight And Task Fit; and (7) Socio-technical Infrastructure And Implementation.

For scholars and practitioners, the central implication is that AI's ethical normalisation should not be treated as a peripheral issue around adoption, but as a socio-technical and governance process through which what counts as normal, acceptable, and contestable is being reconfigured across organisational and societal life. Normalisation theorising must extend to understanding AI's capacity to shape norms, steer behaviour, and accelerate or obscure ethical drift. But also, it's capacity and potential to shape the conditions and realities (Faraj et al., 2018) under which norms emerge and are recognised. Whilst regulatory efforts such as the EU's AI Act aims to prohibit or control AI systems using subliminal, manipulative, exploitative or deceptive techniques causing harm, MIS research is urgently needed to address how to adequately recognise, monitor and govern these techniques and harms, particularly given effects can be gradual, distributed, subtle, opaque and cumulative. The distinction between Normalisation of AI and Normalisation using AI is central to this contribution. At the start of the paper the theoretical distinction of; *Normalising AI*, *Normalising using AI* and *Normalising AI with AI* was introduced. It indicates the possibility for extending Giddens's 'Double Hermeneutic' (1984), not as a triple hermeneutic but as an additional instrumental layer: Human actors interpreting and practicing in the social world. Scientists/AI developers theorising those practices and AI trained on those interpretations re-entering the social world and recursively reshaping it, and so on. Future work aims to develop this theoretical line of enquiry, and indeed future MIS research advancing theorising these 3 distinctions and their relation would be welcome.

As a formative review, this study is necessarily bounded. Future work should expand the database coverage and search vocabulary, and develop the framework against a larger and quickly growing corpus. Even so, acceleration of scholarship in 2024-2026 suggests that AI, normalisation, and ethics is becoming a durable interdisciplinary conversation. That trajectory increases rather than reduces the need for MIS scholarship to examine how AI becomes infrastructural, morally intelligible, and organisationally difficult to contest. The ability to live above the algorithm is perhaps becoming a more different but pressing concern with time.

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