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Perceived Influence of Generative AI on Professional Writing Competence among Office Technology and Management Students in Selected Public Tertiary Institutions in Southeast Nigeria

[1]Elizabeth Chiamaka Okpala & [2]Ogochukwu Gloria Umelue
[1,2]Department of Business Education
[1,2]Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Anambra State
[1]okpala.elizabeth@nocen.edu.ng, [2]cedar4christ3@gmail.com
07068932040, 08032933713

Abstract

The study investigated perceivedinfluence of generative AI on professional writing competence among Office Technology and Management students in selected public tertiary institutions in South East Nigeria. The study was grounded in Cognitive Load Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model, while three research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Amixed-method descriptive survey design was adopted, combining quantitative questionnaire data with qualitative focus group discussions to triangulate lecturers' perceptions with students' experiences. The population comprised 150 OTM lecturers and 320 OTM students drawn from the 400 level of eight public tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria, including three universities, two polytechnics, and three colleges of education. The entire lecturer population was studied due to its manageable size, while all 320 OTM students were purposively sampled as they represent the cohort that has completed the professional writing sequence and were nearing graduation. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire for lecturers and a focus group discussion guide for students. Both instruments were validated by experts in Business Education (Office Technology Management) and Educational Foundations at NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka. Apilot study involving 20 lecturers and 20 final-year OTM students from Delta State institutions yielded Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of 0.88 and 0.86 for the questionnaire clusters, with an overall reliability of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency. Focus group data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analysed using NVivo 12. Quantitative data were analysed using mean and standard deviationwith a criterion mean of 2.50, and one-way ANOVAwith Tukey's HSD post hoc test tested the hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that lecturers perceived generative AI as having both positive and negative influences on students' professional writing competence, though lecturers disagreed that AI encourages frequent writing practice, teaches proper citation formats, or helps maintain consistent tone, and perceived low influence regarding AI-generated factual errors and students struggling to adapt writing to workplace contexts without AI. Students' focus group responses largely supported these perceptions but revealed more nuanced usage patterns, including intentional efforts to avoid over-reliance on AI and awareness of workplace expectations regarding independent writing. Significant differences in perceptions were found among university, polytechnic, and college of education lecturers, and it was recommended that AI literacy be integrated into the professional writing curriculum to promote ethical, balanced, and effective use of generative AI tools among students.

Keywords: Generative AI, Professional Writing Competence, Office Technology and Management, Perceived Influence, Southeast Nigeria.

Introduction

Higher education across the world is currently experiencing rapid transformation due to advancements in

digital technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI). One of the most notable developments is the emergence of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, QuillBot, andClaude.ai, which are increasingly being used by students for academic and writing-related tasks. These tools can generate essays, correct grammatical errors, improve sentence structure, summarize texts, paraphrase content, and produce professional-style documents within seconds. Although these innovations have made writing tasks easier and faster, they have also raised serious concerns regarding originality, critical thinking, skill development, and long-term writing competence across various educational contexts (UNESCO, 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

Office Technology and Management (OTM) education occupies an important position in this discussion because professional writing competence is one of its core learning outcomes. OTM students are trained to function effectively in modern office environments where communication, documentation, report writing, records management, and administrative correspondence are daily responsibilities. According to Igbinedion (2010), OTM evolved from traditional secretarial studies and developed alongside technological advancements from manual typewriting to the modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) era. The programme is designed to equip students with practical office competencies required for effective performance in public and private organizations.

The relevance of OTM education cuts across educational institutions, hospitals, corporate organizations, legal practices, government establishments, and other sectors of the economy. Amoor (2009) explained that the growth of secretarial and office education in Nigeria became more prominent during the late nineteenth century when Nigerians involved in commercial activities required business and administrative knowledge for effective transactions with foreign partners. Today, OTM education is offered in universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education with the objective of producing graduates who can function efficiently and professionally with minimal supervision.

