

Influence of Artificial Intelligence Writing Assistants on Undergraduate Students' Traditional Reading Habits in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) writing assistants on undergraduate students' traditional reading habits at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU). Four specific objectives were outlined and fulfilled by adopting the mixed-method research design of descriptive survey, interview schedule, and observation technique. For the descriptive survey, 395 undergraduate students were sampled through the proportionate stratified sampling technique and the snowball sampling method. A questionnaire instrument developed by the researchers was used to collect data for the study. For the interview schedule, 33 undergraduate students, drawn proportionally from each of the eleven sample strata, were interviewed, and their responses were transcribed subjectively. To execute the observation technique, the researchers used the SciSpace AI Detector to conduct a content-matching test on 97 class assignment papers from year-three students and 19 project works from year-four students.

The triangulation method, novel to this research, generated quantitative and qualitative data that showed a massive dependence among undergraduate students on AI writing assistants to the detriment of traditional reading. There is a strong influence of AI writing assistants on traditional reading habits, as many undergraduate students prefer to search through AI writing Apps for specific content to download and copy-paste into their work, rather than undertake the traditional reading route of patiently tracing, assimilating, and writing new knowledge. The widespread use and preference for AI writing assistants by undergraduate students, basically in a copy-and-paste direction, have far-reaching effects on education in Nigeria. The study recommended, among other things, the need for the articulation and enforcement of policies that will ensure that productive AI writing assistants are used in controlled ways, thereby checking the reckless dependence of undergraduate students on AI writing assistants, especially as such Apps emerge every day.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI Writing Assistants, Students' Use of Writing Apps, Traditional Reading Habits, Undergraduate Students' Reading Habits.

Introduction

Reading is an essential habit for academic

success. Traditional reading underscores the act of reading books, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, etc, to obtain information and gain new insights from basically print documents. Irrespective of the argument that reading on the Internet and computers has increased globally (Turkey Statistical Institute, 2017), and is still growing, effective reading and meaning constructions on technological devices or online platforms cannot be detached from traditional reading ability and dispositions (Leu et al., 2018). Hence, traditional reading is a foremost academic culture that has developed over time (Willinsky, 2017). However, as scholars from different climes are reporting that reading culture is fast declining (Akanda et al., 2013; Alsaeedi et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2014; Olubunmi, 2018), no one knows how far the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education is influencing the decline.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a computer-controlled robot application that performs tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings, such as the ability to reason, discover meaning, generalise, or learn from experience (Copeland, 2024). In education, AI technologies, referred to as AI writing assistants in this paper, are increasingly shaping students' learning experiences, cutting across how they read to obtain information and write in the expression of knowledge.

Unfortunately, as AI writing assistants – ranging from Grammarly, ChatGPT, Meta AI, Essay Writer, and Paragraph AI, to others – are available and accessible to students via mobile phones and other handheld technological devices, no one knows how far they influence students' traditional reading culture, especially amongst undergraduate students who, from anecdotal observations, rely on such platforms to ask textual questions, download quick contextual answers, and copy-paste same in fulfilment of class assignments and project writings. Such widespread use of AI writing assistants raises questions about the potential consequences on students' traditional reading habits and abilities. Thus, while there is no doubt that AI writing assistants are quickly transforming the writing experiences of students, researchers are theoretically worried that they may inadvertently discourage students from reading extensively, affecting traditional reading, which is essential for developing independent writing skills (Rosen, 2010). This is a global concern that begs for empirical studies to show what the actual situation is.

At the moment in Nigeria, the studies of

Anyanwu et al. (2025) and Nehemiah Nwokorie and Chimezie Onichakwe's (2024) are the closest accessible empirical evidence of AI's influence on undergraduate students' traditional reading habits. Their studies find a positive influence of AI on students' reading and academic outcomes at Imo State University, Owerri. Notwithstanding, further research is required to gain more insights about the phenomenon, particularly as it concerns the degree to which AI writing assistants influence undergraduate students' reading of subject-specific books, journals, and other print library collections. Besides, there is no available study to show the impact of AI on traditional reading in other climes, other than studies on how AI is improving electronic reading (Venkateswari, 2024; Xia et al., 2025) and reading by non-English speaking undergraduates (Chea and Xiao, 2024). It is on this premise, therefore, that this study is set to examine the influence of AI Writing Assistants on undergraduate students' reading habits at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU) – one of the federal government-owned universities in Abia State (in the South-Eastern region) of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to:

1. Determine the types of AI Writing Assistants used by undergraduate students of MOUUAU.
2. Determine the purpose of the use of AI Writing Assistants by undergraduate students of MOUUAU.
3. Determine the preference for AI Writing Assistants against traditional reading amongst undergraduate students in MOUUAU.
4. Determine the perceived effects of AI Writing Assistants on the traditional reading habits of undergraduate students in MOUUAU.

Literature Review

The popular concept that traditional reading habits refer to the consistent and organised ways individuals engage with written content, such as books and articles (Yamaç and Öztürk, 2019) – encompassing how often and how long one reads, the preferred reading materials, reading purposes, and strategies employed during reading – is sustained in this study. Undergraduate students, according to the Higher Education Academy, generally refer to individuals pursuing bachelor's degrees or other first-degree qualifications at a university or college

and engage in various academic activities, such as lectures, seminars, assignments, and research projects, aimed at developing their knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities (<https://hea.ie/>). AI writing assistants are computer-controlled robotic applications that perform writing and synthesis tasks like human beings (Copeland, 2024). They utilise natural language processing and machine learning algorithms to generate automated texts, writing suggestions, grammar corrections, and content improvement.

