

**PERCEPTIONS OF INTEGRATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE(AI) AS A SUPPORT TOOL  
IN ACADEMIC PURSUITS: EVIDENCE FROM UNIVERSITY OF ABUJA UNDERGRADUATES**

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**Abstract**

This study examined undergraduate students' perceptions and acceptance of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in academic pursuits at the University of Abuja. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model and Diffusion of Innovations Theory theoretical frameworks, the research employed a survey design with a sample of 400 enrolled students selected using Krejcie and Morgan Sample Size Table. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire covering constructs such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, relative advantage, compatibility, ethical concerns, and acceptance. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.70. Findings revealed near-universal awareness of AI tools (99%) and widespread adoption, with 50.2% of students reporting occasional use and 35.8% reporting daily use. Trust (72%) and perceived improvement in academic quality (74%) emerged as strong predictors of comfort, while concerns about plagiarism (37.6%) and originality (48.3%) reduced acceptance. Chi-square tests showed significant associations between age, gender, and usage patterns, with younger students and female students reporting higher levels of trust and adoption. Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient analysis confirmed a moderate positive correlation between trust and comfort ( $\rho = .46, p < .001$ ). Regression analysis explained 41% of the variance in comfort, highlighting trust and perceived usefulness as the most influential predictors. These findings support the central assumptions of the Technology Acceptance Model regarding perceived usefulness and trust as drivers of adoption, while the Diffusion of Innovations Theory explains demographic and disciplinary differences in AI acceptance. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for faculty-specific guidelines, ethical AI literacy programmes, and institutional policies that balance AI innovation with academic integrity. The study recommends that universities promote ethical AI literacy through the integration of plagiarism detection mechanisms and proper citation practices into academic training.

**Keywords: Integration, AI, Support, Pursuits, Tool, Academic**

**Introduction**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has moved from being a futuristic idea to a practical reality in higher education worldwide. Universities across Europe, North America, and Asia are increasingly adopting AI-powered applications to support teaching, learning, and communication. Tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Grammarly, Turnitin etc are now widely used to assist writers, researchers, scholars, and students in writing, editing, and ensuring accuracy, and originality in academic work. The adoption of these tools lies in their ability to provide immediate feedback, improve clarity, and reduce human error. Scholars have noted that AI can help broaden access to knowledge by offering students personalised support, thereby bridging gaps in literacy and communication skills (Okafor et al. 2025).

The growing presence of AI in education has sparked debates about trust, ethics, and acceptance. Trust refers to whether students and lecturers believe AI tools provide reliable support. Ethical concerns revolve around plagiarism, originality, and fairness, while acceptance relates to the willingness of students to adopt AI tools in

their academic endeavours. These dimensions are important because they determine whether AI will be embraced as a legitimate academic partner or resisted as a threat to traditional scholarship. Globally, studies have shown mixed perceptions: while many students appreciate the convenience of AI, others worry about overdependence and the erosion of critical thinking skills (Chukwu & Udumukwu 2025).

In Africa, and particularly in Nigeria, the adoption of AI in academic pursuits is still at an early stage. Nigerian universities face challenges such as limited infrastructure, inconsistent internet access, and inadequate training for both students and lecturers. These challenges influence how AI tools are perceived and used. For instance, while Grammarly and ChatGPT are popular among students for improving grammar and clarity, concerns remain about their accuracy in handling context-specific academic content, and diminishes scholarly competitiveness. Ethical issues are heightened in Nigeria, where plagiarism has long been a concern in higher education. AI tools, if misused, could worsen this problem by enabling students to generate essays without proper attribution (Chukwu & Udumukwu, 2025).

The University of Abuja, as one of Nigeria's leading federal universities, provides an ideal case for examining these issues. With its diverse student population across faculties such as Arts, Science, Law, Humanities, Management, Social Science, Education, Engineering etc, the institution reflects the broader challenges and opportunities of AI adoption in Nigerian higher education. Students increasingly encounter AI tools in their academic pursuits, whether through writing assignments, preparing presentations, or participating in online examinations monitored by platforms like AutoProctor. Yet, little empirical evidence exists on how these students perceive AI in terms of trust, ethics, and acceptance. This gap in knowledge raises important questions like:

Do students trust AI to provide accurate academic support?

Are they concerned about plagiarism and originality?

And to what extent are they willing to accept AI as part of their academic journey?

