



LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN UTILIZING GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) FOR RESEARCH WRITING

Ria Joy M. Balasabas ¹, Sheena T. Cuevas ², Judee Rose S. Pada ³,
Dr. Roullette P. Cordevilla ⁴ Angela Gabrielle B. Bacang ⁵

¹ Sta. Catalina National High School, Sta. Catalina, Negros Oriental, Philippines

² Tanjay Legislated High School, Tanjay City, Negros Oriental, Philippines

³ Sibulan National High School - Balugo Extension, Sibulan, Negros Oriental Philippines

⁴ Negros Oriental State University, Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, Philippines

⁵ Foundation University, Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of graduate students in utilizing Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) for research writing. The researchers employed a phenomenological approach using purposive sampling to select seven graduate students as participants. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews to capture their experiences and perspectives in depth. The study was completed in June 2026. The findings revealed that the integration of AI in research writing significantly shapes the academic experiences of graduate students, offering both advantages and challenges. Specifically, three major themes emerged from the analysis: (1) Navigating the Difficulties of Research Writing Through Generative AI-Assisted Academic Support, which highlights how AI helps students manage complex writing tasks; (2) Experiencing AI as a Means of Academic Efficiency and Empowerment, which reflects the role of AI in improving productivity, organization, and confidence in writing; and (3) Confronting the Uncertainty and Risks Embedded in AI-Assisted Writing, which emphasizes concerns related to accuracy, overdependence, and academic integrity. Overall, the study demonstrates that while AI serves as a valuable tool in enhancing research writing, its effective use requires critical thinking, ethical awareness, and responsible engagement. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how AI influences graduate-level academic writing and provide insights for educators and future researchers in integrating AI into academic practices.

Keywords: *AI Utilization, Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), Research Writing, Graduate School Students, Lived Experiences*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed educational landscapes worldwide, particularly in the domain of academic writing and research. AI-powered tools such as text generators, grammar checkers, and research assistants are increasingly being utilized by students to support idea generation, organization, and language refinement (Kasneci *et al.*, 2023). While these technologies offer efficiency and accessibility, they also raise critical concerns regarding academic integrity, authorship, and the development of higher-order thinking skills. Globally, scholars have emphasized the dual nature of AI in education, as both a facilitator of learning and a potential threat to authentic knowledge construction if used uncritically (Jie & Kamrozzaman, 2024). Moreover, emerging global discussions highlight the urgent need for clear ethical frameworks and responsible AI integration in academic settings to ensure that learning remains meaningful and student-centered (Zawacki-Richter *et al.*, 2019). As AI continues to evolve, understanding how graduate school students experience and interpret these tools becomes essential in shaping responsible and meaningful integration in academic contexts.

In the local context, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education has been increasingly recognized, particularly in relation to students' academic writing and research practices. Recent local studies indicate that Filipino students are actively utilizing AI tools to support tasks such as drafting, paraphrasing, and organizing academic content, reflecting a growing dependence on these technologies in scholarly work (Discutido, 2025; Valdez *et al.*, 2025). Moreover, empirical findings reveal that AI-supported writing tools can enhance students' written discourse and overall writing performance, especially when combined with guided academic support (Fontanilla *et al.*, 2025). In a broader perspective, Mugot (2025) emphasized that while AI significantly transforms higher education in the Philippines by improving learning processes and research productivity, it also introduces critical challenges related to academic integrity, digital divide, and policy gaps that institutions must address. However, while these studies focus on general academic applications of AI, there remains limited qualitative inquiry specifically examining how graduate students experience and make meaning of AI in the context of research writing, thereby reinforcing the need for the present study.

Despite the rapid expansion of literature on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education, a significant gap remained in understanding the *lived experiences* of graduate students, particularly through qualitative inquiry. Most existing studies have adopted quantitative or mixed-method approaches, focusing on measurable variables such as usage frequency, acceptance, and academic performance. For instance, Baek *et al.* (2024) examined patterns of student use and perceptions of generative AI through large-scale survey data, highlighting demographic and institutional factors influencing AI adoption. Similarly, Asiri and Alharbi (2025) utilized the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to analyze factors affecting graduate students' acceptance of ChatGPT in academic writing using statistical modeling. While these studies provided valuable insights into trends and determinants of AI use, they primarily emphasized quantifiable outcomes and overlooked how students *personally experience*, interpret, and assign meaning to AI in the specific context of

research writing. In contrast, the study of Godinez and Bacang (2025) explored AI utilization in broader academic pursuits; however, it did not focus specifically on research writing as a distinct academic practice. This limitation underscores the need for a phenomenological approach that captures the depth, complexity, and subjective realities of graduate students' engagement with AI tools, particularly within the context of research writing.

The researchers, who were pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Educational Management, recognized a pressing and transformative shift in the academic landscape, one where Artificial Intelligence was no longer a distant innovation but an active force reshaping how knowledge was produced, written, and understood. Amid this rapid evolution, the researchers were compelled to investigate not merely what AI does, but how it is lived and experienced by graduate students engaged in the rigorous demands of research writing. This study was driven by a deep commitment to uncover authentic student voices in a time when technology risks overshadowing human agency in academic work. Furthermore, the study contributed to the broader goals of United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), particularly in promoting inclusive, ethical, and meaningful learning experiences in the digital age. By illuminating these lived experiences, the researchers sought to inform more responsive, humane, and contextually grounded educational practices in the integration of AI.

Research Questions

This study sought to explore the lived experiences of graduate school students as they engage with Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in research writing, aiming to understand how they perceive, interpret, and make meaning of their interactions with AI throughout the academic writing process.

Specifically, this study aimed to answer the grand tour question: What are the lived experiences of graduate school students in utilizing Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for research writing?

METHODOLOGY

This section of the study includes the research design, research environment, research participants and selection criteria, research instrument, data collection and analysis of the data.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically grounded in the descriptive phenomenological approach of Edmund Husserl (1931). This approach was appropriate as the study aimed to explore and describe the lived experiences of graduate students in utilizing Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for research writing. Husserlian phenomenology emphasizes the study of phenomena as they are consciously

experienced, focusing on the essence of lived experience through the process of bracketing preconceived assumptions.

Guided by this philosophical foundation, the study focused on capturing the participants' firsthand accounts of their perceptions, interpretations, and meaning-making processes in using AI during research writing. Rather than measuring variables or testing hypotheses, the descriptive phenomenological approach allowed the researchers to return "to the things themselves," ensuring that the authentic voices and experiences of the participants were fully represented.

Furthermore, contemporary qualitative scholarship supports the continued relevance of Husserlian phenomenology in empirical research. As emphasized by Cudjoe (2023), phenomenological inquiry remains a valuable approach for understanding lived experiences by systematically interpreting how individuals make sense of phenomena in their real-life contexts. This reinforced the suitability of the approach in examining graduate students' experiences with AI tools in academic writing.

For data analysis, the study followed the key procedures of Colaizzi's phenomenological method, including familiarization, identification of significant statements, formulation of meanings, and clustering of themes. These steps ensured that findings were grounded in participants' narratives and captured the essence of their experiences.

Through this design, the researchers were able to generate rich and detailed descriptions that captured the essence of the phenomenon under investigation, consistent with established qualitative research principles (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Research Environment

The study was conducted at Negros Oriental State University Main Campus I, located in Dumaguete City, which is widely known as the "*University Capital of the South*" due to the presence of several higher education institutions within the city. The university is a public state institution that plays a vital role in providing accessible and quality tertiary and graduate education to students in the province and nearby regions.

Negros Oriental State University Main Campus I serves as one of the central academic hubs of the university system, hosting various colleges and academic programs, including graduate studies. It is recognized for its commitment to instruction, research, and extension services, and for accommodating a diverse population of students with varying academic and professional backgrounds. The campus also supports scholarly development through research writing requirements, particularly at the graduate level.

The institution was deemed an appropriate research environment as it provided access to graduate school students who were actively engaged in research writing and

increasingly exposed to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in academic tasks. This setting allowed the researchers to gather rich, relevant, and context-specific data aligned with the objectives of the study.

Research Participants and Selection Criteria

The participants of this study were graduate school students who had direct experience in utilizing Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for research writing. These participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique used to identify individuals who possessed rich and relevant information about the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015).

The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) the participants were officially enrolled as graduate school students, (2) they were currently writing or had already completed a research paper, and (3) they had used or were currently using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in their research writing process. These criteria ensured that the participants had sufficient experience to provide meaningful and in-depth insights into the study.

The number of participants was guided by data saturation, where data collection continued until no new themes or significant information emerged from the interviews (Guest *et al.*, 2020). All seven participants were interviewed until data saturation was reached. An eighth participant was further interviewed to confirm that data saturation had indeed been achieved, ensuring the completeness and depth of the collected data.

