Artificial Intelligence in Learning and Legal Writing: Examining the Relationship Between Perceived Usefulness and Writing Anxiety

Irene Leong Yoke Chu[1], Nasreen Miza Hilmy Nasrijal[2]*, Kuldip Kaur Maktiar Singh[3], Yeap Chun Keat[4]

[1,3,4]Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka, Malaysia

[2]Law Faculty, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka, Malaysia

***Corresponding author**

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ABSTRACT

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools at the tertiary level has transformed the way learners approach academic writing particularly in the context of discipline-specific settings in English-medium contexts. This study investigates 60 non-law students' perceptions of using AI tools to support their learning of law subjects and legal writing abilities, and how this relates to writing anxiety. This study also examines the learners' views about ethical considerations when using AI tools in their studies. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising an adapted version of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), including open-ended responses. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis, while qualitative data were examined thematically. The findings indicate that students generally have a positive perception about the usefulness of technology, particularly in enhancing their understanding and building the language skills required in legal writing. A negative relationship was also found between perceived usefulness of AI tools and writing anxiety, indicating that higher perceptions of AI usefulness result in lower levels of writing anxiety. Regarding ethical considerations, students reported feeling anxious when utilising AI tools due to fear of over reliance. The findings indicate that the integration and utilisation of AI tools in legal contexts require clear and ethical principles to provide students with the cognitive scaffolding required to support both the cognitive and emotional aspects of students' learning.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Legal Writing, Non-Law Students, Writing Anxiety, UTAUT, SLWAI

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems which include ChatGPT, Grammarly, Gemini and Quillbot have transformed the teaching and learning approaches in education at the tertiary level. More specifically, the use of AI tools have enabled students to complete their writing tasks more efficiently, and navigating complex language structures such as legal writing.

The study selected first-year Business Management students who are pursuing their degree at a local university. As a partial requirement of their degree programme, the students are required to enrol in Business Law and as non-law students, they lack the linguistic foundation or legal knowledge needed to execute legal writing that meet the academic standards. As a result, many learners struggle to grasp legal concepts while simultaneously developing the linguistic structures needed to interpret legal principles and construct coherent arguments in ESL writing. As a highly structured discipline, legal writing demands precision and clarity in presenting logical reasoning, which places academic pressure on students and increases writing anxiety. Such psychological problems may hinder students' educational progress and their ability to meet the writing standards set for legal subjects.

Writing anxiety is widely acknowledged to create significant obstacles for ESL students who aim to achieve successful academic writing (Cheng, 2002). Students who experience anxiety face challenges with the organisation of thoughts and expressing their opinions into coherent and logical reasoning. The difficulties faced by ESL students become more severe when they have to write in a language that is not their native tongue (Rahmat & Rahman, 2024; Lee & Kim, 2023). In particular, within the context of this study, non-law students find themselves in a predicament where the medium of instruction is in English and they lack the linguistic foundation that legal writing demands.

Legal writing requires writers to achieve precise levels of accuracy. The presence of even minor language errors will result in diminished confidence and professional expertise according to Bhatia (1993). Writing anxiety together with the fear of making syntactic errors during evaluations could prevent students from processing legal issues effectively (Cheng, 2002; Pajares et al., 2006). Even though students may understand the material, the academic pressure to produce high-quality writing may weaken their academic progress (Wächter & Maiworm, 2022; Hyland, 2022).

Today's educational landscape offers innovative tools that assist students facing such learning challenges. AI tools which include ChatGPT and Grammarly are now being extensively applied in Higher Institutions of Learning. Such tools assist students in various aspects of their educational learning. They enable users to obtain information easily while offering assistance for brainstorming ideas and building structure and coherence in their academic writing tasks. Specifically, AI tools provide students with the necessary support to handle their intensive writing requirements in discipline-related learning such as Business Law which demands well-organised writing skills to deliver logical reasoning and strong arguments. However, the widespread use of AI tools in educational environments also raises important concerns that need to be addressed. AI provides excellent support to users but complete dependence on technology hinders the development of essential cognitive abilities and learning competencies (Rudolph et al., 2023 Abubakar et al., 2025).