The problem is further compounded by the lack of clear institutional policies on AI use. While some universities abroad have issued guidelines on responsible AI integration, Nigerian universities are still grappling with whether to encourage or restrict AI in academic activities. This uncertainty leaves students without clear direction, potentially leading to misuse or underutilisation of AI tools. Scholars have emphasised that without proper regulation and training, AI adoption in Nigerian universities may fail to achieve its intended benefits (Okafor et al., 2025).

The purpose of this study is therefore to understand how students at the University of Abuja perceive AI tools in academic activities. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the level of awareness and use of AI tools, the degree of trust students place in them, the ethical concerns they associate with AI, and their willingness to accept AI as part of their academic activities. These ideas are guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which explains how users come to adopt technology based on perceived usefulness and ease of use (Davis, 1989). Applying TAM to AI in academic pursuits allows us to understand not only whether students use AI, but also why they choose to trust or reject it (Saad et al. 2025).

## Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence in higher education is increasingly understood as a set of digital tools designed to enhance and support learning, communication, and assessment. In academic pursuits, AI tools such as Grammarly, ChatGPT, Turnitin, Claude etc are used to improve clarity, originality, and efficiency in student work. Han et al. (2025) argue that AI is now embedded in many universities' learning systems, offering customised feedback and timely support to students. This has changed the way students interact with academic texts, shifting from reliance on human feedback alone to a blend of human and machine guidance.

The concept of trust in AI tools refers to the confidence students place in their reliability and accuracy. Trust is not automatic; it depends on whether students believe the tools provide fair and dependable support. Studies show that while students often trust AI for grammar correction, they remain cautious about its ability to handle complex academic arguments (Şimşek et al 2025).

Ethics is another central concept. Ethical concerns arise when AI tools are used in ways that compromise originality, fairness, or integrity. Chukwu and Udumukwu (2025) found that Nigerian academics worry about plagiarism and fairness in peer review when AI is used without proper regulation. Globally, Han et al. (2025) reported similar concerns, with students questioning whether AI undermines independent thought.

The third concept, acceptance, refers to the willingness of students to adopt AI tools in their academic journey. Acceptance is shaped by perceived usefulness, ease of use, and institutional policies. Ragheb (2022) noted that African students are generally open to AI adoption, especially when it improves accessibility and reduces costs, but acceptance is limited by ethical concerns and lack of training.

Together, trust, ethics, and acceptance form the conceptual lens for this study. They provide a way of understanding how students perceive AI in academic pursuits, particularly in Nigerian universities where infrastructure and regulation are still developing. By focusing on these three dimensions, the study situates itself within ongoing debates about the role of AI in higher education and highlights the need for responsible adoption. Saad et al (2025) opine that

Based on prior research, the integration of AI into teaching and learning has the potential to positively impact both instructors and students. Although implementation challenges persist, it is imperative to embrace technological progress while seeking to mitigate these challenges, focusing instead on the long-term benefits to teaching and learning (P. 1013).

Saad et al. idea above resonate that integration of AI into teaching and learning can yield significant benefits for both instructors and students. Despite implementation challenges, it is essential to adopt these technologies while addressing limitations and prioritizing their long-term educational value.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

The Technology Acceptance Model was introduced by Fred Davis in 1989 to explain how individuals decide whether to adopt new technologies. Davis argued that two beliefs perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use shape attitudes towards technology and influence behavioural intention to use it (Davis 1989). TAM has been widely applied in education, including studies of e-learning platforms, mobile applications, and more recently, artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

Recent scholarship has extended TAM to account for the distinctive features of AI. Ali et al. (2024) postulate that while usefulness and ease of use remain central, trust and ethical concerns are increasingly relevant when students engage with them. Khlaif et al. (2024) reported similar findings in their study of teachers' adoption of generative AI, noting that institutional support and credibility strongly influence acceptance. Okafor et al. (2025) observed that Nigerian students often adopt AI tools such as Claude, Grammarly and ChatGPT to improve clarity, yet worries about misuse and lack of expertise complicate acceptance. These studies suggest that TAM remains valuable but requires adaptation to address trust, ethics, and cultural context.

### **Diffusion of Innovations (DOI)**

The Diffusion of Innovations theory as proposed by Everett Rogers in 1962; revised 2003 explains how new ideas/technologies spread through social systems. Adoption depends on relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability Rogers (2003). Ajani (2025) applied DOI to generative AI in higher education, showing that adoption varies across faculties and demographic groups, with younger academics acting as early adopters while others resist due to ethical concerns.

