



Perceptions of Students on the Use of AI Tools (Grammarly & ChatGPT) in Academic Writing at an Omani Private College

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ABSTRACT

The release of AI writing tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT has affected the traditional methods of writing in which students do most of the work. These tools have made the writing process for students much easier than ever. However, there are gaps that students could exploit in these tools without putting any effort. This might make it easy for their academic studies, but it will affect them in their future career due to their dependency on AI and not building any skills. This research aims to investigate the Omani private college students' perceptions regarding the use of Grammarly and ChatGPT in academic writing. A mixed-method approach was used to collect data from 500 students through questionnaires and interviews. The findings reveal that students find Grammarly and ChatGPT extremely helpful for writing. However, some students have expressed concern that it affects their actual development as students regarding their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Future studies should investigate the effect that Grammarly and ChatGPT have on students' writing skills and critical thinking in Omani private institutions. Based on the findings, institutes should develop a balanced approach to improve students' writing skills by restricting the overreliance on AI tools.

1. Introduction

The rise and advancement of AI have created numerous possibilities for its use in education and learning. The potential of AI has drawn attention to it due to its massive capabilities, which led to the creation of AI literacy. The rapid pace at which AI is developing puts all educators in all fields engaged in this field, which was previously restricted to computer science labs. Though Computer Scientists were the main researchers in this field, things have changed over the past decade, which has made AI a focus of commercial interest. This encouraged educators and teachers to adopt and learn about the use of AI in their daily practice (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022). However, the rapid rate of AI development has outpaced institutions and policies. Growing concerns have emerged regarding the use of AI in education, such as the possibility of outsmarting humans. Also, there are ethical concerns that involve misuse by students, which might bring more harm than good (Miao & Holmes, 2021, p.5).

On November 30, 2022, the public release of ChatGPT by OpenAI, along with its introduction to teachers, changed the traditional ways of writing. ChatGPT can create any form of original writing. The convenience and ease of ChatGPT use had rattled higher education and created new challenges. Students began utilizing these technologies to the extreme that educators were unable to keep up and create policies to manage or stop them (Dobrin, 2023). As AI has spread rapidly in academia, new approaches

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should be taught to students to effectively cooperate with AI through understanding, accessing, prompting, corroborating, and incorporating it. These methods are used for second language learners to incorporate AI in their learning. The release of AI tools, specifically ChatGPT, has been met with optimism and pessimism. AI-generated writing offers an escape from the hassle of learning a second language due to its ability to create fluent and native text. Even though AI has risks, it should not be banned, as it is almost impossible to do so. Many corporations are investing in and releasing new AI technologies, such as Apple, Google, and Microsoft. Student should adapt to these new changes and learn to integrate AI in their work ethically in the same way they cite a reference. AI-generated content should be cited and stated in their work (Tseng & Warschauer, 2023).

For any new form of technology to be successful, it must be accepted by the users, and how they react to it. With AI trending and spreading among students and EFL classrooms. Also, how easy it is to access and use these technologies. The learner's perspective is important, for it determines how well the students see themselves as good learners. If the technology is easy to use, accessible, and helpful, students will use it more frequently. Most students show positive feedback towards the usefulness of AI for writing, and the main factor contributing to this is how easy it is to access and use. AI could be a useful way to give students ideas on what to write and create more engaging ways to hook the readers. AI-generator apps are also helpful for grammar and vocabulary. These are the positive traits of AI use. (Sumakul et al., 2022). However, it becomes a risk when the students depend on it fully to do all the work, and they put in no cognitive effort. Regardless of the benefits, Students' misuse of AI leads to academic dishonesty. The easy access to AI leads students to use ChatGPT during exams, and this may affect the validity of the degrees that are supposed to prove that the students have specific skills and knowledge in their field. AI detection apps such as Turnitin are used to detect AI-generated content submitted by students. However, AI detection apps are not that reliable, and some students have learned clever ways to bypass the detection (Nelson et al., 2024).

This research aims to find the students' perceptions of the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT and Grammarly in a private college in Oman. Although there are other research papers discussing the Omani students' perception, such as Al Salmi et al (2024) study, and Syahrin & Akmal (2024) study. This research aims to investigate the perception of private institutions' students regarding AI tools in academic writing. More specifically, the research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main factors that influence students to use AI tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT for academic writing?
2. How do the students perceive the use of AI tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT in their assignments?

2. Literature Review

AI is starting to impact academic writing in both beneficial and harmful ways. Research from several fields demonstrates that students see the value of AI, but are also worried about how it might affect learning and academic honesty. There are several studies that present how AI technologies could affect academic writing and English as a Foreign Language Classrooms (EFL).

Nelson et al. (2025) conducted research in Ecuador, and they collected data from 56 undergraduate university students to determine their views on the use of generated AI in academic writing for English as a second language. The data were collected through a survey to assess Ecuadorian EFL students' perceptions of AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, for the generation and refinement of their writing skills in English, with an emphasis on academic dishonesty. An assignment generated by AI chatbots was considered academic dishonesty, and only a few participants believed that submitting a text translated from Spanish to English was not dishonest. The results inform staff and institutions of how Ecuadorian university students see the effect of generated AI inside the field of academic writing. The results also show the reasons why students depend on these tools and their views on the discovery of AI works. The use of AI should be as an additional tool rather than depending on it fully as a shortcut to effort.