Furthermore, a recent wave of research demonstrates how AI systems in educational settings present their own unique ethical challenges. On the one hand, the overdependence on AI tools can lead to negative consequences for students as it hinders their ability to learn independently (Abubakar et al., 2025) while, on the other, students are found to be increasingly aware of issues such as plagiarism, bias, and the responsible use of AI-generated content (Granström & Oppi, 2025; Shrestha, 2025). These challenges could affect students' perceptions of the usefulness of AI in their overall learning and writing apprehension.

Even with increasing interest in AI within higher education, prevailing research has been largely concerned with general academic writing contexts and higher trajectories of technology implementation. Little attention has been paid to discipline-specific writing tasks involving structured immersion in required technical styles and subject knowledge, for example, legal writing.

To address these gaps, this study integrates an adapted version of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) to examine how students' perceptions of AI tools relate to their writing anxiety and ethical awareness in discipline-specific academic writing tasks. This gap is particularly relevant for non-law students, who often lack prior training in legal writing conventions and yet, are required to perform well. By focusing on non-law students in a Business Law context, the study aims to provide a clearer understanding of how AI tools influence both the cognitive and emotional aspects of legal writing.

Research Purpose

The study focuses on investigating the extent to which the students without a law background perceive the use of AI tools vis-a-vis its ability to support their studies and practices in legal English. The study also examines the relationship between the students' perceptions on the usefulness of AI tools and their perceived levels of writing anxiety while performing legal writing tasks. Finally, it explores their views on the ethical consideration of AI in academic writing, specifically when it comes to plagiarism and responsibility when employing AI tools. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

- RQ1: How do non-law students perceive the usefulness of AI tools in supporting their learning and legal writing?
- RQ2: What levels of writing anxiety do students experience when completing legal writing tasks?
- RQ3: To what extent does perceived usefulness of AI tools relate to students' writing anxiety?
- RQ4: How do students perceive the ethical use of AI tools in legal writing?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching and learning practices in higher education have significantly been transformed due to the rapid development of AI. Based on a systemic review of over 2000 studies, Wang et al. (2024) conclude that AI is increasingly used to support academic writing, personalised learning and intelligent assessments. AI tools can increase students' ability to engage with academic writing by providing prompt feedback, enhancing language use, and assisting with the generation and organisation of ideas (Andreou & Christani, 2025). Apart from that, studies show that AI-writing tools assist learners to improve linguistic accuracy and language structures more effectively (Kasneci et al., 2023; Cotton et al., 2024; Nazari et al., 2024; Chiu 2023). These capabilities provide students with the cognitive scaffolding they need to engage with complex academic writing, specifically in legal contexts. When dealing with high-stake writing that requires precision and clarity, AI tools can assist in reducing the cognitive load associated with language processing (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2024).

Students' adoption of AI tools is strongly influenced by their perceptions of usefulness. According to the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), perceived usefulness—**performance expectancy**—is a key construct that determines whether individuals are willing to adopt new technologies (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Recent studies confirm that students use AI tools more when they believe these technologies will enhance their academic results and assist their studying activities. Although students' acceptance and use of AI tools have been widely studied, the relationship between their perceptions of these tools and their learning experiences, particularly writing anxiety, requires further investigation.

Writing anxiety is a well-documented psychological factor that affects ESL students' ability to produce effective academic writing (Cheng, 2002). The writing process becomes challenging for ESL writers particularly in dealing with complex academic writing of a subject in which they are unprepared for (Lee & Kim, 2023; Rahmat & Rahman 2024; Reyes et al., 2024). Within this context, in the case of legal writing, students face a dual-challenge – they need to comprehend the legal concepts while learning to navigate the language structures required to express their understanding during writing tests or assignments. As a result, struggling students tend to lose confidence during the writing process and increasing their writing anxiety due to academic pressure.

