

# Lived Experience of Undergraduate University Students: Increasing Dependency on AI-based Digital Tools for Academic Work. Qualitative Research

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## Abstract

The accelerated fusion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) based digital tools into higher education has outstandingly transformed the academic entity of undergraduate university students. Expanding academic demands, performance expectations, and pressing deadlines have led many undergraduate university students to turn heavily on AI tools for academic writing, problem-solving, academic support, and time management. This Qualitative study aims to explore the lived experiences of undergraduate university students with respect to their increasing dependency on AI-based digital tools. A qualitative phenomenological research design was employed to obtain a profound understanding of students' perceptions, feelings, and meanings regarding their use of AI tools throughout their academic progression. Data were obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with undergraduate university students chosen using purposive sampling. The interviews provided copious and in-depth narratives of students' perceptions and personal experiences. The interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Data were studied using thematic analysis, aimed at documenting frequent outlines and distinguished themes within the data. The investigation revealed six leading themes, frequent key themes, counting Significant Necessity on AI for Theoretical Everyday jobs, Although Capability and Academic Expediency, AI as Intellectual and Academic Provision, Reducing Education, Preservation, and Critical Intelligent skills, Ethical, Economic, and procedural regarding Encounters, and Heedful Efforts to Equilibrium AI-based tools practice and Self-determining Knowledge. The conclusions of this study emphasized that AI-based digital tools play a transformative role in shaping undergraduate theoretical practices. Unfluctuating nevertheless these paraphernalia foster productivity, association, and theoretical excellence, overwhelming dependance attitudes extensive hazards to scholarship complexity, recollection preservation, and intellectual progress. Campuses and educationalists would henceforth progress accountable and well-adjusted AI combination comprehensive clear approaches, ethical management, and assessment methods that ensure admiration for self-determining acquaintance and academic honesty.

**Keywords:** Lived Experience, Undergraduate, Increasing Dependency, Academic Work

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## INTRODUCTION

The immediate flareup of AI-based alphanumeric knowledges is prominently upsetting advanced training administrations internationally, changing undergraduate students' acquaintances with instruction, assessment, and incapacitating all-inclusive hypothetical complications. Those that a decade ago were additional or experimental technologies have now firmly situated AI-based digital tools within everyday academic practice. From writing assignments and summarizing readings, to generating ideas and research support, AI technologies, particularly generative AI systems such as large language model are increasingly framing undergraduate students' experiences. Such is a fundamental change in how knowledge is constructed, accessed, and evidenced within higher education. At present, there has been evidence around the world that the use of AI tools among undergraduate students has moved from optional experimentation to regular academic dependence. The tools are no longer used as a support system but as a source in completing academic tasks. In a large-scale global report, the Digital Education Council (2024) shows that more than half of undergraduate students across 16 countries believe that too much reliance on AI devalues higher education and might affect the quality of learning negatively. This is particularly salient because it captures students' own recognition of risks associated with overusing AI, even while they continue to integrate these tools into their academic routines.

However, the concerns about students' dependency on AI are not just limited to students alone. A global survey was conducted among faculties across the globe, consisting of 28 different countries, by Times Higher Education (2024), and the survey revealed that about 82% faculties across the world shared significant concerns about students' dependency on AI and the capacity to critically think about the outputs generated by AI. A considerable portion of the faculties revealed that students have been showing low levels of engagement and commitment regarding AI's potential for accelerating the efficiency and effectiveness of the learning process, including students' inability to think critically and independently about AI-generated outputs. Furthermore, the above facts and figures reveal the additional implications for higher learning in terms of the misuse and abuse of AI's potential for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the learning process, including students' inability to think critically and independently about AI-generated outputs, and the general balance between the potential for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the learning process.