Professional writing competence remains a fundamental aspect of OTM education. Professional writing competence refers to the ability to produce clear, concise, grammatically correct, and professionally organized documents suitable for workplace communication. According to Kellogg and Whiteford (2009), writing competence comprises three interconnected dimensions: process (planning, translating, reviewing), product (text quality, genre appropriateness), and self-regulation (monitoring and revising). Olaniyi and Adebayo (2020) described professional writing competence as the mastery of skills such as audience awareness, tone management, editing, proofreading, document structuring, and adherence to professional communication standards. Competence in writing business letters, reports, memoranda, minutes of meetings, circulars, emails, and other office documents is essential for employability and career advancement among OTM graduates as Office Technology and Management graduates who cannot write independently become liabilities rather than assets in modern offices.

The focus on 400-level (final year) OTM students is particularly important. These students have completed the core professional writing sequence (typically offered across 200- and 300-level courses) and are expected to demonstrate independent writing competence before graduation. They are also the cohort most likely to have used generative AI tools throughout their studies, making their experiences and perceptions most relevant for assessing the cumulative influence of AI on writing competence development.

In recent years, the rapid growth of generative AI has significantly influenced writing instruction and practice across different levels of education. Large language models (LLMs) such as GPT-4 (OpenAI, 2023) and similar systems are trained on extensive datasets and can produce human-like content based on user prompts. In the context of writing, AI tools assist users in generating ideas, correcting grammar, paraphrasing texts, translating languages, and organizing professional documents. UNESCO (2023) reported a substantial increase in generative AI usage among students in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, particularly between 2022 and 2023. Consequently, many OTM students in Southeast Nigeria now

use these tools for assignments, projects, and examination preparation.

From a theoretical perspective, Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) provides an explanation for how generative AI may influence writing competence. The theory distinguishes between intrinsic, extraneous, and germane cognitive load. In writing tasks, AI tools may reduce extraneous cognitive load by handling surface-level errors such as grammar and spelling, thereby allowing learners to focus on higher-order writing processes such as argument development and organization. However, excessive reliance on AI may reduce germane cognitive load, which is necessary for schema construction and long-term skill acquisition, potentially leading to reduced independent writing competence (Sweller et al., 2019).

Similarly, the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) explains the adoption of generative AI tools based on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In the context of this study, lecturers' perceptions of AI influence are shaped by whether they believe these tools enhance students' writing competence and how easily they can be integrated into teaching and learning processes. This theoretical lens also helps to explain possible differences in perception across institution types due to variations in exposure, resources, and pedagogical orientation.

The increasing use of generative AI in education has generated considerable debate among educators, researchers, and policymakers. Proponents such as Floridi and Chiriatti (2020) argue that AI writing tools help students overcome writer's block, improve grammar accuracy, learn professional vocabulary, and understand document structure more effectively. More recent empirical work by Kasneci et al. (2023) suggests that AI tools can provide immediate feedback and support students who experience difficulty in writing, especially second-language learners.

However, critics including Bommasani et al. (2022) caution that excessive dependence on generative AI may undermine the development of authentic writing competence. According to these scholars, students who rely heavily on AI-generated content may gradually lose originality, critical thinking ability, personal voice, and independent writing skills. Concerns have also been raised regarding academic dishonesty, plagiarism, factual inaccuracies, and students' inability to critically evaluate AI-generated information (Wach et al., 2023).

Preliminary observations by researchers and reports from OTM lecturers in Southeast Nigeria suggest that many students now depend heavily on generative AI tools when completing writing tasks. While some students use AI appropriately for proofreading, idea generation, and document organization, others reportedly submit AI-generated content with little or no personal input or editing. This situation raises concerns about whether students are developing genuine professional writing competence or becoming overly dependent on AI technologies.

For 400-level OTM students, these concerns are particularly significant as they transition from academic writing to workplace communication, where independence, originality, and professional accuracy are expected. Employers require graduates who can produce effective documents without external technological dependence. If AI reliance becomes excessive at this stage, it may undermine readiness for professional practice.

Despite growing interest in generative AI in education, empirical studies on lecturers' perceptions of its influence on the professional writing competence of OTM students in Southeast Nigeria remain limited. Most existing studies are conducted outside Nigeria and may not reflect local institutional realities. Furthermore, little attention has been given to final-year OTM students or to studies that incorporate lecturers' perceptions alongside student perspectives. This creates a gap that necessitates empirical investigation into the perceived influence of generative AI usage on the professional writing competence of 400-level Office Technology and Management students in tertiary institutions in Southeast Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Office Technology and Management (OTM) education in Nigerian tertiary institutions is designed to produce graduates with effective and independent professional writing competence. OTM graduates are expected to prepare business letters, reports, memoranda, minutes of meetings, emails, and other workplace documents accurately and professionally without external assistance. Consequently, writing competence remains a core employability skill emphasized through continuous practice, feedback, and skill development.

