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Guarding Integrity: A Case Study on Tackling AI-Generated Content and Plagiarism in Academic Writing

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***Abstract*—Artificial intelligence presents both opportunities and challenges for academic integrity. While it assists in identifying dishonest behavior, it also raises ethical questions about privacy and surveillance. This study analyzed AI-generated content and plagiarism rates in freshman writing assessments submitted to Turnitin, examining the factors influencing these rates and students' perceptions. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, two key questions were posed regarding plagiarism and AI-generated content in online submissions and the characteristics of the participants involved. An analysis of 50 essays revealed average plagiarism rates of 11% and 14%, alongside AI usage rates of 38% and 49%. Additionally, a demographic analysis and a survey involving 65 students from the ENG102 advanced writing course were conducted to assess their attitudes toward plagiarism and AI-generated content, highlighting significant academic integrity concerns. The findings indicate that students valued academic integrity but were divided on whether the use of AI constitutes cheating or provides an academic boost to their studies. Interviews with five teachers revealed significant demographic and contextual factors influencing plagiarism. The study concluded with recommendations to foster integrity and transparency, emphasizing academic integrity as a core institutional value.**

***Index Terms*—Artificial Intelligence, plagiarism, Academic Integrity, EFL assessments, educational strategies**

I. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly evolving, transforming learning design and teaching models and raising concerns about academic integrity, especially in teaching English as a second language. Questions regarding the ethics and legitimacy of student work have emerged as pressing issues. Academic integrity is essential for institutions, ensuring that student-generated work is genuine. For example, the Modern College of Business and Science underscores honesty, fairness, and responsibility in its academic integrity policies. With the lines between original and copied content becoming increasingly blurred, studies by the International Center for Academic Integrity (2021) and Ghaffari (2009) highlight the significant societal implications of these values. Mulenga and Shilongo (2024) emphasize the importance of accurate attribution in academic research. This study addresses the rise in plagiarism cases and the use of AI tools in academic writing, particularly among higher education students learning English in Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. It employs quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate freshmen students' attitudes and practices at MCBS. Since the institution's policy advocates academic integrity as a fundamental academic virtue, compliance with integrity policies is mandatory due to the challenges posed by AI and similarity detection technologies. MCBS regularly conducts training activities, such as workshops and lectures, to highlight the significance of academic integrity and the consequences of this issue. The present study examines the use of AI-generated content and plagiarism in EFL writing assessments, contributing to institutional research by MCBS. Alawad (2025) indicates a significant need for reliable measures to assess students' writing skills. This underscores the evolving landscape of academic integrity, focusing on the dual roles of AI tools in providing feedback and detecting cheating. With the changing environment of higher education, particularly in the Gulf region, feedback in academic writing is becoming increasingly recognized (Alawad & Hamid, 2025). This research raises critical questions that could influence the development of policies to mitigate cheating while fostering academic integrity. Initially, it explores the patterns and perceptions of AI-generated content and plagiarism in EFL writing assignments among freshmen online students at MCBS, investigating the underlying causes of these issues through two specific objectives:

1. To examine similarity levels and attitudes toward plagiarism and AI-generated content in online EFL writing submissions for freshmen students.

2. To identify demographic and contextual factors linked to higher plagiarism or AI-generated content in freshmen students' writing assessments.

The significant contribution of this study lies in its analysis of academic integrity and the impact of AI on EFL education. It addresses ethical issues surrounding AI-generated content and its acceptance in the academic field, highlighting existing policy and educational gaps. The study promotes systems that uphold academic integrity by encouraging student originality and providing practical improvement suggestions. It emphasizes demographic and contextual elements associated with academic practices and education about plagiarism and AI tools, suggesting that improving these elements could mitigate threats to academic integrity. The evidence underscores the need for policies to prevent and address misconduct and unethical behavior. Ultimately, this study deepens the understanding of how to protect academic integrity in the context of AI and lays the foundation for future policy development and research.