Research Instruments

This study utilized a semi-structured interview as the primary tool for data collection. The interview questions were formulated in English and were open-ended in nature, allowing participants to freely express their thoughts, experiences, and insights regarding their use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in research writing. This format provided flexibility for the researchers to probe further and elicit rich, in-depth responses relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To ensure accurate data capture, a voice recorder was used during the interviews, allowing the researchers to document participants' responses verbatim for transcription and analysis. This ensured that no essential details were lost during the data collection process.

Additionally, the researchers utilized a reflective journal to record observations, insights, and personal reflections throughout the study. This practice supported reflexivity and helped the researchers remain aware of potential biases, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research (Berger, 2015).

Data Gathering Procedure

The data for this study were collected from April to May 2026. Prior to the conduct of the study, the researchers secured the necessary permissions and approvals to ensure that all procedures adhered to ethical research standards.

Following approval, potential participants were identified based on the established selection criteria. The researchers then provided a detailed explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before proceeding with the data collection.

The interviews were conducted through Google Meet, allowing for a flexible and accessible platform for both the researchers and participants. During the interview process, the researchers actively listened and carefully observed both verbal and non-verbal responses of the participants to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences while maintaining awareness to minimize personal biases.

All interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. After transcription, the researchers conducted cross-referencing and verification of the data to ensure accuracy and consistency between the recorded responses and the written transcripts. This process helped maintain the integrity and reliability of the collected data.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data gathered from the in-depth interviews were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method. Colaizzi's (1978) method was selected because it provided a systematic and rigorous process for analyzing lived experiences within a phenomenological framework (Morrow *et al.*, 2015).

Familiarization. The researchers first recorded all interviews using the Voice Memos mobile application and transcribed the details verbatim. After transcription, the researchers read and re-read all interview transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences in utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) for research writing. This process allowed the researchers to immerse themselves in the data and develop an overall sense of the content and depth of the narratives.

Identifying Significant Statements. The researchers carefully extracted significant statements and key phrases from the transcripts that were directly related to the use of AI tools in research writing. These statements were highlighted and organized as they provided meaningful insights into the participants' lived experiences.

Formulating Meanings. Following the extraction of significant statements, the researchers interpreted these statements to formulate meanings. This step involved translating participants' responses into more general expressions while remaining faithful to their original intent and context.

Organizing into Theme Clusters. The formulated meanings were then grouped into clusters of themes. The researchers identified patterns and commonalities across participants' experiences, which led to the development of thematic categories representing shared meanings.

Developing an Exhaustive Description. The researchers integrated all the identified themes into a rich and comprehensive description of the phenomenon. This exhaustive narrative captured how graduate students experienced and utilized AI tools throughout the research writing process.

Producing the Fundamental Structure. From the exhaustive description, the researchers distilled the essential structure of the phenomenon. This involved summarizing the core essence of the participants' lived experiences into a concise yet meaningful statement.

Validation through Member Checking. Finally, the researchers returned the findings to the participants for validation. Participants were asked to review the interpretations and descriptions to confirm their accuracy. Any necessary revisions were incorporated to ensure that the findings authentically represented their experiences.

In summary, all seven steps of Colaizzi's phenomenological method were thoroughly followed to ensure a systematic and rigorous analysis of the data. This process ensured that the findings accurately and credibly reflected the lived experiences of graduate students in utilizing Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) for research writing.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on exploring the lived experiences of Graduate School Students in utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for research writing. It examined how these students perceived, interpreted, and made meaning of their interactions with AI throughout the academic writing process. The participants of the study were limited to selected graduate school students who had experience in using AI tools in their research-related tasks.

Limitation of the Study

Despite its contributions, the study had several limitations. First, the findings were based on a relatively small number of participants, which is inherent in qualitative research, and therefore limited the generalizability of the results to a broader population. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may have been influenced by participants' personal biases, memory recall, or willingness to share their experiences.

Third, the study focused solely on graduate school students and did not include the perspectives of other stakeholders such as educators, research advisers, or institutional administrators. Additionally, the study was conducted within a specific context, and variations in access to AI tools, level of technological proficiency, and

institutional policies may have affected the participants' experiences. Despite these limitations, the study provided meaningful and in-depth insights into the lived experiences of graduate school students in utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for research writing.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the rigor and quality of the qualitative findings, the study established trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement with the data and the use of Colaizzi's phenomenological method, particularly through member checking. The participants were given the opportunity to validate the findings, ensuring that their lived experiences were accurately represented.

Transferability was ensured by providing rich and thick descriptions of the participants' experiences, allowing readers to determine the applicability of the findings to other similar contexts.

Dependability was maintained through a systematic and well-documented research process. The researchers ensured consistency in data collection and analysis by following established qualitative procedures and clearly outlining each step of the methodology.

Confirmability was established by ensuring that the findings were grounded in the participants' actual responses rather than the researchers' biases. This was achieved through careful documentation, audit trails, and the use of verbatim excerpts from the participants' narratives to support the identified themes.

Bracketing and Reflexivity

In this study, the researchers practiced **bracketing** to minimize personal biases and preconceived assumptions regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in research writing. This was done by consciously setting aside prior knowledge and expectations before and during data collection and analysis, allowing the findings to reflect the genuine lived experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994; Tufford & Newman, 2012).

The researchers also engaged in **reflexivity** throughout the research process. During the interviews, reflective journals were used to document observations, insights, and personal reflections. This practice helped the researchers examine their assumptions and monitor potential biases. As emphasized by Hanson (1994), maintaining a reflexive journal enhanced research credibility by requiring the disclosure of research goals and preconceived notions.

Furthermore, the researchers critically examined their positionality, including their perspectives and potential influence on the study, considering factors such as

background and power dynamics (Finlay, 2002; Berger, 2015). Reflexivity was further supported through the systematic use of Colaizzi's phenomenological method, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in participants' responses. Overall, these practices strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that participants experienced Generative AI as both a supportive and challenging presence in academic writing. Their experiences reflected cognitive, emotional, ethical, and practical dimensions of Generative AI integration in research practices.

Through phenomenological analysis, three emergent themes were identified: (1) Navigating Academic Writing Struggles Through AI-Mediated Cognitive Support, (2) AI as a Catalyst for Academic Efficiency and Intellectual Empowerment, and (3) Negotiating Trust, Risk, and Ethical Responsibility in AI-Integrated Academic Writing. These emergent themes collectively describe how participants perceived, interpreted, and made meaning of their engagement with Generative AI throughout the research writing process.

Emergent Theme 1: Navigating the Difficulties of Research Writing Through AI-Assisted Academic Support

This emergent theme describes how graduate school students utilized Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to cope with the challenges and demands of research writing. Participants experienced AI as a meaningful academic support system that helped them overcome difficulties in organizing ideas, improving clarity, refining academic language, and managing complex writing tasks. Their narratives revealed that AI became integrated into their research practices as a practical and accessible tool that reduced mental strain and improved productivity.

The participants' experiences reflect how AI transformed the research writing process into a more manageable and less overwhelming academic task. Through AI-assisted support, participants experienced convenience, confidence, and motivation while navigating the rigorous expectations of graduate studies.

Theme 1: Struggling With the Demands of Academic Writing. Participants revealed that research writing was often experienced as difficult, stressful, and mentally demanding. Many participants encountered challenges in organizing thoughts, constructing academic sentences, expressing ideas clearly, and initiating the writing process. Because of these struggles, AI became an immediate source of academic assistance that supported them in drafting, outlining, and clarifying their ideas. The formulated meanings revealed that participants used AI particularly during moments of confusion and difficulty in expression. AI assisted them in generating outlines, improving sentence construction, checking grammar, and simplifying academic writing tasks. These

experiences demonstrate that AI became a coping mechanism that helped participants reduce the burden associated with scholarly writing.

The findings support Aldulaijan and Almalky (2025), who found that postgraduate students commonly utilize generative AI tools to support brainstorming, drafting, and idea organization. Similarly, Altmäe *et al.* (2023) explained that AI has become increasingly integrated into scientific writing because of its ability to simplify complex writing tasks and improve efficiency. The present study extends these findings by revealing the emotional and phenomenological dimensions of AI utilization, particularly how students experienced relief and support while navigating academic difficulties. The findings also align with Filetti *et al.* (2024), who emphasized that AI writing tools assist researchers in structuring scholarly work, refining language, and improving the overall organization of research outputs. Participants in the present study similarly perceived AI as a practical aid that enhanced their ability to engage with demanding graduate-level writing tasks.

Participant 1 perceived AI as a supportive academic tool that assisted in overcoming difficulties in organizing ideas and expressing thoughts clearly during the research writing process. She shared:

"I first started using AI tools in my research writing during the early stage of drafting my paper, when I was having difficulty organizing my ideas and expressing them clearly."