Such concerns have resonated with international policy organizations, focusing on the pragmatism of regulation and the ethical embedding of AI in educational contexts. According to UNESCO (2023), although AI technologies enable educators to innovate learning and teaching environments to be more inclusive, personalized, and accessible, over-dependence on AI technologies without regulation poses threats to subsume essential cognitive processes rather than support them. UNESCO states that when students "outsource" fundamental intellectual activities, like analysis, synthesis, and solution-finding, to AI systems, their disposition toward learning autonomy and intellectual agency will be gradually eroded. Similarly, at the policy and national/international scope, the use of AI technology has, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2024), also become distributed among students for purposes such as writing, research, and completing their assignments, with little or sometimes any education provided about the usage and application thereof. The policy emphasizes the following with regard to AI technology use among students: although the technology may provide students with short-term academic advantages, too much dependency could mean students are not adequately prepared for

the future, once they graduate and are required to think for themselves. All these factors, at the policy and societal scope, aim to illustrate the overall relevance and need for the examination not only the quite obvious extent to which students are making use of AI technology, but also how it makes sense to students that they are doing so.

Moving beyond global statistical and policy research reports, international research can also further shed light on the attitudes, emotional states, and behavioral patterns of undergraduate students pertaining to AI use. The results of broad international research conducted by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI, 2025) in the United Kingdom revealed: "Among young people currently in universities in the UK, 92 percent reported using generative AI tools, and 88 percent reported doing so as part of assignments. This follows an exponential increase from previous academic years and further demonstrates the mainstreaming of AI use in education." The research revealed other positive uses, such as the use of AI to discuss complex issues, to better understand academic readings, to generate ideas, and to enrich the quality of writing. Although the majority of the students agreed on the importance and ease that could be derived from using AI tools, there was a large margin that felt a sense of insecurity pertaining to the need for ethics and the administration of student dependence on technology to advance with their academics. This confirms that students have realized the future consequences that could arise due to the steadily growing use and reliance on AI tools.

Furthermore, Studies indicate that students' engagement with AI systems is moderated by psychological, emotional, and contextual determinants. In fact, Kasneci, None, & Trausan-Matu (2023) indicate that students are pressing and always busier with more academic pressures, expectations to compete, and limited time to finish their academic activities. Therefore, students have intensified their usage of AI systems such as text generators, grammar checkers, and summarizers. While students acknowledge that AI usage is academically productive and precise, they have decreased their engagement with reflective thoughts and critical thinking. This has made them question whether it promotes student learning or is just used to simplify activities. Research conducted in the United States also supports these conclusions. In their study, Cotton et al. (2023) discovered that for undergraduate learners in the United States, the significance of generative AI includes its capacity for decreasing cognitive workload and related educational pressure. However, for these learners, AI dependency may inhibit their capacity for independent writing, problem-solving, and thorough interaction with education. According to Rudolph et al. (2023), other American research related to AI dependency among learners indicates that although AI is vital for immediate educational needs, learners may find that their dependency on AI hinders their eagerness for interacting with educational resources and their capacity for independent knowledge construction. These studies based in other countries show that AI dependency is not just about learners and AI; instead, it is closely linked to learners' emotional states and pressure.

Additionally, the evidence of widespread AI use and consequent dependency issues is also suggested by national studies. In fact, a national study in Portugal conducted by Moreira et al., (2024) which focused on higher education students, noted that almost all students, representing 97.7%, reported exposure to generative AI for academic purposes, which includes "generating ideas, understanding concepts, and finalizing assignments". Although these students saw a positive effect in terms of speed and academic success, they also exhibited signs of dependency on these tools due to less individual cognitive effort. In a similar manner, research carried out in Saudi Arabia Al-Zahrani et al., (2024) highlighted that "the majority, (78.7%), of undergraduate students

habitually employ AI-based tools, and these students' reported advantages in terms of skills, increased understanding and time management of subject materials, and feasibility of individualized feedback." The research further emphasized that, "despite these benefits, students reported ethical issues associated with academic progression, plagiarism, and personal autonomy in learning." The research and studies carried out highlight clearly that, in terms of education, countries and cultures have similar issues and matters to confront and resolve.

In Asian contexts, studies conducted in China and Pakistan reveal additional dimensions of AI dependency. Research by Zhou and Lu (2024) and Abbas et al., (2024) suggests that indicate that frequent AI use may relate to decreased academic self-efficacy and overconfidence in performance outcomes. Those students who depended seriously on AI tools felt less confident in being able to independently undertake the assignment work; they showed heightened anxiety when AI tools were not available. These findings emphasized that AI dependency affects student's self-assessments of their ability and willingness for independent learning, above their academic behaviors. Aggregately, this national-level research shows that while there is widespread adoption of AI tools to support academic work, students are increasingly aware of the potential risks of over-reliance, including erosion of confidence, avoidance of challenging cognitive work, uncertainty of ethical practice, and possibly longer-term consequences for learning autonomy.