### **Integrated Approach**

By combining TAM and DOI, this study captures both the individual drivers of adoption usefulness, ease of use, trust, and ethics and the social dynamics of diffusion, including age, faculty, peer influence, and institutional culture. TAM explains why students adopt AI tools, while DOI explains how adoption spreads unevenly across groups. Together, they provide a balanced lens for analysing AI adoption in academic pursuits at the University of Abuja.

### **Empirical Studies and Gap in Literature**

Chiu (2024), in their review of artificial intelligence adoption in higher education, identified three recurring themes: usefulness, ethical concerns, and trust. They argued that while AI tools can enhance efficiency and accessibility, unresolved issues around plagiarism and fairness continue to limit acceptance. This global review provides a broad perspective but does not offer country-specific insights into Nigerian universities.

Holmes et al. (2019) examined the promises and implications of AI in education, emphasising its potential to personalise learning and reduce errors. Their report also highlighted risks such as over-reliance and questions of integrity.

Luckin et al. (2016) argued for the integration of AI in education, noting its potential to support teachers and learners. Their report stressed the need for ethical safeguards and institutional training. Although it predates the widespread use of generative AI tools and does not address current student practices in Nigeria.

Luwoye et al. (2024) investigated AI adoption in Nigerian universities, identifying opportunities for improved communication and efficiency. They also reported challenges such as plagiarism, lack of expertise, and weak institutional regulation. While this study situates AI adoption within Nigeria, it focuses primarily on institutional perspectives rather than undergraduate students.

Collectively, these studies show that AI adoption in higher education is expanding but contested. Research consistently highlights usefulness, ethical concerns, and acceptance as central themes. However, Nigerian studies have largely examined institutional or academic staff perspectives, with limited attention to undergraduates. Where students are included, the interplay between trust, ethics, and acceptance has not been systematically measured. This study addresses these gaps by focusing on undergraduate students of the University of Abuja. It examines trust, ethics, and acceptance together, offering new insights into student perceptions of AI in academic pursuits and providing evidence-based recommendations for responsible adoption in Nigerian universities.

### Methodology

This study adopted a survey design to capture perceptions and attitudes among undergraduate students. Surveys are widely used in educational research because they allow for standardised responses that can be compared across groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The population comprised approximately 30,000 undergraduate students at the University of Abuja. Using Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) sample size table, a sample of 400 was considered adequate to represent this population. A simple random sampling approach was intended, but in practice, questionnaires were distributed online through faculty forums, which introduced elements of convenience sampling. Responses were nonetheless obtained from a broad range of faculties, providing diversity across disciplines.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Items were developed from constructs identified in the literature, particularly the Technology Acceptance Model (usefulness, ease of use, trust) and Diffusion of Innovations (relative advantage, compatibility, ethical concerns, acceptance). The instrument included demographic questions, awareness and use of AI tools, and Likert Scale items ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Likert Scales are widely used in perception studies because they provide wide-ranging needed data suitable for quantitative analysis (Joshi et al. 2015).

The questionnaire was reviewed by experts in education and communication to ensure clarity and relevance. A pilot study with 30 students outside the main sample was conducted, and Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.70, confirming internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

### Data Collection

Data were collected online using Google Forms, distributed through faculty forums. This method improved accessibility and efficiency, though it relied on voluntary participation. Online surveys are widely used in higher education research and can achieve broad reach when shared through institutional platforms (Wright, 2005).

### Data Analysis

Data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores) summarised responses. Inferential analyses included chi-square tests to examine associations between categorical variables (e.g., age  $\times$  frequency of AI use, gender  $\times$  trust, faculty  $\times$  plagiarism concerns), Spearman's rho to assess correlations between ordinal variables (e.g., trust  $\times$  comfort), and multiple regression to identify predictors of comfort with AI tools. These methods were selected because they are appropriate for categorical and ordinal data and allow for exploration of relationships between demographic factors, trust, ethics, and acceptance.

## Result

### Data Presentation and Analysis

*Table 1*

*Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 400)*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	Below 18	56	14.0
	18–22	302	75.5
	23–27	37	9.3
	28+	5	1.3
Gender	Female	244	61.0
	Male	156	39.0
Faculty	Agriculture	33	8.3
	Arts	77	19.3
	Basic Medical Sciences	14	3.5

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
	Clinical Sciences	17	4.3
	Communication	27	6.8
	Education	18	4.5
	Engineering	35	8.8
	Environmental Sciences	26	6.5
	Law	11	2.8
	Management Sciences	56	14.0
	Nursing & Allied Health Sci.	18	4.5
	Science	27	6.8
	Social Sciences	37	9.3
	Veterinary Medicine	4	1.0
Year of Study	100 Level	123	30.8
	200 Level	76	19.0
	300 Level	90	22.5
	400 Level+	111	27.8

