

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

TOPIC:

**USAGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS IN RESEARCH WORK
AMONG FINAL YEAR STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

**BEING A BSC. PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR
OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.) DEGREE IN SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY**

BY

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MAT NO: SSC2105918

OCTOBER, 2025

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research project titled:

**“USAGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS IN RESEARCH
WORK AMONG FINAL-YEAR STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN”**

was carried out by EMOKPAE FAVOUR ESOHE, with matriculation number SSC2105918 a student in the Department of Sociology and anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Sociology and anthropology.

To the best of my knowledge, this work is original and has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for any degree in this or any other institution.

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DATE: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Almighty God for His guidance, wisdom, and strength throughout the course of this study. It is also dedicated to the Emokpae family, whose love, prayers, and encouragement have been a constant source of support and who inspired me to persevere through the challenges of this research journey.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the usage of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in research work among final-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. The research was motivated by the growing integration of AI into higher education globally and the limited context-specific evidence from Nigerian universities. The study adopted both explanatory and exploratory research designs. A sample of 120 respondents was drawn from a population of 568 final-year students across six departments using stratified random sampling. Data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of four sections: demographic information, prevalence of AI usage, reasons for reliance, and perceived impacts on critical thinking and originality. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were employed in analyzing the data.

The findings revealed that a majority of students had adopted AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot for their academic activities. Most respondents reported daily or weekly usage, with motivations including saving time, improving grammar, generating ideas, and simplifying complex concepts. While many students perceived AI tools as supportive of critical thinking, concerns were expressed about reduced originality, overreliance, and potential threats to academic independence. Thematic analysis further highlighted common applications in literature review, assignments, and clarification of difficult concepts.

The study concluded that AI tools are now an integral part of academic practices among final-year students, providing efficiency and support but also raising important ethical and pedagogical concerns. It recommends that students use AI as a supplementary aid rather than a substitute for independent reasoning, that lecturers

provide guidance on responsible usage, and that the University of Benin introduce formal policies to regulate AI adoption. Policymakers are also encouraged to develop national frameworks to promote innovation while safeguarding academic integrity.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a rapidly evolving branch of computer science concerned

with designing systems capable of carrying out tasks that traditionally require human intelligence. Such tasks include learning, reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and natural language understanding (Russell & Norvig, 2020; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). Over the years, scholars have distinguished between different levels of AI: narrow AI, general AI, and superintelligent AI (Bostrom, 2014; Nilsson, 2020). Narrow AI refers to systems specialized in specific tasks, such as chatbots and predictive analytics, while general AI seeks to replicate broad human cognitive functions. Superintelligent AI, though hypothetical, envisions intelligence far surpassing human capabilities.

In education, AI technologies are increasingly integrated into students' academic and research experiences. Tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT are widely used for writing, idea generation, paraphrasing, and structuring academic work (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Dwivedi et al., 2023). Beyond writing, platforms such as Quizlet, Socratic, and Duolingo apply AI to personalize learning and adapt to individual needs (Chen et al., 2020; Holmes et al., 2021).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The growing integration of AI into education has reshaped how students conduct academic research. While tools such as ChatGPT and Grammarly enhance efficiency and productivity, they also raise questions about academic integrity, originality, and critical thinking (Kasneci et al., 2023; Susnjak, 2022). In Nigeria, where clear institutional guidelines remain underdeveloped (Adetola et al., 2023), students navigate uncertainty about what constitutes legitimate use of AI. Disparities in access also mean that while some students benefit from AI-enhanced support, others face disadvantages (Afolabi & Adewale, 2022). For final-year students, whose research projects determine graduation, understanding how AI influences their work is a pressing concern.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i. To investigate the prevalence of AI tool usage in research work among final-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin.
- ii. To explore the reasons behind students' reliance on AI tools for research work in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin.
- iii. To examine the impact of AI tools on the ability of final-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin to think critically and generate independent ideas.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What is the prevalence of AI tool usage in research work among final-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin?

- ii. What are the reasons behind students' reliance on AI tools for research work in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin?
- iii. How do AI tools affect the ability of final-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin to think critically and generate independent ideas?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature on AI in higher education by examining its use among final-year students at the University of Benin. It provides insights into the prevalence, motivations, and consequences of AI reliance, offering guidance for educators and policymakers in designing supportive yet integrity-focused frameworks (Holmes et al., 2021).

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is limited to final-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. Specifically, it covers students in Sociology and Anthropology, Political Science, Geography and Regional Planning, Public Administration, Social Work, and Economics and Statistics.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Global Prevalence of AI Usage in Higher Education

In recent years, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education has shifted from a novel practice to a mainstream feature of academic life. Global surveys demonstrate widespread adoption of generative AI (GenAI) among students for tasks such as summarizing texts, developing research ideas, drafting assignments, and refining academic writing. For example, the Digital Education Council's 2024 Global AI Student Survey reported that 86% of students worldwide had engaged with AI tools in their studies, with more than half using them weekly (Digital Education Council, 2024). Similarly, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) in the United Kingdom found that by 2025, 92% of undergraduates had experimented with AI, with 88% using it directly for assessments and research-related activities (HEPI, 2025).

In the United States, adoption rates also reflect normalization of AI use. A 2024 study across the University of California system reported that 65% of undergraduates had used AI tools academically, with approximately half indicating frequent reliance on them (Pew Research Center, 2024). Beyond usage statistics, research has highlighted students' positive attitudes toward AI, particularly in simplifying complex readings, improving the quality of written work, and enhancing productivity (Kasneci et al., 2023).

These findings suggest that AI has become embedded in academic culture globally. More importantly, the most common applications—literature summarization,

brainstorming, and draft refinement—closely align with the research workflows required of final-year undergraduates.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education has become a global phenomenon, reshaping how students learn, research, and complete academic tasks. A major study by the Digital Education Council (2024) found that over 80% of undergraduates across the United States, Europe, and Asia have experimented with generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot. These platforms are now widely regarded as academic companions, providing functions such as paraphrasing, summarizing, grammar correction, and idea generation.

2.1.1 AI Adoption in North America

North America has been at the forefront of AI adoption. In the United States, the Pew Research Center (2024) reported that two-thirds of college students acknowledged using AI tools for coursework, with 45% relying on them at least weekly. A detailed breakdown revealed that STEM students made extensive use of AI for problem-solving and data analysis, while humanities and social sciences students used it primarily for writing support and literature synthesis. Canadian universities mirror this pattern, with final-year students being the most frequent adopters due to the pressures of capstone projects and theses (Smith & Rodriguez, 2023).