Recent studies show that AI tools help people improve language learning but their advantages depend on important psychological and behavioural factors. Andreou and Christani (2025) found that generative AI tools help students improve their writing skills through their ability to generate ideas and their capacity to create logical text connections. However, their study demonstrates that students who depend too much on AI systems tend to lose their ability to think critically and to conduct independent writing work. Wen et al. (2024) discovered that students experience different types of AI-related anxiety which include uncertainty about technology usage and fears about becoming too dependent on AI systems, leading to reduced usage of AI tools. The research shows that despite the knowledge that AI tools can be helpful, students interact with these technologies based on their emotional state and their beliefs about responsible technology usage. Though they see the benefits of using AI in their learning, students also experience a sense of insecurity and fear of over-reliance as obstacles to technology usage (Rudolph et al., 2023).

In a study by Wen et al. (2024), while AI tools help people learn languages better, students experience AI-related anxiety that include uncertainty about technology usage, fear of being penalised and concerns of becoming too dependent on it (Rudolph et al., 2023). Hence, students may feel reluctant to use AI tools even though they understand the benefits of technology. Andreou and Christani (2025) concur that while generative AI tools can

improve students' writing by enhancing organisation, language use, and idea development, they may also lead to overreliance and reduced critical engagement with the writing process.

Further to this, a recent review of AI-related literature by Harefa et al. (2025) found that AI technology engagement is closely associated with psychological distress among individuals. The research shows that anxiety exists as a fundamental characteristic which students develop through their experiences with digital technology. Andreou and Christani (2025) contend that students avoid using AI tools as they experience multiple types of AI-related anxiety which prevents them from using the technology, despite their understanding of its benefits. Their study shows that students' use of AI is shaped by both perceived usefulness and psychological factors, creating a tension between cognitive evaluation and emotional response. This finding shows that emotional factors including anxiety need to be treated as essential elements in AI-assisted educational environments and there is a need to study both the practical advantages of AI tools and their effects on student emotional psychology.

Hence, the implementation of AI in educational settings creates ethical challenges which extend beyond cognitive and emotional factors. The academic community acknowledges that AI systems bring substantial benefits to users, yet they have also discovered three main problems which include academic dishonesty and excessive system dependence and decreasing ability to think critically (Rudolph et al., 2023; Abubakar et al., 2025). Students are increasingly aware of these challenges and recognise both the benefits and risks associated with AI use (Granström & Oppi, 2025). Research also suggests that ethical awareness, institutional policies, and contextual factors play a crucial role in shaping responsible AI use in academic settings (Shrestha, 2025). Bearman and Ajjawi (2023) highlight that the integration of AI in higher education requires a re-evaluation of academic integrity practices.

Recent studies demonstrate that AI tools affect students' academic development through their impact on learners' mental and psychological well-being. Students who use AI tools require learning guidance and assistance as the system delivers educational benefits but could lead to negative impacts such as decreased user participation and escalated dependence on technology while also increasing stress levels (Klimova & Pikhart 2025). The findings show that AI tools should be used efficiently through established educational systems which require a balanced approach to educational technology integration.

Despite the growing body of research on AI in higher education, several important gaps remain. Much of the existing literature focuses on general academic writing contexts and broad patterns of technology adoption. Limited attention has been given to discipline-specific writing tasks that require structured reasoning and specialised knowledge, such as legal writing. Furthermore, there is a lack of research examining how students' perceptions of AI usefulness relate to psychological factors such as writing anxiety, as well as how these perceptions intersect with students' understanding of ethical AI use in the context of legal writing.

To address these gaps, the present study adapts and integrates the UTAUT framework and the SLWAI model to examine how students' perceptions of AI tools relate to their writing anxiety, and ethical awareness in discipline-specific academic writing tasks. By focusing on non-law students in a legal writing context, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of the cognitive, emotional, and ethical dimensions of AI-assisted learning.