"One specific moment I remember was when I used an AI tool to help me rewrite a paragraph from my study to make it clearer and more organized."

"The main situation that influenced my use of AI in research writing was when I felt stuck or had difficulty expressing my ideas clearly."

Participant 2 perceived AI as an integral and highly beneficial academic companion that enhanced convenience, organization, and efficiency in thesis writing and other daily academic activities. She claimed.

"So I have a lots of experiences in using AI because as we all know that, I think AI is part now in our day to day activities, especially now that I am already writing my research or thesis. For my thesis writing it has been very helpful and convenient, that's very true. I often use them to organize my ideas of course, create outlines, improve my sentence structure and check grammar."

"Even though I am an English Major, I am an English Teacher, sometimes I'm not yet fully confident enough with my grammar so they make the writing process faster, and less stressful. Most specially when I'm having difficulty expressing my thoughts clearly."

Participant 5 emphasizes that the presence of AI alone did not immediately lessen the difficulty of research writing, as limited knowledge and unfamiliarity with using AI tools continued to make the writing process challenging. She said:

“Even when AI was already there, I did not know how to use it, so it was still very hard for me.”

Participant 7 perceives AI as a supportive writing guide that assisted in generating ideas, organizing outlines, improving sentence construction, and enhancing the clarity and comprehensibility of research writing. She emphasized:

“AI tools help me a lot when I am writing my research. I use them to get ideas, make an outline, and improve my sentences. When I do not know how to start, AI gives me simple suggestions. It also helps me check my grammar and make my writing clearer and easier to understand.”

Theme 2: Experiencing AI as a Facilitator of Writing Clarity and Organization.

Participants experienced AI as an important tool for improving writing clarity, coherence, and organization. AI assisted them in refining drafts, improving grammar, generating titles, organizing ideas logically, and simplifying complicated concepts. Through these experiences, participants perceived AI as a writing enhancer that strengthened the quality and structure of their academic outputs. The narratives revealed that participants valued AI because it reduced mental exhaustion and minimized writing errors. AI tools became dependable writing assistants that enabled participants to communicate their ideas more effectively and confidently. Participants also recognized the usefulness of integrating multiple AI tools for paraphrasing, summarizing, and refining content.

These findings support Crompton and Burke (2023), who noted that AI tools in higher education improve students' academic performance by enhancing writing quality and supporting independent learning. Likewise, Paperpal (2026) described AI-assisted writing platforms as tools that guide researchers from idea generation to final drafting through grammar correction, paraphrasing, and academic language enhancement. The findings are also consistent with Kurniati and Fithriani (2022), who found that graduate students perceived QuillBot as beneficial in improving sentence structure, clarity, and writing quality in academic work. Participants in the present study similarly experienced AI as a mechanism for producing clearer, more refined, and academically acceptable outputs.

Participant 1 perceived AI as a writing aid that enhanced the clarity, organization, and comprehensibility of academic work, particularly during the process of revising and refining written outputs. She shared:

“One specific moment I remember was when I used an AI tool to help me rewrite a paragraph from my study to make it clearer and more organized.”

“...the tool was very helpful, especially in making my sentences clearer and easier to understand.”

Participant 2 perceived AI as a positive and dependable academic aid that enhanced writing quality, organized ideas, simplified complex concepts, and provided

guidance for improving the overall quality of academic and communication tasks. She claimed:

“AI has been positive and helpful jud siya ma'am. Specially in my academic work. It has made task like writing, organizing ideas, usahay gani ma'am sa kanang mag surat tag letter bisan, honestly speaking, bisan kanang e reply nato sa message or email nga you have to be polite or friendly sa emung message, ako sang ipa check ni AI if sakto raba ni. And understanding complex topics is easier and faster Kay ma ginagmay man niya didto gud ang mga complex topic. So mas makasabot ko. And I find it useful when I need guidance or when I need some one to improve the quality of my work.”

Trans: (“AI has really been positive and helpful, ma'am, especially in my academic work. It has made tasks such as writing and organizing ideas easier. Sometimes, ma'am, when writing a letter, or honestly even when replying to messages or emails where you need to sound polite or friendly, I first let AI check if what I wrote is appropriate. Understanding complex topics has also become easier and faster because AI breaks down complicated ideas into simpler parts. Because of that, I understand better. I also find it useful whenever I need guidance or when I need someone to help improve the quality of my work.”)

Participant 4 perceived AI as a practical writing facilitator that simplified title generation, idea organization, summarization, grammar checking, and sentence construction, while also recognizing the need to verify the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated outputs. She explained:

“In crafting titles Chat GPT is very easy lang, in organizing ideas pud it's very easy, and also specially if you have those long journal articles, ato Ra siya ipa summarize ni chat GPT sayun Ra pud siya, and also if we kanang pag check sa grammar no, sometimes Dili malikayan nga murag unsure ka sa emung grammar if sakto ba siya, sometimes sa ako'a nga part Ako gud siyang e ask sa AI if it's correct grammar no.”

Trans: (“In crafting titles, ChatGPT is very easy to use, and in organizing ideas, it is also very easy. Especially if you have long journal articles, you can simply ask ChatGPT to summarize them and it becomes much easier. Also, when it comes to checking grammar, sometimes it cannot be avoided that you feel unsure whether your grammar is correct. In my case, I usually ask AI if my grammar is correct.”)

“...also kanang pag construct ug sentences, specially tong ta'as na jud kaayo nga mga sentences, sometimes Dili jud malikayan nga mu prompt jud ta sa AI Kay very easy nalang jud siya, Peru ang part pud nga challenging is ang accuracy, Ang iyang reliability if sakto ba, if mu generate siya ug answer, as a researcher no, ato gud siyang e check, ato gud siyang basahon if sakto pud iyang answer nga gi generate.”

Trans: “Also, when it comes to constructing sentences, especially those that are already very long, sometimes it cannot really be avoided that we prompt AI because it has become very easy to use. However, the challenging part is its accuracy and reliability, whether what it generates is really correct. If it generates an answer, as researchers, we still need to check it and read it carefully to make sure that the answer it generated is accurate.”)

Participant 5 perceived AI as a valuable writing support tool that enhanced grammar, improved writing quality, and facilitated the organization and refinement of research content through paraphrasing and revision. She shared:

“I use AI to check the grammar of my paragraph and AI will correct errors, so my writing becomes accurate and improved.”

“AI helps a lot in the organization of my research. In research writing, I use ChatGPT and QuillBot, especially for paraphrasing.”

“Kabalo na ka karon kapoy na. Magkasinayop nya ka sa imohang gisulat. So ma-improve jud atoang writing. Sumpay jud ni siya na ko as a teacher kay nagteach man pud ko ug research. So makatabang jud siya para sa mga researcher. It can help researchers. I am a researcher. I can improve the quality of my writing. Nga kanang mura jud ko konohay nga perti jud. I can improve the quality of my writing.”

Trans: (“You know, nowadays we already get tired and sometimes make mistakes in what we write. So, AI really improves our writing. This is very relevant to me as a teacher because I also teach research. It can really help researchers. It can help researchers. I am a researcher, and I can improve the quality of my writing. It makes me feel as though I am really highly skilled. I can improve the quality of my writing.”)

Participant 7 perceived AI as a writing facilitator that improved clarity, generated new ideas, and made the writing process more organized and manageable, while still requiring personal evaluation of the accuracy of its suggestions. She shared:

“While using it, I was thinking about how I could improve my writing and make my ideas clearer. I carefully read the suggestions and tried to understand them. My first impression was that it was very helpful and fast. I also felt surprised because it gave me ideas that I had not thought of before. At the same time, I felt a little unsure if everything it gave was correct.”

The participant further emphasized that AI transformed her writing approach by assisting in idea generation and organization, allowing her to focus more on revising and refining her academic work. She explained:

“AI has changed my approach by making my writing process faster and more organized. Before, I would struggle to start, but now I first use AI

to get ideas or outlines, then I develop and improve them myself. It also helped me focus more on editing and refining my work instead of only worrying about starting.”

Theme 3: Experiencing AI as a Supportive Academic Companion. Participants described AI not merely as a tool but as a supportive academic companion integrated into their educational journey. AI was experienced as a practical assistant that reduced workload, simplified research processes, and provided continuous academic guidance. Participants relied on AI to retrieve information, summarize literature, improve writing quality, and manage various academic responsibilities more efficiently. The participants' experiences reflect the growing normalization of AI within academic life. AI became part of their routine scholarly practices and contributed to their confidence and productivity as graduate students. Despite recognizing its benefits, participants also emphasized the need for responsible use and critical evaluation of AI-generated outputs.