Qualitative and community-based approaches have brought tremendous insights into "the lived experience" of students becoming dependent on AI. Studies have also been conducted around individual universities or institutions to understand how students behave based on institutional norms and clarity. For example, "A recent qualitative study from a U.S. university, Pitts et al. (2025), discovered that students given free access to AI described an increased reliance upon these technologies for coursework when under time constraints. These students also worry about losing critical thinking and independent writing capacities." Likewise, Abbas et al. (2024) found that students saw the brilliance of AI tools as a coping mechanism for dealing with college stress and work overload. Even though the AI tools aided students in completing work on time and attaining better grades, the students reported feelings that included guilt, worry, and fear of getting caught misusing the AI tools, all of which significantly affected the students' emotional responses to the AI tools. At the same time, community research points to the part played by peer pressure in supporting AI reliance. For their part, Cotton et al. (2023) described students frequently being pressured into utilizing AI since "every other individual is utilizing it." In doing so, student culture became saturated with the normalization of AI reliance.

Nevertheless, within global, international, national, and local spaces, Jia & Lam (2025) dug deep into a common pattern that appears to emerge to create an essential bridge between AI dependency and the psychological/physical conditions accompanying the student population experiencing AI dependency. This condition is highlighted by the reality in which studies point to the matter of empowerment, relief, and reassurance. In response to AI dependency, especially for the student population facing elevated academic stress events. Conversely, Zhou et al. (2024) express that students also report pessimistic emotional experiences related to AI dependency, such as guilt, anxiousness, and fear related to academic misconduct. UNESCO (2023) warns that such emotional challenges may weaken students' motivation and confidence, especially when AI replaces rather than supports cognitive effort. OECD, 2024, and Rudolph et al. (2023) illustrate that from a cognitive perspective, excessive AI reliance may diminish opportunities for reflective learning, critical analysis.

Despite the growing body of global, international, national, and local research Selwyn, 2019; Zawacki-Richter et al., (2019), in light of the increasing use of AI-based digital tools in the higher education sector, there is a growing need to understand the lived experiences of students in their academic lives with these digital tools. While there have been studies on the effectiveness, ethics, and implications of artificial intelligence in education, there has been a lack of focus on the lived experiences of undergraduate students and their increasing dependency on AI-based digital tools in their academic lives. Luckin et al. (2016) emphasizes this is important as the dependency on AI-based digital tools could have an impact on the learning practices, autonomy, critical thinking, and cognitive processes of students. Consequently, additional downhearted the qualitative ordinary, the prevailing education determinations to discover the lived knowledges of undergraduate academia scholars and their snowballing dependence on AI-founded numerary gadgets in intellectual work.

### **Problem Statement**

By means of expertise endures to redesign frequent features of teaching, the increasing dependence on Non-natural Intelligence (AI)-based digital apparatuses between academia undergraduates partakes developed a remarkable tendency. These apparatuses, such as AI-based submissions for computer-generated training, inscription assistance, data examination, and additional, have established irreplaceable for attractive theoretical efficiency, rationalization investigate, and as long as customized education involvements. Even though the possible expediency of artificial intelligence in theoretical exertion is extensively documented, Strand et al. (2023) highlight increasing apprehension about the longstanding implications of this dependence. Student academia scholars are gradually in need of these digital tools, with them not only for unremarkable responsibilities but also for life-threatening theoretical determinations. Kasneci et al. (2023) argue that the ease and efficiency of Artificial Intelligence apparatuses have led to a change in outdated education methods, raising apprehensions about their influence on scholars' abstract truthfulness and reasoning abilities of undergraduates. As AI expertise continues to progress, it is indispensable to comprehend by what means undergraduates distinguish and interact with these numerical tools, along with the possible challenges and principled impasses they encounter while with them.