Conceptual Framework

Two existing theoretical frameworks, namely, The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), are integrated to analyse how students perceive the use of AI tools and its relation to academic writing anxiety and ethical awareness. The UTAUT model created by Venkatesh et al. (2003) describes how AI technology is used and adopted. In particular, the study adapts one of the framework's constructs **performance expectancy**– to examine and measure how users perceive technology to improve their learning efficiency. In this study perceived usefulness represents students' beliefs about how AI tools support their learning and legal writing tasks.

In order to assess students' writing anxiety in relation to **performance expectancy**, Cheng's (2002) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) is employed. The SLWAI describes writing anxiety through

three different dimensions, which include cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety and avoidance behaviour. Cognitive anxiety encompasses concerns about writing performance and evaluation while somatic anxiety covers the experience of tension or nervousness during any writing assignments, and finally, avoidance behaviour demonstrates how students refuse or reject any writing activity.

In addition, the study considers students' ethical perceptions of AI use, including academic issues such as plagiarism, responsible use, and overreliance. Ethical awareness is viewed as an important aspect that shapes how students engage with AI tools in academic contexts. The conceptual framework for the study is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

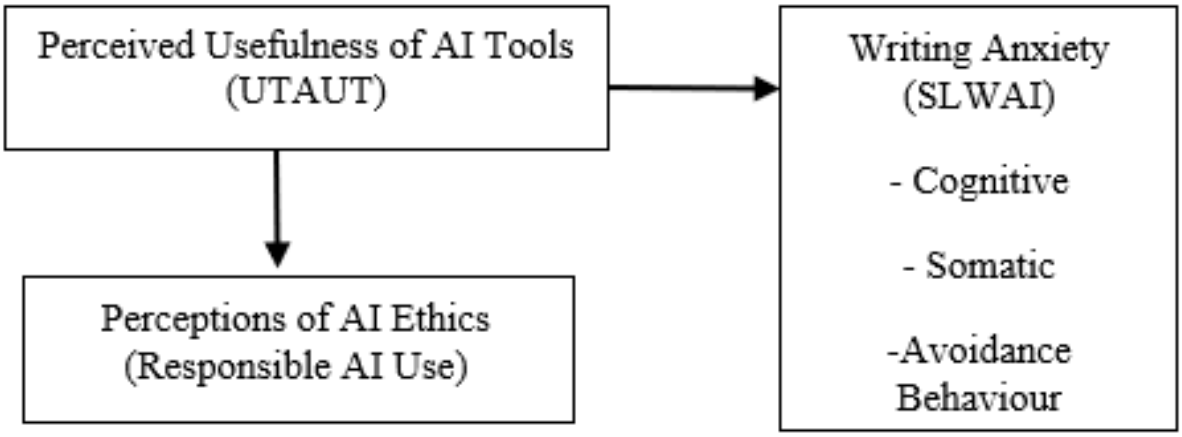

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

By integrating these frameworks, the study proposes that students' perceived usefulness of AI tools influences their writing anxiety levels**,** while also shaping their ethical perceptions of AI use**.** Specifically, when students perceive AI tools as helpful and supportive, they are more likely to experience reduced anxiety during the writing process and demonstrate greater awareness of responsible AI use in learning and writing discipline-related academic content.

METHOD

Research Design

The research utilised a mixed-method research design to study how ESL students view AI tools for academic writing in the context of legal writing, and how it affects their writing anxiety. The mixed-methods approach addresses the research gaps by integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative research used a survey questionnaire adapted from UTAUT and SLWAI to assess how students perceived AI tools and their writing anxiety levels. Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics to discover patterns and relationships among the identified variables. The qualitative research included open-ended questions that allowed students to explain their AI tool usage experiences and their opinions about ethical matters. The researchers employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to study how students view their experiences.

Participants

The study involved 60 first-year Business Management students who were studying Business Law at a local public university. The students were chosen as they fit into the context of how non-law students are required to complete legal writing tasks that are specific to their academic field. The course requires students to study legal materials and case studies and write their responses in English through proper use of legal terms and organised reasoning. As non-law students who lack the basic language structures required to write their legal arguments, many of them deal with the academic pressure to perform which could lead to higher writing anxiety levels. The researchers used purposive sampling to select participants who are enrolled in the Business Law subject and

are familiar with the use of AI tools in the learning environment. Thus, the samples served the study's research goals.

