

**AN INVESTIGATION OF ETHICAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE USE OF  
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) BY UNDERGRADUATES IN NIGERIAN  
UNIVERSITIES**

**Peace Gift EDEYARU  
EDU2102123**

**DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY,  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION,  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,  
BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND  
INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF  
BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF  
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**SEPTEMBER, 2025**

## CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that this research work was carried out by Peace Gift Edeyaru in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Technology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Science (Ed) Degree in Computer Science.

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**Dr. E. P. Ikuereye**  
(PROJECT SUPERVISOR)

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**DATE**

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**Dr. (Mrs.) I.K. Oteze**  
(PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR)

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**DATE**

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**Prof. F. O. Idehen**  
(HEAD OF DEPARTMENT)

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**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to Almighty God, who has been the researcher's strength and sustainer throughout her academic journey. He saw her through every stage of this work, and for His guidance, provision, and unfailing love, she is deeply grateful.

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## ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has reshaped academic practices in higher education, creating both opportunities and ethical concerns. This study investigated the ethical issues associated with AI use among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities, with a focus on the University of Benin. The research examined how AI tools encourage plagiarism, affect academic integrity, contribute to dependence, promote academic laziness, and influence examination malpractice.

A descriptive survey design was employed, and data were collected from seventy (70) undergraduate students across different faculties using a structured questionnaire. The results, analyzed through frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations, revealed that AI tools significantly encourage plagiarism and undermine academic integrity. While students did not show strong overall dependence on AI, findings indicated that selective use promotes moderate laziness and creates new opportunities for exam malpractice.

The study concludes that although AI can enhance learning efficiency, its misuse poses serious ethical challenges. It recommends that universities develop policies, awareness programs, and training initiatives to guide students toward responsible AI use, ensuring that technological benefits align with academic integrity and genuine learning.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background to the Study**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly reshaping education by providing students with new tools for accessing information, improving academic writing, and personalizing their learning experiences. The rise of widely used platforms such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot among university students has introduced both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, these tools enhance productivity, offer real-time feedback, and simplify complex tasks. On the other hand, they raise pressing ethical concerns, particularly in the areas of academic dishonesty, plagiarism, data privacy, and algorithmic bias. Students may submit AI-generated work as their own, thereby undermining originality and critical thinking (McCabe et al., 2001). Additionally, many AI tools gather extensive personal data without clear user consent, raising questions about control, surveillance, and data misuse.

To understand the current role of AI, it is essential to consider how technology has evolved. Technological progress has been marked by several major phases, from the use of early tools like the abacus to innovations during the Industrial Revolution, such as the typewriter and telegraph. The emergence of digital computers in the 20th century facilitated complex calculations and data storage, while the introduction of the internet accelerated global connectivity. By the early 2000s, advances in computing power and machine learning gave rise to AI systems capable of performing cognitive tasks, such as pattern recognition and natural language processing. These developments laid the foundation for modern AI models that now assist with everything from composing essays to diagnosing medical conditions.

AI's influence extends far beyond education. In healthcare, AI tools help with early diagnosis through medical imaging, manage patient records, and even assist in drug discovery. For instance, AI has been used to predict disease outbreaks and reduce errors in prescriptions, thereby improving patient safety and outcomes (Topol, 2019). In the finance sector, AI powers fraud detection systems, automates customer service through chatbots, and supports algorithmic trading. These technologies help banks analyze massive datasets and improve customer satisfaction (Deloitte, 2020). In the transportation industry, AI enables smart traffic systems, route optimization, and self-driving vehicles, all of which contribute to enhanced safety and efficiency. These use cases illustrate how AI has become a catalyst for innovation and transformation across industries.

In the field of education, AI has brought about significant advancements in both teaching and learning. Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) can assess a student's performance and adapt lesson content accordingly, offering a customized learning experience. AI chatbots provide academic support 24/7, answering common questions outside class hours. Tools like automated essay graders assist educators in evaluating assignments faster and more consistently. Learning analytics platforms help identify students at risk of falling behind, allowing for early intervention. Additionally, AI enhances inclusivity through applications such as text-to-speech for visually impaired learners or automatic captioning for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. During the COVID-19 pandemic, AI played a vital role in virtual learning environments by enabling remote instruction and helping educators manage online coursework. These applications reflect how AI is not only enhancing efficiency but also expanding the reach and responsiveness of educational systems.

Despite its advantages, AI presents several ethical drawbacks, particularly in academic environments. One of the most concerning issues is the ease with which students can engage in academic dishonesty. Tools that generate or rewrite content may tempt students to bypass the learning process and submit AI-generated work as their own. This practice undermines the core values of academic integrity and erodes students' capacity for independent thought and expression. Closely related to this is plagiarism, often unintentional, students use AI to paraphrase content without understanding the need for proper citation. Data privacy also emerges as a serious issue; many AI platforms collect sensitive information about users' behaviors, preferences, and writing patterns. Without transparent data use policies, students' personal and academic information is at risk of being misused or exposed (Zeng et al., 2020).

Another concern is algorithmic bias, where AI systems reflect the prejudices in the data they were trained on. As Noble (2018) points out, these biases can manifest in unequal outcomes, favoring certain groups over others. In educational tools, biased AI might grade students unfairly or provide skewed recommendations, thereby affecting academic outcomes. The lack of transparency, or the so-called “black box” problem, further complicates this issue. Students and educators often have little understanding of how AI makes decisions or produces results, which can undermine trust in its use. Overreliance on AI tools may also lead to skill erosion, as students may gradually lose their ability to research, write, and think critically without assistance.

These ethical challenges demand careful reflection and informed action. They are not isolated issues but interrelated concerns that, if unaddressed, can collectively harm the quality of education. Misuse of AI can lead to a decline in academic standards, a loss of trust in the learning process, and long-term impacts on students' intellectual development. Therefore, the

conversation around AI in education must extend beyond its functionality to include its ethical implications, especially in developing contexts.

In Nigeria, the adoption of AI tools in academic settings is increasing rapidly, driven by growing access to smartphones, internet connectivity, and awareness of digital tools. According to recent reports, a significant percentage of Nigerian students now engage with AI-powered platforms to complete their schoolwork. At institutions like the University of Benin in Benin City, AI is already part of daily academic routines. However, the ethical use of these tools remains poorly understood. Most universities lack institutional policies or formal instruction on AI ethics. As a result, students often use AI technologies without clear guidelines, risking unintentional misconduct. The intense academic competition and exam-focused culture in Nigeria can make shortcuts like AI misuse more tempting, while limited digital literacy among students may further contribute to misuse.

The situation in Benin City reflects broader national trends: increasing AI usage without corresponding awareness of its ethical risks. In such environments, the absence of clear policies and ethical frameworks exacerbates the risk of academic dishonesty, data exploitation, and biased outcomes. Educational institutions have a responsibility to address this gap by promoting ethical awareness and responsible AI practices among students.