2.1.2 AI Adoption In Europe

Europe has also embraced AI integration in higher education. According to the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI, 2025), 92% of UK undergraduates had

experimented with AI tools, while 88% used them actively for coursework. European universities, particularly in Germany, France, and the Netherlands, have adopted hybrid policies where AI is tolerated as an assistive tool but discouraged when it replaces original student contributions. This approach has normalized AI usage while simultaneously embedding ethics training into curricula (Müller, 2024).

2.1.3 AI Adoption in Asia

In Asia, AI adoption is both widespread and institutionally supported. China's Ministry of Education invested heavily in AI-enabled platforms as early as 2018, making AI integration almost universal in its universities (Chen et al., 2020). More than 70% of Chinese students reported using AI tools regularly for academic writing, translations, and coding tasks. In India, AI adoption is rising rapidly, particularly among management and technology students, who see AI as a bridge between theoretical learning and practical application (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Similarly, South Korean universities have promoted AI literacy as a mandatory skill, further increasing adoption among undergraduates.

2.1.4 AI Adoption in Africa

Across Africa, adoption is uneven, reflecting infrastructural limitations. Salem and Al-Khalaf (2024) found that South African universities had higher levels of AI penetration than most African peers, due largely to stable internet and significant institutional investments.

The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education across Africa is growing but remains uneven, reflecting the continent's structural and infrastructural challenges. While global trends show AI as a mainstream academic tool, African universities often face limitations such as weak internet connectivity, irregular electricity supply, and high costs of digital infrastructure, which restrict large-scale integration of AI technologies (Salem & Al-Khalaf, 2024).

Nevertheless, some African countries have demonstrated impressive progress. South Africa leads the continent in AI adoption due to its relatively advanced infrastructure and government investments in digital education. Universities such as the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University have reported increasing use of AI-enabled platforms for learning, research, and administrative purposes (Moyo, 2023). In Kenya, AI usage is steadily expanding as universities integrate digital learning management systems that incorporate AI for grading and feedback. Similarly, in Ghana, studies show that students, particularly in private universities, rely on AI-powered paraphrasing and grammar tools to supplement limited library resources (Adusei, 2024).

At the same time, challenges persist. Many African institutions lack formal policies regulating AI usage. Students are often left to experiment independently with tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot, sometimes without guidance on ethical or academic integrity issues (Okon, 2024). Furthermore, affordability is a barrier, as many advanced AI platforms require paid subscriptions that are inaccessible to the majority of students.

Despite these constraints, scholars agree that AI adoption is gaining traction among African undergraduates, particularly in final years of study where academic workloads are highest. The rise of mobile phone penetration has also boosted adoption, as students increasingly access AI tools via smartphones rather than

computers (Ojo, 2024). Overall, while Africa still lags behind Western and Asian regions in institutional AI integration, the continent shows growing momentum, with South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana serving as leading examples of adoption within the higher education sector.

2.1.5 AI Adoption in Nigeria

In West Africa, Nigerian universities have witnessed growing enthusiasm for AI tools among students, but adoption is constrained by frequent power outages, weak internet access, and inconsistent exposure to digital literacy (Ojo, 2024). Despite these challenges, Nigerian undergraduates especially in urban institutions like the University of Lagos and University of Benin are among the fastest-growing users of ChatGPT, Grammarly, and paraphrasing tools (Okon, 2024).

Globally, final-year students consistently report higher levels of reliance compared to their peers in lower levels of study. This is explained by the greater workload demands, particularly the requirements of dissertations, seminar papers, and long essays. Overall, the literature demonstrates that AI adoption is no longer an isolated trend but a mainstream academic practice across continents, raising important questions about its implications for originality, creativity, and critical thinking.

2.2 Year-of-Study Effects and Final-Year Context

While AI adoption is widespread across student populations, evidence suggests that senior students are more likely to engage with AI for academic purposes. For instance, a study in medical education revealed that final-year students were over three times more likely to use ChatGPT compared to first-year students, reflecting the increased complexity of academic tasks at advanced stages (Salem & Al-Khalaf, 2024).

Similarly, Walden's 2024–25 survey of higher education institutions reported discipline-specific variations in AI adoption, with heavier use among students in research-intensive programs.

2.2.1 AI Use Among Lower – Upper Students (First and Second Year)

The implication for final-year students is clear: the academic demands of dissertations, capstone projects, and extended essays encourage greater reliance on AI. These projects typically require independent topic formulation, extensive literature reviews, and rigorous writing stages at which AI tools are perceived as valuable aids. Consequently, final-year students are not only more frequent users of AI, but also more likely to use it in research-specific contexts.

Scholars agree that year of study is a major factor influencing students' patterns of AI use. Multiple surveys show that first- and second-year students tend to use AI sparingly, often for basic tasks such as grammar correction, short assignments, or clarifying definitions (Salem & Al-Khalaf, 2024). Their limited exposure to independent research tasks reduces the urgency of adopting AI tools.

2.2.2 AI Use Among Upper - Level Students (Third and Fourth Years)

By contrast, third- and fourth-year students particularly final-year undergraduates demonstrate disproportionately heavy reliance. Adebayo (2023) attributes this trend to cumulative academic workload: final-year students are expected to write projects, sit for final examinations, apply for graduate programs or jobs, and sometimes balance

part-time employment. Under such conditions, AI becomes an indispensable time-management strategy.

Globally, similar patterns are observed. In the United States, final-year students use AI for literature reviews, project drafts, and data interpretation more frequently than freshmen or sophomores (Pew Research Center, 2024). In the UK, HEPI (2025) found that final-year students were almost twice as likely as first-years to use AI daily. In Canada, Smith and Rodriguez (2023) noted that AI adoption peaked during the final semester, coinciding with dissertation writing.

2.2.3 Nigerian Final Year Context

In Nigeria, the trend is even more pronounced. Okon (2024) found that 78% of final-year students in the University of Benin relied on AI weekly, compared to 42% of second-year students. Students cited project deadlines, lack of adequate supervision, and limited access to library resources as primary drivers. Olatunji and Musa (2024) further emphasized that poor lecturer-student ratios make it difficult for supervisors to give timely feedback, leaving many students dependent on AI-generated guidance.