The findings align with Nguyen *et al.* (2024), who explained that AI-assisted academic writing involves collaborative interaction between humans and AI systems. Similarly, Cress and Kimmerle (2023) argued that AI contributes to knowledge construction when users actively engage in reflection and critical interpretation. Participants in the present study demonstrated this collaborative relationship by utilizing AI as a supportive guide while maintaining personal judgment and academic responsibility. The findings also support Sarker *et al.* (2024), who described AI as an emerging partner in academic knowledge creation that enhances efficiency while still requiring human oversight and intellectual contribution. Participants perceived AI as a meaningful support system that strengthened their research practices without completely replacing human effort and critical thinking.

Participant 1 perceived AI as a supportive academic companion that assisted during challenging moments in research writing, particularly when guidance and clarity were needed in the writing process. She shared:

“AI played the role of a helper during that moment.”

Participant 3 perceived AI, particularly Google Scholar, as a supportive academic companion that enhanced efficiency in searching, organizing, and gathering scholarly information while preserving the importance of human judgment and critical validation. The participant viewed AI as a guide that supports research work without replacing intellectual responsibility. She explained:

“AI, especially Google Scholar, acted as a support tool that made searching for sources faster and more organized. For me, using AI in research writing means saving time and improving efficiency, but still carefully checking and validating all information. For me personally, “using AI in research writing” means using tools that assist in gathering, organizing, and sometimes summarizing information more efficiently. However, I see it as a guide rather than a replacement for critical thinking.

It is helpful, but only when I carefully screen and verify the information it provides.”

“The essence of my experience is that AI is a helpful support tool that saves time but requires responsible use. The most meaningful aspect is learning how to balance efficiency with credibility. I would describe it to others as a tool that makes research easier and faster, but one that still requires your own judgment and critical thinking to produce quality work.”

Participant 4 experienced AI as a supportive academic assistant that provided guidance and assistance in both teaching and research-related tasks. Although highly appreciative of AI's presence, the participant emphasized that its usefulness must be balanced with verification and responsible use. She stated:

“Yes ma'am, using AI is very helpful for us teachers. Happy kaayo ko nga ga exist Ning AI and very thankful nga naa sila ga guide and gatabang nato for us nga maka tabang sa atong gibuhay. Dili ta mag over dependent sa AI. Ato pud e verify, e cross-examination if sakto ba, if sakto b apud ang iyang gihatag nga answers.”

Trans: (“Yes ma'am, using AI is very helpful for us teachers. I am very happy that AI exists and very thankful because it guides and helps us in what we do. However, we should not become overly dependent on AI. We still need to verify and cross-check whether the answers it provides are correct and accurate.”)

Participant 5 perceived AI as a supportive academic companion that facilitated the organization and structuring of research work, making scholarly tasks more manageable and systematic. She shared:

“AI helps a lot in the organization of my research.”

Participant 6 viewed AI as a dependable academic companion that supported both research writing and teaching responsibilities. The participant perceived AI as a helpful partner that improved writing quality, simplified information gathering, and reduced the burden associated with academic work. She emphasized:

“Kabalo na ka karon kapoy na. Magkasinayop nya ka sa imohang gisulat. So ma-improve jud atong writing. Sumpay jud ni siya na ko as a teacher kay nagteach man pud ko ug research. So makatabang jud siya para sa mga researcher. It can help researchers. I am a researcher. I can improve the quality of my writing. Nga kanang mura jud ko konohay nga perti jud. I can improve the quality of my writing.”

Trans: (“You know, nowadays we easily get tired and sometimes make mistakes in our writing. Because of that, our writing can really improve. This is very relevant to me as a teacher because I also teach research. It can truly help researchers. I am a researcher, and I can improve the quality of my writing. It makes me feel as though I am very capable. I can improve the quality of my writing.”)

“When you use AI, you can easily gather information. You can summarize it easily nga lami jud kaayo. There are many sources. Makatabang jud nako (with emphasis every word). I can easily get related literature from AI. Paspas kaayo.”

Trans: (“When you use AI, you can easily gather information. You can summarize it easily, and it feels very satisfying to use. There are many sources available. It really helps me a lot. I can easily obtain related literature from AI. It is very fast.”)

Participant 7 experienced AI as a supportive guide and assistant that facilitated the writing process while still requiring personal thinking and ownership of academic work. The participant recognized AI’s assistance in initiating writing, organizing ideas, and refining sentences but maintained the importance of independent verification and authorship. She explained:

“AI played the role of a guide or assistant. It helped me start my writing, organize my thoughts, and improve my sentences. However, I still checked the information and made sure that the final work was my own. Overall, that experience showed me that AI can support my research writing, but I still need to think carefully and do my own work.”

Emergent Theme 2: Experiencing AI as a Means of Academic Efficiency and Empowerment

This emergent theme describes how graduate school students experienced Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a source of academic efficiency, convenience, confidence, and empowerment in research writing. Participants perceived AI as a transformative academic tool that reduced workload, improved time management, enhanced productivity, and made complex research tasks more manageable. Their experiences revealed that AI contributed not only to academic convenience but also to emotional relief, motivation, and increased confidence in handling scholarly responsibilities. The participants’ narratives further demonstrated that AI became deeply integrated into their academic lives. Many participants reflected on the contrast between research writing in the pre-AI era and the present AI-assisted environment, recognizing how technological advancements transformed their experiences as graduate students. Through AI utilization, participants experienced research writing as less burdensome, more efficient, and more achievable despite the pressures of graduate education.

Theme 1: Experiencing AI as a Source of Efficiency and Academic Convenience. Participants experienced AI as a practical and time-saving academic tool that improved efficiency in various aspects of research writing. The narratives revealed that AI helped participants manage academic workloads, summarize journal articles, retrieve relevant literature, organize information, and complete writing tasks more quickly. Participants particularly valued AI because it reduced the extensive effort traditionally associated with graduate-level research. Several participants reflected on how AI transformed the research process by simplifying tasks that previously required long hours

of manual searching, reading, and organization. Participants who experienced research writing before the emergence of AI emphasized the significant contrast between traditional and AI-assisted academic work. They described the pre-AI research process as physically exhausting, time-consuming, and mentally draining, whereas AI-assisted research writing was perceived as faster, more accessible, and more manageable.

The findings support Yang and Hwang (2025), who explained that AI enhances research documentation and academic writing by improving efficiency, organization, and access to information. Similarly, Celik (2025) emphasized that AI tools significantly reduce the time required for academic writing tasks by assisting researchers in summarizing information, generating ideas, and refining written outputs. Participants in the present study similarly perceived AI as a transformative academic resource that improved productivity and reduced academic burden. The findings also align with Dergaa *et al.* (2023), who discussed how generative AI technologies improve academic efficiency by accelerating writing processes and facilitating access to information. The participants' experiences further support Al-Qudimat *et al.* (2025), who noted that AI contributes to more efficient research practices by simplifying information retrieval and reducing repetitive academic tasks. In the present study, AI became a practical support system that enabled graduate students to cope more effectively with the demands of research writing.

Participant 1 experienced AI as an academic support mechanism that improved efficiency during periods of heavy workload and academic pressure. The participant perceived AI as a practical tool that assisted in managing deadlines and organizing written work more efficiently. She shared:

"Time pressure, heavy workload, and the need to make my writing more organized also pushed me to use AI as support."

"When deadlines are close, I feel more pressure to finish my work, so I sometimes use AI to help me revise faster or improve my sentences."

Participant 2 perceived AI as a transformative tool that enhanced productivity and accelerated academic work. The participant believed that AI significantly shortened the time traditionally required to complete research-related tasks and viewed it as an emerging force that would reshape future academic practices. She claimed:

"I believe AI will change how we work. So it will serve as a Tool that can support and improve our productivity."

"Yes ma'am. Karun gani sa amo school like gi ingnan mi nga ang 3 months nga making of RRL is kuha'on nalang ug 3 days, tungod sa AI ma'am."

Trans: ("Yes ma'am. In our school now, we were even told that what used to take three months to complete an RRL can now be done in just three days because of AI, ma'am.")

Participant 3 experienced AI, particularly through keyword-based searching, as a mechanism that substantially improved the speed and efficiency of literature retrieval. The

participant recognized that AI-assisted searching transformed research from prolonged manual searching into a more focused and organized process while maintaining personal analysis of gathered sources. She explained:

“What stood out was how quickly I could find relevant studies compared to manual searching. The process involved entering keywords, scanning results, selecting useful articles, and then analyzing them myself.”

Participant 4 perceived AI as a highly practical academic tool that simplified demanding research tasks and strengthened time management, particularly while balancing work and graduate studies. The participant experienced AI-assisted summarization as an efficient alternative to manually reading extensive journal materials. She stated:

“When it comes to summarizing long journal articles Kay naa man gud siya ma'am ri no nga, sometimes mu attached ta ug file dayun specially nga sa ako'a karun currently, Kay 20 jud Ka research journal, nya sa usa ka journal pila Ka pages, 20 pages, Ako gi sulayan nga mu attached ug file, dayun mu read man pud Ang AI dayun iya e summarize if unsa Ako gina pangayo nga prompt, so it's very helpful gyud pud.”