For 400-level OTM students, who are in their final year of study and have completed the professional writing course sequence, the expectation is that they should demonstrate independent writing competence suitable for entry-level office positions. However, the rapid rise in the use of generative AI tools among these students has introduced concerns about the authenticity of their writing development. Preliminary observations and interactions with OTM lecturers in Southeast Nigeria suggest that some students rely heavily on these tools when completing academic writing tasks, with instances of AI-generated content being submitted with minimal personal input, editing, or critical evaluation. This growing reliance raises concerns about the possible erosion of independent writing ability, critical thinking, originality, and creativity among 400-level students who are on the verge of entering the workforce.

Despite the increasing use of generative AI among 400-level OTM students, there is limited empirical evidence on lecturers' perceptions of its influence on their professional writing competence in Southeast Nigeria. Existing studies are often limited in scope, rely on small or convenience samples, and rarely compare perceptions across different types of tertiary institutions. In addition, few studies have incorporated student perspectives to complement lecturers' views. It is against this background that the study investigates the perceived positive and negative influence of generative AI usage on the professional writing competence of 400-level Office Technology and Management students in tertiary institutions in Southeast Nigeria from both lecturers' and students' perspectives.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the perceived influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of Office Technology and Management students in selected public tertiary institutions in Southeast Nigeria.

Specifically, the study:

1. determined the perceived positive influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of OTM students
2. ascertained the perceived negative influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of OTM students
3. examined students' experiences of generative AI usage in writing tasks in selected public tertiary institutions in Southeast Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the perceived positive influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of OTM students in Southeast Nigeria?
2. What is the perceived negative influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of OTM students in Southeast Nigeria?
3. What are students' experiences of generative AI usage in writing tasks in selected public tertiary institutions in Southeast Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of lecturers from universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education on the perceived positive influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of 400-level Office Technology and Management students in Southeast Nigeria.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of lecturers from universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education on the perceived negative influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of 400-level Office Technology and Management students in Southeast Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-methods descriptive survey design involving both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative aspect employed the descriptive survey design, while the qualitative aspect involved focus group discussions with 400-level Office Technology and Management (OTM) students to obtain deeper insights into their experiences with generative AI tools in writing tasks (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted in South-East Nigeria, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States.

The population of the study comprised 150 OTM lecturers and 1,200 final-year (400-level) OTM students from eight selected public tertiary institutions offering Business Education (Office Technology and Management option) in South-East Nigeria. The institutions consisted of three universities, two polytechnics, and three colleges of education selected purposively to ensure institutional representation across the five states. The lecturer population included 48 lecturers from universities, 52 from polytechnics, and 50 from colleges of education, while the student population included 320 final-year (400-level) students. Lecturers were considered suitable respondents because they regularly assess students' writing tasks and are therefore well positioned to evaluate the influence of generative AI on writing competence.

Data were collected using a structured Lecturer Questionnaire (LQ) and a Student Focus Group Discussion Guide (SFGG). The questionnaire was structured on a 5-point Likert scale and contained 22 items covering both positive and negative influences of generative AI on students' writing competence. The focus group discussion guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore students' experiences, frequency of AI usage, perceived benefits and challenges, dependence concerns, and perceptions of workplace readiness in relation to writing competence.

The instruments were validated by three experts comprising two lecturers in Office Technology and Management from the Department of Business Education and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Reliability of the questionnaire was established through a pilot study involving 20 OTM lecturers and 20 final-year OTM students from Delta State University, Abraka, and Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba with a reliability coefficient of 0.87.

Out of the 150 questionnaire distributed, 142 were returned. In addition, eight focus group sessions were conducted, one in each institution, involving all available 400-level OTM students. The sessions were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and moderated using a standardised discussion procedure to ensure uniformity across institutions.