Another study related to the EFL context, conducted by Demirel (2024), addresses the issue of how AI can be practically utilized to assist with academic writing and provides various techniques for academic writing instructors to safeguard academic integrity when using AI tools. This study highlights the teacher's role in guiding students, unlike Nelson et al. (2025), which puts more emphasis on students' worries about dishonesty. A qualitative method was employed to collect data on the use of AI by graduate and undergraduate students studying language-related programs in Turkish Universities. The online survey involved 72 students, of whom 22 were males and 50 were females. The goal of this study was to find out the circumstances of undergraduates and graduate students in their use of AI and give instructions to educators on the use of these tools to help develop students' writing skills and maintain the balance between the AI risks and academic integrity. The study's findings call for the urgency to attract attention to how important it is for educators to advise students on how to use AI ethically, while also creating an environment that encourages critical thinking and originality. Clear policies and instructions should be implemented to ensure the maximum benefit of AI use in academia, which will be useful for both students and educators (Demirel, 2024).

The fast-paced development of AI has started to impact teachers' methods and students' learning. It started to affect English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Classrooms. To solve the dispute of AI is helpful to students or not, it is necessary to know the opinions and perspectives of the students. Semi-structured interviews with 8 EFL Indonesian university students were the method used to collect data from students who used AI tools for their writing classes (Sumakul et al., 2022). Both Nelson et al (2025) and Sumakul (2022) have demonstrated that AI is useful, but risky when misused. The findings of Nelson et al (2025) revealed that the students were more concerned about the struggle of developing their writing skills than about being caught and facing punishment. The students believed that ChatGPT texts are easily detected, and institutions should implement strategies to detect plagiarism. The results of Sumakul et al (2022) showed that the students perceived AI tools positively, and they enjoyed the AI learning process. However, this study suggests that teachers should develop their technological proficiency so that they can design learning activities that merge AI technology to have a prosperous lesson.

Writing tasks and instructions had not changed much over the years, but they all changed with the release of ChatGPT by OpenAI in 2022. The ability of ChatGPT to create almost flawless and original work was dangerous and affected institutions globally. Dobrin (2023) provides suggestions to students and teachers on how they can integrate AI in education. It provides guidelines on how to use AI platforms for academic, civic, personal, and professional writing tasks, but it does not give instructions on the technical side. However, due to the accelerating pace of AI evolution, Dobrin's suggestions cannot formalize guidelines on AI use. But this work can be used to help students in writing, as well as to raise the ethical concerns about AI use in writing.

Though there are several studies that examined the perceptions of faculty and students in different contexts, such as Purnomo & Andriani (2025), Saidashev et al (2025), Sham et al (2025), and Hanura & Widiarti (2025). However, few studies have investigated Omani students' perceptions and adoption of AI for writing in Oman. Syahrin and Akmal (2024) examined the thoughts of students, educators, and administrators on the part of ChatGPT in the educational setting in Oman. The study gives an understanding of how much AI is used in education in Oman and the upcoming plans to deal with it. It also provides useful information for institutions that are willing to adapt to the changing times, but keep the traditional ways and values alive. The data were collected through voluntary focus group discussions from Dhofar University. The study included 15 participants from the academic year of 2023. The results of the study showed that instructors might use ChatGPT for brainstorming, and they might use it for drafting emails due to the fast pace of AI tools. From the administrative staff's perspective, it is evident that they utilize this system to edit, draft, and refine documents. The students mentioned that they use it to summarize and elaborate on some information, thus improving their English language skills. The findings showed that participants use ChatGPT to perform various tasks, including assignments, emails, and homework.

Al Salmi et al (2024) researched the use of artificial intelligence in Oman for education and the adoption of smart transport technology in the context of Oman. The study aimed to comprehend this rising occurrence and its effect on society. To better understand the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors connected to the use of AI and the selection of smart transportation, combined methods of data collection were used. The methods included questionnaires and interviews, which led to the results of AI's capabilities to customize the learning experience, while also raising ethical concerns and practical issues of AI use. This study shows different levels of use of smart transportation technology, and it is mostly motivated by various problems such as privacy, environmental considerations, and usability. Recommendations were made to motivate the ethical use of AI and smart transport technology in this study. This research also hopes to describe the reasons and motivations to give feelings of importance, direction, and applicability. Both the studies of Al Salmi et al (2024) and Syhrin & Akmal studied the perceptions of Omani students and faculty at universities. However, private college students' perceptions in Oman are under-researched.