II. Literature Review

Maintaining academic integrity is essential for educational institutions, as it ensures that students and researchers produce original work. Promoting academic integrity necessitates trust, honesty, accountability, fairness, and respect. These principles form a foundation that safeguards the credibility of academic outputs and the reputation of educational institutions. Anti-plagiarism tools are crucial for self-regulation and fostering ethical and innovative behavior despite concerns about accuracy, cost, and potential misuse (Witchel et al., 2018). Resistance to new technologies often arises from reliance on traditional plagiarism detection methods (Bulwik, 2004). Recent technological advancements, such as tools based on the Jaccard index and cosine similarity, have improved the assessment of text originality (Fakhri et al., 2010). Moreover, machine learning algorithms have enhanced originality determination, although they have sparked debates (Seth, 2024; Kocaman, 2023). New document similarity comparison tools boost the efficiency and quality of text evaluation (Juma & Fahmy, 2013). For EFL students, classroom assessments utilizing similarity indices are critical for identifying plagiarized or AI-generated content, thereby supporting learning ethics (Perrone & College, 2011). Research on the washback effect and technology in assessment supports these evaluations (Chappell & Voss, 2016; Cheng et al., 2015; Nimichsalim & Bhatti, 2019). AI-generated content presents significant risks to academic integrity. While it can be beneficial for research purposes, AI-produced text may violate principles of honesty and respect. Institutions should formulate guidelines for using AI tools to prevent plagiarism while facilitating technology integration. Plagiarism policing systems must evolve with AI advancements (White, 2023). AI-generated content and plagiarism risks can arise from easy online access, deadline pressures, and performance expectations (Johnson, 2022). Cultural views on knowledge sharing and plagiarism vary (Nketsiah et al., 2023; Thompson et al., 2017; Hendy et al., 2021). Educating students about source attribution is vital to prevent unintentional plagiarism (Smith, 2023). Addressing technological and ethical barriers is essential to protect academic work. To promote academic integrity, students should embrace diverse strategies and policies. Developing policies that reinforce integrity is crucial for sustaining the educational system. Establishing standards, applying constructive discipline, and similar approaches help create an integrity-focused academic environment (Yilmaz & Bertram, 2017; Mittelstadt, 2024; Morris, 2023). Engaging students in integrity education is beneficial (Bretag et al., 2014). Participating in interactive class discussions and utilizing real-world exam questions effectively uphold integrity (Richards et al., 2016; Obeidat et al., 2016). Implementing these strategies can transform education, fostering integrity and well-being (Walker & White, 2014; Bealle, 2017).

A. Previous Relevant Studies

Academic integrity has become a significant concern in higher education. Nketsiah et al. (2023) investigated plagiarism awareness among 1,054 postgraduate students in a developing country by analyzing socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, and academic level. Their findings revealed significant differences in plagiarism awareness based on academic level rather than gender. This study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions from academic leaders, librarians, and educators. Thompson et al. (2017) examined the effect of a workshop on Asian international graduate students' understanding of academic honesty at a U.S. university. Integrating cultural elements into the workshop positively influenced students' comprehension of the university's expectations, underscoring the necessity for culturally sensitive training. Utilizing social learning theory, Hendy et al. (2021) explored academic dishonesty among U.S., French, and Greek students. Their analysis indicated that dishonesty among peers strongly predicted self-reported academic dishonesty in all three countries. Cultural differences accounted for a significant portion of the variance in dishonest behaviors, with French students exhibiting the highest levels of dishonesty concerning cheating. The application of artificial intelligence (AI) in EFL/ESL education has incited innovations and ethical controversies. Smith (2023) and Johnson (2022) suggested that AI can enhance students' motivation to learn and acquire a language through natural language processing and adaptive learning systems. Lee (2021) cautioned about ethical considerations such as data privacy and algorithmic bias, advocating for carefully considered measures. Babaii and Nejadghanbar (2016) examined plagiarism among Iranian graduate students, finding significant discrepancies in ethical perceptions and the understanding of plagiarism, indicating a need for further preventive measures. Goda et al. (2014) observed that engaging chatbots before debates positively influenced EFL students' critical thinking and motivation. Mahato et al. (2023) analyzed how AI and virtual reality can promote supportive EFL learning environments. According to Jiang (2022), technology must be integrated into academic settings with integrity and professionalism. Eliott (2023) highlighted the importance of mindful

AI usage in classrooms. Gezgin (2023) and Söğüt (2024) stressed the ethical use of AI and its significance in education. These studies indicate that AI can potentially transform EFL teaching while emphasizing the responsible use of AI tools.