Nowadays, there are many AI writing assistants, and interestingly, they come as downloadable and installable apps on mobile phones and other handheld computer devices. The Internet, using Google, has various and sometimes confusing lists of AI tools for scholarly content generation, and consequently, offered several sources from which a total of thirty-one AI Writing Assistants were synthesised and delineated for this study as follows:

1. ChatGPT – a text-generating AI chatbot (developed by OpenAI) that uses natural language processing and machine learning to generate responses to user input that are grammatically correct and contextually relevant, including generating text, answering questions, and engaging in natural conversation;
2. Grammarly – a writing assistant tool that helps users improve their writing by identifying grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, and checking their work for plagiarism;
3. Meta AI on WhatsApp – an AI feature on WhatsApp that lets users ask questions, get recommendations, and create images in real-time;
4. Snapchat AI (or My AI on Snapchat) – a conversational AI tool integrated into the Snapchat messaging system (with Snapchat being a social media app that enables people to send photos, videos, and messages to friends);
5. QuillBot – an AI-powered writing tool that helps users to paraphrase and summarise text, as well as check for grammar and spelling mistakes, highly compatible with the Google Docs add-on;
6. Essay writer – an AI-powered writing tool that accelerates the writing process by helping a user generate an essay that contains accurate, well-researched information, with references where required;
7. Paragraph AI – a writing assistant software that makes writing easier, by offering smart suggestions, grammar, and spelling corrections, with the most appropriate words, phrases, and sentence structures for any given context, whilst being able to translate content into more than 40 languages.
8. Copy AI – a writing assistant that helps users generate content such as blog posts, emails, landing pages, and social media posts;
9. Keyword – a mobile application that helps users find and analyse keywords for use in online marketing and search engine optimisation (SEO);
10. Gemini – a Google-owned AI that can generalise and seamlessly understand, operate across, and combine different types of information, including text, code, audio, image, and video to generate content;
11. Jasper (formerly known as Jarvis) – an AI copywriting software that helps users generate marketing copy for their businesses. It uses natural language processing (NLP) to understand the user's input and generate copy that is accurate and engaging.
12. Hypotenuse AI – an AI-powered tool that generates conversational and natural language prompts for AI art generators, like DALL-E and Midjourney, designed to help users generate more specific and creative prompts;
13. Content Forge – an AI-powered content creation tool that can generate a variety of content, including blog posts, product descriptions, social media posts, and more than suggest headlines, and generate SEO-friendly content;
14. WordAi – an AI-powered article rewriter that helps users create new versions of existing articles while maintaining the original meaning, through the help of natural language processing and machine learning software that understands and rewrites text;
15. Smart Copy – a web-based AI tool that generates marketing copy for websites, ads, emails, and other content, using natural language processing and deep learning to generate copy that is optimised for conversion, with the ability to suggest keywords and write headlines and descriptions;
16. Writesonic – an AI-powered writing tool that generates copy for a wide range of use cases, including product descriptions, blog posts, headlines, and more, that uses natural language

- processing and machine learning to generate content that is unique, accurate, and engaging;
17. DeepL – a neural machine translation service that uses deep learning to translate text from one language to another;
 18. ProRank Tracker – a web-based rank-tracking software that helps users monitor their website's search engine rankings and track the effectiveness of their SEO campaigns;
 19. Ink – a web-based content management system (CMS) that helps users create, manage, and publish web content, with the help of a drag-and-drop interface to make it easy for users to create and update their websites without any coding knowledge.
 20. SEO AI – an AI-powered search engine optimisation (SEO) tool that helps users optimise their websites for search engines, using artificial intelligence to analyse a website's content and provide recommendations for improving its ranking;
 21. Scalenut – an SEO analysis tool that helps users identify and fix errors in their textual work, such as broken links, page speed issues, and technical issues.
 22. Tome – a research assistant tool that helps users find relevant information on the web by providing a search engine, a browser extension, a marklet (a bookmarking tool), and a library to organise and store the user's research;
 23. Rytr – an AI-powered writing assistant that helps users generate content in more than 30 languages, and supports various writing formats, such as social media posts, blog posts, product descriptions, and more;
 24. Anyword – an AI-powered content optimisation platform that helps users create high-quality content in a variety of formats, including blog posts, website copy, and social media ads;
 25. Wordtune – an AI-powered writing tool that helps users rephrase and improve their written content, by allowing them to perform sentence rephrasing, tone adjustments, grammar correction, and style suggestions;
 26. Simplified – an AI-powered design platform that helps users create graphics, presentations, and videos. It uses machine learning to generate templates and designs based on the user's inputs.
 27. Textmetrics – an AI-powered writing assistant that uses natural language processing and machine learning to analyse and improve written content;
 28. ProWritingAid – an AI-powered writing assistant and style editor. It uses machine learning to identify issues such as poor grammar, spelling mistakes, weak sentence structure, overused words, confusing phrasing, and suggestions for improving the overall style of a text.
 29. Surfer SEO – an AI tool that users optimise and analyse content through keyword research, content creation, and on-page SEO;
 30. CanIRank – the first SEO AI tool that gives users specific action recommendations rather than just data.
 31. Writcream AI – an AI content writer that assists users in generating articles, product descriptions, and more in seconds, upon providing a few inputs as topics or sentences relating to what the user wants to write.