While reliance on AI may enhance efficiency, critics warn of potential drawbacks. Eke (2024) argues that over-reliance can erode independent reasoning, as students may accept AI outputs uncritically. This raises a paradox: while AI empowers final-year students to complete demanding tasks, it may simultaneously reduce their ability to develop original insights.

2.3 AI in Research-Specific Student Practices

Several studies have examined how students incorporate AI tools into their academic research processes. Four main areas of application are consistently identified in the literature.

First, students use AI for topic exploration and research question development. AI tools assist in brainstorming potential research topics, clarifying the scope of inquiry, and refining questions into forms that are manageable and academically relevant (HEPI, 2025).

Second, students rely on AI for literature management and summarization. Generative AI has been widely adopted as a tool for condensing lengthy academic texts, synthesizing arguments across multiple sources, and helping students identify key themes and gaps in the literature (Digital Education Council, 2024).

Third, AI provides support in drafting and writing. Applications such as ChatGPT and Grammarly are frequently employed for rephrasing, grammar correction, improving clarity, and enhancing the overall coherence and structure of essays and reports (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

Finally, students in technical and applied disciplines utilize AI for methodological and coding assistance. This includes seeking explanations of research methods, guidance in statistical analysis, and support in debugging or generating code (Vaithilingam et al., 2022).

Collectively, these practices show that students regard AI as a supportive companion that enhances productivity and confidence during the research process. However, scholars also caution that excessive reliance on AI may weaken students' capacity for independent analysis and critical thinking (Kasneci et al., 2023).

2.4 Rationale for AI Tool Adoption

The motivations for adopting AI tools are diverse and multifaceted. Scholars generally categorize them into academic, psychological, technological, and social rationales.

2.4.1 Academic Motivators

Academic motivations dominate. Dwivedi et al. (2023) highlight time-saving as the most commonly cited reason. AI tools simplify complex tasks such as summarizing lengthy readings, paraphrasing, and editing. In Nigeria, where students often combine studies with economic survival activities, saving time is especially important (Ojo, 2024). AI also enhances grammar and coherence, giving students greater confidence in the presentation of their work. For students whose first language is not English, AI is particularly attractive for eliminating grammatical errors and improving academic tone (Chen et al., 2020).

2.4.2 Psychological Motivators

Psychological motivations are equally important. Many students perceive AI tools as “study companions” that reduce academic stress and anxiety. Okon (2024) found that 64% of Nigerian undergraduates agreed that AI tools made them feel less overwhelmed by project writing. This psychological relief reinforces continuous reliance, even when alternatives exist.

2.4.3 Technological Motivators

Technological ease-of-use plays a significant role in driving adoption. Modern AI tools are mobile-friendly, accessible on smartphones, and often free at the entry level. This accessibility ensures that even students with minimal technical training can comfortably integrate them into daily academic life (Salem & Al-Khalaf, 2024).

2.4.4 Social and Peer Influences

Social and peer factors also influence adoption. Students may feel compelled to use AI when peers are already benefiting from it. Peer-to-peer diffusion accelerates adoption rates, as students exchange knowledge of effective prompts, reliable tools, and strategies for bypassing plagiarism detection (Eke, 2024). In Nigeria, this diffusion is evident in WhatsApp and Telegram student groups where peers share AI tips and strategies.

Taken together, these rationales highlight that AI adoption is not simply a matter of curiosity. It reflects deeper academic, psychological, and social needs that shape students' behaviors across contexts.

2.5 The Nigerian and African Context

While global studies dominate the literature, African research is beginning to shed light on regional dynamics. In Nigeria, Ojo (2024) found that perceived usefulness, ease of use, and peer influence were the strongest predictors of ChatGPT adoption among undergraduates, drawing on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This suggests that Nigerian students are motivated by both academic benefits and social pressures in their use of AI tools.

A 2024 Ipsos–Google survey further revealed that 70% of Nigeria’s online population had engaged with generative AI tools within the year, surpassing the global average of 48% (Ipsos & Google, 2024). Students were among the most active users, particularly in assignments, research preparation, and exam revision. However, disparities exist: Afolabi and Adewale (2022) reported that up to 82% of communication undergraduates lacked access to AI for learning, underscoring inequalities across academic disciplines.

Beyond Nigeria, evidence from other African countries highlights similar trends. In South Africa, multi-university surveys (2023–2025) confirm widespread experimentation with AI for literature review, writing assistance, and academic feedback. In Ghana, undergraduates described AI tools as supportive companions in drafting reports and sustaining engagement during research projects (Mensah, 2025).

Taken together, these findings suggest that African undergraduates are incorporating AI into their academic routines despite infrastructural challenges such as limited internet access and underdeveloped institutional policies. For final-year students in Nigeria, the pressures of dissertation writing and independent research may further drive reliance on AI tools.

2.6 Impact of AI on Critical Thinking

The impact of AI tools on students’ critical thinking has been one of the most contested topics in educational research. Some scholars argue that AI tools can stimulate critical engagement, while others maintain that they create intellectual laziness and reduce cognitive depth.

2.6.1 Positive Contribution of AI

On the positive side, AI can serve as a cognitive scaffold, helping students break down complex ideas into manageable parts. For example, ChatGPT can provide multiple perspectives on a topic, encouraging students to evaluate and synthesize diverse viewpoints (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Similarly, Grammarly and QuillBot may guide students to rephrase sentences more clearly, thereby improving logical flow and argumentative structure. In this sense, AI does not replace thinking but provides a framework that enhances reasoning.

2.6.2 Risks of over reliance on AI

However, critics warn that heavy reliance on AI may lead to surface-level engagement rather than deep critical analysis. Eke (2024) notes that many Nigerian students simply accept AI outputs without questioning their accuracy, thereby bypassing the process of reflective thinking. This is consistent with international findings: Müller (2024) observed that students in Germany often copy AI-generated arguments wholesale, reducing opportunities for independent thought.

Another challenge lies in the black-box nature of AI systems. Unlike textbooks or scholarly articles where sources are verifiable, generative AI often produces content without transparent citations. This makes it difficult for students to trace knowledge back to its original source, thereby weakening academic rigor (Chen et al., 2020).

In Nigeria, where research supervision is often weak, students may lean excessively on AI to structure arguments, reducing the cultivation of independent problem-solving skills. This raises a paradox: while AI increases efficiency, it can simultaneously deskill learners if used uncritically.

2.6.3 Balanced Approaches to AI Use

Scholars propose a balanced approach—encouraging students to use AI as an aid but requiring them to critically interrogate its outputs. By positioning AI as a partner rather than a replacement, universities can help maintain academic independence while harnessing technological benefits.