B. Literature Gap

This study distinguishes itself from previous research by comprehensively analyzing the roles of AI-generated content and plagiarism in EFL students' writing assessments. It uniquely identifies the profiles of students who engage in plagiarism and utilize AI-generated content. While existing studies primarily focus on ethical concerns and strategies for managing plagiarism, this research delves deeper into the ethics surrounding AI-generated content and plagiarism by examining student submissions, gathering student opinions, and conducting interviews with experienced teachers.

Prior research has explored AI's role in second language acquisition, its ethical implications, and its effectiveness in promoting critical thinking and engagement. For instance, Wei (2023) highlights that AI enhances English learning, motivation, and self-regulated learning skills among EFL learners. However, this study goes further by quantitatively detailing the prevalence of plagiarism and AI-generated content in student assignments and examining how demographics such as gender and age correlate with the plagiarism rate. Additionally, while Georgiou (2024) investigates the increase in student engagement with AI tools and plagiarism, it does not address the impact on critical thinking skills. This research fills that gap by outlining the patterns and ratios of AI-generated content compared to manually created content, highlighting the current effects on education and providing a nuanced understanding of the ethical dimensions involved.

III. Research Methodology

A. Research Questions

To address the primary purpose and the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the levels of similarity in online EFL writing submissions, and how do students perceive plagiarism and AI-generated content?
2. What demographic and contextual factors contribute to higher plagiarism rates or reliance on AI-generated content tools in writing assessments?

B. Context and Participants

This study utilized purposive sampling to recruit participants from a larger population for a comprehensive exploration of plagiarism in online writing assessments. Participants were selected based on specific, relevant characteristics. The sample comprised 95 students and five teachers, including 25 freshmen from three ENG 101 sections during Spring 2024 at the General Education Department, the Modern College of Business and Science. These participants were then coded P001 to P025. Each student submitted two essays via Turnitin, resulting in 50 selected samples. The research focused on AI-generated content and threshold-crossing, which occurs when the similarity index surpasses an acceptable limit, indicating potential plagiarism. Additionally, responses from 65 ENG102 students in Fall 2024 were analyzed to understand their perspectives on plagiarism and AI-generated content. Furthermore, five faculty members were interviewed to gain deeper insights into academic integrity issues.

C. Research Approach & Instruments

This study employed a descriptive-analytical approach and utilized three data collection instruments. The first tool, quantitative content analysis, gathered data from problem-solution and classification essays submitted to Turnitin. A manual data extraction tool was also used to collect the participants' demographic information. A survey about attitudes toward plagiarism and AI-generated content was administered to 65 students in the advanced writing class (ENG102) in Fall 2024. Furthermore, five experienced teachers were interviewed to gain insights into plagiarism in online assessments, mainly focusing on the demographic and contextual factors associated with potential plagiarism and the use of AI in generating content.

D. Research Procedure

The initial phase of this research involved validating the data collection tools, including quantitative content analysis, manual data gathering, and expert interviews. This process encompassed tests for validity (content, construct, criterion) and reliability (inter-rater, internal consistency) to ensure accuracy. The analysis focused on 50 essays from three ENG101 sections targeting problem-solving and classification essays to detect AI-generated content and similarity indexes. Demographic information, such as age, gender, and academic background, was manually retrieved from participant profiles to gain insights into individuals involved in plagiarism or engaging with AI content. Additionally, a survey targeting 65 students in ENG102, an advanced writing course, was employed to assess perspectives on AI content and plagiarism for Fall 2024. Qualitative insights regarding the context and demographics of plagiarists were gathered from interviews with five faculty members. All research tools adhered to ethical standards and received approval from the college's Research Ethics Committee.