AI has created numerous benefits, but those benefits come with a price and many risks, and this needs to be investigated to determine if the positives outweigh the negatives. A study done by Aljuaid (2024) examined whether AI tools are replacing traditional writing courses and whether they truly help students or pose risks. Existing literature was reviewed by the researcher on combining AI writing tools in academic writing commands. The findings of this research give an understanding of how educators could combine AI writing tools into the curriculum while keeping quality and integrity standards. This study can help make appropriate decisions on using AI to help improve writing skills by combining the latest research. The finding reveals that AI helps with style and grammar, but there are still speculations about its impact on critical thinking and creativity. There are no signs that AI is going to replace academic writing courses. As these courses teach students research, citations, critical thinking, argumentation, originality, creativity, and ethics, which AI is inadequate at. The best approach to deal with AI is through a balanced approach, as AI is only a supportive tool that is unlikely to replace writing courses due to these courses being the core elements of academic writing.

Teachers and educators around the world are now forced to adapt and learn in the unsteady field of technology. With the release of ChatGPT, they must realize the capabilities and challenges that AI has. This research proposed a five-part pedagogical framework that was pursued to help second language learners through admitting the current and long-term circumstances that

must be taught to students about AI tools. The framework steps include understanding, accessing, corroborating, and incorporating. These methods hope to help students use AI practically to prepare them for the unpredictable landscape of technology (Tseng & Warschauer, 2023).

The creation and development of AI have created assumptions about how it will affect education and learning. There have been wrong assumptions about AI that are due to the misinterpretation of modern technical possibilities, a lack of knowledge of modern AI tools in education, and a limited outlook on the purpose of education in society. This research gives an analysis of AI systems used in education and their assumptions. A typology has been developed of AIED, and a description of various ways of implementing AI in education and learning to show if these explanations are based on different definitions of what AI is and education, while also examining the possible barriers of AIED (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022).

Governments and institutions should give and create strategies for how to integrate AI in education. This document gives guidance and policy advice for governments and leaders to help their country get a grip on how to use AI in education properly. This will help protect ethics and human rights, which makes it follow the UNESCO plan to make sure that these guidelines help achieve sustainable development and incorporation. AI has the capacity to enhance teaching and learning; it can give support to teachers by lowering their burdens and improving efficiency in the learning systems. However, there are ethical concerns such as privacy, transparency, and problems of companies trying to control AI in education, motivated by profit gain (Miao & Holmes, 2021).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore students' perceptions of using AI tools—specifically Grammarly and ChatGPT—in academic writing. The combination of survey and interview data allowed for a comprehensive understanding of not only the extent of AI tool usage among students but also the underlying attitudes, benefits, and concerns associated with these technologies.

3.2. Research Context and Rationale

Although several studies have examined the use of AI writing tools in higher education, most have focused on public universities or general tertiary contexts. Limited attention has been given to private colleges in Oman, despite their increasing adoption of digital tools in teaching and learning. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how AI tools are perceived and integrated into writing practices across diverse academic disciplines within the private higher education sector.

3.3. Participants

The study involved 500 students enrolled in various writing-related courses across multiple programs in an Omani private college. Participants represented different majors and academic levels to ensure a broad and inclusive understanding of student perceptions. Additionally, a purposive sample of 10 students participated in semi-structured interviews to provide in-depth qualitative insights.

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was voluntary. Identities were kept strictly confidential to ensure candid responses and to protect students from any potential academic or ethical consequences related to AI use.

3.4. Instruments

Two instruments were developed for data collection: a survey questionnaire and an interview protocol. The survey consisted of 15 items divided into five thematic sections:

1. Perceptions, convenience, and usefulness of AI tools
2. Factors influencing use
3. Integration and institutional regulation
4. Frequency and patterns of use
5. Perceived benefits and risks

Most items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree.” The final section included multiple-response questions, allowing participants to select all benefits or risks they perceived when using AI tools. This structure enabled the collection of quantifiable data reflecting both positive and negative experiences.

3.5. Interviews

The semi-structured interview protocol comprised six open-ended questions designed to explore students' experiences and attitudes toward AI tools in greater depth. The questions covered the following areas:

- Positive and negative experiences using Grammarly or ChatGPT
- Suggestions for fair and responsible use of AI tools in academic settings
- Perceived ease or difficulty introduced by AI tools
- Influence of AI use on critical thinking and self-learning
- Perceptions of whether AI can outperform human writing

Interviews were conducted individually and recorded with participants' consent.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

Quantitative data were collected first through the survey, distributed electronically to 500 students. This was followed by qualitative data collection through interviews with 10 selected participants. The sequential design allowed the researcher to identify key patterns from the survey and then explore them in more depth during interviews.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the institution's research committee before data collection. Informed consent was secured from all participants, and anonymity was maintained throughout. Sensitive data, including names and course details, was omitted or coded to ensure confidentiality. The study adhered to institutional ethical standards, emphasizing voluntary participation and protection from potential academic repercussions.