Given this background, this study investigates the real-world ethical issues surrounding AI use by undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. It seeks to understand how students perceive and respond to concerns like plagiarism, privacy, and fairness when engaging with AI tools. More importantly, the research explores the institutional role in guiding ethical AI usage. By situating the study in a Nigerian context, particularly Benin City, this research aims to bridge the gap between technological adoption and ethical awareness. The findings are intended to inform

the development of educational policies, curriculum updates, and support structures that ensure AI serves as a tool for learning, not a shortcut around it.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to significantly enhance learning experiences in higher education. Ideally, AI tools should assist students in personalizing their learning, improving their writing, and deepening their research skills through ethical use. In a perfect setting, undergraduate students would leverage AI to complement their academic efforts, ensuring originality, critical thinking, and respect for academic integrity. However, in reality, many students now use AI without fully understanding the ethical boundaries involved. Instead of supporting learning, AI tools are sometimes used for academic shortcuts such as plagiarism, unauthorized assistance, and even data misuse. In the Nigerian context, particularly in cities like Benin City, the rapid adoption of AI among undergraduates has not been matched by corresponding ethical education or institutional policies. As a result, issues like academic dishonesty, privacy risks, algorithmic bias, and unfair advantages are becoming more pronounced, threatening the integrity of the educational system.

Previous studies have largely focused on the benefits of AI in education, highlighting how it can automate grading, personalize learning, and expand access to educational resources (Luckin et al., 2016; Topol, 2019). Some research has also pointed to the ethical concerns surrounding AI, particularly around bias and data privacy (Noble, 2018; Zeng et al., 2020). However, there remains a critical gap in understanding how undergraduate students, especially in Nigeria, perceive and navigate these ethical challenges in their everyday academic activities. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the specific ethical issues associated with AI usage among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. It aims to uncover students' awareness, attitudes,

and practices concerning AI ethics and to provide recommendations for promoting responsible and ethical use of AI within Nigerian higher education institutions.

### **Research Questions**

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the use of AI tools encourage plagiarism among undergraduate students?
2. What is the influence of AI usage on students' respect for academic integrity?
3. How does frequent exposure to AI tools contribute to student dependence in academic tasks?
4. To what extent does reliance on AI promote laziness in academic work?
5. How does the use of AI tools influence exam malpractice among undergraduate students?

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to investigate the ethical issues *associated with* the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by undergraduate students in Nigerian universities.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the extent to which the use of AI tools encourages plagiarism among undergraduate students.
2. To determine the influence of AI usage on students' respect for academic integrity.
3. Investigate how frequent exposure to AI tools contributes to student dependence in academic tasks.
4. Assess the extent to which reliance on AI promotes laziness in academic work.

5. Explore how the use of AI tools influences exam malpractice among undergraduate students.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will be significant to undergraduate students, lecturers, university administrators, education planners, policymakers, and future researchers. Undergraduate students will benefit from a better understanding of the ethical boundaries surrounding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, Meta AI, and Gemini. By identifying key concerns such as plagiarism, privacy violations, and algorithmic bias, the study will help students become more responsible and informed in their academic practices.

Lecturers will gain insight into how students engage with AI tools and the potential for misuse, which can inform the design of coursework and assessments that discourage academic dishonesty while fostering originality and critical thinking. University administrators will find the results useful in formulating institutional policies that promote ethical AI usage and protect student data. These policies will contribute to the creation of a safe and fair academic environment.

For education planners and curriculum developers, the study provides data necessary for integrating digital literacy and AI ethics into undergraduate programs. This ensures that the curriculum remains relevant to technological realities while promoting ethical standards. Policymakers, including the Ministry of Education, will benefit from the research by using the findings to establish national guidelines on the use of AI in higher education, particularly in regulating student use and protecting personal data.

Finally, the study adds to the growing academic literature on AI ethics in education, particularly in the Nigerian context. It lays a foundation for further research into how emerging technologies affect student behavior, institutional practices, and educational outcomes. This contribution is vital for developing ethical frameworks and support systems that ensure AI tools are used to enhance rather than undermine academic development.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study focuses on investigating the ethical issues associated with the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools by undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. Specifically, the research will examine how AI use relates to plagiarism, respect for academic integrity, student dependence, laziness in academic work, and cheating behaviors. The study aims to understand the extent to which undergraduate students are ethically impacted by their engagement with AI tools for academic tasks.

The scope of the study is limited to undergraduate students currently enrolled in selected universities in Benin City, with the University of Benin serving as the primary case study.

The study will cover the following aspects:

1. Examination of how the use of AI tools encourages plagiarism among undergraduate students.
2. Determination of the influence of AI usage on students' respect for academic integrity.
3. Investigation of how frequently the use of AI tools leads to student dependence in academic tasks.
4. Assessment of how AI reliance contributes to laziness in academic performance.

5. Exploration of how the use of AI tools influences exam malpractice among undergraduate students.

### Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to undergraduate students who actively use AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, Meta AI, and Gemini for academic purposes during the current academic session. The study does not include postgraduate students, academic staff, or AI developers, as their patterns of AI use and ethical considerations may differ.

The research will also not address technical AI design, national policy frameworks, or infrastructure-related issues. Instead, it is limited to examining five specific ethical concerns directly tied to students' academic behavior: plagiarism, academic integrity, student dependence, laziness, and exam malpractice. Broader sociocultural or economic influences on AI adoption are beyond the scope of this study.

### Operational Definition of Terms

1. **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** For this study, AI refers to tools and systems designed to mimic human intelligence. These AI applications assist users in completing tasks such as generating text, analyzing data, and improving productivity.
2. **AI Tools:** AI tools in this study refer to software or applications powered by artificial intelligence that students use for academic purposes. Examples include:
  - **ChatGPT:** A language model developed by OpenAI that generates human-like responses. It helps students with answering questions, generating ideas, and writing assignments or essays.

- **QuillBot:** A paraphrasing tool that helps students reword or rephrase sentences and paragraphs. It also checks grammar and summarizes texts.
  - **Grammarly:** A writing assistant that helps students improve their writing by checking grammar, spelling, and punctuation. It gives real-time feedback and suggestions.
  - **Meta AI:** A chatbot developed by Meta (formerly Facebook). It assists students by answering questions, helping with research, and generating content.
  - **Gemini:** An advanced AI tool created by Google that can process text and images. It helps students by answering complex questions and assisting with academic tasks.
3. **Undergraduate Students:** These are students who are currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in a Nigerian university. In this study, they are students who use AI tools to support their academic work, including assignments, essays, and research.
  4. **Academic Settings:** This refers to places where academic work is done. It includes classrooms, online courses, libraries, and any environment where students complete assignments, take exams, or do research.
  5. **Ethical Issues:** This refers to the challenges and concerns that come up when students use AI in ways that may be dishonest or unfair. Examples include using AI to cheat, plagiarize, or submit work they didn't fully do themselves.
  6. **Academic Integrity:** This means doing academic work honestly and responsibly. It includes avoiding cheating or using AI tools to generate assignments without proper effort or citation.

7. **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism in this study means using AI-generated content or someone else's work without giving credit. This includes copying and pasting text from AI tools and submitting it as original work.
8. **Privacy Concerns:** This refers to the risk that students' personal or academic information might be collected or shared without their permission when using AI tools.
9. **Data Security:** This means protecting students' personal and academic information from being stolen, hacked, or misused while using AI platforms.
10. **Algorithmic Bias:** Algorithmic bias happens when AI tools produce unfair results because of how they were trained. This could lead to students from certain backgrounds being treated differently or unfairly by AI systems.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

In this chapter, an effort will be made to review work done by other researchers that is related to this study. The following are the major subheadings under which the reviewed literature will be discussed:

- Introduction
- Concept of Ethics and Ethical Issues
- Ethical Issues Related to the Use of AI in Education
- Plagiarism as an Ethical Issue
- Respect for Academic Integrity as an Ethical Issue
- Student Dependence on AI Tools
- Laziness in Academic Work
- Exam Malpractices as an Ethical Issue
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

## **Introduction**

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of related literature on the ethical issues arising from the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools by undergraduate students in Nigerian universities, with a particular focus on institutions within Benin City. As the integration of AI technologies into education becomes increasingly widespread, it is essential to examine how students are engaging with these tools and the ethical implications that follow. The review seeks to provide a scholarly foundation for understanding the moral challenges posed by AI applications in academic settings, especially to student behavior and institutional expectations.