Trans: (“When it comes to summarizing long journal articles, there is a feature where you can attach a file. In my case right now, I have around 20 research journals, and each journal has about 20 pages. I tried attaching the files, and AI was able to read and summarize them based on the prompt I provided. So, it is really very helpful.”)

Yes yes ma'am. Kay kanang atong time biya Dili man ta, fully student Ra gyud, weekdays ga trabaho ta, dayun pagka sabado maoy pag adto nato sa Skwelahan, para mu skwela. Murag Ang pag kuan pag manage nato sa atong time dako gyud siyag katabang.

Trans: (“Yes, yes ma'am. During our time, we were not full-time students because we worked during weekdays and only went to school on Saturdays to study. So, when it comes to managing our time, AI has really been a great help.”)

Participant 5 experienced AI as a convenient and highly useful academic resource that simplified research writing and minimized the need for extensive browsing across multiple online platforms. The participant perceived AI as a practical source of immediate information that made academic work easier to accomplish. She emphasized:

“Based on experience Ma'am, using AI is really convenient and very useful in creating research because when you ask anything, AI will really supply you with answers. It is convenient because you can check your answers without browsing many many websites.”

Participant 6 perceived AI as a fast, efficient, and increasingly indispensable academic support system that facilitated information gathering, literature retrieval, and

writing improvement. The participant recognized AI as deeply integrated into the life of a researcher and viewed it as a tool that strengthened academic learning and enhanced the quality of scholarly work. She emphasized:

“When you use AI, you can easily gather information. You can summarize it easily nga lami jud kaayo. There are many sources. Makatabang jud nako (with emphasis every word). I can easily get related literature from AI. Paspas kaayo.”

Trans: (“When you use AI, you can easily gather information. You can summarize it easily, and it feels very convenient and satisfying. There are many sources available. It really helps me a lot. I can easily obtain related literature from AI. It is very fast.”)

Dili jud ko ka avoid nga dili jud mogamit kay sus, magsigesige naman jud. Nya mao to, sus, kalami man jud sa akua mga write-ups. We cannot escape AI in terms of research. Sumpay na jud nis atoa kinabuhì as a researcher para moimprove jud atoa akademikong pagkatuto.

Trans: (“I really cannot avoid using AI because it has become very common already. And because of that, I can really see how much my write-ups improve. We cannot escape AI in terms of research. It has already become part of our lives as researchers to help improve our academic learning.”)

Theme 2: Experiencing Emotional Relief, Confidence, and Academic Empowerment. Participants described AI as a source of emotional relief, confidence, and academic empowerment. Their narratives revealed that AI reduced stress and frustration associated with research writing by helping them overcome writer’s block, improve writing quality, and manage academic expectations more effectively. Participants expressed feelings of amazement, happiness, motivation, and intellectual confidence as they discovered the capabilities of AI tools in supporting their scholarly work. Several participants shared that AI made them feel more competent and capable as graduate students. The assistance provided by AI increased their willingness to revise and improve their work while reducing discouragement caused by repeated corrections and writing difficulties. Participants also experienced renewed motivation and enjoyment in their academic journey because AI made research writing feel less overwhelming and more achievable.

The findings support Huff (2025), who explained that AI tools can positively influence researchers’ confidence and productivity by providing accessible academic support during writing tasks. Similarly, Aldulaijan and Almalky (2025) found that postgraduate students perceived generative AI tools as beneficial in reducing academic stress and improving confidence in completing scholarly tasks. Participants in the present study similarly experienced AI as an empowering academic companion that strengthened their confidence and persistence in graduate studies. The findings are also consistent with Godinez and Bacang (2025), who described AI integration in academic pursuits as a transformative experience that reshapes students’ learning experiences and emotional engagement with academic work. The present study extends these findings by

highlighting how AI-assisted writing contributed not only to academic productivity but also to emotional resilience, motivation, and determination among graduate school students.

Participant 1 experienced AI as a source of emotional relief that helped reduce frustration and uncertainty during research writing. Although initially feeling cautious about AI use, the participant simultaneously experienced amazement and relief as AI enabled progress during difficult writing situations. She shared:

I felt both amazed and a bit unsure at first because it made the work easier, but I also knew I needed to use it responsibly.

Overall, I felt relieved because it helped me move forward with my writing, especially during times when I felt stuck.

Participant 3 experienced AI as a mechanism that reduced feelings of academic burden while increasing curiosity and personal control over the research process. The participant perceived AI-assisted searching as emotionally reassuring because it minimized overwhelming workloads without replacing independent scholarly thinking. She explained:

Instead of feeling overwhelmed by the volume of readings, I felt more in control of the research process. My first impression was that even this limited form of AI already made academic work easier and more manageable. It did not replace the need to read and critically analyze sources, but it reduced the time spent on searching and organizing materials. Emotionally, I felt a mix of relief and curiosity. Relief because the workload became lighter and less time-consuming, and curiosity because I began to realize the potential of AI tools in transforming research writing. Even with minimal exposure, I could already see how AI could support students in making their work more efficient while still maintaining academic rigor.

Participant 5 experienced AI as a source of amazement, happiness, and intellectual confidence upon learning how to utilize its capabilities effectively in doctoral research writing. The participant perceived AI as an empowering academic resource that enhanced personal confidence and made complex research tasks appear more achievable. She emphasized:

When I learned how to use AI in my PhD, I was amazed because in just one click, everything will be provided as long as you prompt correctly.

Sus, malipay jud ko aning AI. Mura jud ko ug brayt kaayo.

Trans: ("I am really happy with AI. It makes me feel very intelligent.")

Participant 6 experienced AI as a motivating and emotionally supportive academic companion that reduced discouragement associated with repeated corrections and extensive revisions. The participant perceived AI-assisted revision as a factor that

strengthened willingness to improve scholarly work while minimizing loss of motivation experienced during earlier research experiences. She explained:

...akoa mga research ron, ginagmay nalang jud ang feedback, but dili jud pareha sauna nga perting daghana hantud mawad-an na ko ug gana. Sa mga ginagmayn sayop, willing ra jud ko mochange kay naa may makatabang si AI.

Trans: (“...In my research now, the feedback has become minimal, unlike before when there were so many corrections that I would eventually lose motivation. For minor mistakes, I am willing to make changes because AI is there to help me.”)

Participant 7 experienced AI as a source of confidence and empowerment that helped overcome writer’s block and facilitated engagement with research writing. The participant perceived AI assistance as beneficial in building self-confidence while simultaneously fostering greater independence and caution in revising academic work. She said:

Yes, my confidence has improved because AI helps me overcome writer’s block and gives me a starting point. However, I also became more careful and independent in checking and revising my work. I learned that I should not fully depend on AI, but instead use it to support my own thinking and skills.

Theme 3: Recognizing the Transformative Presence of AI in Academic Life.

Participants recognized AI as a transformative and increasingly unavoidable presence in academic life. Their narratives revealed that AI became deeply integrated into research practices, teaching responsibilities, and scholarly learning. Participants acknowledged that educational institutions and academic communities are increasingly encouraging the use of AI tools, provided that these technologies are utilized responsibly and ethically. Several participants reflected on the evolution of research writing across different periods of their academic lives. Those who experienced graduate studies before the emergence of AI described the traditional research process as highly labor-intensive and demanding. In contrast, the present AI-assisted environment was perceived as more supportive, accessible, and efficient. Participants recognized that AI significantly transformed the way research is conducted, particularly in accessing information, refining writing, and completing academic requirements.

The findings support Crompton and Burke (2023), who emphasized that AI has become an increasingly influential component of higher education due to its ability to transform teaching, learning, and research practices. Similarly, Zawacki-Richter *et al.* (2019) explained that AI applications in higher education continue to expand because of their contributions to academic support, information access, and personalized learning experiences. Participants in the present study reflected these developments by recognizing AI as a lasting and evolving component of contemporary academic life. The findings also align with Salas-Pilco and Yang (2022), who noted that AI technologies are

increasingly integrated into educational systems and scholarly environments worldwide. Participants in the present study similarly perceived AI as a transformative academic presence that reshaped their experiences as researchers, students, and educators. Despite this growing integration, participants continued to emphasize the importance of responsible use, critical thinking, and human judgment in maintaining the integrity of academic work.

Participant 3 recognized AI as a gradually emerging yet transformative component of research writing, particularly through tools such as Google Scholar that streamlined the process of locating relevant studies and academic materials. Although the participant initially experienced limited exposure to AI technologies, these tools became meaningful in improving access to scholarly information and organizing research tasks more efficiently. She shared:

AI tools became part of my research writing experience quite late, and even now, only in a very minimal way. The most common form of AI I used was Google Scholar, which, although not as advanced as today's AI writing tools, already helped streamline the process of finding relevant studies and articles.