4. Findings, Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Instrument reliability

Table 1 presents internal consistency estimates for all constructs included in the survey. The overall 15-item instrument achieved Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$, indicating high internal consistency and supporting the use of aggregate scores in the analyses that follow. At the subscale level, Perceived Usefulness (Q1-Q3; $\alpha = 0.84$), Motivation to Use (Q5-Q7; $\alpha = 0.81$), Perceived Benefits (Q14; $\alpha = 0.80$), and Perceived Risks (Q15; $\alpha = 0.83$) each demonstrated high reliability, suggesting that items within these constructs were well aligned and measured coherent underlying dimensions. Ethical Awareness & Regulation (Q8-Q11; $\alpha = 0.78$) and Frequency of Use (Q12-Q13; $\alpha = 0.73$) reached acceptable levels for research purposes, confirming the stability of these scales. Taken together, these coefficients indicate that the instrument is psychometrically sound and internally coherent, thereby providing a reliable basis for the descriptive and interpretive findings presented in Figures 1-3.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis for Students' Perceptions of AI Writing Tools (N = 500)

Factor	Items Included	Number of Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Perceived Usefulness	Q1-Q3 (Helps fix grammar, generate ideas, write faster)	3	0.84	High reliability
Ease of Use	Q4 (Ease and clarity of use)	1	—	Single-item – not applicable
Motivation to Use	Q5-Q7 (Better marks, save time, improve English)	3	0.81	High reliability
Ethical Awareness & Regulation	Q8-Q11 (Peer use, restrictions, declaration, training)	4	0.78	Acceptable reliability
Frequency of Use	Q12-Q13 (Use of Grammarly and ChatGPT)	2	0.73	Acceptable reliability
Perceived Benefits	Q14 (Grammar, confidence, feedback speed, clarity)	4	0.8	High reliability
Perceived Risks	Q15 (Originality, plagiarism, misinformation, dependency)	4	0.83	High reliability
Overall Scale	Q1-Q15	15	0.89	High internal consistency

Note: Cronbach's α values above 0.70 indicate acceptable internal consistency; values above 0.80 indicate high reliability (George & Mallery, 2019)

4.2. Perceptions of AI writing tools (Q1–Q11)

Figure 1 displays the response distributions for the eleven Likert-type statements capturing students' perceptions of Grammarly and ChatGPT. A discernible positive trend is observed in the data: the majority of respondents indicated Agree or Strongly Agree regarding the items related to usefulness, efficiency, and ease of use. There is a consensus regarding Q1 ("Grammarly assists in the rapid identification and correction of grammatical issues") and Q11 ("Educators ought to instruct students on the ethical use of AI tools"). These two statements approach ceiling effects. This trend indicates that individuals perceive structured, institution-led instruction as highly beneficial and express a collective demand for it.

The data aligns well with a Technology Acceptance framework. Students acknowledge that AI assists with grammar, idea generation, and rapid writing, resulting in consistently high Perceived Usefulness scores from Q1 to Q3. The Ease of Use score (Q4) is also satisfactory. The evaluations likely account for the elevated utilisation rates depicted in Figure 2. The Motivation items also demonstrate a practical aspect. Ninety percent of students reported utilising AI tools for time-saving purposes (Q6), while eighty-one percent indicated their use for improving academic performance (Q5). Only 65.4% indicated that enhancing their English skills was their primary motivation for utilising them (Q7). The motivation set prioritises performance and efficiency over skill development.

The inclusion of additional details enhances the narrative's interest. Q8 ("I use AI tools because a lot of my friends do") has a low level of support (around 39.8% positive and 32% negative), which means that social influence isn't strong; students use AI for practical reasons more than because "everyone else is doing it." Q9 ("AI tools should be used without restrictions") produces a split (44% agree; 32.6% disagree), indicating ambivalence about the scope of permissible use. When read alongside the strong endorsement for declarations (Q10: 70%) and training (Q11: ~100%), a policy paradox emerges: students favor educative guardrails (training, disclosure) but express hesitation about blanket restrictions. In sum, Figure 1 depicts a cohort that is enthusiastic about AI's practical benefits yet cognizant of the need for transparent boundaries and institutional guidance.