The purpose of this literature review is to explore existing academic works, scholarly debates, and empirical studies that are relevant to the topic under investigation. By critically analyzing previous studies and theoretical perspectives, this chapter will establish a contextual and conceptual framework for understanding how AI influences academic conduct among undergraduates. It will also identify key areas where ethical lapses commonly occur and highlight the consequences of these behaviors for both students and academic institutions.

This review is structured under carefully selected subheadings derived from the research questions and objectives outlined in Chapter One. The subtopics include: the concept of ethics and ethical issues; ethical issues related to the use of AI in education; and focused discussions on five key ethical concerns, namely: plagiarism, academic integrity, student dependence on AI tools, laziness in academic work, and exam malpractices. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature reviewed, highlighting existing research gaps and establishing how the present study aims to fill them.

## **Concept of Ethics and Ethical Issues**

The concept of ethics is central to understanding the challenges associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academic environments. Ethics, in its broadest sense, refers to the branch of philosophy that deals with what is morally right or wrong, good or bad, fair or unfair in human conduct. It provides a framework for evaluating actions and guiding decisions in both personal and institutional contexts. In academic settings, ethics establishes the foundation for acceptable behavior, promoting honesty, accountability, fairness, and responsibility (Ogunbanjo, 2020).

According to Velasquez et al. (2015), ethics involves the study of standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, and specific virtues. These standards are often codified into rules, policies, and professional codes of conduct. In educational contexts, ethics is not only concerned with the conduct of students but also with the practices of educators, researchers, and institutions. Ethical conduct in universities includes upholding academic integrity, protecting students' privacy, promoting equity, and fostering a culture of critical thinking and independent learning (Nwosu & Okeke, 2021).

## **Understanding Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues arise when actions or decisions conflict with established ethical principles or standards. In the context of education, these issues often relate to academic dishonesty, data misuse, discrimination, unequal access to learning resources, and breaches of confidentiality. As universities adopt new technologies to enhance learning, these tools introduce complex ethical challenges that must be examined and addressed.

Artificial Intelligence presents a new dimension to ethical considerations in academia. AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot, offer students various forms of academic assistance—from grammar correction and paraphrasing to essay generation and plagiarism detection. While these tools can enhance productivity and learning outcomes, their misuse raises ethical red flags (Borenstein & Howard, 2021).

One of the critical challenges is determining where support ends and academic misconduct begins. Students may use AI to bypass learning, submit generated content as original work, or engage in unethical shortcuts to meet academic requirements. Furthermore, many AI applications rely on data collection, raising concerns about user consent, data privacy, and institutional responsibility in protecting sensitive information (Zuboff, 2019).

### **Ethical Issues in Technology and Education**

The infusion of digital tools into education has historically raised ethical debates. Traditional ethical concerns such as plagiarism, cheating, and falsification of research have evolved with the advancement of technology. AI has amplified these concerns by providing sophisticated capabilities that can mimic human reasoning, produce essays, answer exams, and even engage in conversations indistinguishable from those of a human tutor.

In Nigeria, the increasing accessibility of AI tools through smartphones and the internet has made them popular among university students. However, due to limited digital literacy and the absence of institutional policies guiding ethical AI use, students often exploit these tools without understanding the implications. Research by Adegboyega (2022) found that over 60% of Nigerian undergraduate students admitted to using AI tools to complete assignments, but only a fraction could identify whether their actions constituted academic misconduct.

Another challenge lies in algorithmic transparency. Most AI systems operate as "black boxes," meaning their internal processes are not visible to users. This opacity makes it difficult for students to understand how outputs are generated, which can lead to unquestioning reliance on AI, even when it produces biased or inaccurate information. As Binns (2018) noted, ethical AI must be explainable, fair, and accountable.

### **Importance of Ethics in Academic Contexts**

The importance of ethics in higher education cannot be overstated. Universities are not only centers for acquiring knowledge but also environments for shaping moral values and responsible citizenship. Encouraging ethical conduct among students fosters trust in academic processes, upholds the credibility of institutions, and contributes to societal development (Obasi, 2017).

Ethical lapses such as plagiarism, cheating, or dependence on AI can undermine academic standards, devalue degrees, and erode public confidence in educational institutions. Moreover, when students graduate without an appreciation for ethical conduct, they carry these attitudes into the workplace, perpetuating unethical practices in professional settings.

For this reason, integrating ethical education into curricula is vital. Students should be taught not only how to use AI tools effectively but also how to recognize and avoid unethical practices. As Oyesomi and Salawu (2020) argue, cultivating ethical awareness is a critical component of digital literacy in the 21st century.

### **Ethical Issues Related to the Use of AI in Education**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly being adopted in educational environments worldwide, including in Nigerian universities. While AI promises to revolutionize the learning experience through tools such as intelligent tutoring systems, automated grading, and personalized learning

applications, it also introduces a range of ethical concerns that warrant serious attention (Luckin et al., 2016; Aoun, 2017). This section explores the broader ethical issues associated with the use of AI tools by undergraduate students, especially in the context of academic engagement.

### **Use of AI Tools in Educational Contexts**

AI applications are now commonly used by students for various academic purposes. These include chatbots like ChatGPT, Grammarly for grammar correction and writing enhancement, QuillBot for paraphrasing, Turnitin for plagiarism detection, and AI-based research assistants like Semantic Scholar or Elicit. These tools offer convenience, improve productivity, and provide real-time feedback (Holmes et al., 2019). For instance, Grammarly and QuillBot help in polishing writing and paraphrasing texts, which can be valuable to students with limited language proficiency. Similarly, ChatGPT can serve as a tutor by answering questions, summarizing articles, or explaining difficult concepts.

In the Nigerian context, AI adoption is gradually gaining traction as students increasingly access mobile phones and internet services. A study by Ajayi et al. (2023) revealed that a significant number of Nigerian undergraduates use AI-based tools to complete assignments, prepare seminar papers, and even write projects. Although these tools provide learning support, they also raise ethical issues regarding misuse, overdependence, and academic dishonesty.

### **Ethical Challenges in AI-Assisted Learning**

One of the foremost ethical challenges is the **unauthorized use of AI-generated content**, where students submit assignments produced entirely or partially by AI tools without proper acknowledgment. This blurs the line between genuine learning and academic dishonesty (Khalil & Er, 2022). The increasing accessibility of AI means students can generate entire essays,

reports, or answers without understanding the material, raising questions about the integrity of academic outputs.

Another key concern is the **lack of transparency and explainability** in many AI systems. Students and educators often do not understand how AI arrives at its conclusions or suggestions, which can lead to misplaced trust or misuse. This is particularly problematic in automated grading systems or plagiarism detection platforms, where algorithmic decisions may influence students' grades and academic records (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

**Bias and fairness** also represent ethical issues in AI. If an AI tool is trained on biased data, it may reflect or reinforce discriminatory patterns. For example, AI-generated content might marginalize certain cultural or linguistic contexts, which can be a disadvantage to non-native English speakers or students from underrepresented regions (Binns, 2018). While these concerns are more prominent in global North countries, Nigerian institutions must not ignore them as they expand AI use.