2.7 Theoretical Frameworks: Explaining AI Adoption

Two major frameworks are often used to explain how students adopt new technologies: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory.

2.7.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), argues that adoption is largely determined by two perceptions: usefulness and ease of use. If students perceive AI tools as both helpful for completing research tasks and simple to operate, they are more likely to adopt them. Nigerian research confirms this: Ojo (2024) found that usefulness, ease of use, and peer influence strongly predicted ChatGPT adoption among undergraduates. For final-year students, these factors are particularly relevant given the demands of extended research projects.

2.7.2 Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI)

The Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory (Rogers, 2003) complements TAM by explaining how new technologies spread across populations. DOI emphasizes relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. Generative AI

tools spread rapidly because they are accessible, easy to test, and provide clear advantages in saving time and improving research outputs (Salem & Al-Khalaf, 2024).

2.7.3 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

Together, TAM and DOI provide a strong theoretical lens to interpret why final-year students adopt AI tools in research: the tools are easy to use, highly beneficial, and socially normalized.

2.8 Originality and Academic Integrity

The relationship between AI usage and originality is equally complex. While AI can improve academic writing, it also raises profound concerns about plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

2.8.1 Risks of Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

One concern is unintentional plagiarism. Many students use paraphrasing tools like QuillBot or SpinBot without realizing that the underlying ideas still belong to other authors. Turnitin and other plagiarism detectors may flag such work, even if the words are altered (Salem & Al-Khalaf, 2024). This creates tension between student perceptions of originality and institutional definitions of plagiarism.

2.8.2 AI as a corrective tool for academic Integrity

In contrast, some scholars argue that AI tools can reduce plagiarism by helping students reformulate borrowed ideas more effectively. For instance, Grammarly can

flag improper citations, while ChatGPT can guide users on how to paraphrase responsibly. From this perspective, AI becomes a corrective tool rather than a threat (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

2.8.3 Global and Nigerian Institutional Responses

Institutional responses vary globally. In the United States, many universities have issued strict guidelines on AI usage, cautioning students against submitting fully AI-generated content (Pew Research Center, 2024). In the UK, universities often tolerate AI use as long as students acknowledge it as an aid, similar to referencing secondary sources (HEPI, 2025). In Nigeria, however, the policy environment remains unclear. Most universities have not formally regulated AI, leaving both students and supervisors in a gray area (Ojo, 2024).

The key concern is whether AI diminishes academic originality. Okon (2024) found that Nigerian supervisors increasingly complain that final-year projects read “too polished” and lack personal voice, raising suspicions of over-reliance on tools like Grammarly and ChatGPT. While AI improves presentation, it risks creating homogeneity in student writing, where individuality is replaced by algorithmic style.

Ultimately, originality depends not on whether AI is used, but on how it is used. If students employ AI to generate ideas and then critically refine them, originality can be maintained. If, however, students rely exclusively on AI outputs, academic dishonesty becomes more likely.

2.9 Benefits and Risks of AI Usage in Academic Research

2.9.1 Benefits

The use of AI tools in academic research offers several advantages.

First, AI significantly improves efficiency and saves time. Students are able to summarize large volumes of literature quickly, generate outlines, and obtain timely feedback on draft work (Kasneci et al., 2023).

Second, AI contributes to improved writing quality. Tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT enhance grammar, coherence, and academic tone, which is particularly beneficial for students who are non-native English speakers (Holmes et al., 2021).

Third, AI provides confidence and academic support. By simplifying complex concepts and clarifying research methodologies, AI reduces the anxiety that is often associated with independent academic work (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

Fourth, AI enhances accessibility. It provides affordable academic assistance compared to the costs of professional editing or tutoring, thereby offering opportunities to students with limited resources (Ajibade, 2024).

2.9.2 Risks

Despite these benefits, the use of AI in research also presents risks.

First, accuracy is a recurring concern. AI tools sometimes generate misleading or fabricated information, including incorrect references, which undermines academic integrity (Kasneci et al., 2023).

Second, overreliance on AI can diminish students' capacity for critical thinking and independent reasoning. Scholars caution that excessive dependence on AI may hinder originality in research outputs (Susnjak, 2022).

Third, there are ethical concerns. The ability of generative AI to produce complete essays and bibliographies with minimal human involvement raises questions about plagiarism and the authenticity of student work (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

Fourth, inequities in access create educational disparities. Students from under-resourced backgrounds may not have consistent access to AI technologies, which could widen existing gaps in learning outcomes (Afolabi & Adewale, 2022).

Finally, the indiscriminate use of AI may pose risks to long-term learning. Walden (2024) found that students who heavily relied on AI tools often performed poorly in examinations, suggesting that excessive use reduces opportunities for deep learning and knowledge retention.

2.10 Institutional and Policy Perspectives

As AI adoption spreads, institutions and policymakers are grappling with how best to regulate its use. Globally, responses fall into three categories: restriction, regulation, and integration.

2.10.1 Restrictive Approaches to AI

Restrictive approaches are common in conservative academic systems. Some American universities initially banned ChatGPT altogether, fearing widespread plagiarism (Pew Research Center, 2024). However, such bans often proved ineffective, as students found ways to bypass restrictions using personal devices or VPNs.

2.10.2 Regulatory Approaches to AI

Regulatory approaches seek to allow limited use of AI while maintaining academic integrity. In the UK, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI, 2025) reports that most universities now permit AI use for brainstorming and language polishing but forbid it for generating full essays. Institutions emphasize disclosure: students must indicate whether AI assisted in their work.

2.10.3 Integrationist Approaches to AI

Integrationist approaches embrace AI as part of the learning ecosystem. Countries like China and South Korea have actively encouraged AI literacy, embedding it in university curricula. Students are taught not only how to use AI but also how to evaluate its outputs critically (Chen et al., 2020).

2.10.4 Nigerian Institutional and Policy Context

In Nigeria, policy frameworks remain underdeveloped. The National Universities Commission (NUC) has yet to issue formal guidelines, leaving individual universities to craft their own responses. Some supervisors informally permit AI-assisted grammar correction, while others condemn AI use altogether (Okon, 2024). This inconsistency creates confusion for students, who must navigate mixed signals.

International organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD have urged universities to strike a balance: AI should be recognized as a transformative learning tool but regulated to protect originality, ethics, and intellectual honesty (Salem & Al-Khalaf, 2024). For Nigerian universities, this means developing structured policies that combine awareness, training, and ethical guidelines, rather than leaving students in uncertainty.