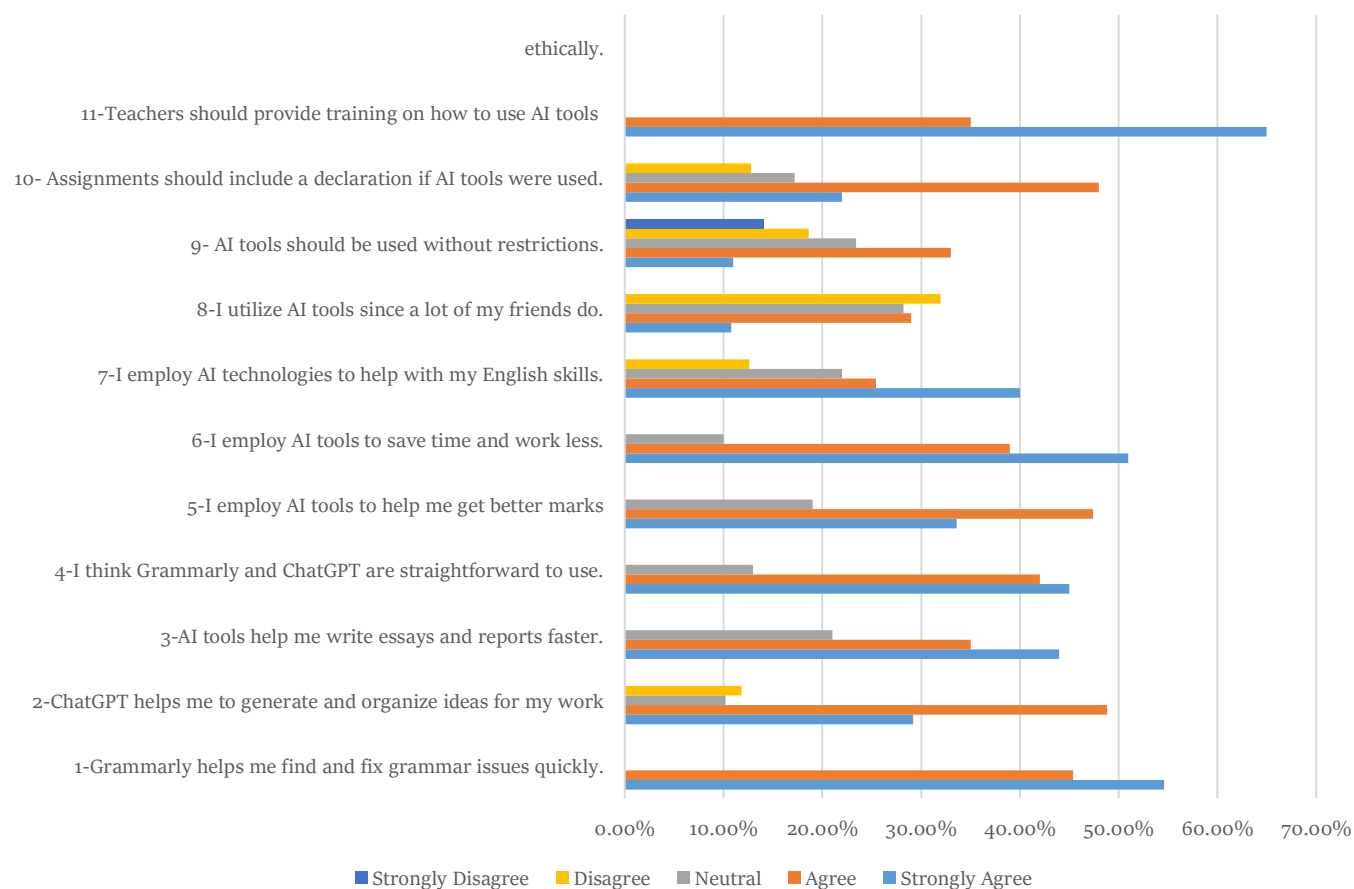


Figure 1. JPEG image of Students' perceptions of AI item 1-11

4.3. Frequency of use (Q12–Q13)

Figure 2 compares the reported frequency of using Grammarly and ChatGPT for academic writing. Both tools are clearly mainstream in students' routines. Approximately 70% report using Grammarly Always or Often, while ChatGPT reaches about 62% in the same categories. Roughly a third of respondents select Sometimes for both tools, and only a small minority report Rarely/Never. This pattern is consistent with the perceptions in Figure 1: when tools are experienced as useful and easy to use, they become part of everyday study practices.

The slight edge for Grammarly likely reflects its long-standing integration with word processors and its focus on surface-level accuracy (grammar, punctuation, word choice), which aligns with routine editing tasks in coursework. By contrast, ChatGPT—a newer, generative tool—appears to be leveraged for idea generation, organization, and drafting, and has nonetheless reached substantial adoption within a relatively short time. Interpreted together, Figures 1 and 2 suggest that AI writing tools have transitioned from optional aids to normal supports in the private-college learning environment under study.