Participant 4 perceived AI as a transformative academic resource that became integrated into both research writing and time management responsibilities. The participant described utilizing various AI platforms such as QuillBot, Google Scholar, and ChatGPT to support paraphrasing, information retrieval, and content generation, while recognizing AI's role in balancing academic and professional demands. She stated:

Yes ma'am. When I was conducting my first research, so I used an AI tool which is first the Quillbot, a paraphrasing tool. And also google scholar, and also when it comes to generating answers I also use Chat GPT. There are also a lot of AI that I've used ma'am but I mainly use those 3 ma'am.

Yes yes ma'am. Kay kanang atong time biya Dili man ta, fully student Ra gyud, weekdays ga trabaho ta, dayun pagka sabado maoy pag adto nato sa Skwelahan, para mu skwela. Murag Ang pag kuan pag manage nato sa atong time dako gyud siyag katabang.

Trans: ("Yes, ma'am. During our time, we were not full-time students because we worked on weekdays and only went to school on Saturdays to attend classes. That is why, in terms of managing our time, AI has been a great help.")

Participant 5 acknowledged AI as a transformative presence that significantly changed the nature of graduate studies and research writing. By comparing past and present experiences, the participant emphasized how AI made academic work more convenient, reduced extensive revisions, and provided dependable support in navigating scholarly tasks. She emphasized:

Before, it was really hard because you need to browse a lot of references, read many books, and visit physical libraries.

Compared to before, my grad school studies now are more convenient, and somehow it gives me confidence because I know where to run to. Before, there were a lot of feedback and major revisions—even changing the entire RRL.

In research writing, I use ChatGPT and QuillBot, especially for paraphrasing.

Participant 6 perceived AI as an increasingly accepted and transformative presence within educational institutions and academic life. The participant reflected on the significant contrast between pre-AI and AI-assisted research environments, recognizing that technological advances eased the burdens of manual research while also strengthening motivation and enjoyment in graduate studies. She shared:

Daghan jud mga eskwelahan nga mo encourage, ug use AI. Amoa teacher mo-encourage but be responsible.

Trans: (“Many institutions really encourage the use of AI. Our teacher also encourages us to use AI, but to do so responsibly.”)

Sauna, sa panahon una na ko Masters, wala pa juy AI. Katong time, grabe akoo struggle kay nanghulam ko ug libro sa Silliman University Library, perting daghana, mga tupong na ko ang gidaghanon sa libro akoang gibasa. Tanan books kabahin sa history, usa ka lamesa ga latag jud na nako. Wala pa juy internet. Akoo pajud kaugalingon Eninglis, akoo tanan, kapoya. Daghan kaayo ko giadto nga library, didto pud ko sa Silliman, NORSU library, ug Dumaguete City Library.

Trans: (“Before, during the time when I was taking my Master’s degree, there was no AI yet. During that time, I really struggled because I had to borrow many books from the Silliman University Library. I read piles of books, almost as tall as me. All the books were about history, and I spread them across an entire table. There was no internet yet. I also had to translate and write everything in English on my own, which was very exhausting. I visited many libraries, including the Silliman University Library, NORSU Library, and Dumaguete City Library.”)

Naenjoy ko sa akoo pag-eskwela ra jud ron. Labi na tungod sa AI. Samot na kay wala bawali. But mag basa ra jud japon ko. Hopefully, mahuman na jud ko aning akoang Masteral.

Trans: “I am really enjoying my studies now, especially because of AI. Even more so because it is not prohibited. But I still make sure to read. Hopefully, I will finally be able to finish my Master’s degree.”

Emergent Theme 3: Confronting Uncertainty and Risks Embedded in AI-Assisted Writing

This emergent theme describes how graduate school students confronted the uncertainties, risks, ethical tensions, and responsibilities associated with utilizing Artificial

Intelligence (AI) in research writing. While participants acknowledged the usefulness and efficiency of AI tools, they also recognized the limitations, inaccuracies, and ethical concerns embedded in AI-assisted writing. Their experiences revealed a continuous process of balancing convenience with critical thinking, originality, academic integrity, and responsible judgment. The participants' narratives demonstrated that AI utilization was not experienced as entirely straightforward or unproblematic. Participants became increasingly cautious about misinformation, overdependence, ghost references, loss of originality, and the weakening of critical thinking skills. Despite the growing integration of AI into academic work, participants emphasized the importance of verification, independent analysis, ethical awareness, and personal intellectual contribution in the research writing process.

Theme 1: Confronting Uncertainty and Limitations in AI-Generated Outputs.

Participants experienced uncertainty regarding the reliability, accuracy, and credibility of AI-generated outputs. Their narratives revealed that although AI provided fast and convenient responses, participants frequently questioned the correctness of the information produced. Several participants shared experiences of encountering inaccurate information, generalized responses, ghost references, and misleading content, which required careful verification using reliable academic sources. The formulated meanings revealed that participants maintained a cautious and critical stance when interacting with AI-generated content. They emphasized the need to review references, validate information, refine prompts, and rewrite outputs to ensure originality and personal understanding. Some participants also expressed internal conflict regarding whether AI-generated responses genuinely reflected their own ideas and intellectual engagement in research writing.

The findings support Khalifa and Albadawy (2024), who emphasized that AI may improve productivity in academic writing but still requires careful human supervision to ensure accuracy and credibility. Similarly, Levis (2024) discussed the limitations of AI systems, particularly their tendency to generate misinformation and unreliable outputs when prompts are unclear or information is insufficient. Participants in the present study similarly experienced AI as both beneficial and uncertain, requiring continuous validation and critical judgment. The findings also align with Saver (2024), who cautioned that AI writing tools may generate fabricated or inaccurate information if users fail to verify sources properly. The participants' experiences particularly reflected this concern through their encounters with ghost references and unreliable citations. Furthermore, Cheng *et al.* (2025) emphasized that responsible AI-assisted academic writing requires critical evaluation and ethical awareness from users. The present study extends these discussions by revealing the lived experiences of graduate students who continuously negotiated trust, doubt, and responsibility while utilizing AI in research writing.

Participant 1 experienced uncertainty while using AI and maintained a conscious effort to preserve personal control over the research writing process. Although AI provided helpful suggestions, the participant continuously questioned the accuracy of the generated content and reflected on whether the intellectual ownership of the work remained hers. She shared:

"I kept thinking if the suggestions were correct and if I was still the one in control of my work."

Participant 2 acknowledged AI as a highly useful and convenient academic tool while simultaneously recognizing its limitations and potential risks. The participant valued AI for assisting with idea organization, grammar checking, and thesis writing but also expressed concern regarding misinformation, unreliable links, and the possible weakening of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities when AI is used without careful verification. She claimed:

"So I have a lots of experiences in using AI because as we all know that, I think AI is part know in our day to day activities, specially know that I am already writing my research or thesis. For my thesis writing it has been very helpful and convenient, that's very true. I often use them to organize my ideas of course, create outlines, improve my sentence structure and check grammar."

"...there are negative sides pud in using AI. Number 1 is... the possibility of providing in accurate or what you call this.. misleading information gani ma'am, especially if the data is outdated or not properly verified, naa siyay gihatag na link pero dili nimo ma open, dili d ay siya working, it can also make users or it may affect the users critical thinking and problem solving skills over time."

Trans: ("There are also negative sides in using AI. First is the possibility of providing inaccurate or misleading information, especially if the data is outdated or not properly verified. Sometimes it gives links, but they cannot be opened or are not working. It can also affect users' critical thinking and problem-solving skills over time.")

Participant 3 perceived AI as simultaneously empowering and uncertain, requiring a balanced and critically reflective approach. While AI increased efficiency and provided guidance during research writing, the participant emphasized that it should function only as a support tool rather than a substitute for independent judgment and careful evaluation. She emphasized:

"While using AI, I felt more efficient and somewhat empowered, but also cautious. I was aware that I should not depend on it completely. This shows that my relationship with AI is helpful but critical—I use it as a guide, not a replacement for my own judgment."

Participant 4 experienced AI as both beneficial and challenging due to the ongoing responsibility of checking the reliability and accuracy of generated outputs. The participant recognized that although AI simplified academic tasks, it also demanded careful validation to ensure trustworthy and credible information. She stated:

"Yes ma'am my experience ma'am in utilizing AI in research writing, specifically in research writing jud no, it was very helpful and also

sometimes in Chat GPT is also challenging kay we are checking man pud gud if the answers it generates is sakto no, or if it's reliable, so it is both helpful and also challenging."