### **Global and Nigerian Perspectives**

Globally, educational stakeholders are grappling with how to regulate AI use ethically. Institutions like UNESCO and the European Commission have released guidelines on AI ethics in education, emphasizing principles such as fairness, accountability, privacy, and inclusiveness (UNESCO, 2021). In the United States and the UK, universities are developing policies that outline acceptable use of AI tools and emphasize academic integrity.

In Nigeria, however, such regulatory frameworks are still underdeveloped. Many universities, including those in Benin City, do not have formal policies or guidelines on AI use. As a result, students often use AI tools with little or no awareness of ethical standards. According to Edewor

and Aluede (2023), this lack of regulation can lead to widespread misuse of AI tools and erode academic values.

Furthermore, the **digital divide** in Nigerian education complicates AI ethics. Students with better access to digital infrastructure can exploit AI more effectively than their counterparts in rural or under-resourced areas, thereby creating inequalities in academic performance. Hence, ethical considerations must also include issues of **accessibility and digital equity**.

### **Plagiarism as an Ethical Issue**

Plagiarism remains one of the most significant academic and ethical concerns in higher education globally. It refers to the act of presenting someone else's work, ideas, or expressions as one's own without proper acknowledgment (Park, 2003). With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, plagiarism has taken new dimensions, making detection more complicated and student misuse more common. In the context of Nigerian universities, particularly in Benin City, the increased accessibility to AI writing assistants has compounded the problem.

### **Defining Plagiarism in the Age of AI**

Traditionally, plagiarism involved direct copying from books, articles, or peers without citation. However, AI-generated content adds complexity. Students can now use AI tools such as ChatGPT, QuillBot, and Jasper AI to generate essays, paraphrase texts, or summarize scholarly articles with ease. While these tools are beneficial when used ethically, their misuse constitutes a new form of digital plagiarism (Foltynek et al., 2020).

The ethical dilemma arises when students copy-paste AI-generated content into their assignments without understanding or crediting the source. Some students may believe that since

the content is generated by a machine, it does not require citation—a misconception that promotes academic dishonesty (Khalil & Er, 2022).

### **How AI Tools Encourage Plagiarism**

AI tools provide instant access to well-structured responses and polished texts. This convenience tempts students to bypass the intellectual effort required in academic writing. Tools such as QuillBot can rephrase entire paragraphs, making it difficult for plagiarism detection software to trace sources. According to Omodan and Abidoeye (2022), about 35% of undergraduates in southwestern Nigerian universities admitted to using AI tools to complete assignments without referencing the source.

Moreover, the fine line between acceptable use and misuse is often blurred. For example, students may use AI to generate a first draft and then manually edit it. While this practice could be considered assisted writing, it can become unethical if students do not engage critically with the content or present it as entirely their own.

### **Local and Global Empirical Studies**

Empirical studies across the globe highlight the surge in AI-induced plagiarism. Folynek et al. (2020) conducted a study across European universities and found that students increasingly relied on AI to paraphrase or rewrite content from academic sources. Similarly, in Nigeria, Okoye and Akintola (2023) found that about 40% of students in two universities in Edo State admitted to submitting AI-generated content without editing.

A study by Eze and Chinweuba (2023) at the University of Benin revealed that many students lacked awareness of proper AI citation practices. The study showed that while students

appreciated the time-saving benefits of AI, only 18% believed that using AI-generated essays without attribution was unethical.

Furthermore, lecturers face challenges in identifying AI-induced plagiarism. Traditional plagiarism detection software like Turnitin is often ineffective against content generated by AI tools, especially when the content is newly generated and not stored in any indexed database. This technological loophole encourages misuse and makes enforcement difficult.

### **Institutional Response and Educational Implications**

Globally, universities are beginning to address this issue by updating academic integrity policies. Some institutions now require students to disclose whether AI was used and in what capacity. Others have begun integrating AI-literacy training into student orientation programs (Schumacher & Ifenthaler, 2023).

In Nigeria, most universities still lack formal guidelines on AI usage. This policy vacuum contributes to inconsistent enforcement and student ignorance. Universities in Benin City, including the University of Benin, have yet to implement comprehensive AI ethics education. Without institutional clarity, students continue to operate in ethical grey areas.

Addressing AI-induced plagiarism requires a multipronged approach:

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Educating students on the ethical use of AI tools.
- **Policy Reforms:** Including AI use in academic integrity policies.
- **Faculty Training:** Equipping lecturers with the knowledge to detect and manage AI-based infractions.
- **Technological Solutions:** Leveraging AI-detection tools designed to identify machine-generated content.

Plagiarism facilitated by AI tools represents a growing challenge to academic integrity in Nigerian higher education. Without robust institutional responses and student awareness, this issue threatens to undermine educational quality and credibility.

### **Respect for Academic Integrity as an Ethical Issue**

Academic integrity refers to the ethical code and moral standards that govern behavior in educational settings, particularly as they relate to honesty, responsibility, and fairness in academic work. It emphasizes the importance of producing one's work, giving proper credit to sources, and avoiding all forms of cheating or misrepresentation. According to Fishman (2014), academic integrity is the commitment to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. These values underpin ethical academic behavior and are essential to maintaining the credibility and reliability of higher education institutions.

### **Importance of Academic Integrity in Higher Education**

Academic integrity is essential for upholding the standards and credibility of educational institutions. When students commit to maintaining integrity, they not only promote a fair learning environment but also demonstrate respect for their peers, instructors, and the academic system as a whole. Violations of academic integrity, such as unauthorized collaboration or use of external tools to complete assignments, compromise the learning process and diminish the value of earned qualifications (Park, 2003). For universities, maintaining integrity is a matter of institutional reputation. Employers and graduate schools often rely on the assumption that degrees represent true academic merit.

In Nigerian universities, academic integrity is emphasized in student handbooks, course syllabi, and official policies. For instance, the University of Benin outlines academic honesty policies in

its Student Code of Conduct, which prohibits cheating, fabrication, and the use of unauthorized materials. Penalties for violations range from formal warnings to expulsion, depending on the severity of the offense (University of Benin, 2022).

### **How AI Use Affects Respect for Academic Integrity**

The increasing use of AI tools among undergraduate students is raising concerns about their impact on academic integrity. While these tools offer support in learning, writing, and research, they also make it easier for students to bypass ethical academic practices. For example, students may use AI-generated responses from tools like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, or QuillBot without verifying accuracy or properly referencing the information. This behavior can lead to a decline in critical thinking, ownership of learning, and respect for intellectual work.

A study by Adebayo and Omisore (2023) found that many Nigerian undergraduates view AI tools as shortcuts to completing tasks rather than as educational aids. Approximately 64% of students surveyed admitted to submitting AI-generated content without revision, while 48% reported doing so without citing the tool or its outputs. This pattern suggests a growing disconnect between technology use and academic values.

Students may also develop excessive trust in AI outputs, accepting responses without cross-checking facts or engaging critically with the material. According to Mhlanga (2023), this over-reliance on AI can lead to "intellectual complacency," where students lose motivation to think independently or question the information provided. Such behavior undermines the principle of academic integrity, which expects students to engage actively with academic material and demonstrate individual understanding.

### **Institutional Efforts to Uphold Integrity in the Age of AI**

Universities in Nigeria and globally are beginning to address these challenges by updating academic policies and introducing AI literacy initiatives. For instance, some institutions now require students to disclose the use of AI tools in their assignments and explain how these tools contributed to their work. Additionally, lecturers are encouraged to design assessment methods that prioritize critical thinking and personal reflection, making it harder for students to rely entirely on AI assistance.