Whereas these AI writing assistants offer automated texts, writing suggestions, and corrections to users, several scholars highlight their potential negative influence on traditional reading habits. Prior literature describes that the ease of relying on AI Writing Assistants for grammar and spelling corrections may lead students to overlook the importance of proofreading and self-editing. Consequently, students may become less attentive to their writing, reducing their motivation to read and critically analyse their work. More so, scholars also opine that students who rely too heavily on AI writing assistants may neglect the process of reflection and revision that is essential for effective writing. Scholars also opine that AI writing assistants only produce surface-level understanding for students against deeper learning outcomes and retention. In addition, prior literature suggests that students may become overly reliant on AI writing assistants, leading to a decline in their ability to produce original and creative writing. As these scholars theoretically perceive a negative influence of AI writing assistants on students' traditional reading habits, and mainly in overseas climes, the need for contextual empirical evidence becomes paramount to verify their assertions.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that AI writing assistants are impacting undergraduate students' educational experiences positively. A prior study supposes that AI writing assistants help students to improve their writing by providing instant feedback

and suggestions to them. An other prior study suggests that AI writing assistants can help students learn from their mistakes and develop a deeper understanding of the writing process. More so, Nehemiah Nwokorie and Chimezie Onichakwe (2024) find that AI generally impacted undergraduate students' reading culture by helping students simplify and break down subject topics and variables, making them easier to read. But, there is no available empirical evidence to show how and why AI writing assistants affect traditional reading habits negatively or not, except for the work of Nehemiah Nwokorie and Chimezie Onichakwe (2024), which has empirical variance with this study. Albeit, the hypothesis of this study is hinged on the concern that students' dependence on AI writing assistants would reduce the time they spend on drafting and revising their work, consequently leading to a decline in their traditional reading habits. The hypothesis is hinged on the Technology Acceptance Theory.

Propounded by Fred Davis in 1986, the Technology Acceptance Theory (or Model) predicts that people are most likely to prefer and adopt a technology that is useful and easy to use. This implies that students who find the AI writing assistants reliable and convenient are most likely to abandon traditional reading, which hitherto aided their writing.

However, it is imperative to verify the theory and the consequent hypothesis since the empirical research of Nehemiah Nwokorie and Chimezie Onichakwe (2024) shares similarities with the present study in terms of geographical space, content, and population scopes, and reports otherwise. The basic variation of the said study from the present research is in its design. Whereas the authors depended on a descriptive survey design to collect data from which they report that AI positively influenced students' reading culture in Imo State University, Owerri, the present research would go deeper to analyse the phenomenon from a synthesised lens of positivism and interpretivism.

Methodology

To fulfil the objectives of this research, a mixed-method research design that included a descriptive survey, interview schedule, and observation technique was implemented. This triangulation, as characteristic of mixed method designs (Creswell, 2009), was considered relevant for a study such as this, which requires a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data to provide sufficient grounds for settling the divide

amongst researchers on the influence of AI Writing Assistants on undergraduate traditional reading habits, and understand why and how the situation occurred.

For the descriptive survey approach, a total of 29,586 registered undergraduate students of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU) during the 2023/2024 academic session were used as the population for the study (MOUUAU Directorate of Academic Affairs, 2024). Given the population size, a sample of 395 was drawn for the study, using the Taro Yamane formula, $n = \frac{n}{1 + n(e)^2}$. To ensure effective representation of the population across the sample, the proportionate stratified sampling technique was implemented to distribute the sample across the eleven Colleges (or Faculties) in MOUUAU. Furthermore, the snowball sampling technique was deployed to select respondents from each stratum of the sample units, thereby allowing the researchers to locate members of each College through existing participants. Copies of expert-validated questionnaire instruments were used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire instrument contained dichotomous questions on types and purposes of AI Writing Assistants use, respondents' preference for, and perceived influence of AI Writing Assistants on the traditional reading habits of undergraduate students of MOUUAU. Eleven trained research assistants (consisting of postgraduate students) were used to collect data from each College in MOUUAU. Data from the questionnaire instrument was analysed using descriptive statistics of percentage distributions. A criterion of 50% and above was accepted to denote: high use/useful/high preference/strong influence; while percentages below 49 indicated low use/not useful/low preference/weak influence. Albeit, 0% implied no use/need/preference/ influence.

On the interview schedule method, a structured list of oral questions guided a one-to-one conversation with 33 undergraduate students, drawn proportionally from each of the eleven sample strata/Colleges. The researchers ensured that the selected participants were not among the respondents who completed the study's questionnaire by using a pre-interview inquiry technique to determine eligible participants before investing time in a full interview with them. The aim of the interview was not only to verify the questionnaire responses by other members of the population but also to gain deeper insights into how and why AI Writing Assistants influenced traditional reading habits among undergraduate students. See

Appendix A for the interview questions. While the interview participants were assured of their anonymity, their responses to the oral questions were collected through the aid of mobile phone voice recorders, which were electronically stored in an unnamed folder, password-protected, and transcribed subjectively.