2.11 Institutional and Policy Perspectives

Universities worldwide are grappling with how to regulate AI use in academic research. Initial attempts at banning generative AI have been largely ineffective because detection tools remain unreliable (Dwivedi et al., 2023). As a result, many institutions are shifting toward transparency-based policies that encourage disclosure and critical engagement with AI outputs. For example, several UK universities now require students to acknowledge the use of AI tools in dissertations (HEPI, 2025).

In Nigeria, however, institutional guidelines remain underdeveloped. Most universities have not formally addressed AI adoption, leaving students and lecturers in uncertainty about acceptable practices (Adetola et al., 2023). This lack of policy does not reduce usage but instead creates risks of unregulated and potentially unethical practices. By contrast, libraries and writing centers in some countries have begun offering training programs to help students evaluate AI outputs critically and integrate them responsibly into academic work (Holmes et al., 2021).

2.12 Conceptual Review

The conceptual review clarifies key ideas and variables relevant to this research.

2.12.1 Artificial Intelligence (AI).

AI in higher education refers to software systems capable of generating, analyzing, or refining academic content. This includes generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT), grammar assistants (e.g., Grammarly), and paraphrasing tools (e.g., QuillBot).

2.12.2 Prevalence.

Prevalence measures how widely AI is adopted by students, particularly in terms of frequency of use. High prevalence suggests normalization of AI tools in academic practice.

2.12.3 Rationale.

Rationale addresses the underlying reasons for student adoption—academic efficiency, psychological relief, technological accessibility, and peer influence.

2.12.4 Critical Thinking.

Critical thinking involves the ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize knowledge independently. The concern is whether AI enhances or undermines these abilities.

2.12.5 Originality.

Originality refers to producing independent, creative, and unique academic work. The rise of AI raises questions about whether originality is diminished when tools assist too heavily in idea generation and writing.

2.12.6 Institutional Perspectives.

This involves university and policy responses to AI use, ranging from restriction to integration. It also includes the ethical frameworks surrounding AI adoption in higher education.

The conceptual linkages can be summarized as follows: widespread prevalence of AI, driven by strong rationales, influences critical thinking and originality. These effects are mediated by institutional perspectives and understood within theoretical frameworks such as TAM, DOI, UTAUT, and Constructivism.

2.13 Theoretical Frameworks

The study of AI adoption in higher education has been analyzed through several theoretical lenses. These frameworks help explain not only why students adopt AI tools but also the broader consequences for learning and originality.

2.13.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

Developed by Davis (1989), TAM remains one of the most widely applied frameworks for understanding technology usage. The model emphasizes two key constructs: perceived usefulness (the extent to which a student believes AI enhances academic performance) and perceived ease of use (the degree to which AI is user-friendly). Students are more likely to adopt AI when they find it both effective and easy to use. In Nigeria, this model explains the rapid spread of ChatGPT, which requires minimal training and delivers quick results (Okon, 2024).

2.13.2 Diffusion of Innovations (DOI).

Rogers' (2003) DOI theory describes how innovations spread through social systems over time. AI tools, like other innovations, move from early adopters to mainstream users. Peer influence plays a central role. As students observe their colleagues successfully using AI to complete assignments, they are more likely to follow suit

(Eke, 2024). This explains why Nigerian undergraduates often share AI strategies on WhatsApp groups, accelerating adoption beyond formal institutional endorsement.

2.13.3 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT).

Venkatesh et al. (2003) extended TAM by incorporating social influence, facilitating conditions, and effort expectancy. According to UTAUT, students' adoption of AI is shaped not only by personal attitudes but also by social pressures and institutional support. For example, students are more likely to use AI if peers encourage them and if the university provides strong internet and digital infrastructure. This model underscores the role of Nigerian universities' infrastructural deficits in shaping adoption patterns.

2.13.4 Constructivist Learning Theory.

Constructivist theorists emphasize that learning occurs when students actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive it. AI can align with this theory when used as a scaffold, providing resources that enable deeper understanding (Müller, 2024). However, constructivists also caution that uncritical dependence on AI undermines independent knowledge construction. In contexts like Nigeria, where supervision is limited, students may shift from active learning to passive consumption of AI-generated knowledge, contradicting the principles of constructivism.

By applying these frameworks, the study situates AI adoption within established models of technology use and learning, thereby enriching its analytical depth.

2.14 Gaps in the Literature

Despite growing research on AI in education, several gaps remain:

- i. Few studies focus specifically on final-year students, who are among the most intensive users of AI.
- ii. Limited research examines how students employ AI across different stages of research projects.
- iii. African perspectives often emphasize adoption drivers but do not measure prevalence or patterns in detail.
- iv. There is little evidence evaluating the effectiveness of institutional policies on AI adoption.

These gaps justify the need for context-specific research such as this study, which investigates AI adoption among final-year Social Science students at the University of Benin.

2.15 Conclusion of the Literature Review

The reviewed literature shows that AI usage in higher education has become widespread, with prevalence rates often exceeding 80 percent globally. Evidence suggests that adoption intensifies among final-year students, who face complex and independent research tasks such as dissertations and capstone projects. Students use AI for topic exploration, literature review, drafting, and methodological guidance, but they remain aware of risks related to accuracy, overreliance, and academic integrity.

In Nigeria and across Africa, adoption is strong but uneven, shaped by factors such as digital literacy, infrastructure, and institutional policy gaps. Theoretical frameworks such as TAM and DOI help explain why adoption has been so rapid, while ongoing debates highlight the importance of balancing benefits with ethical considerations.

The literature emphasizes that the question is no longer whether students use AI, but how its usage can be guided to enhance learning, protect integrity, and support equitable access.

This chapter also reviewed existing literature on the prevalence, rationale, and impact of AI tool usage among undergraduates. The evidence demonstrates that AI adoption has become mainstream globally, with final-year students showing the highest reliance due to academic workload pressures. Motivations for adoption are multifaceted, including academic efficiency, psychological relief, and technological accessibility.

The chapter also highlighted the dual impact of AI on critical thinking: while it can scaffold reasoning and improve clarity, it may also foster dependency and reduce originality when used uncritically. Concerns about academic integrity remain significant, especially in Nigeria where policy frameworks are weak and inconsistent.