Trans: ("Yes, ma'am. In my experience of utilizing AI in research writing, it has been very helpful. However, using ChatGPT can also be challenging because we still need to check whether the answers it generates are correct or reliable. So, it is both helpful and challenging.")

Participant 5 confronted the limitations of AI by recognizing how unclear prompts and system inaccuracies could produce misleading information. The participant demonstrated critical awareness by reviewing AI-generated responses, refining prompts, and carefully checking references to avoid misinformation and fabricated citations. She shared:

"I read the entire answer coming from AI, but if my prompt lacks something or I mistyped, AI will give a different answer, so I recheck my prompt."

"AI will give sources and everything, but sometimes it gives ghost references, so we have to double check."

Participant 7 experienced internal dilemmas concerning dependence, accuracy, and the academic acceptability of AI-generated content. Although the participant recognized AI's usefulness, she emphasized the importance of consulting reliable academic sources and ensuring that research outputs remained grounded in personal understanding and independent thinking. She expressed:

"However, I know that I should not depend too much on AI. Sometimes the information is not complete or not correct, so I always check it using books, journals, and other reliable sources. I also make sure that my work is still my own and based on my understanding."

"Yes, I have experienced some dilemmas when using AI. I sometimes feel unsure if I am already relying too much on it instead of using my own thinking. I also worry about whether the content it gives is fully accurate and if it is acceptable in academic writing."

Theme 2: Negotiating Ethical Responsibility and Academic Integrity in AI Use. Participants experienced AI utilization as an ethical and intellectual responsibility that required careful balance between efficiency and academic integrity. Their narratives revealed a strong awareness regarding the importance of originality, honesty, independent thinking, and personal effort in scholarly writing. Although participants recognized AI as a valuable support tool, they consistently emphasized that AI should not replace human understanding, critical analysis, and authentic intellectual contribution. Several participants described internal struggles regarding originality and dependence on AI-generated outputs. To address these concerns, participants adopted strategies such as verifying information, rewriting content using personal understanding, contextualizing AI-generated responses, and using AI only as a guide rather than a substitute for thinking

and writing independently. Participants also highlighted that institutional expectations and teacher guidance influenced their cautious and responsible use of AI in academic work.

The findings support Ateriya *et al.* (2025), who emphasized that ethical AI utilization in academic writing requires accountability, transparency, and responsible judgment from users. Similarly, Miao *et al.* (2024) discussed the ethical dilemmas associated with AI-assisted writing, particularly regarding originality, authorship, and academic integrity. Participants in the present study similarly experienced tension between benefiting from AI assistance and preserving personal authenticity in scholarly work. The findings are also consistent with Casal and Kessler (2023), who examined concerns regarding the growing difficulty of distinguishing AI-generated writing from human-authored texts. Participants in the study reflected similar concerns by emphasizing the importance of maintaining human voice, originality, and ownership in research writing. Furthermore, Cress and Kimmerle (2023) argued that meaningful knowledge construction with AI still depends on active human participation, reflection, and interpretation. The participants' experiences demonstrated that despite the increasing usefulness of AI, they continued to value critical thinking, independent learning, and ethical responsibility as essential elements of graduate-level research writing.

Participant 1 experienced AI use as a responsibility that required preserving originality and maintaining ownership of academic work. Although AI assisted in improving writing, the participant remained cautious about dependence and consistently aligned AI utilization with institutional expectations and the requirement to produce authentic scholarly outputs. She shared:

"At that time, I was thinking about how to improve my writing while making sure that the ideas were still my own, and I was carefully checking each suggestion."

"I still try to be careful and not depend on it too much because I know the work should still be my own."

"Institutional policies and teacher expectations also shape how I use AI. Since we are expected to produce original work, I make sure that I only use AI as a guide and not something that will do the whole task for me."

Participant 2 negotiated AI use by ensuring that the final scholarly work remained grounded in personal understanding and intellectual contribution. While recognizing AI as a useful support tool, the participant expressed concern that excessive reliance might diminish personal voice and authenticity in academic writing. She claimed:

And also, I also ensure that the final output reflects my own understanding and ideas. Kay sometimes I feel like that it's not me already. It's very AI na, so over all I considered AI a useful support tool that enhances my research writing. But then again I still depend on my own critical thinking in completing my work.

Participant 3 experienced ethical AI utilization as a process of balancing academic efficiency with credibility and institutional accountability. The participant recognized that external academic demands and time constraints influenced AI use, yet these same expectations reinforced responsible practices such as verification, citation, and independent judgment. She emphasized:

“My use of AI—mainly Google Scholar—was influenced by time pressure, limited access to resources, and the need to find credible sources efficiently. Deadlines pushed me to use AI more because it sped up searching, while academic expectations required me to still verify and properly cite all information. Teacher and institutional expectations also made me cautious, ensuring I used AI ethically and did not rely on it blindly. Without these conditions, I might have used AI less strategically.”

“The most meaningful aspect is learning how to balance efficiency with credibility. I would describe it to others as a tool that makes research easier and faster, but one that still requires your own judgment and critical thinking to produce quality work.”

Participant 4 experienced AI-assisted writing as beneficial yet ethically demanding because of the responsibility to evaluate the accuracy and reliability of generated outputs. The participant recognized that although AI simplified sentence construction, the researcher remained accountable for verifying and critically examining the information produced. She stated:

“And also kanang pag construct ug sentences, specially tong ta'as na jud kaayo nga mga sentences, sometimes Dili jud malikayan nga mu prompt jud ta sa AI Kay very easy nalang jud siya, Peru ang part pud nga challenging is ang accuracy, Ang iyang reliability if sakto ba, if mu generate siya ug answer, as a researcher no, ato gud siyang e check, ato gud siyang basahon if sakto pud iyang answer nga gi generate.”

Trans: (“And also, in constructing sentences, especially those that are already very long, it is sometimes unavoidable to prompt AI because it has become very easy to use. However, the challenging part is the accuracy and reliability of its responses. As researchers, we still need to check and carefully read whether the generated answer is correct.”)

Participant 5 approached AI use with careful judgment and contextual consideration. The participant emphasized that AI-generated responses should never be accepted blindly and must instead be examined and adapted according to the specific context and requirements of the study. She stressed:

“I take precautionary measures in accepting the answers coming from AI because I want to make sure that my answers will fit my questions and context.”

“You have to double check and be careful, and not copy everything. You have to contextualize based on your study.”

Participant 6 perceived AI as a meaningful support mechanism that complements rather than replaces human intelligence and critical thinking. While acknowledging AI's usefulness in grammar, organization, and qualitative writing, the participant strongly maintained that intellectual ownership and scholarly reasoning ultimately remain human responsibilities. She expressed:

“Pagkat-on nako ana nakaingon jud ko nga Ay lami di-ay ni. Kay sauna akong ra jung own critical thinking. Makatbang jud siya nako. Samot na tong gipasulat ko ug qualitative kay gamit kaayo nako pero dili jud nako pweding dili gamiton ang akoang pag ka brayt but still based in AI especially about grammar, organization of my study, but dili gyud siya replacement sa atong pagka brayt. Kita juy kinabraytan. Mosupport ra jud siya. Mosupport ra siya dili siya moreplace sa atoa pagkabrayt.”

Trans: (“When I learned how to use it, I really realized that it is very useful. Before, I relied only on my own critical thinking. It really helped me a lot, especially when I was writing qualitative research. However, I cannot depend only on AI because I still need to use my own thinking. AI can help in grammar and organizing my study, but it is not a replacement for our intelligence. We are still the ones who are intelligent; AI only supports us, it does not replace us.”)

Participant 7 viewed ethical AI use as requiring continuous reflection, adherence to academic standards, and independent intellectual effort. Although AI made writing easier and more manageable, the participant emphasized that responsible research writing still depended upon careful thinking, verification, and personal ownership of the final work. She shared:

“Overall, my experience with AI is good. It helps me save time and makes writing easier, but I still need to think carefully and follow the rules in research writing.

In that experience, AI played the role of a guide or assistant. It helped me start my writing, organize my thoughts, and improve my sentences. However, I still checked the information and made sure that the final work was my own. Overall, that experience showed me that AI can support my research writing, but I still need to think carefully and do my own work.”

Theme 3: Learning to Navigate AI Through Prompting, Adaptation, and Technological Familiarity. Participants experienced the use of AI as a learning process that required adaptation, technological familiarity, and the development of effective prompting skills. Their narratives revealed that successful AI utilization depended not only on access to technology but also on the ability to construct clear prompts, personalize responses, and critically interpret AI-generated outputs. Participants gradually learned that the quality of AI responses was strongly influenced by the quality and specificity of their prompts. Several participants described becoming more familiar and strategic in utilizing AI tools over time. They explored multiple AI platforms, compared outputs, refined prompts, and adapted their use of AI according to academic needs. Participants also

recognized the limitations associated with non-paid AI versions and expressed willingness to invest in premium AI tools because of their usefulness in research writing and academic work.