E. Data Collection

Fifty essays were selected from the essays submitted to Turnitin based on similarity indexes and AI-generated content detected. Demographic information was gathered from the participants' academic profiles and analyzed to ascertain the

behavioral attributes of students who plagiarize or utilize AI to generate academic content. A questionnaire was administered to sixty-five students enrolled in (ENG102) course via Google Forms to collect their perspectives regarding plagiarism and AI-generated content. Additionally, interviews with five experienced faculty members conducted via written email correspondence provided qualitative insights into the demographic and contextual factors contributing to plagiarism. Such perspectives offer valuable insights from an instructional viewpoint, enhancing the understanding of these factors, as claimed by Alawad (2024).

IV. Findings and Discussion

A. Research Question 1: What are the Levels of Similarity in Online EFL Writing Submissions Among Target Participants, and How do Students Feel About Plagiarism and the Use of AI-Generated Content?

To address this question, the researchers quantitatively analyzed 50 essays submitted to Turnitin to determine similarity indexes and identify AI-generated content, as indicated in Tables 1 and 2 and the subsequent figures. Additionally, they assessed participants' attitudes toward plagiarism and AI-generated content through a questionnaire, as shown in Figure 3.

Table 1
Similarity Indices and AI Content in Submitted Classification Essays

Participant Code	Assessment ID	Type of Similarity	Percentage of Similarity		Source of Similarity
			CA	AIAP	
P001	A3	CP	7%	0 %	Internet Source
P002	A3	CP + AIAP	5%	63%	Internet Source + AI Tool
P003	A3	AIAP	0%	76%	AI Tool
P004	A3	CP + AIAP	11%	48%	Internet Source +AI Tool
P005	A3	CP + AIAP	10%	74%	Student Paper + AI Tool
P006	A3	ALAP	0%	92%	AI Tool
P007	A3	CP + AIAP	19%	14%	Internet Source+ AI Tool
P008	A3	CP + ALAP	9%	81%	Internet Source +AI Tool
P009	A2	CP	7%	0%	Internet Articles+ Publications
P010	A3	CP	18%	0%	Internet Source
P011	A3	CP + ALAP	5%	57%	Internet +AI Tool
P012	A3	CP	17%	0%	Student Paper
P013	A3	ALAP	0 %	100%	AI Tool
P014	A3	CP	8%	0%	Internet Sources
P015	A3	CP+ALAP	11%	23%	Student Paper + AI Tool
P016	A3	CP	13%	0%	Publications
P017	A3	ALAP	0%	92%	AI Tool
P018	A3	CP+ALAP	7%	43%	Student paper +AI Tool
P019	A3	ALAP	0%	87%	AI Tool
P020	A3	CP	25%	0%	Publication
P021	A3	CP	23%	0%	Student paper
P022	A2+A3	CP+ALAP	12%	53%	Internet Sources+ AI Tool
P023	A1+A2+A3	CP	32%	0%	AI Tool
P024	A1+A2+A3	CP	17%	0%	Internet + Student Paper
P025	A1+A2	CP+ ALAP	8%	41%	Student Paper + AI Tool
	Mean (X)		11%	38%	
	Standard Deviation (SD)		0.084512	0.372215	
	Variance (VAR)		0.024496	0.153909	
	Range (R)		73	100	