The observation technique was deployed to further understand the preferences of undergraduate students on AI Writing Assistants and traditional reading habits, by observing what is already happening in the real world. To execute the technique, the researchers observed a total of ninety-seven class assignment papers of year-three students on the essay, *Discuss the characteristics of Scientific research*; and nineteen distinct project works of year-four students who were supervised by one of the researchers, all in the Department of Library and Information Science (DLIS) of MOUAAU. The observational study lasted for a period of seven months (from August 2024 to February 2025). All the observed works were submitted in soft copies by the participants to one of the researchers' email addresses and were copy-pasted on the SciSpace AI Detector – an academic AI that performs multiple AI functions such as academic writing, rewriting, and text editing, in addition to being an AI detector test (<https://scispace.com/ai-detector>). However, the SciSpace tool adoption for this study was solely for AI text detection, and thus, was used for content-matching of the works submitted by the participants. The test result was analysed and interpreted using statistical charts with a decision rule of: 0-33% indicating Low AI Content; 34-66% representing Moderate AI Content; and 67-100% signifying High AI Content. Participating students had no prior knowledge of the researchers' intention to use what they submitted for academic grade purposes for research. As such, full confidentiality is maintained within the ethics of research.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Survey Result

From the three hundred and ninety-five copies of the questionnaire instrument distributed to the study respondents, 390 were returned filled and used for the survey analysis. The presentation and analysis were done sequentially according to the specific objectives of the study. Hence, to fulfil the first objective of the study, Table 1 shows a distribution of the types of AI

writing assistants utilised by undergraduate students of MOUAAU.

Table 1: The Types of AI Writing Assistants Used by Undergraduate Students of MOUAAU.

s/n	AI Writing Assistants Used	% of Users (N=390)
1	ChatGPT	79%
2	Grammarly	69%
3	Snapchat AI	69%
4	Meta AI on WhatsApp	65%
5	Keyword	59%
6	SEO AI	56%
7	ProWritingAid	50%
8	Anyword	53%
9	Textmetrics	51%
10	DeepL	48%
11	Gemini	48%
12	QuillBot	29%
13	Surfer SEO	24%
14	WordAi	23%
15	Copy AI	21%
16	Ink	16%
17	Essay writer	15%
18	Smart Copy	15%
19	Paragraph AI	14%
20	Content Forge	10%
21	Jasper (formerly known as Jarvis)	0%
22	Hypotenuse AI	0%
23	Writesonic	0%
24	ProRank Tracker	0%
25	Scalenut	0%
26	Tome	0%
27	Rytr	0%
28	Wordtune	0%
29	Simplified	0%
30	CanIRank	0%
31	Writecream AI	0%

From Table 1 above, a total of nine AI writing assistants are found to be highly utilised by the undergraduate students of MOUAAU. The AI writing assistants that are highly utilised are ChatGPT, Grammarly, Snapchat AI, WhatsApp Meta AI, Keyword, SEO AI, Anyword, Textmetrics, and ProWritingAid, respectively. On the other hand, twelve of the studied AI writing assistants were poorly utilised, while the remaining eleven were not utilised by the studied population. In all, most of the AI writing assistants outlined for the study are, in one way or another, utilised by undergraduate students.

To answer the second objective, which sought to know the purpose of AI writing assistants used by undergraduate students of MOUAAU, Table 2 follows.

Table 2: The Purposes of AI Writing Assistants Use Among Undergraduate Students of MOUAU.

s/n	Purposes of AI Writing Assistants Use	% of Yes Responses (N=390)
1	To generate ideas and directions to write take-home assignments.	89%
2	To download textual contents that suit my project report topic/writing.	71%
3	To generate templates for writing academic assignments.	61%
4	To proofread my academic papers	44%
5	To write class tests and examinations.	38%
6	To read up on any topic that can be read in print textbooks.	38%
7	To download textual information that has relevant references.	35%
8	To search for information that I would have looked for on the library shelves.	14%
9	To do a plagiarism check on my academic papers.	0%
10	To translate academic text into my native language for easier understanding of the knowledge in context.	0%

Table 2 shows that undergraduate students of MOUAU used AI writing assistants to generate ideas and directions to write take-home assignments; download textual contents that suit their project report topic/writing; and generate templates to write their academic works. However, no respondent used AI writing assistants for plagiarism checking, nor for translating academic text into a native language that will aid easy understanding of knowledge in context. Whereas the latter is what ideally should have been the norm, the former is prevalent, indicating that undergraduate students of MOUAU are not utilising the AI writing assistants productively. It is most likely that a student who uses AI writing assistants to generate ideas and gain directions to write academic

papers could also be unable to successfully write the academic paper without the aid of AI writing assistants. Again, juxtaposing the responses on using the AI writing assistants to generate ideas and directions (89%) with those of using the AI writing app to proofread academic papers (44%) is a clear indicator of dependence on AI writing assistants, as against conducting traditional reading to synthesise knowledge and write original content. Thus, fewer students agreed to have utilised AI writing apps for proofreading their works because they most likely did not generate the paper from their original articulations.

Table 3 below shows the preference for AI writing assistants against traditional reading amongst undergraduate students in MOUAU.