Popular Disapproval for increasing use of Artificial Intelligence tools, here left-overs inadequate education that discovers the lived experiences of learner intellectuals and their developed suggestion concluded this knowledge. This qualitative study purposes to pursue this breach by exploring in could you repeat that manner undergraduate university undergraduates distinguish their snowballing dependence on Artificial Intelligence-stuck digital tools for enlightening determinations. The education resolves the support, responsibility, and honorable discussions undergraduates' appearance, as extensive as an unrestricted understanding of the extrapolations of Artificial intelligence combination on knowledge developments and theoretical implications. Contending with these changing aspects presents assistance in developing techniques that balance the compensations of Artificial Intelligence apparatuses while preserving significant theoretical assistance and truthfulness.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The conflation of artificial intelligence (AI) partakes commanded to digital strategies in advanced tutoring, entirely redesigning undergraduates' enlightening performs and involvements.

Nonfiction places of interest that AI technologies remain no technique extended unnecessary conceptions but have grown-up entrenched in the interior monotonous academia education environments. These devices are extensively utilized to support educational writing, research organization, assessment preparation, and all kinds of learning activities. Systematized reviews indicate that AI tools now impact not only how students complete educational activities but also how they engage with knowledge and literacy processes. As AI usage enhances, educated concentration has moved from specialized functionality toward understanding students' cognitive, emotional, and ethical feelings and experiences with these advanced technologies.

The primary objectives of earlier studies on AI in university settings were improved performance, productivity, and transformation in higher education students. (Popenici & Kerr, 2017) As stated, AI operating systems first became known as successful tools for improving educational performance through the implementation of instructional and educational strategies. Similarly, (Holmes et al., 2019) highlight that AI applications were largely viewed as solutions for individualized learning, automation, and data-driven decision-making. However, as AI tools became more approachable to students, researchers began to identify that their impact increases more than functional benefits and affects students' learning behavior, decision-making, and sense of responsibility. A massive body of literature reports AI-based tools as academic support mechanisms that increase students' productivity and learning efficiency. Students mostly use AI applications for idea creation, making assignments, improving language quality, and managing academic workloads. According to (Luckin & Holmes, 2016) AI works as a cognitive structure by decreasing mental effort and supporting students during complex learning tasks. This framework consequence is exactly understandable in period-convincing theoretical surroundings, anywhere undergraduates rest on on on AI tools to accomplish targets and abstract work. Through resources of a consequence, AI is often seen as an authorizing income that simplifies mission achievement and attainment in scholars.

Experimental studies suggest that students' dependence in AI tools is significantly linked to believed usefulness and academic competence. Jia et al. (2025) report that students who trust AI-founded theoretical writing tasks have a tendency to perceive better competence and improved self-esteem. This belief inspires repeated use, predominantly for repetitive abstract responsibilities such as syntax improvement, summarization, and gratified association. Accordingly, AI tools have become important to students' day-to-day academic goings-on, strengthening outlines of dependence. These conclusions propose that dependency on AI progresses progressively finished optimistic theoretical knowledges and supposed presentation benefits. Even though there are strong advantages, the literature dependably increases apprehensions about increasing dependence on AI-based tools. Although confidence is significant, extreme necessity may limit self-governing intellectual and critical thought (Jia et al., 2025). Undergraduates repeatedly circumvent by means of AI assistance during periods of academic pressure, even when they understand its limitations. This predisposition jerry can lead to artificial learning, by way of competence, which is ordered over profounder reasoning appointment (Selwyn, 2019). Indiscriminating dependence on educational technologies may also decline students' analytical, critical, and thoughtful skills.

Elsewhere, cognitive reasoning, the expressive and moral features of trusting in AI are progressively noteworthy in study. Undergraduates often feel indeterminate around using AI tools. While they escalate the theoretical support these tackles offer, they are similarly concerned about uprightness and imagination. (Nugroho, 2025) proceedings that apprehensions around copy,

production, and requirement on AI are dominant in students' knowledge. As a consequence, students feel conflicted as they balance academic expectations with the convenience of AI. Eventually, using AI is an expressive experience as well as a procedural decision. From a qualitative viewpoint, AI tools can assess students' intelligence and happiness, and the safekeeping of their intellectual work. Under pressure, undergraduates may find comfort and reassurance in AI organizations, which are continuously available and indulgent. (Zhu & Luo, 2024) Communication that users often attribute human-like qualities, such as empathy and understanding, to digital systems, even though they distinguish that these systems are not truly conscious or emotional. This perceived empathy can increase students' attachment to AI and whitethorn principal to superior dependence, particularly amongst those who feel stressed, inaccessible, or have low self-confidence.