Research Instrument

The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire divided into four sections. Section A collected demographic information. Section B measured students' perceived usefulness of AI tools using six items adapted from the **performance expectancy** construct of UTAUT expounded by Venkatesh et al. (2003). Section C assessed students' writing anxiety using Cheng's (2002) SLWAI framework, comprising 22 items across three dimensions: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and avoidance behaviour. The use of the full scale ensured comprehensive measurement and established validity of the construct.

Section D measured students' perceptions of the ethical use of AI tools in academic writing using five items. These items were developed based on existing literature on academic integrity, overreliance, and responsible AI use, as there is currently no standardised scale specifically designed to assess ethical perceptions of AI in educational contexts. In particular, the items were informed by studies highlighting ethical concerns related to AI use in education, including issues of academic integrity and critical thinking (Rudolph et al., 2023; Abubakar et al., 2025), students' awareness of AI-related risks and benefits (Granström & Oppi, 2025), and the role of ethical awareness and institutional guidance in promoting responsible AI use (Shrestha, 2025). All items in Sections B, C, and D were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A pilot test was conducted to ensure clarity and content validity of the items prior to data collection.

To assess the validity and reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency. A value of 0.70 and above is generally considered acceptable. The analysis showed that all constructs achieved acceptable to good reliability levels, indicating that the items reliably measured the intended variables. Perceived Usefulness: $\alpha = 0.88$; Cognitive Anxiety: $\alpha = 0.85$; Somatic Anxiety: $\alpha = 0.83$; Avoidance Behaviour: $\alpha = 0.81$; Ethics: $\alpha = 0.84$

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through online questionnaires which were distributed at the end of the academic semester. Students participated on a voluntary basis and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would not impact their academic evaluation. This stipulation encouraged honest feedback from the participants who received sufficient time to complete the online questionnaire within the span of a week.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise students' perceptions of AI tools and their levels of writing anxiety.

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived usefulness of AI tools and writing anxiety. Regression analysis was further used to determine whether perceived usefulness significantly predicted writing anxiety.

Qualitative data obtained from open-ended responses were analysed using thematic analysis. This approach allowed for the identification of recurring themes related to students' experiences, perceived benefits, challenges, and ethical considerations in AI-assisted writing.

FINDINGS

Types and Frequency of AI Tools Used

The data in Table 1 indicate that ChatGPT is the most widely used AI tool (90.0%), followed by Grammarly (76.7%) and QuillBot (63.3%). In contrast, fewer students reported using tools such as Google Gemini (35.0%) and Microsoft Copilot (25.0%).

Table 1. Types and Frequency of AI Tools Used (n = 60)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Types of AI Tools Used*	ChatGPT	54	90.0
	Grammarly	46	76.7
	QuillBot	38	63.3
	Google Gemini	21	35.0
	Microsoft Copilot	15	25.0
Frequency of AI Use	Rarely	6	10.0
	Sometimes	14	23.3
	Often	26	43.3
	Very Often	14	23.3

*Multiple responses

In terms of usage frequency, the majority of students reported using AI tools either often (43.3%) or very often (23.3%)" in their overall learning, indicating that AI tools are regularly integrated into their academic writing practices. These findings support the high perceived usefulness reported, suggesting that frequent exposure to AI tools contributes to students' positive perceptions of their effectiveness in supporting writing tasks.

Perceptions of AI Usefulness and Writing Anxiety

Results from Descriptive allowed **Analysis**

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for both perceived usefulness of AI tools and writing anxiety. The writing anxiety scale consisted of 22 items adapted from the SLWAI (Cheng, 2002); however, only selected items are presented in Table 2 for brevity.