Table 3: Preference for AI Writing Assistants Against Traditional Reading Amongst Undergraduate Students in MOUAU.

s/n	Preference for AI Writing Assistants	% of Yes Responses (N=390)
1	It is more convenient for me to use AI Apps to search for academic information than to search through library shelves and print collections.	89%
2	I prefer to use my AI apps to read anything I want at any time, anywhere, rather than to visit the University Library or other quiet corners to read.	86%
3	I prefer to use AI writing Apps to analyse topics of my interest rather than to read through textbooks, journals, and other print materials for the same purpose.	78%
4	I use my AI Writing Apps to read about topics I learned in class.	74%
5	I use my AI Writing Apps to make fast searches for e-content to support my research writings.	71%
6	With my AI apps for academic work, I now read e-content more often than I read textbooks, journals, and other print materials.	69%
7	I enjoy reading through AI apps on my mobile phone rather than through print materials.	69%
8	With AI writing apps, I see no reason to spend time flipping through the pages of textbooks, journals, and other print materials.	68%
9	I easily understand what I read on AI Apps more than on print materials (textbooks, journals, and others).	64%
10	I would rather purchase /download apps that contain academic content for research writing than purchase textbooks, journals, and other print materials.	63%
11	I use my AI Writing Apps to read e-articles.	61%
12	I use my AI Writing Apps to read e-copies of textbooks, journals, and other academic e-content.	55%

Table 3 shows that undergraduate students of MOUAU prefer to use the AI writing assistants to read academic e-materials rather than to read print copies of textbooks, journals, and other print

materials. The responses show a higher preference for AI writing apps than for reading in their university library. The preference is hinged on convenience in the use of AI writing assistants to search for and

read up academic information in concise forms rather than search through library shelves for books and other print collections, which require time and concentration to read.

Concerning the perceived effect of AI writing assistants on the traditional reading habits of undergraduate students in MOUAU, Table 4 shows the distribution of responses from the respondents.

Table 4: Perceived Effect of AI Writing Assistants on Traditional Reading Habit of Undergraduate Students in MOUAU.

s/n	Perceived Effects of AI Writing Assistants	% of Yes Responses (N=390)
1	AI writing assistants have changed the way undergraduate students approach traditional reading, making it more focused on getting information quickly.	85%
2	AI writing assistants will replace undergraduate students' reading habits in the future.	78%
3	Traditional reading habits are still essential for academic success, despite the availability of AI writing assistants.	74%
4	Traditional reading habits are more effective for learning and retaining information for undergraduate students than AI writing assistants.	74%
5	Undergraduate students prefer to depend on AI writing assistants over traditional reading for academic tasks.	72%
6	Traditional reading habits expand undergraduate students' knowledge more than AI writing assistants do.	68%
7	AI writing assistants have led to a decline in undergraduate students' critical thinking and analytical skills that arise during reading.	63%
8	AI writing assistants have reduced the time students spend on reading to complete their class assignments.	61%
9	Students now rely less on traditional reading because of AI writing assistants.	46%
10	AI writing assistants have reduced the reading comprehension of undergraduate students.	38%

Table 4 shows the strong influence of AI writing assistants on traditional reading habits. The basic response in Table 4 is that AI writing assistants have changed the way undergraduate students approach traditional reading, making it more focused on searching for and getting information quickly. This is followed by the worry that AI writing assistants will replace undergraduate students' reading habits in the future. Remarkably, respondents accepted that traditional reading habits are still essential for academic success, despite the wide-ranging benefits of AI Writing Assistants to them.

Interview Schedule Responses

To further understand how and why AI writing assistants influenced undergraduate students' traditional reading habits in MOUAU, the six questions fielded to 33 interview participants by the researchers are sequentially analysed. Data collected from the participants were carefully coded and thematically summarised using the NVivo software. The themes upon which the qualitative analysis was done include: use of AI writing assistants by undergraduate students, why undergraduate students use AI writing assistants, reading print materials versus using AI writing assistants among undergraduate students, impact of AI writing assistants on traditional reading habits of

undergraduate students, and rekindling traditional reading habits in undergraduate students.

Use of AI Writing Assistants by Undergraduate Students

The widespread use of AI writing assistants is examined in this study. Every single participant used AI writing assistants and has lots of benefits to share about AI writing assistants. For example, Participant N27 says that he uses "AI App every day for everything, to the point that the Meta AI has become his first point of call for clarifications and insights on any confusing issue or discourse. Participant N19 says that the reason she saved money and got herself an Android phone was basically to utilise AI technology on the go. Meanwhile, Participant N13 remarked that she will continue to "use AI Apps until some other technology that is better and more reliable emerges". All these confessions imply unequivocally that the use of AI writing assistants among undergraduate students cannot be denied. The prevalence is massive and is happily received as a new normal for the learning class of the educational environment. The revelations from the interview responses on this theme are a testament that AI writing assistants will continue to be used as long as they exist. In a nutshell, there was no dissenting voice to

the consensus that AI writing assistants are utilised by undergraduate students in MOUAU.

Why Undergraduate Students Use AI Writing Assistants

Responding to this question, twenty-seven participants agreed to use AI writing assistants mainly for three interconnected reasons: to do take-home assignments with ease, to write seminar papers without racking their brains, and to do project writing effortlessly. Yet, all these benefits, according to the participants, can only come by understanding how to ask the AI writing assistants appropriate questions or type proper search queries. In other words, the inability to decode and coin appropriate query terms would result in unsuccessful utilisation of the AI Writing Apps. Furthermore, Participants N2 and N20 reveal how they used ChatGPT on their phones in the past to write in organised class assessment exercises and also in examination halls without being caught by the lecturers and invigilators, respectively. But, even though these responses were natural truths, it is not for these reasons given by Participants N2 and N20 that AI writing assistants were designed. As further deduced, the “ease and effortlessness” that the other members of the twenty-seven participants found in using AI writing assistants tilted to the negative direction avowed by Participants N2 and N20. These participants were not using AI writing assistants ethically and productively. Further probes confirmed it and revealed that the said participants enjoyed fielding their assignment questions to the AI Writing Assistant and lifting verbatim responses AI returns. They were either ignorant or unconcerned about common academic research ethics such as plagiarism, despite knowing that bringing extraneous materials, such as their mobile phones, into an examination hall to write from is a punishable examination offence in MOUAU. All the same, their confessing of how they used AI Writing Apps in examination halls did not mean that they dared the consequences of their actions if caught in the act. Instead, they were caught up in the free-flowing interview session and thus, poured out their heart without reservations, which in itself is an indication of the validity of the data on reasons for undergraduates’ use of AI writing assistants.