Recognized factors powerfully inspire how students use AI tools. Explore shows that undergraduates often lack clear guidance on the proper and ethical use of AI in their studies. (Selwyn, 2019) points out that in the absence of clear policies, students must decide for themselves when and how to use AI. Learners whose stay is dependent on AI for assistance because they are afraid of being accused of dishonesty strength encounter improved emotional strain and ethical conflicts as a result of this indecision. Consequently, organizational confusion, as opposed to purposeful exploitation, can promote reliance. In addition, the academic research underlines the importance of knowledge of AI in minimizing dependency. (Holmes et al., 2019) say that, along with competence in technology, an important comprehension of AI boundaries and moral dilemmas is essential to ensure the successful implementation of AI. Despite adequate guidance, students will begin to questions AI generated response, which might increase the risk of inaccurate responses and impair their ability to think critically. This excessive dependency implies an evolution out of active creation of information.

In the context of methodology, almost all of the earlier studies on AI in higher education have adopted quantitative and mixed-method studies emphasizing outcomes for performance in academic work, acceptance rates, and trust levels.(Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019) It ought to be noted that while these methods deliver helpful insight into the patterns of usage, they frequently stop short of reflecting the richness and depth of the students' everyday experiences. Whereas there have been limited qualitative studies, they demonstrate how AI reliance influences sense of self, ethical consideration, and mental response. According to these conclusions, dependence must be viewed as a statistical procedure that can be affected by projected expectation, emotional need, and the culture of academia. According to the investigative research, AI-related technological advancements have an important effect on university students' learning experiences throughout. Although they also address issues associated with dependency, analytical involvement, and moral decision making, these technologies improve effectiveness, affordability, and overall confidence. Trust, pressure from academia, institutional environments, and psychological encouragement alter students' experiences with AI. Previous studies illustrate the necessity of going beyond just functional analysis and examining how students perceive and rationalize how they rely on AI tools. A phenomenological focus on lived experiences is therefore important to develop a deeper, human-focused understanding of AI dependency in higher education.

Vieriu and Petrea (2025) emphasized the brisk embodiment of artificial intelligence AI in the higher education virtually reformed the students' academic practices. After the introduced of AI tool ChatGPT in November 2022 extensively acquired by the university students the acceptance

rates awfully immense in academic contexts. (Zhai et al., 2024) noted that Its usage all over the place exclusively in academic writing to a greater extent of AI base application similarly ChatGPT and consensus in the learning routines of the students. Despite this technology contribute in both academic progress and capability but clue illustrate a certain repeated uses of AI be permitted toward addiction persuasion learning behaviors, cognitive engagement and academics purity. For that reason, current articles focus on the addiction of AI when appearing interest in higher education setting.

Vieriu and Petrea (2025) described that research determine a particular taking over of AI among university students are approximately common in which ChatGPT is usually ultimate usage tool after that AI sustained educational platforms. (Zhang et al., 2024) observed that students again and again apply AI ahead of weekly or regularly base especially as long as academic support, writing improvement along with interpretation of convoluted ideas. The indicated comprehensive assimilation shows a well know AI tools are not any more auxiliary however eagerly embroiled in core academic task. Furthermore students address namouras encouraging aspect for AI usage in addition to time saving protection, academic consolation and cognitive collaboration. (Holland & Ciachir, 2025) mentioned that of the main aspect aiding repeating dependency leaning on AI tools are the immediate availability of answers. As a results AI tools pay off both emotional and informational needs boost deep-seated patterns. Zhang et al., (2024) explained that AI addiction extends beyond routine tool action and characterized when exorbitant dependence expressed by both intellectual attachment observable overuse. Already stated addiction endure on a continuum, assorting from active educational support to difficult dependence that reduce picking up self-sufficiency.(Zhang et al., 2024) highlighted that the interaction of person- affect-cognition-achievement (I- PACE) model has been appertained to clarify AI addiction accenting how respective characteristics emotional stress cognitive anticipations and administrant acting all around pitch in to difficult AI application.