The results indicate that students reported a high level of perceived usefulness (M = 4.12, SD = 0.64), with all items scoring above 4.00, suggesting strong agreement that AI tools support writing quality, organisation, and clarity.

In contrast, writing anxiety was reported at moderate levels across all three dimensions. Cognitive anxiety recorded the highest mean (M = 3.42, SD = 0.82), indicating that students are primarily concerned about the quality and evaluation of their writing. Somatic anxiety (M = 3.10, SD = 0.75) reflects moderate physical tension during writing tasks, while avoidance behaviour (M = 2.98, SD = 0.79) was the lowest, suggesting that students are less likely to avoid writing despite experiencing anxiety.

Overall, these findings indicate that while students perceive AI tools as highly useful, they continue to experience moderate levels of writing anxiety, particularly at the cognitive level. Taken together, these results suggest that although students recognise the practical benefits of AI tools in supporting their writing, this does not entirely eliminate the psychological challenges associated with academic writing. The coexistence of high perceived usefulness and moderate anxiety highlights the complexity of students' learning experiences, where technological support may enhance performance while emotional concerns about writing quality and evaluation persist.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis for AI Usefulness and Writing Anxiety

Construct	Dimension / Item	Mean	SD
Perceived Usefulness (UTAUT)	Improves writing quality	4.20	0.62
	Helps organise ideas	4.15	0.65
	Makes writing easier	4.05	0.66
	Enhances understanding	4.10	0.63
	Improves clarity	4.18	0.61
	Useful for legal writing	4.05	0.67
	Overall Mean	**4.12**	**0.64**
Writing Anxiety (SLWAI)	**Cognitive Anxiety**	**3.42**	**0.82**
	Worry about writing quality	3.50	0.80
	Fear of making mistakes	3.45	0.83
	Difficulty expressing ideas	3.40	0.81
	Concern about evaluation	3.41	0.80
	Somatic Anxiety	**3.10**	**0.75**
	Feeling nervous when writing	3.15	0.74
	Feeling tense	3.12	0.76
	Physical discomfort	3.08	0.77
	Avoidance Behaviour	**2.98**	**0.79**
	Avoid writing tasks	3.05	0.78
	Postpone assignments	3.00	0.80
	Reluctance to write	2.95	0.77

Relationship between Perceived Usefulness of AI tools and Writing Anxiety

Results from Pearson Correlation And Linear Regression Analyses

Table 3 presents the results of the Pearson correlation and linear regression analyses examining the relationship between perceived usefulness of AI tools and writing anxiety.

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate negative relationship between perceived usefulness and writing anxiety ($r = -0.42$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that students who perceive AI tools as more useful tend to experience lower levels of writing anxiety.

Table 3. Correlation and Regression Analysis of Perceived Usefulness and Writing Anxiety

Variables	Mean	SD	Pearson r	β	T
Perceived Usefulness	4.12	0.64	1	-0.38	-3.12
Writing Anxiety	3.17	0.79	-0.42*	—	—

*$p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.14$

Further analysis using linear regression showed that perceived usefulness significantly predicts writing anxiety ($\beta = -0.38$, $t = -3.12$, $p < 0.05$). The negative beta coefficient indicates that an increase in perceived usefulness is associated with a decrease in writing anxiety.

The regression model explained 14% of the variance in writing anxiety ($R^2 = 0.14$), suggesting that perceived usefulness is a modest but significant factor influencing students' writing anxiety. These findings suggest the potential role of AI tools not only in supporting writing performance but also in reducing anxiety associated with writing tasks.

According to theoretical perspectives, the finding validates the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Utilization of Technology (UTAUT), which strongly posits the significance of perceived usefulness as a direct precursor of technology acceptance (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The digital cognition model would appear to corroborate this last supposition by linking AI to cognitive learning outcomes as well as students' emotions in the learning situation (Wen et al., 2024).