*Interpretation of Table 1. A total of 400 undergraduate students participated. The demographic profile shows that most respondents were young undergraduates aged 18–22, with females forming a clear majority. Representation was strongest from the Arts and Management Sciences faculties, though students from nearly all faculties participated, giving the sample a broad disciplinary spread. In terms of study level, first-year students were the largest group, but upper-level students were also well represented. This distribution suggests that awareness and use of AI tools can be examined across a diverse set of students, reflecting both early and advanced stages of university study.*

### Awareness and Usage of AI Tools

Almost all respondents (99%) reported awareness of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, and Grammarly. Usage frequency varied: 35.8% reported daily use, 50.2% occasional use, 11.8% weekly use, and 2.3% reported never using AI (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Frequency of AI Tool Use (N = 400)*

Frequency	Count	Percent
Daily	143	35.8
Occasionally	201	50.2
Weekly	47	11.8
Never	9	2.3

**Note.** *Just over half of the students (50.2%) reported using AI tools occasionally, while more than one-third (35.8%) said they use them daily. A smaller group (11.8%) used AI weekly, and only 2.3% had never used such tools. This distribution shows that AI has already become part of everyday academic life for most undergraduates, though the intensity of use differs across students.*

### Perceptions of AI Tools

Students expressed general positive perceptions. 72% agreed or strongly agreed that AI provides accurate academic support, 74% agreed it improves communication, and 66.1% reported being comfortable using AI. A large majority (80.6%) believed AI will play an important role in academic communication. Ethical concerns were also evident: 37.6% agreed AI encourages plagiarism, and 48.3% agreed it reduces originality.

### Inferential Analysis

A chi-square test revealed an association between age and frequency of AI use,  $\chi^2(9, N = 400) = 26.92, p = .001$ . Younger students (below 18 and 18–22) reported heavier use compared to older students (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Age by Frequency of AI Use (N = 400)*

Age Group	Daily	Never	Occasionally	Weekly	Total
Below 18	23	0	28	5	56
18–22	113	5	149	35	302
23–27	4	3	23	7	37
28+	3	1	1	0	5
<b>Total</b>	143	9	201	47	400

**Note.** The majority of daily users were aged 18–22 (37.4% of the total sample), with younger students clearly leading in AI adoption. Those below 18 also showed notable engagement, with 41.1% of them using AI either daily or occasionally. In contrast, older students (23–27 and 28+) reported much lower usage, with only 10.8% of daily users coming from these age groups. This pattern suggests that younger undergraduates are more comfortable integrating AI into their studies compared to their older peers.

A chi-square test indicated a relationship between gender and trust in AI tools,  $\chi^2(4, N = 400) = 10.32, p = .035$ . Female students reported stronger trust compared to males (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

Gender by Trust in AI Tools (N = 400)

Gender	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Female	3	1	59	142	39	244
Male	5	7	37	82	25	156
Total	8	8	96	224	64	400

**Note.** Female students expressed stronger trust in AI tools compared to males, with more agreeing or strongly agreeing that AI provides reliable academic support. This difference suggests that gender may influence perceptions of trust in technology.

**Table 5**

Trust in AI × Comfort Using AI (N = 400)

Trust in AI	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Strongly Disagree	3	0	1	3	1	8
Disagree	0	3	5	0	0	8
Neutral	26	8	57	4	1	96
Agree	139	13	36	32	4	224
Strongly Agree	23	2	5	34	0	64
Total	191	26	104	73	6	400

**Note.** A moderate positive correlation was observed between trust in AI tools and comfort using them ( $\rho = .46, p < .001$ ). Students who trusted AI were more likely to report being comfortable with its use, reinforcing the link between confidence and adoption.

**Table 6**

Multiple Regression Predicting Comfort with AI Tools (N = 400)

Predictor Variable	$\beta$ (Standardised)	SE	t	p
Trust in AI tools	.44	.07	6.29	< .001
AI improves quality	.31	.08	4.02	< .001
Reliance on AI	.18	.06	2.95	.003
Plagiarism concern	-.21	.09	-2.33	.020
Originality concern	-.17	.08	-2.12	.035
Gender (Male = 1)	-.11	.05	-2.01	.045
Age group	-.06	.04	-1.42	.157
Year of Study	.09	.05	1.98	.049

**Note:** The regression model was significant,  $F(10, 389) = 14.62, p < .001$ , explaining 41% of the variance ( $R^2 = .41$ ). Trust and perceived quality improvement were the strongest positive predictors of comfort with AI tools, while plagiarism and originality concerns reduced comfort. Gender and year of study also had modest effects, whereas age was not significant. Faculty differences were tested but did not yield consistent significant effects, so coefficients are not reported here.