On the other hand, six participants accepted using AI writing assistants for positive academic purposes. They used AI writing assistants to understand the topics they learned in class. They

basically used Snapchat, WhatsApp, Meta AI, ChatGPT, and Grammarly to find definitions and meanings of the topics they learn in class, and to make sense out of them in their private study times. For these six participants, AI writing assistants are not tools for performing copy-pasting tasks. One of them, Participant N7, remarked that she uses the Grammarly AI App to write coherent and lexically correct papers, and has held onto the App since she learned about its potential in constructing good lexis in term papers and project works from her roommate in the year 2023. What she does, according to her, is to write her original work by herself and afterwards turn on her internet to use the Grammarly App to restructure wrong sentences, correct phrases, delete redundant words, and add necessary articles and prepositions. This reflects the productive use of AI writing assistants.

However, more important jobs of AI writing assistants, like referencing and citation arrangement, plagiarism checking, etc, were not seen as concerns of undergraduate students in their use of AI writing assistants. And, it is not clear if they actually know and understand that AI Writing Assistants can be of such positive use. All these, therefore, call for literacy training on AI writing assistant uses and benefits.

Reading Print Materials Versus Using AI Writing Assistants Among Undergraduate Students

Participants’ responses to this question are intriguing. A total of 32 participants declared that they preferred to use AI writing assistants to perform their academic assignments rather than read textbooks, journals, and other print materials from the University Library or elsewhere. Only one participant opted for print materials against AI writing assistants, arguing that AI writing apps can be misleading sometimes in the content they generate.

The preferences of the 32 participants who preferred to use AI writing assistants to perform their academic assignments rather than read textbooks, journals, and other print materials from the University Library or elsewhere were essentially driven by three summarised factors. One, they found AI writing assistants beneficial for finding content to suitably write take-home assignments. Two, they enjoyed the AI writing assistants’ function of analysing confusing topics. Three, AI writing assistants provided them with ready-made constructs to answer practically all academic questions they could imagine. However, the

lone voice in the choice match averred to be guided by the fear of copying wrong contents from AI writing assistants, which he was a victim of in the past. Probing further on how AI generated wrong content for the lone response, it was deduced that his query phrases to the AI were not properly formulated and thus, resulted in a wrong text generation by the Meta AI he used. In all of these, the need for educating undergraduate students on the productive uses of AI writing assistants is underscored.

Impact of AI Writing Assistants on Traditional Reading Habits of Undergraduate Students

Interview participants, at first hearing of the question, independently said that using AI writing assistants to do academic assignments does not deter them from reading printed textbooks, journal articles, and other print educational materials when their need arises. And, the researchers asked: when would the need arise? Traditional reading in libraries and at quiet corners by undergraduate students is no longer the norm. Undergraduate students who should regularly consult books at their university libraries to read, synthesise, and write take-home assignments rarely do so nowadays. The preference for AI writing assistance is clear and is no doubt consistent with the 21st-century demands. But what happens to print collections in the university library? Do we still need them in university education? What can you say about the future of reading printed books and information materials? At this point of intensive inquiry, some participants began to open up as follows:

- i. Eleven of the interviewed participants avowed that the arrival of education-based AI tools was a welcome development to them at a time when they are too busy with many works that they rarely find spare time to go to the university library to sit down and read.
- ii. Participants N1, N9, and N33 were of the view that traditional reading decreased in their academic lives because of the cost of buying textbooks for themselves. For them, their location of residence outside the university campus does not permit them to stay late in the university library after the close of classes, nor are the university library collections accessible remotely for them to borrow books and read without visiting the physical library space. These have made Participant N9, in particular, stay for about two years on campus

without reading any printed textbooks. According to him, his schedule of activities does not afford him the time to visit the library, and he has no financial capability to buy himself the textbooks he needs. Luckily for him, buying textbooks in MOUAU is statutorily not compulsory.

- iii. Participants N17, N25, N29, and N31 attributed the declining traditional reading habits to the arrival of Google and the Internet, insisting that these technologies made scientific knowledge searching, use, and communication an Android phone away. To them, taking a walk to the library is a waste of time when Google and the Internet have what they need. However, it was easy to assume that the participants' credit to Google was to Google Scholar since it is Google Scholar that provides reliable access to scientific knowledge content and not necessarily Google. But, surprisingly, these particular participants were not even certain about the difference between Google and Google Scholar. This was another clear indication of ignorance on the part of the undergraduate students, who require contextual information literacy education to address.

With these assertions, it is not far-fetched to state that the AI writing assistants are negatively impacting the traditional reading habits of undergraduate students in MOUAU.