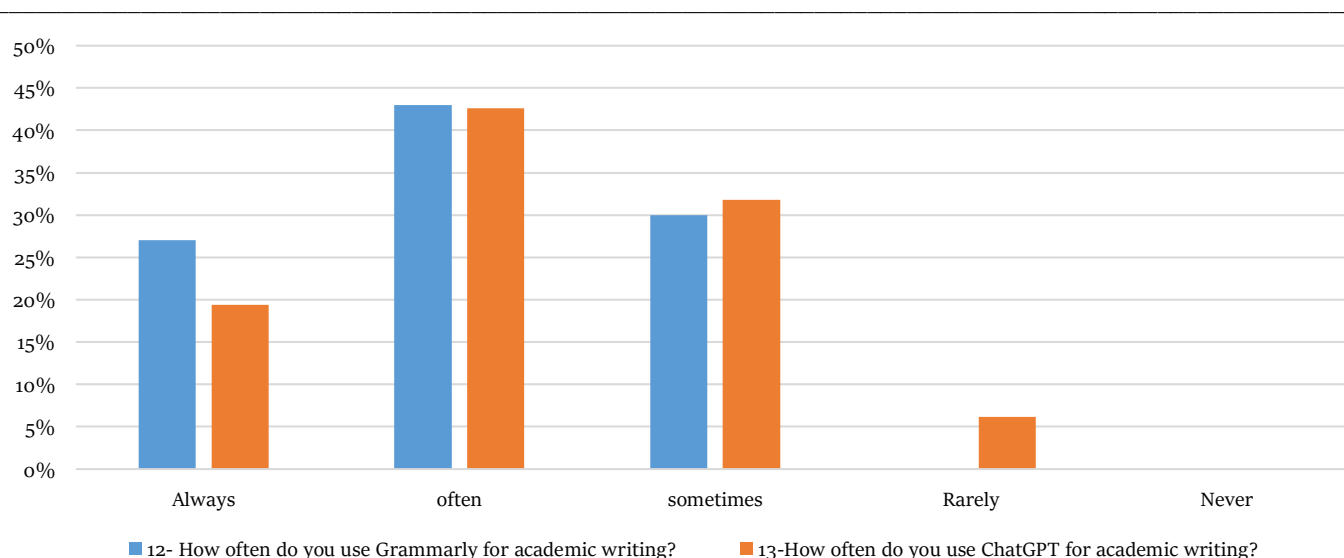


Figure 2. Frequency of using Grammarly & ChatGPT (Items 12-13)

4.4. Perceived benefits and risks (Q14–Q15)

Figure 3 contrasts students' multi-response selections for benefits (Q14) and risks (Q15). On the benefits side, the most frequently selected advantage is that AI tools “give feedback faster than teachers or tutors” (59.8%), followed by “help me express what I want more clearly” (47.2%) and “help me with grammar and vocabulary” (45%). These choices emphasize efficiency, immediacy, and linguistic support as the primary added values. Notably, only 32.4% report that AI tools increase writing confidence, suggesting that while AI improves mechanics and speed, it does not automatically translate into deeper self-efficacy or independence in writing.

On the risks side, students articulate strong cognitive and ethical worries. The most prominent concern is “makes me less original and less able to think critically” (88.6%), followed by “makes me dependent on technology” (69.4%) and “increases the likelihood of plagiarism” (63.2%). A smaller, but still substantial, proportion (42%) identifies the risk of erroneous or misleading information. These endorsements indicate a striking benefit-risk asymmetry: students are enthusiastic users who simultaneously recognize the trade-offs—especially the potential erosion of originality and critical reasoning if reliance becomes habitual or uncritical.

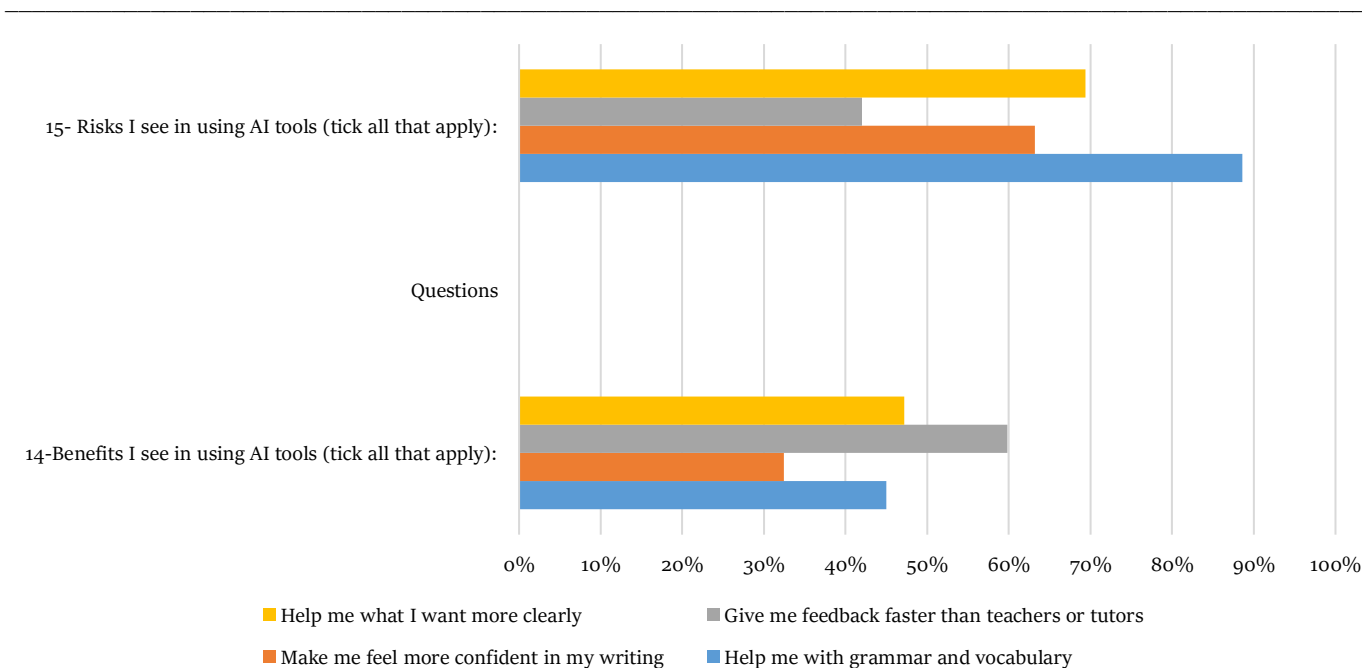


Figure 3. Perceived benefits and risks of using AI writing tools (Items 14-15)