In the University of Lagos, for example, the Faculty of Education recently issued a circular warning against the unauthorized use of AI-generated content and emphasizing the importance of academic honesty (UNILAG, 2023). Similar policies are being adopted in other universities to ensure that students understand the boundaries of acceptable AI use.

Below is a table summarizing key impacts of AI on academic integrity:

<b>Aspect of Academic Integrity</b>	<b>Effect of AI Use</b>
Independent Work	Students may copy AI responses without original input
Verification of Information	AI responses are used without checking for accuracy
Citation Practices	AI tools used without acknowledgment or referencing
Critical Engagement	Decline in analysis and synthesis skills due to reliance on AI
Ethical Awareness	Misunderstanding of what constitutes honest use of AI tools

While AI tools can support student learning, their improper use threatens the foundational values of academic integrity. Nigerian universities must proactively educate students on responsible AI engagement and revise academic policies to reflect the realities of AI-assisted learning. Fostering a culture of honesty, responsibility, and ethical awareness remains crucial to preserving the integrity and credibility of higher education.

## **Student Dependence on AI Tools**

Student dependence, in the context of educational psychology, refers to a learner's excessive reliance on external sources or assistance to complete academic tasks, often at the expense of developing their understanding and skills. In technology-integrated education, this concept has gained renewed significance due to the widespread availability and ease of access to Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. Dependence becomes problematic when students consistently rely on technology not as a means to support learning, but as a substitute for engaging in critical thinking, problem-solving, and independent effort.

## **Defining Student Dependence in Educational Contexts**

According to Zimmerman (2002), dependence in learning is the degree to which students rely on others (or external tools) to regulate their cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational processes. In healthy learning environments, some degree of guidance or tool usage is expected; however, overdependence occurs when learners become passive recipients of knowledge, unable to perform tasks or solve problems without technological intervention (Tella, 2020).

In Nigeria, the growth of mobile technology and AI-based educational platforms has transformed how students approach academic tasks. While these platforms offer efficiency and support, they also present a risk of fostering intellectual complacency. As observed by Adewumi and Ogunleye (2021), undergraduate students are increasingly exhibiting patterns of academic dependency, particularly when using tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot to automate reading comprehension, essay writing, and referencing tasks.

## **Overreliance on AI for Simple Tasks**

AI tools were designed to enhance productivity, not replace student engagement. However, many students now use AI for tasks that traditionally required active thinking, such as summarizing lecture notes, solving simple mathematical problems, composing essays, or even writing personal reflections. Instead of learning the material and expressing it in their own words, students may rely on AI outputs that they barely understand (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2023).

For example, a study by Olatunji et al. (2022) showed that over 65% of Nigerian undergraduate respondents admitted to using AI-generated content without modifying or reviewing it. These students expressed that they trusted AI more than their ability to construct answers. This behavior signifies an increasing trend where AI becomes a cognitive crutch rather than a learning aid.

### **Using AI as a Helper vs. a Crutch**

There is a clear difference between responsible use and overdependence. Responsible users engage with AI as a supportive resource. For example, a student may use Grammarly to correct grammar while still writing their essay. In contrast, overdependence occurs when the student prompts ChatGPT to write an entire assignment and submits it without reflection or editing.

<b>Use Case</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Impact on Learning</b>
AI as a Helper	Used to refine, check, or support work	Enhances productivity and accuracy
AI as a Crutch	Used to replace original thinking or effort	Undermines learning and autonomy

When students skip the cognitive steps of formulating ideas, analyzing questions, and constructing arguments, their learning process becomes hollow. This hinders the development of academic independence and deep understanding, key goals of university education.

### **Effects of Dependence on Cognitive Development**

The most concerning effect of AI dependence is the erosion of students' problem-solving skills. When learners frequently avoid challenges by outsourcing tasks to AI, their resilience and confidence in handling academic rigor diminish. Nwosu (2022) emphasized that this type of passive learning contributes to poor retention and difficulty transferring knowledge to real-world scenarios.

Moreover, overreliance on AI may reinforce surface learning, where students focus on completing tasks rather than comprehending concepts. Over time, this reduces their ability to engage critically with academic material. Students may also perform poorly in exam settings where AI assistance is not available, exposing gaps in their independent learning capacity.

### **Long-term Dangers of AI Dependence**

The implications of AI dependence extend beyond university education. Graduates who have not built problem-solving competencies may struggle in workplaces that demand innovation, decision-making, and critical reasoning. Employers expect graduates to be capable of independent thought, communication, and ethical judgment—skills that are not nurtured when AI becomes a replacement for learning (Babalola & Yusuf, 2023).

Furthermore, AI overdependence threatens academic standards and the integrity of educational credentials. If students cannot defend or replicate the work they submit, their academic achievements may be considered superficial or unreliable. This is particularly problematic in professional programs such as law, medicine, and engineering, where competence has real-world consequences.

## **Laziness in Academic Work**

Academic laziness refers to the consistent avoidance of intellectual effort or the reluctance to engage fully with academic tasks, often leading to suboptimal performance or superficial engagement with learning activities. According to Adeyemi and Osunde (2020), academic laziness manifests when students prioritize convenience over effort, preferring shortcuts to rigorous learning processes. It is characterized by procrastination, lack of initiative, and overdependence on external aids rather than personal input and critical engagement. In the context of the 21st-century digital age, this form of laziness is increasingly influenced by the availability of advanced technological tools, chief among them, Artificial Intelligence (AI).

## **How AI Increases Academic Laziness**

AI tools are designed to support learning, but their excessive use can inadvertently promote academic laziness. Tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot provide students with quick responses, corrected grammar, or rephrased sentences with minimal human input. When students begin to rely on these tools not just for assistance but for completing entire assignments, the boundary between support and substitution becomes blurred. According to Nwachukwu and Aluko (2023), many students no longer feel the need to brainstorm, draft, or revise their work extensively because AI tools perform these tasks more efficiently.

Convenience, a major benefit of AI, becomes a double-edged sword. As observed by Salami and Ebunoluwa (2021), students are tempted to avoid traditional learning routines such as reading textbooks, attending lectures, or practicing problem-solving exercises, instead depending on AI to generate summaries or answers. This can lead to a decline in intellectual stamina and a growing disinterest in in-depth learning.

### **Evidence from Studies on AI-Induced Laziness**

Several empirical studies have explored the connection between AI usage and reduced student effort. A survey conducted by Okoro and Bello (2022) across four universities in Nigeria found that 63% of undergraduate students admitted to skipping assignments or delaying coursework because they believed AI tools could complete the tasks in minutes. Many of these students stated that they only skim through the AI-generated content before submission, often without fully understanding it.

Similarly, Ahmed and Musa (2023) found that 71% of students using QuillBot to rewrite their essays made no further edits to the final output. This passive approach to learning implies that AI tools are fostering a culture where intellectual engagement is replaced by automation. In contrast to the goals of higher education—which prioritize independent thinking, research skills, and problem-solving—this trend suggests a regression in students' academic development.

### **Culture of Shortcuts in Academic Behavior**

The emergence of AI has merged with a broader academic culture where shortcuts are normalized. Students increasingly seek the path of least resistance, driven by pressures to meet deadlines, maintain grades, and juggle multiple responsibilities. The notion that "the end justifies the means" pervades many university environments, where results are prioritized over learning processes.