More ever academic education hypothesis give additional perception into AI intercourses. (Muzumdar & Cheemalapati, 2025) AI application design with polychrome education hypothesis containing behaviorist, cognitive, constructivist and humanist passages. These academic junction indicates that reliance may affect education courses otherwise hanging on how AI devices are applied within educational task. (Muzumdar & Cheemalapati, 2025) elaborated that experiential ambit of AI reliance students' adventures of AI disclose complex dynamics communed to branch and regulator. In structured educational situation students again and again describe broke free will where interactive AI application allow major individual involvement and conclusion raw material. This interpretation highlights that reliance manifest in other way across atmospheres. Holland and Ciachir (2025) illustrated that emotionally students draw cross reaction to AI applications. While passion of self-assurance and comforting are frequent negative feelings alike as anxiety, discomforts and concern about misapplication are also described. (Zhang et al., 2024) pointed out that in some cases AI application are saw as covers for educationist feedback especially when human support is limited from a cognitive outlook studies always pinpoint negative education issues hooked up with extreme AI dependency, these carry reduced critical, thinking limited creativity increased educational shiftlessness and weakened problem working capabilities.(Vieriu & Petrea, 2025) stressed that concern regarding the attrition of self-dependent thinking skill are again and again expressed by students highlighting possible long term goods on educational expansion.

Holland & Ciachir (2025) strongly argue that AI reliance correspondingly rises significant ethical challenges related to educational integrity. Students show doubt when differentiating acceptable AI backing from educational misconduct especially regarding editing rewording and idea innovation. This nebulousness contributes to tension and inconsistent practices across educational setting. Further enterprises related to AI closeness favor, isolation and equity are broadly argued in the literature. (Alkaiissi & McFarlane, 2023; Lund, 2023) clarified that problem alike as AI generated in accuracies and erratic access to higher applications may yonder complex ethical judgment in educational surround. (Holland & Ciachir, 2025) found that students also express apprehensiveness regarding scented worth of educational capabilities amid building up AI dependency. Pedro et al., (2019) highlighted that institutions hold commenced developing strategies to handle AI integration featuring the part of AI as a confirming rather than substitute education resource. Holland and Ciachir, (2025) observed that indicated approaches embrace estimation redesign AI knowledge education and clearer institutional guidelines. Even so disagreeing events continue to pitch in to students confusing and anxiety. (Muzumdar & Cheemalapati, 2025) asserted that although rising research several gaps hang around existing studies by and large concentrate on ChatGPT with finite exploration of other generally applied AI application. (Zhang et al., 2024) explained that besides maximum research provide cross sectional perceptivity lacking longitudinal examination of reliance development over moment. (Livberber & Ayvaz, 2023) argue that cultural and contextual controversies especially in non-western educational atmospheres similarly hang around underexplored.

The Latest literature indicates the growing position of the AI specifically ChatGPT, in advance education language literacy. AI grounded application is gradually taken up to handle complaints fronted by non-English considerable parallel as limited vulnerability low provocation and time restrictions. ChatGPT proceed using bulky languages models, empower interactive arguments explanation of complex generalities vocabulary developments and writing support forming it a adaptable supplementary education resource. (Chan & Hu, 2023) point out that students scent ChatGPT as an applicable because to its comfort of using rapid fire replies and capability to epitomize knowledge experiences which agree with the technology acceptance model featuring sensed avail and relief of usage. Research affecting fitness wisdom pupils display that ChatGPT supports deal of English accouterments, particularly discipline distinct language enhances learner motivation and their confidence. Baskara (2023) demonstrated that many empirical studies says that positive student perceptions of ChatGPT for enhancing vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills, as well as encourage autonomous and self-directed learning. AI digital assistants provide instant feedback and explanations, which can decrease anxiety and support independent practice. However, literature also show reasonable challenges. Discussion contains information over burden , random imprecision, limited situational understanding, and the risk of over dependency , which may negatively affect critical thinking skills. (Rukiati et al., 2023) concluded that moreover, AI don't have human interaction, cultural variation, and emotional responsiveness, factors considered important for effective language accomplishment. Ethical issues such as data privacy and academic honor further complicate AI based tools in education.