Synthesizing the reliability evidence with the three figures yields a coherent account of students' engagement with AI writing tools. High internal consistency across the instrument confirms that the observed patterns are not artefacts of measurement but reflect stable perceptions. Students express a strong perception of the utility and ease of use associated with tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT, which corresponds with their frequent and habitual integration of these technologies—an adoption trajectory that is consistent with established technology-adoption frameworks. The motivations exhibited by students tend to lean towards pragmatic objectives—namely, time efficiency and grade enhancement—rather than a focused pursuit of skill acquisition, which implies that, in the absence of instructional guidance, students prioritize efficiency over the development of writing proficiency. The impact of social factors seems to be quite limited, indicating that usage is mostly driven by pragmatic study tactics rather than by peer-established norms. Students have mixed feelings on regulation: they want training and explicit disclosures, but they are divided on whether or not to allow unlimited use. This indicates a preference for educational safeguards over stringent prohibitions. The benefits most valued by students—such as speed, immediacy, and linguistic accuracy—conflict with their primary concerns, which include a loss of originality and critical thinking, excessive reliance on technology, and the risk of plagiarism. These tendencies collectively establish artificial intelligence as an essential resource in academic endeavours, with its educational effectiveness dependent on how academic institutions direct its application to foster independent reasoning rather than mere automation.

The findings advocate for an integrated approach that positions AI literacy as a fundamental component of basic writing instruction and assessment, rather than an ancillary element or limited to a single discipline. Curricula must systematically instruct students on prompting, verifying, citing, and critically evaluating AI-generated outputs. They should also stress the importance of metacognitive reflection on the reasons for accepting or rejecting suggestions and how to back up claims with reliable sources. Assessment policies should prioritize process transparency—requiring clear AI-use declarations and collecting process artefacts such as drafts, revision histories, and brief oral defenses—so that originality is demonstrated in reasoning, evidence selection, and revision decisions rather than in surface form alone. Effective institutional guidelines should delineate permitted and restricted use cases with accompanying rationale, frame constraints as supportive of learning, and align with task designs that incentivise analysis, source-based writing, and in-class composition. Routine monitoring of subgroup patterns, such as by major or level, along with the relationships between frequency of use, perceived usefulness, and risk awareness, can guide iterative refinements to curricula and policy. Collectively, these measures establish a pedagogical framework wherein AI enhances students' abilities in judgement, argumentation, and style rather than replacing them.

4.5. Efficiency, immediacy, and idea scaffolding

Across interviews, students repeatedly framed Grammarly and ChatGPT as time-saving **accelerators** that lower the activation energy of writing. Tools were praised for jump-starting ideas, organizing content, and centralizing information: AI “helps

generate more ideas... and organize work" (S1), "reduces time... you can get the information in one place instead of researching multiple websites" (S4), and "gives the answers for quizzes... creates the spark for ideas" (S5). This language describes AI as a scaffold for invention and planning rather than merely a grammar checker. The narratives exhibit convergence with quantitative trends (significant consensus regarding utility and efficiency in Q1–Q3; substantial routine utilization in Q12–Q13). From an analytical perspective, students are exchanging the costs associated with search and planning for expedited advancement toward a preliminary draft – a judicious strategy in the context of impending deadlines. The inherent risk in this scenario is cognitive offloading: when the processes of planning and information retrieval are externalized to the tool, students may progress swiftly yet potentially engage less in the construction of knowledge and the development of cognitive schemas, thereby establishing the groundwork for the tensions elucidated in subsequent themes.

4.6. Surface accuracy versus deep learning

Students made a clear distinction between surface-level gains and deep learning. They said that AI helped them write better and put things together faster ("exact answers... at a fast pace," S3), but they were worried that "knowledge... does not stick... since I put no effort into researching" (S4). Some people thought that AI's benefits were more mechanical (grammar, vocabulary, sentence polish) than conceptual (argumentation, evaluation, transfer). This is in line with the survey's benefits profile, which shows that 45% of people said grammar and vocabulary were helpful, 47.2% said clarity was helpful, and only 32.4% said confidence gains were helpful. From a learning-science perspective, students are delineating a shallow-processing pathway: output quality improves, yet the beneficial challenges that enhance long-term retention (searching, selecting, re-articulating) are circumvented. The analysis indicates that in the absence of explicit instructional design, students are unlikely to transform AI-facilitated fluency into enduring comprehension or autonomous rhetorical mastery.

4.7. Overreliance and erosion of critical thinking

A prevalent theme in interviews was reliance and the perceived decline of autonomous reasoning. Students said that AI was "another mind... as if it took the ability to think from my mind" (S4) and that it was hard to defend AI-assisted text: "copy and paste... might get [me] in trouble if... asked about what is written" (S3). Some people said that using ChatGPT all the time made them less creative: "less creative in my writing... have to depend on ChatGPT" (S5). These accounts strongly support the most highly endorsed risk in the survey (Q15: loss of originality/critical thinking = 88.6%). From an analytical perspective, this exemplifies metacognitive displacement: the responsibilities of monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making transition from the student to the tool, thereby undermining the self-regulatory loop that cultivates expert judgement. The interviews also reveal an assessment vulnerability: when comprehension has not been personally developed, oral defences or in-class evaluations highlight the disparity between refined text and true understanding. This helps explain why students are asking for both training and clearer rules at the same time. They understand both the benefits and the intellectual costs of relying on things that aren't structured.