Perceived Usefulness of AI tools and Ethics

Results from Thematic Analysis

Qualitative data from the questionnaire indicate that students generally demonstrate awareness of ethical considerations in the use of AI tools, particularly in recognising that AI tools do provide support rather than replace independent work. Students acknowledged the importance of maintaining academic integrity but expressed concerns about overreliance on AI-generated content, especially in relation to critical thinking and originality. This suggests that while students are open to using AI tools for academic support, they remain cautious about their potential misuse and its implications for learning. Such awareness reflects an emerging understanding among students on the responsible use of AI tools. The following open-ended responses provided further insights into students' experiences with AI tools. Three main themes emerged from the thematic analysis.

Theme 1: AI as Writing Support

Many students reported that AI tools helped them organise ideas, improve grammar, and structure their writing more effectively.

Sample student response: "AI tools help me organise my ideas when writing legal answers and make my sentences clearer."

Another student reported that: "Using AI tools really takes off a lot of pressure during my writing tasks. I use Grammarly to edit my work and ChatGPT helps me with building my arguments better in legal writing."

One more student commented: "While I understand about plagiarism, I use AI tools to improve my language structures so that I can argue my case more effectively in my writing assignments."

These sample responses suggest that AI tools function as learning aids that support students in managing complex writing tasks. This supports the quantitative findings where perceived usefulness recorded a high mean score (M = 4.12).

Theme 2: Concerns about Overreliance

Some students expressed concerns that excessive dependence on AI tools might reduce their ability to think independently.

Example student response: "AI can help generate ideas, but as a student I know I should not depend on it too much. I need to generate my own ideas to support the case study but then AI really makes my life easier."

One student stated: "Using AI is of course useful and I have no choice but to use it to help me understand the case better. Also, I learn to use the language structures properly. I try not to depend on the tool too much but I think legal writing is hard so I can't do it without AI."

Another commented: "I think AI is the best thing that ever happened to us as students. It's there to help us, so why not? Anyway, it helps me think fast but I still have to think of ways to get ChatGPT or Gemini , for example, to give me what I need."

This reflects growing concerns in among students' on the overreliance of generative AI tools in their learning of legal content and writing. This aligns with the moderate levels of writing anxiety observed in Table 2.

Theme 3: Ethical Awareness of AI Use

Students also demonstrated awareness of ethical issues related to AI-assisted writing, particularly in relation to plagiarism.

Example student response: "I do understand that AI tools should be used as a guide, to avoid plagiarism but I can't help it. It reduces my stress trying to learn and write the content, but I also have to make sure I am meeting the goals of the task."

One more student mentioned: "Not everything that ChatGPT explains is accurate. I know that but it helps me learn the structures or the legal terms to use when writing my assignments. So that really helps. Anyway, my lecturer now uses the software to check for plagiarism so sometimes I also feel anxious. If there's plagiarism, then I will score badly. But if I don't, I will also do badly."

Another student also expressed a similar dilemma: "Although we know the lecturer can tell if we use AI to do our assignments, we still need it. I'm not sure if I will be able to use the proper language to explain in legal writing. To get good grades I have to write my arguments clearly and without AI, I make a lot of mistakes."

These findings indicate that although students are aware of ethical concerns, they still experience anxiety when using AI tools in their academic work. Thus, there is a need to emphasise the need for guidance on responsible AI use in academic contexts and to avoid over-reliance. These findings reinforce the importance of ethical awareness identified in the quantitative data.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide clear evidence of the role of AI tools in shaping students' writing experiences in academic contexts.

In addressing RQ1, the students' positive perceptions of AI tools (M = 4.12) underscore the significant role of technology in building students' self-confidence during the writing process. In the context of legal writing, the pressure of producing accurate and precise language structures to meet academic expectations can be very demotivating. However, consistent with the high perceived usefulness reported (M = 4.12), students are able to overcome their discomfort and use AI tools to support better writing quality. In discipline-specific contexts such as Business Law, AI tools help students organise ideas more coherently and enhance writing quality through improved clarity. Previous research has shown that perceived usefulness functions as the main factor which drives students to use AI technologies according to Park et al. (2026) and Khairuddin et al. (2024). Students are more likely to use AI tools when they believe these tools will assist them in attaining better academic results

according to the **performance expectancy** construct of UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003). These findings are also in line with recent studies which show that AI tools improve students' writing performance by supporting idea generation, linguistic accuracy, and coherence (Andreou & Christani, 2025; Chiu, 2023; Nazari et al., 2024).