The review situated AI adoption within theoretical frameworks such as TAM, DOI, UTAUT, and Constructivism, which help explain the behavioral and social dimensions of adoption. The conceptual review synthesized the core constructs of prevalence, rationale, critical thinking, originality, and institutional perspectives into a coherent framework.

Overall, the literature establishes both the opportunities and challenges posed by AI in higher education. It underscores the need for Nigerian universities to adopt balanced policies that encourage responsible use while safeguarding originality and critical thinking. This sets the foundation for the methodological approaches presented in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Preamble

This chapter describes the research methodology, including research design, area of study, population, sample size, sampling techniques, instrument for data collection, methods of data collection, and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted both explanatory and exploratory designs. The explanatory design examined the prevalence of AI tool usage and its impact, while the exploratory design investigated underlying reasons for reliance on AI tools (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.3 Area of Study

The study was conducted in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria. The faculty consists of Sociology and Anthropology, Political Science, Geography and Regional Planning, Public Administration, Social Work, and Economics and Statistics.

3.4 Population of the Study

The study population comprised all final-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences during the 2023/2024 academic session. According to departmental records, the total population was 568 students (University of Benin, 2024).

3.5 Sample Size

Using Yamane's formula (1967) at a 95% confidence level, the sample size was determined to be 120 students. This was sufficient for reliable findings while maintaining feasibility in data collection.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

Stratified random sampling was used to ensure adequate representation from all departments. Proportional allocation determined the number of respondents per department, followed by simple random sampling to select individuals (Bryman, 2016).

3.7 Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a semi-structured questionnaire divided into four sections:

Section A: Demographic Information collected gender, age, department, and other background details.

Section B: Prevalence of AI Tool Usage explored the extent and frequency of AI use in research work.

Section C: Reasons for Reliance on AI Tools identified motivations such as efficiency, ease of use, and academic pressures.

Section D: Impact of AI Tools on Critical Thinking and Originality examined how students perceived AI's influence on creativity, originality, and critical reasoning.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

Primary data were gathered through questionnaires administered to respondents. Secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journals, conference papers, and credible online resources.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and distribution tables. The results were presented in tables and interpreted in relation to the study objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of data collected through the questionnaire administered to final year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin. The total sample size was 150 respondents, distributed across departments using proportional stratified random sampling. The analysis is presented using frequency and percentage tables, followed by brief interpretations. Interview responses were excluded, as this study relied solely on questionnaires.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

TABLE 4.1 DEPARTMENT OF RESPONDENTS

DEPARTMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Social Work	38	25.3
Political Science	35	23.3
Public Administration	26	17.3
Economics & Statistics	26	17.3
Sociology & Anthropology	24	16.0
Geography & Regional Planning	1	0.7

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above 4.1, the results show the department of the respondents. The results show that 25.3% of the respondents are from Social work, 23.3 of the respondents are from Political science, 17.3 of the respondents are from Public administration, 17.3 of the respondents are from Economics & statistics, 16.0 are from Sociology & Anthropology, 0.7 are from Geography & regional planning.

TABLE 4.2 GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	70	46.7
Female	68	45.3
Prefer not to say	12	8.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table 4.2, the results show the gender of the respondents. The results show that 46.7% of the respondents are male, 45.3% of the respondents are female and 8.0 of the respondents prefer not to say. This shows that majority of the respondents are male

TABLE 4.3 AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
22–25	68	45.3
18–21	43	28.7
26–30	33	22.0
Above 30	6	4.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above 4.3, the results show the age of the respondents. The results therefore reveals that the respondents between the age of 22 – 25 are accounted as 45.3%, the respondents between the age of 18 – 21 are accounted as 28.7%, the respondents between the age of 26 – 30 are accounted as 22.0% and the respondents above 30 are accounted as 4.0%. This shows that the respondents between the age of 22 – 25 counts as the majority of the population.

SECTION B: PREVALENCE OF AI TOOL USAGE

TABLE 4.4 HAVE YOU EVER USED AI TOOLS FOR YOUR RESEARCH WORK?

HAVE YOU EVER USED AI TOOLS FOR YOUR RESEARCH WORK?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	115	76.7
No	35	23.3

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the data shows that 76.7% of the respondents have used AI tools for their research work, and 23.3% has not used AI tools for their research work.

TABLE 4.5 FREQUENCY OF AI TOOL USAGE FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

FREQUENCY OF AI TOOL USAGE FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Daily	46	30.7
Weekly	44	29.3
Monthly	34	22.7
Rarely	20	13.3
Never	6	4.0

From the table above, the data shows that 30.7% of the respondents use AI tools for their academic research daily, 29.3% of the respondents use AI tools for their academic research weekly, 22.7% of the respondents use AI tools for th/eir academic research monthly, 13.3% of the respondents us AI tools for their academic research rarely and 4.0 of the respondents never use AI tools for their research work

TABLE 4.6 WHICH AI TOOLS ARE MOST COMMONLY USED?

WHICH AI TOOLS ARE MOST COMMONLY USED?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
QuillBot	40	26.7
Others	36	24.0
Turnitin	29	19.3
Grammarly	25	16.7
ChatGPT	20	13.3

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the data shows that 26.7% of the respondents use QuillBot AI tool, 24.0% of the respondents use Other AI tools, 19.3% of the respondents use Turnitin AI tool, 16.7% of the respondents us Grammarly AI tool and 13.3% of the respondents use ChatGPT AI tool.

TABLE 4.7 IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU USED AI TOOLS IN RESEARCH?

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU USED AI TOOLS IN RESEARCH?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
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Literature review support	45	30.0
Grammar editing	38	25.3
Idea generation	34	22.7
Data analysis guidance	20	13.3
Others	13	8.7

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows the ways respondents have used AI tool in research. 30.0% of the respondents has used AI tool for Literature review support, 25.3% of the respondents use AI tools for Grammar editing, 22.7% of the respondents use AI tools for Idea generation, 13.3% of the respondents use AI tool for Data analysis guidance and 8.7% of the respondents use it for other reasons.

TABLE 4.8 SITUATION WHERE AI TOOLS WERE MOST HELPFUL

SITUATION WHERE AI TOOLS WERE MOST HELPFUL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Clarifying difficult concepts	40	26.7
Checking plagiarism	32	21.3
Generating summaries	28	18.7
Improving writing style	30	20.0
Others	20	13.3

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows the situations where AI tools were most helpful and 26.7% of the respondents used AI tools in clarifying difficulty concepts, 21.3% used AI tools in checking plagiarism, 18.7% of the respondents used AI tools

in generating summaries, 20.0% of the respondents used AI tool in improving writing style and 13.3 used AI tool for others.