The findings support Filetti *et al.* (2024), who explained that AI-assisted academic writing requires researchers to actively engage in refining prompts and evaluating generated outputs to maximize effectiveness. Similarly, Altmäe *et al.* (2023) noted that AI tools become more beneficial when users develop familiarity with their functions, limitations, and appropriate applications in scientific writing. Participants in the present study similarly experienced AI utilization as an evolving skill that improved through repeated interaction and technological adaptation. The findings also align with Paperpal (2026), which emphasized that AI writing tools support users throughout the writing process but still require active user input, revision, and contextual understanding. Furthermore, Nguyen *et al.* (2024) explained that human-AI collaboration in academic writing involves continuous interaction, adjustment, and evaluation between users and AI systems. Participants in the present study reflected these experiences through their gradual development of prompting strategies, technological confidence, and responsible AI engagement in research writing.

Participant 2 perceived AI utilization as a process that required intelligent prompting and personalization to obtain accurate and meaningful responses. The participant recognized that AI-generated outputs may become too generalized when prompts are unclear, highlighting the importance of refining instructions and adapting responses to fit academic contexts. She explained:

“Yes ma’am, and another thing is.. another difficulty pud ma’am is, AI responses can be too general so you have to prompt properly, so I still need to revised and personalized the content.”

Trans: (“Yes, ma’am. Another difficulty is that AI responses can sometimes be too general, so you need to prompt it properly. Because of this, I still need to revise and personalize the content.”)

“Yes ma’am, according to one of my professors kuan in graduate school you need to be intelligent enough in your prompt para sakto pud iyahang e tubag sa imoha.”

Trans: (“Yes, ma’am. According to one of my professors in graduate school, you need to be intelligent enough in prompting so that the AI will give the correct response to you.”)

Participant 4 viewed AI utilization as highly dependent on accurate prompting and technological access. The participant emphasized that correct prompts produce more efficient and immediate outputs while also recognizing the practical limitations of non-paid AI versions. Despite these constraints, the participant expressed willingness to invest in AI technologies due to their perceived academic value and efficiency. She shared:

“Oo ma'am. Kato emu gi engun ganiha nga pag dili Pro emung Quilbot kay if mo Pro ta murag mubayad man gud ta sa iyaha, so pag dili siya Pro, limited ra pud emung access sa iyaha, dili ka maka gamit atong Humanize, naa man to. Naa mga limited ra jud emu magamit, mao pud ang naka apan.”

Trans: (“Yes, ma’am. Like what you said earlier, if your QuillBot is not Pro, you have to pay for it. If it is not Pro, your access is limited, and you cannot use features like Humanize. There are really limited functions you can use, and that is the downside.”)

“Yes ma'am. Basta sakto ra emung prompt nga gihatag, so sakto pud iyang tubag. Peru karun kay sakto ra emung prompt, in just 1 click naa na emung kinahanglanon. Sayun ra siya kaayo, it's very easy.”

Trans: (“Yes, ma’am. As long as your prompt is correct, its response will also be correct. But now, with a proper prompt, in just one click you already have what you need. It is very easy and convenient.”)

“If naa siyay significant nga impact sa ato'a ug so that mapadali atong trabaho ma'am, kabalo pud ka nga naa siyay return of investment if mu bayad ka so why not, pwde siya kung significant jud siya sa atong trabaho and kanang Dili siya masayang ana.”

Trans: “If it has a significant impact on us and helps make our work faster, and since you also get a return on investment when you pay for it, then why not? It is worth it if it is really useful for our work and not wasted.”

Participant 5 recognized that AI effectiveness depended on careful prompting and continuous review of generated responses. The participant experienced that incomplete or inaccurate prompts could lead to unintended answers, thereby requiring rechecking and refinement to ensure relevance and accuracy. She emphasized:

“I read the entire answer coming from AI, but if my prompt lacks something or I mistyped, AI will give a different answer, so I recheck my prompt.”

Exhaustive Description

The participants in this study, all of whom are graduate students, shared a range of experiences regarding their use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their research writing. Their responses showed how Generative AI tools have influenced their academic work, particularly in making tasks such as searching for information, organizing ideas, and constructing sentences faster and more manageable.

However, several concerns emerged regarding the use of these tools. Many participants emphasized that AI-generated responses are not always accurate or complete, which requires them to verify information using reliable academic sources. This

raised awareness about the importance of not relying entirely on Generative AI and instead using it with careful judgment.

Additionally, participants expressed concerns about overdependence on AI and its possible effect on originality and critical thinking. They highlighted the need to ensure that their work remains based on their own understanding and ideas. Some participants admitted experiencing internal doubts about relying too much on AI, which led them to consciously revise and personalize the outputs they used.

Lastly, the participants viewed Generative AI as a helpful support tool in research writing but stressed that it should be used responsibly. They believe that while AI can improve efficiency and assist in academic tasks, students must still prioritize independent thinking, verification of information, and maintaining academic integrity. Their experiences reflect a balanced perspective, recognizing both the benefits and limitations of AI while emphasizing the importance of active engagement in the research process.

Conclusions

In light of the findings, the researchers arrived at the following conclusions:

The participants perceive Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a valuable tool that enhances research writing by improving efficiency, assisting in idea generation, and supporting organization and language construction. However, they consistently emphasized that Generative AI should be used responsibly and not as a replacement for independent thinking. Participants highlighted the importance of maintaining academic integrity, originality, and intellectual ownership. They viewed Generative AI as a guide or support system rather than a shortcut, ensuring that their outputs remain grounded in personal understanding and critical analysis.

Moreover, participants acknowledged the limitations of Generative AI, particularly in terms of accuracy, reliability, and sometimes overly generalized responses. Because of this, they stressed the need to verify information using credible academic sources and to carefully evaluate Generative AI-generated content.

The findings also revealed that effective Generative AI utilization requires skill, particularly in constructing clear prompts, refining outputs, and adapting responses to specific academic contexts. Over time, participants developed technological familiarity and strategic use of Generative AI tools.

Overall, graduate students view Generative AI as beneficial in research writing but advocate for a balanced approach, one that integrates efficiency with ethical responsibility, critical thinking, and personal effort.

Recommendations

Grounded by the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Teachers:

1. Guide students in using Generative AI as a support tool while emphasizing the importance of independent thinking and originality in research writing.
2. Encourage students to verify AI-generated information using credible academic sources and to engage critically with their outputs.
3. Integrate discussions on AI literacy, including prompting skills and evaluation of AI responses, into classroom instruction.

School Administrators:

4. Provide seminars and workshops on the ethical and responsible use of AI in academic writing to guide students in maintaining academic integrity.
5. Develop clear institutional policies regarding AI usage to ensure consistency and proper guidance across programs.

Future Researchers:

6. Conduct further studies on AI utilization in different academic disciplines to compare experiences and challenges.
7. Explore the long-term effects of AI use on students' critical thinking skills and academic writing development.
8. Consider using mixed-method or quantitative approaches to examine the broader impact of AI on academic performance.

Final Reflection

Reflecting on the interviews with the participants, the researchers observed a thoughtful and responsible approach to the use of Artificial Intelligence in research writing. The participants shared how Generative AI tools helped make their academic tasks more manageable, particularly in organizing ideas, improving grammar, and speeding up the writing process. At the same time, the participants demonstrated strong awareness of the limitations and risks associated with AI. Many emphasized the importance of verifying information and ensuring that their work remains accurate and credible. As one participant shared, *"I always check it using books, journals, and other reliable sources."* This highlights their commitment to maintaining the quality and integrity of their academic work.

The participants also stressed the importance of relying on their own thinking. While AI was seen as helpful, they recognized that it should not replace their intellectual effort. One participant expressed that Generative AI "supports but does not replace our intelligence," emphasizing that human reasoning remains central to research writing. Furthermore, the researchers noted that participants gradually developed skills in using AI effectively, particularly in crafting prompts and refining outputs. This reflects that AI use is not only a tool but also a learning process that requires adaptation and critical engagement.

Overall, the researchers found that while Generative AI plays a significant role in the academic experiences of graduate students, it is used with caution and responsibility. The participants value its benefits but remain committed to preserving originality, critical thinking, and academic integrity. Their experiences serve as a reminder that technology should enhance learning, not replace the human capacity to think, analyze, and create.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This study observed ethical standards to ensure the protection of the rights and welfare of all respondents. Approval was secured and proper endorsements were obtained from concerned educational authorities before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. A consent statement was also presented to the respondents before the conduct of the interview. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. No personal identifiers were collected, and responses were handled with strict security. The study also ensured that participation posed no harm or risk to respondents, and all procedures were conducted in line with accepted ethical research guidelines.

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Corresponding author: riabalasabas201@gmail.com