In relation to RQ2, the results show that students still deal with writing anxiety (M = 3.17), which remains a moderate but significant obstacle to academic work. The analysis showed that these non-law students face a dual challenge when studying a law subject. Students must manage two tasks: understanding legal material and expressing that understanding through precise academic writing. These challenges are consistent with previous studies showing that discipline-specific courses require students to produce structured arguments using specialised academic language (Lee & Kim, 2023; Rahmat & Rahman, 2024).

One of the key findings of the study emerges from RQ3, where a significant negative relationship was found between perceived usefulness and writing anxiety ($r = -0.42$, $\beta = -0.38$). Students who perceived AI tools as more beneficial reported lower levels of writing anxiety. The findings suggest that AI tools serve two key functions: supporting idea development and improving writing accuracy by reducing uncertainty in writing tasks. The findings suggest that AI tools may influence both students' writing performance and their psychological experiences during the writing process. The findings are consistent with Wen et al. (2024), who highlight that despite the benefits of AI tools for language learning, students may experience AI-related anxiety that negatively influences their engagement with such technologies. Students' engagement with AI tools is shaped by their anxiety levels, as they rely on these tools for support while remaining aware of the risks of over-reliance, particularly in independent assessment contexts.

Finally, in answering RQ4, the research results suggest that ethical awareness plays an important role in how students engage with AI tools. In this study, the participants' perceptions indicate a realisation that AI should be used to assist their work rather than replace their need to study independently. The research demonstrates that institutions need to develop specific guidelines for responsible AI implementation as excessive reliance on AI systems will result in both reduced critical thinking abilities and higher rates of academic misconduct (Abubakar et al., 2025; Rudolph et al., 2023). The results of the study match recent research which shows that AI tools provide obvious advantages but require ethical understanding and institutional support for responsible implementation (Granström & Oppi, 2025; Shrestha, 2025). The findings are also supported by the qualitative analysis of the students' open-ended responses signalling awareness that AI tools should be used as a means to support learning.

The writing development process shows potential for improvement through AI tools which also help decrease anxiety levels. However, the advantages of AI technology may be reduced when students rely excessively on it, highlighting the need for balanced and responsible use.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study examined how non-law students perceive the use of AI tools in supporting their learning and legal writing tasks, and how these perceptions relate to their writing anxiety. The findings indicate that students generally view AI tools as useful, particularly in improving writing structure, clarity, and overall quality. Despite these benefits, students reported moderate levels of writing anxiety, primarily driven by concerns about their writing performance.

The results further show that students who perceive AI tools as more useful tend to experience lower levels of writing anxiety, suggesting that AI tools can support both cognitive and emotional aspects of learning. At the same time, students demonstrated awareness of ethical considerations, recognising that AI should support rather than replace independent work.

These findings highlight the need for a balanced and responsible integration of AI tools in educational settings. While AI can enhance learning and reduce anxiety, appropriate guidance and clear ethical frameworks are essential to ensure meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to students from a single institution, which may affect the generalisability of the findings. In addition, the study relied on self-reported data, which may not fully reflect students' actual writing performance or their use of AI tools.

Future research should involve a larger and more diverse sample across different disciplines to enhance the robustness of the findings. Further studies could also examine the perceptions of law students from the Law Faculty, and to determine whether AI-assisted writing leads to measurable improvements in writing quality and academic performance.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

Authors' Contributions

Associate Professor Dr Irene Leong Yoke Chu and Dr Nasreen Miza Nasrijal were the lead researchers, while Dr Kuldip Kaur and Dr Yeap Chun Keat assisted in the data analysis. All the authors contributed to the writing, literature review and revision of the manuscript.

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