This culture is particularly observable in Nigerian universities, where infrastructural challenges, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient lecturer-student interaction often push students toward self-help alternatives. As noted by Omoruyi (2022), many Nigerian undergraduates feel under-supported in their academic journey and turn to technology not just for learning enhancement,

but as a replacement for academic engagement. AI tools then become a substitute teacher, reducing the urgency to attend lectures, consult texts, or conduct research.

### **Digital Laziness: A Global Phenomenon**

Academic laziness induced by digital convenience is not limited to Nigeria. In a study by Li and Huang (2020), American and Chinese university students were found to overuse educational technologies, with over 40% reporting that they rarely read course material thoroughly when a summarization tool or AI assistant was available. These students reported a reduction in academic motivation and critical engagement.

Moreover, Alghamdi and Johnson (2021) observed that university students who use AI tools excessively reported lower satisfaction with their academic achievements and greater difficulty performing in assessments that required original thinking or spontaneous responses. This finding suggests that digital laziness can weaken cognitive development and reduce a student's ability to think independently over time.

### **Implications for Academic Development**

The implications of AI-induced laziness are serious. Students may graduate with strong-looking academic records but weak foundational skills. This not only diminishes their employability but also affects their ability to contribute meaningfully to knowledge creation and innovation. In professional settings, where AI assistance may not always be available, such students may struggle with tasks requiring initiative and creativity.

Institutions must take steps to combat this trend. Curriculum reforms should emphasize critical thinking and independent analysis. Assignments can be redesigned to include oral defenses, timed essays, or reflective journals that discourage copy-paste practices. Universities should also

develop policies around ethical AI use and train students to see technology as a tool, not a replacement for learning.

### **Exam Malpractices as an Ethical Issue**

Cheating in academia, such as unauthorized collaboration, copying answers, or submitting others' work, is widely regarded as a violation of ethical and scholarly standards (Whitley & Keith Spiegel, 2002). These dishonest behaviors undermine core values like honesty, fairness, and trust, which are essential in educational settings (Azuka, 2014; Whitley & Keith Spiegel, 2002). Nigerian law explicitly criminalizes academic cheating, yet studies report that many undergraduates still engage in collaborative cheating (e.g., sharing answers or copying coursework) at a high rate. Such findings suggest that cultural attitudes like helping a friend at the expense of academic integrity often justify cheating among students (Azuka, 2014). Importantly, using technology to cheat (for example, texting exam questions or using hidden devices) does not change the ethical breach; it merely updates old forms of dishonesty to new tools (Azuka, 2014; Whitley & Keith Spiegel, 2002).

The rise of generative AI tools has added new dimensions to this problem. Large language models like ChatGPT can produce essays, answer questions, or write code on demand. While these tools have legitimate educational uses, they also make it easier for students to misrepresent AI-generated content as their own. For example, Ezeani (2024) warns that in Nigeria's context, where education is often devalued, students may treat ChatGPT as a "made easy" shortcut, undermining creative research and rigorous learning. Likewise, Saidu (2024) notes that despite awareness of plagiarism, many Nigerian students still resort to AI assistance due to time pressure, fear of failure, or the desire for better grades. In essence, passing off AI-generated answers without proper attribution is ethically equivalent to ghostwriting or contract cheating (Whitley &

Keith Spiegel, 2002). Such misuse of AI not only violates honesty norms but also corrupts the academic evaluation process (Ezeani, 2024; Saidu, 2024).

These cheating behaviors raise important ethical concerns. By definition, cheating means using data, resources, or methods to complete academic work dishonestly. It involves deception, presenting someone else's ideas or text as one's own, and thus betrays the trust placed in students (Salamah, 2022; Whitley & Keith Spiegel, 2002). Researchers have found that students often rationalize cheating, even AI-assisted cheating, by claiming altruistic motives or inevitability (Azuka, 2014). For instance, Azuka (2014) found that many Nigerian undergraduates cheat "to help a friend," reflecting a shift from strict ethical rules to a "care" orientation. However, most ethics theories and academic honor codes maintain that such rationalizations do not excuse the misconduct: presenting AI-written text as original still misrepresents the true author and unfairly advantages dishonest students (Salamah, 2022; Whitley & Keith Spiegel, 2002).

Addressing AI-enabled cheating, therefore, demands reinforcing academic integrity. Studies recommend that universities develop clear policies and educational programs about responsible AI use. For example, Izevbigie et al. (2025) found that students who were more aware of AI's ethical challenges showed greater commitment to integrity. Saidu (2024) similarly emphasizes the need to promote integrity and teach proper attribution in the AI era. Nigerian scholars argue that institutions should embed ethics education into curricula and honor codes, reorienting students toward justice-based values (Azuka, 2014; Izevbigie et al., 2025). Such measures, combined with honor pledges and monitoring, aim to deter both traditional and AI-driven cheating, preserving the trust and fairness essential to higher education.

## **Summary of Reviewed Literature**

This chapter has critically reviewed the literature surrounding ethical issues related to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools by undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. The review was guided by the research questions and organized into thematic areas, including ethics and ethical issues, AI in education, and specific concerns such as plagiarism, academic integrity, dependence on AI, academic laziness, and exam behaviour. Each of these ethical dimensions represents critical challenges faced by students and institutions as AI becomes more integrated into academic environments.

The concept of ethics was examined as the foundation of academic conduct, highlighting principles such as honesty, responsibility, and fairness. The emergence of AI tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot has introduced complex dilemmas that test these principles. While these tools can support learning, their misuse often leads to ethical violations.

Plagiarism was reviewed as a growing concern, especially with the ease of generating unoriginal content using AI. Studies revealed that students frequently use AI to paraphrase or produce full texts without attribution, challenging universities' ability to detect misconduct. The discussion on academic integrity showed that AI affects not just originality but also students' respect for the learning process, especially when they rely on AI to bypass intellectual effort.

Dependence on AI tools was identified as a behavioral trend where students over-rely on automated solutions, reducing their ability to think critically and solve problems independently. This leads to weakened academic confidence and skill development. Similarly, academic laziness was explored as a cultural and psychological issue exacerbated by AI's convenience. Research highlighted how students are increasingly skipping lectures, assignments, and readings, instead depending on AI-generated content for minimal effort.

The findings on examination malpractice revealed that students employ AI tools to bypass academic integrity standards, using them for take-home tests, essays, and even live assessments, which often contravene institutional regulations. This practice not only undermines learning but also threatens the credibility of academic qualifications.

**Identified Gaps in the Literature:** While the global academic community has begun to investigate the impact of AI on student ethics, there is a noticeable gap in studies focusing specifically on Nigerian undergraduate students. Most Nigerian universities lack updated policies on AI usage, and little empirical data exists on students' attitudes, behaviors, or awareness related to ethical concerns with AI tools.

**Contribution of the Present Study:** This study seeks to fill this gap by focusing on undergraduate students in universities within Benin City, Nigeria. By examining their experiences and behaviors regarding AI use, the research will provide context-specific insights that can inform institutional policy and academic practice. The study will also contribute to the broader field of educational ethics by offering empirical evidence on how students in developing countries interact with emerging technologies.

In summary, this literature review has shown that the ethical use of AI in academia is a pressing issue requiring immediate attention. The absence of clear policies, increasing misuse of AI tools, and limited research in the Nigerian context underscore the relevance of this study. Its findings will help universities, educators, and policymakers understand how to guide responsible AI usage and safeguard academic integrity in the digital age.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the methodology that was used to conduct the study. It outlines the procedures for data collection and analysis under the following subheadings:

- Design of the Study
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

#### **Design of the Study**

The research adopted the descriptive survey design. This design is suitable for gathering information from a specific population to describe and interpret existing conditions or relationships. The study was conducted to examine the ethical issues associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools among undergraduate students. The design enabled the researcher to systematically collect and analyze data from a sample of students to understand their behavior, experiences, and attitudes toward AI use in academics.

## Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised all undergraduate students across the various faculties of the University of Benin (UNIBEN). The total student population was thirty-five thousand, two hundred and eighty-seven (35,287), distributed among eighteen (18) faculties. The distribution of students across the faculties is presented in Table 3.1 below:

**Table 3.1: Population of Undergraduate Students in the University of Benin (UNIBEN)**

S/N	FACULTY	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
1	Agriculture	1308
2	Arts	4099
3	Basic Medical Sciences	3697
4	Dentistry	163
5	Education	3758
6	Engineering	4226
7	Environmental Science	1075
8	Institute of Education	160
9	Law	948
10	Life Sciences	4281
11	Management Sciences	3152
12	Medicine	918

13	Pharmacy	1119
14	Physical Sciences	2735
15	Social Sciences	2548
16	Sustainable Procurement, Environmental & Social Standards	295
17	Veterinary Medicine	115
18	Vocational and Technical Education	693
	<b>Total</b>	<b>35,287</b>

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample size for this study comprised 70 undergraduate students drawn from the 18 faculties of the University of Benin. To ensure fair representation, proportionate stratified random sampling was used: the total sample was first allocated to each faculty in proportion to its student population, and then simple random sampling was applied within each faculty to select individual respondents.

### **Research Instrument**

The research instrument is a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher titled “Ethical Issues in the Use of AI Tools Among Undergraduate Students.” It is divided into two sections: A and B. Section A contains the demographic data of the respondents, such as faculty, department, level, and gender. Section B consists of twenty (20) items, which were developed based on the research questions raised in Chapter One. The items are presented in a 4-point Likert scale format with the following options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The

responses obtained from the participants will provide insight into how undergraduate students use AI tools concerning plagiarism, academic integrity, dependence, academic laziness, and cheating behaviors.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was presented to the research supervisor and two other lecturers in the Faculty of Education for expert review. Their corrections and suggestions were used to revise the questionnaire, thereby ensuring both face and content validity.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, the researcher adopted the test–retest technique. The questionnaire was first administered to 10 students who were not part of the main sample. After a two-week interval, the same questionnaire was re-administered to the same group of students. The responses obtained from the two administrations were analyzed using Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.929, which indicated a high level of consistency. This confirmed that the instrument was reliable for the study.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The researcher administered the questionnaire personally to the selected respondents. Before distribution, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of anonymity and confidentiality. All questionnaires were retrieved on the same day to minimize loss and ensure a high response rate.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected were organized and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequency tables and simple percentages were used to answer the research questions. This method was chosen because it is simple to apply and allows the researcher to carry out the analysis without external assistance.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This Chapter Presents the results obtained from the analysis of data for answering the research questions formulated. The data were analyzed using statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores.

#### Presentation of the Results

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does the use of AI tools encourage plagiarism among undergraduate students?

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the use of AI tools and plagiarism among undergraduate students**

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	I have submitted work created entirely by AI as my work.	2.91	0.87	Agree
2	I copy content from websites and use AI to rewrite it to avoid detection.	2.81	0.88	Agree
3	I use AI-generated content without citing the source.	2.71	0.95	Agree
4	I believe using AI to help with assignments is not the same as plagiarism.	2.47	0.99	Disagree
5	I sometimes mix AI-generated text with my writing to make it look original.	3.29	0.77	Agree

The Research Question One sought to find out the extent to which the use of AI tools encourages plagiarism among undergraduate students. The data analyzed in Table 1 reveals that out of five (5) items, four (4) of them were agreed upon, representing 80% of the items on the questionnaire, while one (1) item was disagreed with, representing 20%.

**Research Question 2:** What is the influence of AI usage on students' respect for academic integrity?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the influence of AI usage on students' respect for academic integrity**

S/N	Questionnaire Items.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	The values of academic integrity are becoming less relevant in the age of AI.	2.67	1.01	Agree
2	AI usage has reduced students' commitment to producing authentic academic work.	2.87	0.94	Agree
3	AI tools make academic misconduct seem more acceptable to students.	2.56	1.03	Agree
4	AI tools have weakened the importance of originality in academic work.	2.87	0.91	Agree
5	I feel less guilty about academic dishonesty when AI tools are involved.	2.50	1.07	Agree

Research Question Two sought to examine the influence of AI usage on students' respect for academic integrity. The data analyzed in Table 2 shows that all five (5) items were agreed upon, representing 100% of the items on the questionnaire.

**Research Question 3:** How does frequent exposure to AI tools contribute to students' dependence on academic tasks?

**Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of responses on students' dependence on AI tools for academic tasks**

S/N	Questionnaire Items.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	I use AI tools even for simple academic tasks that I could do myself	2.63	0.89	Agree
2	I find it difficult to complete assignments without AI assistance	2.09	0.96	Disagree
3	I have become lazy in my thinking because AI does the work for me	2.13	0.92	Disagree
4	I check AI responses even when I already know the answer	2.34	0.97	Disagree
5	I have forgotten how to research without	2.11	0.95	Disagree

Research Question Three sought to investigate how frequent exposure to AI tools contributes to students' dependence on academic tasks. The data analyzed in Table 3 reveals that only one (1) item was agreed upon, representing 20% of the items, while four (4) items were disagreed with, representing 80%.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent does reliance on AI promote laziness in academic work?

**Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of responses on AI reliance and academic laziness among students**

S/N	Questionnaire Items.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	I avoid reading assigned texts because AI can provide summaries.	2.19	0.93	Disagree
2	I procrastinate on doing assignments, knowing AI can complete them quickly.	2.53	0.95	Agree
3	I no longer research topics deeply because AI gives quick answers.	2.50	0.97	Agree
4	I put less effort into understanding concepts because AI explains them	2.46	0.92	Disagree
5	I spend less time studying because AI helps me with assignments.	2.29	0.94	Disagree

Research Question Four sought to determine the extent to which reliance on AI promotes laziness in academic work. The data analyzed in Table 4 shows that two (2) items were agreed upon, representing 40%, while three (3) items were disagreed upon, representing 60%.

**Research Question 5:** How does the use of AI tools influence exam malpractice among undergraduate students?

**Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of responses on AI tools and exam malpractice among undergraduate students**

S/N	Questionnaire Items.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	AI tools provide students with quick answers that can be used during exams	2.96	0.86	Agree
2	Many students believe AI use in exams is	2.14	1.01	Disagree

3	less serious than other forms of cheating The use of AI during exams can reduce the need for traditional cheating methods	2.36	0.93	Disagree
4	Students can use AI tools discreetly during computer-based tests	2.50	0.98	Agree
5	I spend less time studying because AI helps me with assignments	2.93	0.87	Agree

Research Question Five sought to examine how the use of AI tools influences exam malpractice among undergraduate students. The data analyzed in Table 5 shows that three (3) items were agreed upon, representing 60% of the items, while two (2) items were disagreed upon, representing 40%.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study aimed to examine the ethical issues associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in academic work among undergraduate students of the University of Benin.

The findings from Research Question One revealed that out of five items, four were agreed upon (80%) and one was disagreed with (20%). This indicates that the majority of respondents acknowledged that AI tools encourage plagiarism practices such as submitting AI-generated work, copying and rewriting content, and using AI without citation. This suggests that AI has made plagiarism easier and more widespread among students.