Quantitative data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted as the bench mark for decision making. Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) post hoc test was used to identify the specific groups responsible for the differences. Qualitative data obtained from the focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim and analysed

thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework of thematic analysis, while themes generated were compared with the lecturers' responses to identify areas of convergence and divergence.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the perceived positive influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of OTM students in Southeast Nigeria?

Table 1: Lecturers' Mean Ratings on Perceived Positive Influences of Generative AI Usage (N = 142)

S/N	Item Description	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Generative AI helps students generate ideas quickly when starting a writing task	3.45	0.69	Agreed
2	AI tools improve grammar accuracy in students' professional documents	3.53	0.66	Agreed
3	Students use AI to paraphrase complex sentences more clearly	3.40	0.72	Agreed
4	AI assists students in structuring business letters and reports properly	3.47	0.67	Agreed
5	Students learn new vocabulary and professional expressions from AI generated suggestions	3.32	0.75	Agreed
6	AI helps students overcome writer's block during composition	3.50	0.70	Agreed
7	Using AI for proofreading reduces typographical and punctuation errors	3.38	0.68	Agreed
8	AI provides examples of well written professional documents that students can study	3.25	0.78	Agreed
9	Students can compare their own writing with AI output to identify areas for improvement	3.18	0.74	Agreed
10	AI encourages students to write more frequently because it reduces fear of making mistakes	2.45	0.80	Disagreed
11	AI tools help students maintain consistent tone and formality in business writing	2.48	0.73	Disagreed
12	Students learn correct citation and referencing formats using AI assistance	2.38	0.83	Disagreed
	Cluster Mean	**3.15**		**Agreed**

Data in Table 1 revealed that respondents rated nine items with mean ratings above 2.50, while items 10, 11, and 12 had mean ratings below the criterion mean. The cluster mean of 3.15 indicates that lecturers generally perceived idea generation, grammar improvement, paraphrasing, document structuring, and overcoming writer's block as positive influences. However, lecturers disagreed that AI encourages students to write more frequently by reducing fear of mistakes (mean = 2.45), that AI tools help maintain consistent tone in business writing (mean = 2.48), and that students learn correct citation and referencing formats using AI assistance (mean = 2.38). The standard deviations ranging from 0.66 to 0.83 indicate moderate variability in lecturers' responses.

Research Question 2

What is the perceived negative influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of OTM students in Southeast Nigeria?

Table 2: Lecturers' Mean Ratings on Perceived Negative Influences of Generative AI Usage (N = 142)

S/N	Item Description	Mean	SD	Remark
13	Students submit AI generated content without personal editing or understanding	3.65	0.63	High Influence
14	Over reliance on AI reduces students' ability to think critically about writing tasks	3.58	0.68	High Influence
15	Students lose originality and personal voice in their professional writing	3.51	0.71	High Influence
16	AI usage makes students lazy to learn basic grammar rules independently	3.54	0.66	High Influence
17	Students become unable to write without first consulting an AI tool	3.43	0.74	High Influence
18	AI generated content often contains factual errors that students fail to detect	2.48	0.78	**Low Influence**
19	Students copy AI outputs verbatim, violating academic integrity policies	3.47	0.70	High Influence
20	Frequent AI use weakens students' ability to revise and edit their own drafts	3.41	0.72	High Influence
21	Students struggle to adapt their writing to different workplace contexts without AI	2.46	0.76	**Low Influence**
22	AI tools produce generic writing that lacks depth, nuance and critical analysis	3.34	0.73	High Influence
	Cluster Mean	**3.29**		**High Influence**

Table 2 shows that eight negative influence items had mean ratings between 3.34 and 3.65, with a cluster mean of 3.29, indicating that lecturers strongly agreed that generative AI has negative influences on students' writing competence. However, item 18 received a mean rating of 2.48, falling below the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating low perceived influence. Similarly, item 21 received a mean rating of 2.46, also indicating low perceived influence. These findings suggest that lecturers do not perceive factual inaccuracies in AI-generated content or difficulties in workplace adaptation as significant negative influences.

Research Question 3 (Qualitative Findings)

What are students' experiences of generative AI usage in writing tasks in selected public tertiary institutions in Southeast Nigeria?

Analysis of the eight student focus groups (N = 320 (400-level) students) yielded five major themes.