TABLE 4.9 OTHER ACADEMIC PURPOSES FOR AI TOOLS

OTHER ACADEMIC PURPOSES FOR AI TOOLS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Assignments and essays	50	33.3
Presentation preparation	35	23.3
Grammar correction	30	20.0
Exam preparation	20	13.3
Others	15	10.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows other academic purposes for AI tools. 33.3% of the respondents use AI tool for assignments and essays, 23.3% of the respondents use AI tools for presentation preparations, 20.0% of the respondents use AI tools for grammar correction, 13.3% of the respondents use AI tools for exam preparations and 10.0% of the respondents use AI tool for others.

SECTION C: REASONS FOR RELIANCE ON AI TOOLS

TABLE 4.10 MAIN REASON FOR USING AI TOOLS

MAIN REASON FOR USING AI TOOLS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Save time	40	26.7
Generate ideas	32	21.3
Improve grammar	29	19.3
Check plagiarism	22	14.7
Simplify concepts	17	11.3
Others	10	6.7

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows 26.7% of the respondents use AI tool to save time, 21.3% of the respondents use AI tool to generate ideas, 19.3% of the respondents use AI tool to improve grammar, 14.7% of the respondents use AI tool to check plagiarism, 11.3% of the respondents use AI tool to simplify concepts, and 6.7% of the respondents use AI tool for others.

TABLE 4.11 CONVENIENCE OF AI TOOLS VS TRADITIONAL METHODS

CONVENIENCE OF AI TOOLS VS TRADITIONAL METHODS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	61	40.7
Agree	48	32.0
Neutral	26	17.3
Disagree	11	7.3
Strongly Disagree	4	2.7

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows 40.7% of the respondents Strongly Agree to the convenience of AI tools vs traditional methods, 32.0% of the respondents Agree to the convenience of AI tool vs traditional methods, 17.3% of the respondents are Neutral to the convenience of AI tool vs traditional methods, 7.3% of the respondents Disagree to the convenience of AI tool vs traditional methods and 2.7% of the respondents Strongly Disagree to the convenience of AI tool vs traditional methods.

TABLE 4.12 LECTURERS’/SUPERVISORS’ STANCE ON AI TOOLS

LECTURERS’/SUPERVISORS’ STANCE ON AI TOOLS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Neutral	71	47.3
Discourage	40	26.7
Encourage	39	26.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows 47.3% of the respondents are Neutral to their stance on AI tools, 26.7% of the respondents are Discouraged on AI tools and 26.0% of the respondents Encourages AI tools.

TABLE 4.13 WHY DO YOU PERSONALLY PREFER AI TOOLS?

WHY DO YOU PERSONALLY PREFER AI TOOLS?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Saves time	52	34.7
Improves work quality	40	26.7
Helps generate ideas	33	22.0
Provides clarity	15	10.0
Others	10	6.7

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows 34.7% of the respondents personally prefer AI tool because it saves time, 26.7% of the respondents personally prefer AI tool because it improves work quality, 22.0% of the respondents personally prefer AI tool because it helps generate ideas, 10.0% of the respondents personally prefer AI tool because it provides clarity and 6.7% of the respondents personally prefer AI tools for others.

TABLE 4.14 CHALLENGES AI TOOLS HELP OVERCOME

CHALLENGES AI TOOLS HELP OVERCOME	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)

Plagiarism concerns	45	30.0
Grammar/structure issues	40	26.7
Difficulty in idea generation	35	23.3
Limited access to resources	20	13.3
Others	10	6.7

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows the challenges AI tool help respondents overcome, 30.0% of the respondents overcome Plagiarism concerns, 26.7% of the respondents overcome Grammar/structure issues, 23.3% of the respondents overcome Difficulty in idea generation, 13.3% of the respondents overcome Limited access to resources and 6.7% of the respondents overcome others.

TABLE 4.15 COMPARISON OF AI TOOLS TO TRADITIONAL METHODS

COMPARISON OF AI TOOLS TO TRADITIONAL METHODS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
More efficient	55	36.7
Easier to use	38	25.3
Faster access to resources	30	20.0
Less reliable	15	10.0
Others	12	8.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows the comparison of AI tools to traditional methods, 36.7% of the respondents find it More efficient, 25.3% of the respondents find it Easier to use, 20.0% of the respondents find it faster to access resources, 10.0%

of the respondents find it Less reliable and 8.0% of the respondents have other reasons.

SECTION D: IMPACT OF AI TOOLS ON CRITICAL THINKING AND ORIGINALITY

TABLE 4.16 EFFECT OF AI TOOLS ON CRITICAL THINKING

EFFECT OF AI TOOLS ON CRITICAL THINKING	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Improves	62	41.3
Reduces	37	24.7
No effect	34	22.7
Not sure	17	11.3

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, result shows the effect of AI tools on critical thinking, 41.3% of the respondent Improves, 24.7% of the respondents Reduces, 22.7% of the respondents has No effect, 11.3% of the respondents are Not sure.

TABLE 4.17 CONFIDENCE IN DEVELOPING OWN IDEAS

CONFIDENCE IN DEVELOPING OWN IDEAS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
No	66	44.0
Sometimes	50	33.3
Yes	34	22.7

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, results show 44.0% of the respondents are Not confident in developing their own ideas, 33.3% of the respondents are Sometimes confident in developing their own ideas, 22.7% of the respondents are Confident in developing their own ideas.

TABLE 4.18 DOES RELIANCE ON AI HINDER ORIGINALITY?

DOES RELIANCE ON AI HINDER ORIGINALITY?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly Agree	50	33.3
Agree	49	32.7
Neutral	28	18.7
Disagree	15	10.0
Strongly Disagree	8	5.3

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the results show 33.3% of the respondents Strongly Agree that reliance on AI hinders originality, 32.7% of the respondents Agree that reliance on AI hinders originality, 18.7% of the respondents are Neutral on reliance on AI hinders originality, 10.0% of the respondents Disagree that reliance on AI hinders originality and 5.3% of the respondents Strongly Disagree that reliance on AI hinders originality.