### Theoretical Integration

Findings are consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), as perceived usefulness (trust, quality improvement) strongly predicted comfort and adoption. Ease of use was reflected in comfort levels. Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 2003) helps explain demographic and faculty differences: younger students and those in humanities/social sciences were more engaged but also more critical of ethical risks. Adoption patterns are shaped not only by individual perceptions but also by social and disciplinary contexts.

### Discussion

The results of this study confirm that AI adoption among undergraduates is widespread, with 99% awareness and over 85% reporting at least occasional use. This aligns with Al-Momani & Ramayah (2024) studies, who found that TAM and DOI jointly explain high adoption intentions in higher education, particularly among younger cohorts. The strong predictive role of trust and perceived quality improvement in our regression model mirrors findings by Khanfar (2025), who showed that organisational and individual factors are central to AI adoption decisions.

**Ethical Concerns** were prominent, with 37.6% of students agreeing AI encourages plagiarism and 48.3% believing it reduces originality. These concerns echo Chan's (2024) concept of *Algiarism*, where students perceive generative AI as blurring boundaries of academic misconduct. Similarly, it affirms Lund et al. (2025) report, that students worry about AI undermining integrity even as they value its efficiency. Faculty differences reinforce this. Humanities and Social Sciences students, whose disciplines emphasise originality and critical argument, expressed stronger concerns than Science faculties. This disciplinary divide reflects UNESCO's (2025) call for context-sensitive AI ethics frameworks.

**Gender Differences** were also evident, with female students reporting stronger trust in AI. This resonates with Russo et al. (2025) systematic review, which found females often engage more positively with AI tools in learning contexts. This aligns with Dávila et al. (2025) studies, which demonstrated that gender influences trust in AI versus human advice in classroom experiments. The findings therefore contribute to a growing recognition of the "gender trust gap" in AI adoption.

**Age Differences** showed younger students (18–22) as heavier users, consistent with Caffaratti et al. (2025) assertion, who found adolescents more willing to adopt AI when contextual and psychological factors support it. Chan & Lee (2023) also highlighted a generational divide, with Gen Z students more enthusiastic adopters than older users.

Taken together, these findings illustrate that adoption is not uniform: it is shaped by perceived usefulness, trust, ethical concerns, gender, age, and disciplinary context. The Technology Acceptance Model explains much of the variance, but Diffusion of Innovations theory adds understanding by showing how adoption spreads unevenly across social groups and faculties.

The study reveals that AI is a support tool rather than a replacement for originality and that clear boundaries between permitted and prohibited uses will reduce ethical risks. Adoption is shaped not only by student attitudes but also by organisational culture and faculty perspectives. Exploring these dimensions will provide a more holistic understanding of how AI can be responsibly integrated into higher education.

### Conclusion

This study establishes that AI tools are now embedded in undergraduate academic pursuits at the University of Abuja. Students generally trust AI and perceive it as a tool that improves communication and supports academic activities; however, ethical concerns regarding plagiarism and originality remain significant. Younger students and female students are more trusting and frequent users of AI tools, while students in the humanities and social sciences demonstrate greater caution, reflecting disciplinary traditions and orientations.

The findings support the assumptions of the Technology Acceptance Model, particularly its emphasis on perceived usefulness and trust as drivers of adoption, while the Diffusion of Innovations Theory helps explain demographic and disciplinary differences in AI adoption. Importantly, the study reveals that AI adoption is shaped not only by individual perceptions but also by broader social and ethical contexts.

The study recommends that universities should promote ethical AI literacy by integrating workshops on plagiarism detection, citation practices, and responsible use. This approach supports global calls for context-sensitive ethics frameworks and helps students navigate the boundaries of academic integrity. Alongside this, institutions must encourage trust through transparency by clearly explaining how AI tools function, their limitations, and the safeguards in place to prevent misuse. Such openness builds confidence and reduces the risk of misinformation. Universities should therefore balance enthusiasm for AI with clear policies on academic integrity. Training programmes should emphasize the responsible use of AI tools, while disciplinary differences should be acknowledged in the design of institutional guidelines. Future research should explore faculty and institutional perspectives, as well as longitudinal changes in students' attitudes as AI becomes

further integrated into higher education.

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