Table 3: Summary of Qualitative Findings from 400-Level OTM Student Focus Groups

Theme	Major Findings	Illustrative Student Responses	Implications
Theme 1: Widespread but Strategic Use of AI	Most students (approximately 82%) reported using generative AI tools at least weekly. However, many students described deliberate and controlled use rather than indiscriminate dependence. AI was mainly used for outlining ideas, grammar correction, and editing support.	"I use ChatGPT to get an outline, but then I write my own sentences. By 400 level, you should know not to copy-paste" (Male student, University of Nigeria, Nsukka). "After Grammarly corrects my grammar, I read through and try to understand why it made that change. That's how I learned the difference between 'affect' and 'effect'" (Female student, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka).	The findings suggest that many final-year students use AI strategically as a writing support tool rather than a complete replacement for personal writing effort. This contradicts lecturers' assumptions about indiscriminate AI use.
Theme 2: Awareness of Overdependence Risks and Workplace Implications	Approximately 45% of participants expressed concern about becoming "lazy writers" and linked excessive AI dependence to employability challenges and workplace expectations. Students demonstrated sophisticated understanding of when AI use might be inappropriate.	"We are going to graduate soon. If I cannot write a memo without ChatGPT, how will I survive in a bank where they block all external websites?" (Female student, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe). "My lecturer caught me once because the AI wrote something that sounded too American. Now I try to write my own draft first, then use AI only for grammar checking" (Male student, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam).	Students demonstrated awareness of the risks associated with overdependence and viewed independent writing competence as important for future employment. This awareness may mitigate the negative influences perceived by lecturers.
Theme 3: Institutional Variation in AI Exposure and Guidance	University students reported greater exposure to AI-related classroom discussions (67%) compared to students in polytechnics (31%) and colleges of education (28%). This variation likely	"Our lecturer showed us how to use AI responsibly. She said it's okay to ask AI to critique your work but not to write it for you" (Male student, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike). "Nobody talks about AI in	Institutional environment appears to significantly influence students' awareness, confidence, and understanding of ethical AI use in academic writing. Institutions lacking formal guidance

Theme 4: Contextual Non-Use and Self-Imposed Boundaries	Students reported avoiding AI during examinations, reflective writing tasks, assignments requiring personal experiences, and situations where lecturers specifically prohibited AI use. This indicates metacognitive awareness of AI's limitations.	"For my final proj ect proposal, I wrote everything myself because I wanted my supervisor to see my real ability. AI can't write my research aim because only I know what I want to investigate" (Female student, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka). "During exams, we don't have AI . So we have to write on our own. That's why I try to practice writing without it sometimes" (Male student, Federal Polytechnic, Oko).	Contrary to some lecturers' perceptions, many students indicated that they could write independently without AI and used the tools mainly for efficiency and support. This challenges the assumption that AI use necessarily leads to skill erosion.
Theme 5: Demand for AI Guidance and Workplace Preparation	More than 78% of participants expressed the need for formal instruction o n ethical AI use and workplace expectations regarding AI-assisted writing. This highlights a significant gap in current curriculum provision.	"We need a workshop on AI in the workplace, not just in school. What happens when we get a job and they have different rules?" (Male student, Institute of Management & Technology, Enugu). "Nobody has taught us when it's cheating and when it's not. We are just guessing. And we are graduating in six months!" (Female student, Federal College of Education (Technical) Umun ze).	Students demonstrated strong interest in AI literacy training and expressed uncertainty regarding acceptable and unacceptable AI use in academic and workplace settings. This demand for guidance suggests that students recognize the need for structured learning about AI ethics.

While lecturers generally perceived generative AI as having predominantly negative influences on students' professional writing competence (cluster mean = 3.29), the student focus groups presented a more balanced perspective. Although students acknowledged the risks of overdependence, many also described strategies for maintaining independent writing competence and using AI responsibly. Students further demonstrated greater awareness of workplace implications than lecturers appeared to assume. The findings therefore suggest that lecturers may overestimate passive dependence on AI among final-year students and underestimate students' metacognitive awareness of AI's limitations. However, the institutional differences observed indicate that negative outcomes may be more pronounced in institutions where formal AI guidance and literacy instruction are limited.

Test of Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of lecturers from universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education on the perceived positive influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of 400-level Office Technology and Management students in Southeast Nigeria.