Rekindling Traditional Reading Habits in Undergraduate Students

Interview responses on this theme infer that reading print materials among undergraduate students is gradually shifting grounds for reading electronic collections. But, in a case where the text is the same, whether in print or an electronic copy, what makes the difference? To this, seven participants independently maintained that electronic text not only affords them convenience in reading but also allows them to read selectively within a given text. For example, Participant N2 said: "Through content search on a particular e-book, I can easily skip certain parts of an e-book to read my preferred sections of the book without flipping through pages of the book". Participant N3 said that "reading e-texts makes it easy to read in piecemeal, because you will read exactly what is required to fulfil academic assignments at a given time." Participant N8 argued that with his learning schedule on Campus nowadays, he cannot

imagine himself sitting down at the library or at his lodge to read a book from beginning to end at a stretch. But, with e-books and other e-texts downloadable on mobile phones and laptops, he may read in parts as the need for information about the sections arises. In a similar direction, eighteen participants insisted that the MOUAU library and its print collections should migrate to the Internet, where they can access and download library content and read remotely with their mobile phones. Only four participants responded to traditional print reading, advising the MOUAU Library authority to provide them with current texts and air-conditioned reading halls. Among these four was Participant N11, who said: “MOUAU Library

reading spaces are not like other libraries where a reader can relax in an air-conditioned space and discuss academic works with peers without being harassed by library staff”. Well, this minute comment points to the need for libraries to become more of social spaces than of noiseless zones.

The Outcome of the Observation Technique

Figure 1 shows the result of the AI content-matching text for ninety-seven class assignment papers of year-three students and nineteen project works of year-four students on different titles.

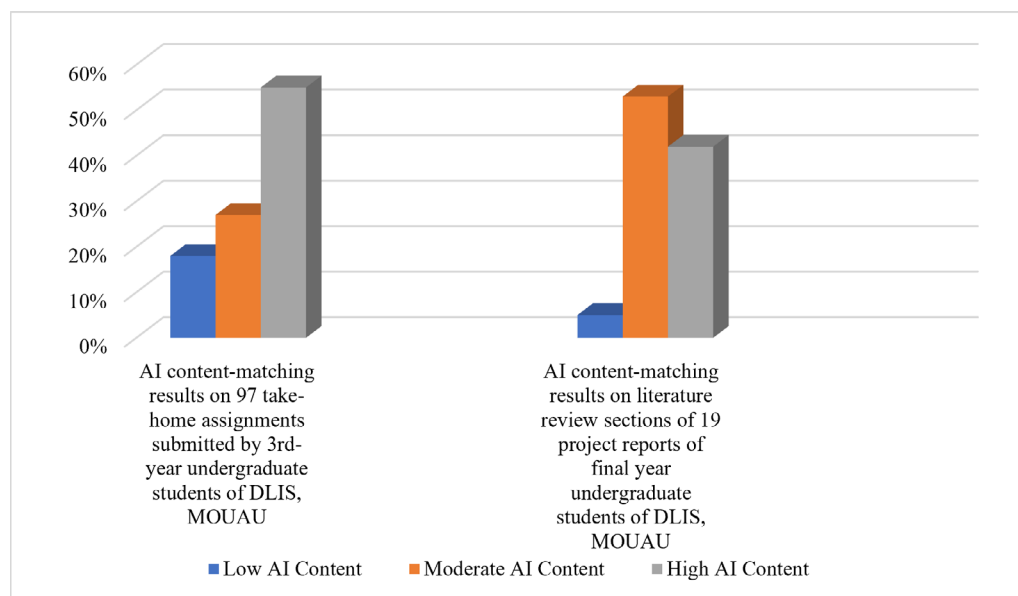


Figure 1: AI Content-Matching Results on Undergraduate Students' Academic Papers.

The observation result in Figure 1 clearly shows that the study population depended highly (at a 55% rate) on AI writing assistants to generate content they submit as take-home assignments, and also depended significantly (moderately at a 53% rate, and highly at a 42% rate) on the same AI writing assistants to write their final year project works. This result is consistent with the survey and interview revelations, indicating that the undergraduate students of MOUAU prefer AI writing assistants to traditional reading and depend more on the former than on the latter to carry out their academic work in MOUAU.

Summary of Results

The four objectives of this study have been

fulfilled successfully. The triangulation of methods used in the study complementarily revealed that:

- i. Nine AI writing assistants were being highly utilised by undergraduate students of MOUAU, and sequentially include ChatGPT, Grammarly, Snapchat AI, WhatsApp Meta AI, Keyword, SEO AI, Anyword, Textmetrics, and ProWritingAid, respectively.
- ii. The major purpose of the use of AI writing assistants among undergraduate students of MOUAU is to generate ideas and directions to write take-home assignments by downloading textual content that suits their writing needs.
- iii. As confirmed by the interview responses and

- observation results, the preference for AI writing assistants against traditional reading amongst undergraduate students in MOUUAU is very high.
- iv. There is a strong influence of AI writing assistants on traditional reading habits, as many undergraduate students prefer to search through AI writing apps for specific content to download and copy-paste into their work, rather than undertake the traditional reading route of patiently tracing, assimilating, and writing new knowledge.

Discussion and Implications of the Findings

The first finding of this study implies that AI writing assistants have permeated the MOUUAU academic space, with a total of nine AI writing assistants actively and highly utilised by undergraduate students. All the AI writing assistants utilised by MOUUAU undergraduate students are part of the trending AI writing assistants published in Adams and Chuah (2022) and Hosseini et al. (2024). With these revelations, one can only imagine what would become of the evolving AI writing environments soon.