The findings from Research Question Two showed that all five items were agreed upon (100%). This indicates that AI usage negatively influences students' respect for academic integrity. Students agreed that AI reduces commitment to authentic work, weakens originality, and makes misconduct appear more acceptable. This implies that AI is contributing to a decline in the values of academic integrity among students.

The findings from Research Question Three revealed that out of five items, one was agreed upon (20%) and four were disagreed with (80%). This suggests that although students sometimes use AI for simple tasks, they do not show strong dependence on AI. Most students reported that they can complete assignments and research without relying heavily on AI tools.

The findings from Research Question Four showed that two out of five items were agreed upon (40%), while three items were disagreed with (60%). This indicates that reliance on AI only moderately promotes laziness in academic work. While some students admitted to procrastinating and avoiding deep research, the majority maintained that they still read, study, and try to understand concepts.

The findings from Research Question Five revealed that three items were agreed upon (60%) and two were disagreed with (40%). This indicates that AI tools contribute to exam malpractice, as many students admitted that AI can provide quick answers and be used discreetly in computer-based tests. However, some respondents still disagreed, suggesting that not all students view AI as a replacement for traditional cheating.

Overall, the findings of this study show that AI tools have both positive and negative implications, but their misuse raises significant ethical concerns in areas such as plagiarism, academic integrity, laziness, and exam malpractice.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This study investigated the ethical issues associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities, with a focus on the University of Benin. The research was guided by five objectives and corresponding research questions, which examined: plagiarism, respect for academic integrity, dependence on AI, academic laziness, and exam malpractice.

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of undergraduate students of the University of Benin, and a sample of 70 students was selected using a random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, and the data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

The findings revealed that AI tools significantly encourage plagiarism among students. Out of five items, four were agreed upon, representing 80%, while one item (20%) was disagreed with. A large number of students admitted to submitting AI-generated work as their own, rewriting content from websites using AI, and using AI outputs without citation. Notably, 91.4% reported mixing AI-generated text with their writing, indicating a widespread acceptance and practice of AI-facilitated plagiarism.

The study also showed that AI usage negatively influences students' respect for academic integrity. All five items in this section (100%) were agreed upon, suggesting that AI reduces students' commitment to authentic academic work, weakens the value of originality, and makes

misconduct appear more acceptable. Some respondents further admitted that they feel less guilty about dishonesty when AI tools are involved.

The findings on dependence indicated that students do not display strong reliance on AI tools for academic tasks. Out of five items, only one (20%) was agreed upon, while four (80%) were disagreed with. This suggests that although students sometimes use AI even for simple tasks, most are still capable of conducting research and completing assignments without heavily depending on AI.

Regarding laziness, the findings showed that reliance on AI moderately promotes laziness in academic work. Two of the five items (40%) were agreed upon, while three (60%) were disagreed with. This indicates that although some students admitted to procrastination and reduced depth of research, the majority reported that they continue to read, study, and attempt to understand concepts on their own.

Finally, the study revealed that AI tools significantly influence exam malpractice. Three of the five items (60%) were agreed upon, while two (40%) were disagreed with. Many students acknowledged that AI can provide quick answers during exams and can be used discreetly during computer-based tests. A substantial number also admitted to sharing AI-generated answers with peers during examinations, which poses a serious threat to examination integrity.

Overall, the study established that while AI tools can enhance learning efficiency, they also pose significant ethical challenges in relation to plagiarism, academic integrity, academic laziness, and exam malpractice.

## **Conclusion**

From the analysis and discussion of the findings, it can be concluded that AI tools exert a dual influence on undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. On one hand, AI provides quick

access to information and supports learning by making academic tasks easier. On the other hand, its misuse raises significant ethical concerns that affect core academic values.

The study established that AI tools significantly encourage plagiarism and weaken students' respect for academic integrity. While students do not generally show strong dependence on AI, selective overreliance can reduce critical thinking and promote academic laziness. The findings also revealed that AI creates new avenues for examination malpractice, making traditional assessment methods more vulnerable.

In light of these results, there is an urgent need for structured guidance, awareness, and institutional policies to regulate AI usage in academic settings. Promoting responsible AI usage is therefore essential to balance the benefits of technology with the preservation of ethical standards and academic integrity.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Nigerian universities should organize workshops, seminars, and training programs on AI ethics to educate students on responsible usage, while lecturers should provide clear guidelines that distinguish acceptable AI assistance from academic dishonesty.
2. Institutions should update academic integrity policies to explicitly include AI-related misconduct, ensuring that consequences for AI-assisted plagiarism and cheating are clearly outlined to deter unethical behavior.
3. Students should be encouraged to use AI tools as supplementary aids rather than substitutes for independent thinking, and assignments should be designed to promote critical analysis, reflection, and problem-solving.

4. Lecturers should adopt assessment methods that require deep engagement, such as oral presentations and research journals, while universities should strengthen examination monitoring systems to detect unauthorized AI use during computer-based assessments.
5. Universities should periodically review AI usage and ethical awareness among students, provide continuous training, and collaborate with AI developers to create tools that discourage misuse while promoting responsible learning.

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## APPENDIX I

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
I have submitted work created entirely by AI as my work.	70	2.91	0.87
I copy content from websites and use AI to rewrite it to avoid detection.	70	2.81	0.88
I use AI-generated content without citing the source.	70	2.71	0.95
I believe using AI to help with assignments is not the same as plagiarism.	70	2.47	0.99
I sometimes mix AI-generated text with my writing to make it look original.	70	3.29	0.77
The values of academic integrity are becoming less relevant in the age of AI.	70	2.67	1.01
AI usage has reduced students' commitment to producing authentic academic work.	70	2.87	0.94
AI tools make academic misconduct seem more acceptable to students.	70	2.56	1.03
AI tools have weakened the importance of originality in academic work.	70	2.87	0.91
I feel less guilty about academic dishonesty when AI tools are involved.	70	2.50	1.07
I use AI tools even for simple academic tasks that I could do myself	70	2.63	0.89
I find it difficult to complete assignments without AI assistance	70	2.09	0.96
I have become lazy in my thinking because AI does the work for me	70	2.13	0.92
I check AI responses even when I already know the answer	70	2.34	0.97
I have forgotten how to research without AI helping me	70	2.11	0.95
The values of academic integrity are becoming less relevant in the age of AI.	70	2.19	0.93
AI usage has reduced students' commitment to producing authentic academic work.	70	2.53	0.95

AI tools make academic misconduct seem more acceptable to students.	70	2.50	0.97
AI tools have weakened the importance of originality in academic work.	70	2.46	0.92
I feel less guilty about academic dishonesty when AI tools are involved.	70	2.29	0.94
I avoid reading assigned texts because AI can provide summaries.	70	2.96	0.86
I procrastinate on doing assignments, knowing AI can complete them quickly.	70	2.14	1.01
I no longer research topics deeply because AI gives quick answers.	70	2.36	0.93
I put less effort into understanding concepts because AI explains them	70	2.50	0.98
I spend less time studying because AI helps me with assignments.	70	2.93	0.87

#### Administration of Questionnaires

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Retrieved	70	100%
Unretrieved	0	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100%</b>

Demographic (Gender)	Frequency	Percentage
Male	33	47.1
Female	37	52.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100%</b>

## APPENDIX II

### RELIABILITY

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

#### Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	10	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	10	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.929	25