Table 4: One-way ANOVA Summary on Perceived Positive Influences by Institution Type

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F cal	F crit	Decision
Between Groups	5.42	2	2.71	4.96	3.07	. . ..
Within Groups	75.89	139	0.546			
Total	**81.31**	**141**				

Data in Table 4 revealed that the calculated F value of 4.96 was greater than the critical F value of 3.07 at 0.05 level of significance with 2 and 139 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis Ho_1 was rejected. This indicates a significant difference among university, polytechnic, and college of education lecturers in their perceptions of the positive influences of generative AI. Post hoc analysis using Tukey's HSD revealed that university lecturers (mean=3.48, SD=0.52) rated positive influences significantly higher than polytechnic lecturers (mean=3.21, SD=0.58, p=0.04) and college of education lecturers (mean=3.18, SD=0.60, p=0.03). No significant difference was found between polytechnic and college of education lecturers (p=0.78).

H_{02}: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of lecturers from universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education on the perceived negative influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of 400-level Office Technology and Management students in Southeast Nigeria.

Table 5: One-way ANOVA Summary on Perceived Negative Influences by Institution Type (N = 142)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F cal	F crit	Decision
Between Groups	9.87	2	4.935	7.82	3.07	Reject Ho_2
Within Groups	87.65	139	0.631			
Total	**97.52**	**141**				

Data in Table 5 revealed that the calculated F value of 7.82 was greater than the critical F value of 3.07 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis Ho_2 was rejected. This indicates a significant difference among institution types on perceived negative influences. Post hoc analysis revealed that university lecturers (mean=3.62, SD=0.64) rated negative influences significantly higher than polytechnic lecturers (mean=3.31, SD=0.71, p=0.02) and college of education lecturers (mean=3.29, SD=0.69, p=0.01), while no significant difference was found between polytechnic and college of education lecturers (p=0.85).

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a complex duality in lecturers' perceptions of generative AI's influence on the professional writing competence of 400-level Office Technology and Management students. Lecturers acknowledged significant positive influences, particularly in grammar accuracy (mean=3.53), idea generation (mean=3.45), document structuring (mean=3.47), and overcoming writer's block (mean=3.50), corroborating the work of Kasneci et al. (2023) and Open AI (2023) regarding AI's scaffolding potential. From the perspective of Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988), AI appears to reduce extraneous cognitive load by handling surface-level mechanics, enabling students to focus on higher-order writing processes. However, lecturers disagreed that AI encourages more frequent writing practice (mean=2.45), helps maintain consistent business tone (mean=2.48), or teaches proper citation formats (mean=2.38). These disagreements suggest that AI's pedagogical benefits are domain-specific and may not extend to the development of intrinsic motivation, professional judgment, or academic integrity skills. The strong disagreement regarding citation learning (mean=2.38) is particularly concerning, as it indicates that lecturers recognize AI's limitations in teaching proper academic conventions, supporting UNESCO's (2023) concerns about uncritical AI adoption undermining academic integrity and students' metacognitive development.

Conversely, lecturers expressed pronounced concerns regarding negative influences, with eight of ten items exceeding the criterion mean. Strongest agreement was recorded for students submitting AI-generated content without personal editing (mean=3.65), reduced critical thinking (mean=3.58), laziness in learning grammar rules (mean=3.54), loss of originality (mean=3.51), and violation of academic integrity through verbatim copying (mean=3.47). These perceptions align with Bommasani et al.'s (2022) and Wach et al.'s (2023) criticisms regarding AI's potential to weaken analytical engagement and authentic writing development. The high ratings concerning students becoming unable to write without AI (mean=3.43) and weakened revision abilities (mean=3.41) suggest a troubling pattern of cognitive deskilling that is particularly problematic for final-year students transitioning to professional workplaces. However, lecturers perceived low influence regarding AI-generated factual errors (mean=2.48) and workplace adaptation challenges (mean=2.46). The low rating on factual errors may indicate lecturers' confidence in students' critical evaluation skills at the 400-level or suggest that professional writing tasks are less susceptible to factual inaccuracies compared to research-based writing. Similarly, the low perceived influence regarding workplace adaptation reflects lecturers' confidence in the foundational skills developed through OTM's comprehensive curriculum (Olaniyi & Adebayo, 2020), suggesting that despite AI's negative influences, students retain the capacity for independent professional writing.