Concerning why undergraduate students utilise AI writing assistants, some reasons that are seemingly contrary to what the tool should serve have emerged. The finding shows that undergraduate students used AI writing assistants to generate ideas and content for copy-pasting, in fulfilment of their academic assignments. Hence, the notion that AI writing assistants are transforming students' learning experiences and shaping their expression of knowledge (Nehemiah Nwokorie and Chimezie Onichakwe, 2024) cannot be verified in this study. Instead, it is expected that the responsible use of AI writing assistants should enable students to achieve the thoroughness expected in academic writing, embodied in their services of plagiarism checking, citation and reference generation, and text language translation, and not the other way around. It is rather foreseeable that the future graduates, having passed through higher educational institutions, would scarcely conduct independent critical reasoning and idea construction because of how deeply lost they are in the bandwagon of AI writing assistants.

To find that the undergraduate students who were studied not only expressed their preference for AI writing assistants but also practically used

them at various levels of their academic writing, as revealed in the observation result, explains how badly the AI writing tools have influenced traditional reading habits. If not for the triangulation design adopted for this study, interview responses in which respondents claimed that their use of AI writing assistants does not affect their reading habits would have been misleading. Altogether, the preference variation between the questionnaire responses and the interview comments is well-settled by the observation technique's discoveries. As revealed, undergraduate students depend mainly on AI writing assistants to write their scholarly assignments, doing it with a copy-and-paste approach. This affirms the concern in earlier studies that AI writing assistants are unavoidably affecting traditional reading habits to the extent of jeopardising students' ability to produce original and creative writing. However, the need for Nigerian academic institutions' libraries to leverage the Internet and its associated technologies to render scholarly information services is long overdue, and is thus used as an excuse by undergraduate students for their bad reading habits. This is a serious situation that calls for the overhauling of the library system to incorporate necessary technological-driven services, and avoid a situation where the establishment of libraries may not be encouraged in the future on the basis that students can obtain all the information they need from their mobile handsets without stepping into the library.

Lastly, this study showed a strong negative influence of AI writing assistants on traditional reading habits, pointing to how fast AI writing assistants are changing the way undergraduate students approach traditional reading in academic institutions. Fred Davis' Technology Acceptance Theory (or Model) of 1986 is still valid in predicting that undergraduate students of this day prefer to search for and download specific knowledge content as quickly as possible. Undergraduate students find AI writing assistants useful and easy to use, to the detriment of the traditional reading habit of tracing and assimilating knowledge systematically. Something needs to be done urgently to correct the anomaly, especially now that the present crop of undergraduate students understands (by a majority questionnaire response) that traditional reading habits are still essential for a student to trace, interpret, reinterpret, and self-reliantly communicate knowledge in writing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

By triangulating three research methods and synthesising qualitative and quantitative data, this study has noted the massive dependence of undergraduate students on AI writing assistants at the detriment of traditional reading. The widespread use and preference for AI writing assistants by undergraduate students, basically in a copy-and-paste direction, as observed in this study, has far-reaching effects on education in Nigeria. Contrary to some popular views that AI writing assistants are positively impacting students' writing expressions, the traditional reading habits necessary for effective academic writing are declining. One can only imagine what the future holds for a generation of students who prefer already-made AI content to read to create original thoughts and innovative writings. This is where anti-plagiarism efforts come in to curtail irresponsible use of an AI writing assistant to commit plagiarism, which must be condemned and sanctioned. However, this is not to say that some AI writing assistants are not useful, especially in spelling, grammar, sentencing, paraphrasing, referencing, summarising, and image creation. AI writing assistants are quite useful if used responsibly. But the findings of this study showed otherwise, revealing the irresponsible dependence of the undergraduate students on the AI writing assistance, which is not good for a knowledge society.

Therefore, to save society and its educational system from getting to this point of knowledge degeneration, this paper recommends that:

1. As new AI writing assistants emerge daily, the MOUAU administration should articulate and enforce policies that will ensure that productive AI writing assistants are used in controlled ways.
2. MOUAU Librarians should overhaul their use of library/information literacy education curriculum to include teachings on artificial intelligence literacy skills.
3. MOUAU administration should fund the University Library to build and render digital and or online library services to students, harnessing the Web 2.0 and 3.0 services that will provide undergraduate students the opportunity of using their mobile phones to access library collections remotely.
4. For AI writing assistants not to replace undergraduate students' reading habits in the

future, the MOUAU Senate should set up effective avenues to recognise and reward undergraduate students who engage in traditional reading for critical thinking and original writing, against their counterparts who rely on AI writing assistants to copy-paste content.

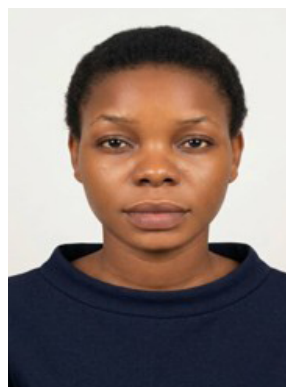
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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Do you use AI writing Apps?
2. If yes, what do you use it for?
3. Choose between reading print materials and using AI Writing Apps to do your academic assignments.
4. What informed your choice above?
5. Do you think AI Writing Apps affect traditional reading habits?
6. If AI Writing Apps are affecting traditional reading habits, what do you think should be done to correct the anomaly?