Overall, previous studies show that while ChatGPT is an important STRONG tool in English language learning, it should not change traditional instruction. Instead, balanced integration combining AI support with human guidance is suggested , particularly for non-English related majors like health science students who have specific academic and professional language needs This body of literature show the need for pedagogical policies that guide proper use of AI,

encourage verification of information, and enhance critical thinking, confirming that technological revolution enhances learning outcomes without effecting cognitive development or fruitful teacher–student interaction in higher education situations in all diverse academic disciplines across the world. The inspected literature establishes AI reliance a multidimensional problem effect educational, cognitive, emotional and ethical facets of advanced education. While AI application give concrete educational support extreme dependency may undermine hypercritical thinking, creativity, learning free will. Going substantiation indicate the need for profound qualitative research of students resided experiences with AI reliance. Addressing these gaps is developing common sensible pedagogical designs and institutional courses that support and balanced and ethical AI integration in advance education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Quantitative Phenomenological research strategy was embraced to interrogate how undergraduate university student’s proficiency and sense the utilize of AI based digital application within their educational durations. Phenomenology reinforces grasp entity lived experiences and the meaning they assign to that expertise. This design was suitable because the pursued to discover students personalized betrothal with AI applications their sense of reliance and the educational and cognitive allegations uprising from such utilization. The phenomenological approach permitted the researcher to acquire rich in depth and realistic records without charging predefine hypothesis or postulates. By unifying participants viewpoints, the study aimed to disclose how AI applications form education behaviors study design, critical thinking educational performances and ethical consciousness. This approach correspondingly supported research of students emotional and cognitive reactions to AI usage containing confidence, encouragement, dependency, stress and perceived intellectual efficacy.

Through alerts clarification of participants chronology, the design eased to holistic understanding of how AI technologies are assimilated everyday educational practices. Collectively the phenomenological design agreed with study objectives of acquiring certified student’s emprises and generating revealing insights into the functions of AI tools in coexistent undergraduate educations. It further delivered an authoritarian frame for identify participated content across participants while admiring respective differences thereby fortifying credibility, depth and applicability of the findings for preceptors, policymakers and experimenters concerned with accountable integration of AI in advanced education contexts and the future undergraduate education environment. The study was conducted at a public university, where undergraduate programs highlight innovative academic writing, explore assistance, and critical thinking. The institutional environment provided an appropriate setting due to general access to AI-based digital tools and cumulative academic demands.

The study population comprised undergraduate university students registered in academic curricula necessitating common use of cardinal technologies. A total of twelve undergraduate students contributed to the training. Purposive Sampling Technique was used to select participants who needed to be considered through considerate using AI-based digital tools for theoretical purposes. The technique certified that participants might offer rich and relevant statistics associated with the study objectives. 12 undergraduate students from all kinds of academic’s discipline attended. Their different background in academia to the diversity viewpoints on AI dependability and theatrical appointment which allowed formulate the figures. Semi-structured,

lengthy interviews served as the primary methodology for creating and collecting data; these conversations lasted roughly two hours long per person and gave flexibility, but also maintained consistency throughout all conversations. An interview guide was constructed using the study's purposes characterized by questions about how frequently people utilize artificial intelligence technology; if using artificial intelligence improves their educational experience; how artificial intelligence impacts an individual's ability to think and learn; what concerns they have about used artificial intelligence; if their educational institutions have any guidance for students using artificial intelligence.

Each interview was conducted at a setting where the participants would be relaxed and would have privacy whereas discussing their thoughts and opinions about using artificial intelligence. The conversations were recorded with audio devices with the participant's consent; these recordings were then transcribed word-for-word to reserve the participants' exact words. Field notes were also kept to provide information about the facial expression or body language of participants and various other details about the situation. The researcher followed ethical guidelines throughout this research process by providing participants with the opportunity to participate voluntarily, protecting the participants' privacy by providing confidentiality, and providing the right of participants to withdraw from the study at any time. Data collection continued until it was established that the researcher could no longer identify emerging, new themes in data through the constant comparisons of themes identified in interviews conducted after the previous interview had concluded.