4.8. Reliability, relevance, and reference credibility

Students understood that AI can be wrong with confidence. It was common for reports to include irrelevant details and shaky citations, such as "extra information unrelated to the topic" (S1), "does not give the proper and exact information" (S2), and "references... not credible" (S5). These experiences correspond to the 42% who identified misinformation as a risk (Q15). Students are facing hallucination and deductive relevance in their analytical work (on-topic tone with off-target claims). People think that AI gives "exact answers" (S3), but they also know that those answers might not be based on enough evidence. This tension shows that students are starting to become more aware of epistemic sensitivity: they are starting to understand that an authoritative voice does not equal verified truth. The interviews advocate for explicit instruction in verification workflows (cross-referencing databases, tracing claims to sources, and rejecting unverifiable references) to ensure that students perceive AI as a draft generator rather than a definitive source.

4.9. Expectations for policy, training, and disclosure

Participants requested explicit boundaries, disclosures, and ethics education: "limits... and a declaration if AI tools were used" (S2); "teachers should teach... to think critically" (S5); "keep an eye... ask them about what they wrote" (S3). These preferences align with the quantitative data, indicating robust support for training and AI-use declarations in Q10–Q11, and ambivalence regarding unrestricted use in Q9. Students are expressing a model of educative governance: they seek guidance that delineates legitimate support from substitution, alongside assessment practices that validate authorship (e.g., concise oral evaluations). Importantly, the call is not for blanket bans but for transparent norms that make responsible use teachable, audible, and visible in coursework. Policies that specify permitted uses (e.g., grammar checking, idea prompts with citation) and restricted practices (e.g., undisclosed paragraph generation) would align with these expectations.

4.10. Human authorship, voice, and emotion

Most interviewees contended that AI does not write better than humans, citing emotion, individuality, and judgment as decisive advantages: “humans write with feelings... AI writing is robotic and emotionless” (S4); “every human’s mind is different... AI follows a prompt” (S5). A minority perspective (S2) recognised AI’s capability for superior source aggregation and efficient coverage, yet it also conceded the necessity of human guidance. Students are analytically differentiating between form and voice: while AI can replicate textual features, it encounters difficulties with stance, nuance, and audience-specific choices that indicate genuine authorship. This aligns with the asymmetry observed in Figure 3: students value AI for its efficiency and clarity, while expressing concerns about a diminished voice and uniform responses. The implication is that instruction should emphasise voice-bearing moves—evaluation, synthesis of competing sources, and justification of choices—specifically in areas where human writers excel beyond templated generation.

Interviews give a balanced but alarming picture. AI helps pupils get started with their work and write better when they’re done. That’s why your study indicated that many people find it useful and use it a lot. They also talk about the problems of writing without friction: less difficulty can mean fewer learning signals (search, selection, re-expression), which makes it hard for individuals to defend or convey what they read on the page. They don’t say no to AI; instead, they want rules that make the learner think about things like verification, logic, and self-explanation while AI assists. So, the qualitative analysis adds to the quantitative results: AI is becoming a normal part of how students write. Schools should make sure that the disciplined, open, and critically scrutinised use of academic writing becomes routine. This will keep human judgment and voice at the centre of it.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that AI writing tools have become standard aids in students’ academic endeavours; they are regarded as beneficial, user-friendly, and are frequently utilised for drafting, idea organisation, and expediting feedback. Reliability evidence ($\alpha = .89$ overall) substantiates that these patterns are stable rather than mere artefacts of measurement. Simultaneously, students express distinct cognitive and ethical concerns, particularly regarding the potential decline in originality and critical thinking, reliance on technology, issues of plagiarism, and sporadic misinformation. In short, the things that students value most (speed, clarity, and surface accuracy) are at odds with the things that scare them most (loss of independent reasoning and authorship).

The educational task, therefore, is not whether to use Grammarly or ChatGPT but how to integrate them so they augment rather than replace learning. For private colleges in Oman, the evidence supports a shift from ad-hoc use to guided integration: embed AI-literacy instruction in writing courses (prompting, verification, citation of AI assistance, bias/misinformation checks), pair AI-supported drafting with process-oriented assessment (AI-use declarations, iterative drafts, in-class writing, brief oral defenses), and articulate transparent, educative policies that distinguish permitted support (e.g., grammar checking, brainstorming with attribution) from prohibited substitution (undisclosed generation).

Finally, while the present design captured perceptions across majors and levels, it relied on self-report and did not link AI use to measured writing performance or critical-thinking outcomes. Future work should examine subgroup differences (e.g., IT vs. non-IT), track changes over time, and relate AI use to rubric-based writing quality and independent reasoning. Aligning pedagogy, policy, and assessment in these ways can preserve human judgment and voice while leveraging AI’s strengths for efficiency and linguistic support.

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