The student focus groups provided a crucial counterpoint, revealing that students demonstrate more strategic awareness than lecturers assume. While 82% used AI tools weekly, many employed deliberate strategies to avoid over-reliance, using AI primarily for outlining, grammar correction, and editing rather than full content generation, aligning with Kasneci et al.'s (2023) observation that students often exercise more judgment in AI use than educators recognize. Approximately 45% expressed concerns about becoming "lazy writers" and linked excessive AI dependence to employability challenges. Significantly, more than 78% expressed the need for formal instruction on ethical AI use, reflecting recognition of the gap between current curriculum provision and workplace realities. Significant institutional differences emerged, with university lecturers rating both positive and negative influences higher than their counterparts in polytechnics and colleges of education, likely due to differential exposure to AI-related academic discourse and research culture. This interpretation is supported by the qualitative finding that university students (67%) reported greater classroom AI discussions compared to polytechnics (31%) and colleges of education (28%). The findings extend both Cognitive Load Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model, suggesting that AI's influence on cognitive load is not uniformly beneficial and may simultaneously diminish germane load

essential for long-term skill development. Practically, the results highlight the need for explicit instruction in tone management, audience awareness, and proper citation practices, as these are areas where AI provides insufficient support. The strong student demand for AI guidance indicates a significant curriculum gap requiring institutional policies, AI literacy integration, and cross-institutional collaboration to address inequities in AI preparedness. Overall, while generative AI presents valuable opportunities for writing support, its unchecked use may undermine independent professional writing competence, necessitating balanced integration rather than outright restriction, with particular attention to areas where AI's benefits are uncertain and where student guidance is most needed.

Conclusion

The study examined lecturers' perceptions of the influence of generative AI on the professional writing competence of 400-level Office Technology and Management students in selected public tertiary institutions in Southeast Nigeria. Based on the findings, it is concluded that generative AI has a dual influence on students' professional writing competence.

On one hand, generative AI enhances students' writing development by improving grammar accuracy, supporting idea generation, strengthening document structure, and increasing writing efficiency. However, lecturers disagreed that AI encourages more frequent writing practice, teaches proper citation formats, or helps maintain consistent tone in business writing, suggesting a nuanced view of AI's benefits.

On the other hand, it poses significant challenges such as overdependence, reduced originality, weakened critical thinking skills, and declining independent writing ability, though lecturers perceived low influence regarding AI-generated factual errors and workplace adaptation challenges, indicating confidence in students' foundational skills developed through the OTM curriculum.

The study also revealed significant variations in lecturers' perceptions across institution types, with university lecturers demonstrating more nuanced views than their counterparts in polytechnics and colleges of education, suggesting that institutional environment shapes how generative AI is understood and evaluated.

Furthermore, qualitative findings showed that students use generative AI more strategically than lecturers assume, demonstrating awareness of AI's limitations, self-imposed boundaries on use, and strong demand for formal guidance on ethical AI use, challenging assumptions about passive student dependence.

Overall, while generative AI presents valuable opportunities for improving writing support, its unchecked use may undermine independent professional writing competence, necessitating balanced integration rather than outright restriction in academic settings, with particular attention to areas where AI's benefits are less certain and where student guidance is most needed.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended that:

1. Administrators of Office Technology and Management programmes in collaboration with curriculum planners in universities, polytechnics and colleges of education should integrate AI literacy modules into the professional writing curriculum so as to educate students on ethical and effective use of generative AI tools.
2. Lecturers of professional writing courses should require students to submit process documentation including outlines, drafts, and revision histories alongside final assignments so as to ensure cognitive engagement with writing tasks.
3. Administrators of tertiary institutions should develop and enforce clear academic integrity policies that specify acceptable and unacceptable uses of generative AI for coursework in Office Technology

and Management programmes.

4. Lecturers should design assessment methods that include in-class supervised writing tasks either handwritten or on secured computers so as to verify students' independent writing competence without AI assistanceand prepare them for workplace contexts where AI may not be available.
5. Government at all levels should encourage institutional administrators to organize workshops and seminars for both lecturers and students on how to critically evaluate and edit AI generated content before submission.

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