## **RESULTS & FINDINGS**

Thematic analysis revealed five major themes reflecting undergraduate students' dependency on AI-based digital tools.

### **Reliance on AI for Cognitive Support**

Participants said they often rely on AI tools to generate ideas, summarize information, and solve problems. Numerous proverb AI as a method to encompass their own thoughtful, manufacture theoretical work feel a smaller amount emotionally challenging. Some also mentioned that these tools are always available, make it easy to communicate, and do non judge them like people occasionally do.

### **Perceived Academic Efficiency and Time Management**

Students are well-known for using AI tools as well-organized possessions that improve their production. They observed AI-assisted lettering and study as vital for piloting substantial theoretical workloads and assembly tight aims.

### **Adopting Perceptions of Learning and Skill Development**

Contributors statement greater competence when using AI-based tools; nonetheless, likewise rapid apprehensions about concentrated critical thinking, innovation, and self-governing learning. Approximately scholars are also concerned around attractive overly dependent on AI over time.

### **Ethical Concern and Academic Integrity Awareness**

Contributors' unwritten moral subjects, like plagiarism and theoretical fraudulence. Unmoving, since strategies for by means of AI remained uncertain, their performances varied.

### **Role of Institutional Guidance and Assessment Practices**

Once recognized, approaches were unclear, and undergraduates relied more on AI for procedures. They highlighted the standing of clear teaching and valuations that inspire self-governing thinking.

### **Conscious Efforts to Balance AI-based tools use and Independent Learning**

Participants worried about the importance of complementing the usage of AI tools with self-governing learning. Several supposed they custom a 50/50 approach, preliminary with outdated education approaches and formerly using AI tools as soon as they need amplifications. They create this approach helped them maintain their inscription skills, study more efficiently, feel more self-confident, and be better equipped for conferences and abstract settings. This balance is key to keeping script skills, education ability, self-confidence, and being prepared for consultations and actual academic situations.

### **Discussion**

The consequences reveal that the use of AI in undergraduate education is complex. AI tools can help undergraduates perform better and study more, but depending on them too considerably can harm their critical thinking skills and engagement. These consequences reflect worldwide concerns about how AI affects self-governing learning and academic honesty. Indistinct school policies have created greater uncertainty and raised ethical questions. Students turn to AI for various reasons, including academic heaviness, how they are graded, and their own motivation. Schools should discover an equilibrium between using new technology and teaching in ways that build serious thinking.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study finds that AI-based digital technologies have a strong effect on how undergraduates learn. If these tools are not used enough, the quality of education and skill development may suffer, despite their rapid and positive impact. To use AI ethically while protecting academic integrity and encouraging self-directed learning, universities need to adopt a balanced approach.

### **Recommendations**

Organizations of higher education should recognize and support practical submissions of non-natural intellect while preserving theoretical integrity. Furthermore, universities necessitate clear, specific guidelines for integrating AI tools such as ChatGPT into teaching, learning, exercise, and assessment. When everyone involved has access to one set of rules, it will create more consistency among all departments and help prevent people from abusing AI at any level. Second, institutions need to establish training programs for faculty and students to train them to be literate in AI technology. Education and training on basic knowledge of how AI works, the limitations of AI technology, and the appropriate ways to utilize AI within academia will provide users with the ability to responsibly and critically engage with this technology, rather than blindly depending on it. Third, the redesign of assessment methods to promote emphasis placed on critical thinking,

creativity, and problem-solving skills will be beneficial to prevent school members from relying on AI-generated content to meet the requirements of their academic responsibilities. Among the many ideas to accomplish this are to incorporate open-ended questions in assessments, examine/reflectively write on assignments and learning experiences, engage in project-based learning, participate in oral assessments, etc. Last, institutions should foster ethical awareness concerning AI-assisted academic work. Incorporating courses or discussions throughout the curriculum on topics such as academic integrity, data privacy, and ethical use of AI will create opportunities for school members to act responsibly and ultimately establish integrity in an increasingly AI-driven educational environment.

### **Limitations**

Due to the limited sample size and the study's single-institution setting, the research's generalizability is limited. Future studies should include a larger number of diverse institutions over time to consider the potential long-term effects of AI reliance.

### **Competing Interests**

The authors declared no known competing interests.

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