TABLE 4.19 EFFECT OF AI TOOLS ON INDEPENDENT THINKING

EFFECT OF AI TOOLS ON INDEPENDENT THINKING	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Improved efficiency but reduced originality	45	30.0

Increased dependency	35	23.3
Helped in clarifying thoughts	30	20.0
No significant effect	25	16.7
Others	15	10.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result show 30.0% of the respondents Improved efficiently but reduced originality, 23.3% of the respondents Increased dependency, 20.0% of the respondents Helped in clarifying thoughts, 16.7% had No significant effect, and 10.0% of the respondents have other effects on AI tools on independent thinking,

TABLE 4.20 INFLUENCE OF AI TOOLS ON ORIGINALITY

INFLUENCE OF AI TOOLS ON ORIGINALITY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Reduced originality	50	33.3
Enhanced creativity	40	26.7
Neutral effect	30	20.0
Made work easier	20	13.3
Others	10	6.7

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result show 33.3% of the respondents Reduced originality, 26.7% of the respondents Enhanced creativity, 20.0% of the respondents had Neutral effect, 13.3% of the respondents Made work easier and 6.7% of the respondents had Others.

TABLE 4.21 STRATEGIES TO BALANCE AI SUPPORT WITH CRITICAL THINKING

STRATEGIES TO BALANCE AI SUPPORT WITH CRITICAL THINKING	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Cross-check with textbooks/journals	48	32.0
Discuss with peers	35	23.3
Limit AI reliance	30	20.0
Consult supervisors	22	14.7
Others	15	10.0

Source: Field survey, 2025

From the table above, the result shows 32.0% of the respondents cross-check with textbooks/journals, 23.3% of the respondents discuss with peers, 20.0% of the respondents limit AI reliance, 14.7% of the respondents consult supervisors and 10.0% of the respondents use others.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined the usage of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in research work among final-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. Data were collected from 150 respondents and analyzed to address the study objectives.

The findings revealed that a large majority of students have adopted AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot in their academic activities. Frequency of usage varied, but many respondents reported daily or weekly reliance on these tools.

The study also established that the major reasons for adoption were efficiency and time-saving, improvement of grammar and writing, generation of ideas, and simplification of complex concepts. Most respondents agreed that AI tools were more convenient than traditional methods, although lecturers and supervisors expressed mixed views, with neutrality being the most common stance.

With regard to impact, the study found that AI tools were perceived as beneficial to critical thinking by some students, while others expressed concerns that heavy reliance might reduce originality and creativity. Thematic analysis further showed that students commonly used AI tools for literature reviews, assignments, and clarification of difficult concepts. Nevertheless, concerns about reduced confidence in idea generation and potential threats to academic independence were consistently noted.

Overall, the study established that AI tools have become embedded in the academic routines of final-year students. They provide efficiency and support but also pose challenges related to originality, critical thinking, and independent learning.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that AI tools are now integral to the academic practices of final-year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. Their widespread adoption underscores their perceived usefulness in addressing academic challenges such as managing large amounts of information, improving writing quality, and generating research ideas.

However, while AI tools enhance efficiency and accessibility, they also introduce risks that cannot be overlooked. The findings indicate that over-reliance on AI may compromise originality, creativity, and independent intellectual engagement. Furthermore, the absence of clear institutional policies leaves both students and lecturers uncertain about acceptable levels of AI integration in academic work.

The study therefore affirms that AI tools present a double-edged reality: they offer valuable opportunities for improving academic performance, but they also demand careful regulation, responsible use, and pedagogical guidance to preserve the integrity of higher education.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- i. For Students: Final-year students should use AI tools as supplementary aids rather than substitutes for independent research and critical thinking. Training themselves to balance AI-generated input with personal analysis will strengthen originality and creativity.
- ii. For Lecturers and Supervisors: Academic staff should provide clearer guidance on acceptable uses of AI tools. Rather than discouraging adoption, supervisors can integrate AI literacy into research supervision, helping students critically evaluate AI outputs.
- iii. For the University Administration: The University of Benin should develop explicit policies on the ethical use of AI in academic work. These policies should balance the opportunities offered by AI with safeguards against misuse, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty.
- iv. For Policymakers: At a broader level, higher education policymakers in Nigeria should establish national frameworks to guide AI usage in universities. Such frameworks should promote innovation while ensuring equity and integrity.
- v. For Further Research: Future studies should expand the scope by including other faculties and institutions, and by examining task-specific applications of AI across different stages of the research process. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of AI in higher education.

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APPENDIX I:

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

My name is **EMOKPAE FAVOUR ESOHE**, a final-year student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin. I am currently conducting a research project titled:

“USAGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS IN RESEARCH WORK AMONG FINAL-YEAR STUDENTS IN THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.”

This questionnaire is designed to gather information on the prevalence, reasons, and perceived impacts of AI tool usage among final-year students. Your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be used strictly for academic purposes. Please note that your identity will remain anonymous, and there are no risks attached to your participation.

Your honest and objective responses will contribute significantly to the success of this research. Thank you for your time and anticipated cooperation.

SECTION A: Demographic Information

1. Department: _____

2. Gender: Male Female Prefer not to say

3. Age: 18–21 22–25 26–30 Above 30

SECTION B: Prevalence of AI Tool Usage

4. Have you ever used AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, Turnitin) for your research work?

Yes No

5. How often do you use AI tools for academic research?

Daily Weekly Monthly Rarely Never

6. Which AI tools do you commonly use?

ChatGPT Grammarly QuillBot Turnitin Others (please specify)

7. In what ways have you used AI tools in your research?

8. Can you describe a situation where AI tools were most helpful in your research?

9. Apart from research work, what other academic purposes do you use AI tools for?

SECTION C: Reasons for Reliance on AI Tools

10. What is your main reason for using AI tools in research?

Save time Improve grammar Generate ideas Check plagiarism Simplify concepts Others _____

11. Do you find AI tools more convenient than traditional methods?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. What is your lecturer's/supervisor's stance on using AI tools?

Encourage Neutral Discourage

13. Why do you personally prefer to use AI tools in your research process?

14. What challenges do AI tools help you overcome?

15. How do you think AI tools compare to traditional methods of gathering information? _____

SECTION D: Impact of AI Tools on Critical Thinking and Originality

16. Do you believe AI tools improve or reduce your ability to think critically?

Improve Reduce No effect Not sure

17. Do AI tools affect your confidence in developing your own ideas?

Yes No Sometimes

18. Do you agree that excessive reliance on AI tools can hinder originality in students' research work?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

19. In what ways do you think AI tools have affected your ability to think independently? _____

20. How has AI tool usage influenced your originality in developing research ideas?

21. What strategies do you use to balance AI support with your own critical thinking and creativity? _____