*Notes: CA: Copy-Paste Plagiarism and AIAP: Al-assisted Plagiarism

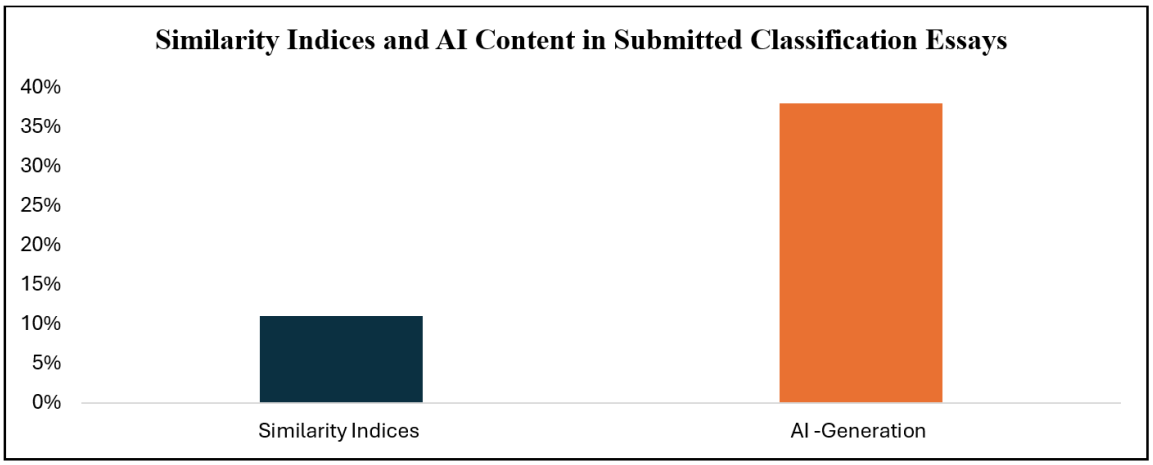


Figure 1. Similarity Indices and AI Content in Submitted Classification Essays

(a). Key Findings Discussion of Classification Essays

The classification essay analysis presented in Table 1 and Figure 1 shows that 11% of the essays contained plagiarized content (SD = 0.084512), and 38% was AI-generated (SD = 0.372215). These findings reveal moderate statistical variation in plagiarism and AI content among the essays, verified by variances of 0.024496 and 0.153909. The similarity indexes and AI-generated content ranged from 73 to 100%. For example, Participant P001 had 0% plagiarism but 100% AI content, while Participant P010 had 41% plagiarism and no AI content. Participant P002 had 9% plagiarism and 78% AI content. The average plagiarism was 14% (SD = 0.157), and AI content was 49% (SD = .392), indicating significant issues with academic integrity. These results align with previous studies highlighting students' reliance on AI tools, undermining originality (Smith, 2022; Johnson & Lee, 2021). Future research should explore these trends' effects and how to mitigate them, while institutions need stronger mechanisms to uphold academic integrity.

TABLE 2
SIMILARITY INDEXES AND AI CONTENT IN PROBLEM-SOLUTION ESSAYS

Participant Code	Assessment ID	Type of Plagiarism	Percentage of Plagiarism		Source of Plagiarism
			CA	AIAP	
P001	A3	AIAP	0%	100%	AI Tool
P002	A3	CP+AIAP	9%	78%	Internet Source +AI Tool
P003	A3	CP+AIAP	6%	44%	Internet Source + Tool
P004	A3	AIAP	0%	94%	AI Tool
P005	A3	CP+AIAP	10%	74%	Internet AI Tool
P006	A3	CP	18%	0%	Internet Source + Student Paper
P007	A3	CP	12%	0%	Internet Source
P008	A3	ALAP	0%	91%	AI Tool
P009	A2	CP	13%	0%	Internet Articles+ Publications
P010	A3	CP	41%	0%	Internet Source
P011	A3	ALAP	0%	100%	AI Tool
P012	A3	CP+ALAP	9%	26%	Student Paper +AI Tool
P013	A3	CP+ALAP	8%	87%	Student Paper AI Tool
P014	A3	CP	14%	0%	Internet Sources
P015	A3	CP+ALAP	22%	72%	Student Paper + AI Tool
P016	A3	CP	18%	0%	Publications + Internet Sources
P017	A3	CP+ALAP	7%	59%	Student paper +AI Tool
P018	A3	CP+ALAP	20%	63%	Internet AI Tool
P019	A3	ALAP	0%	100%	AI Tool
P020	A3	CP+ALAP	19%	73%	Internet AI Tool
P021	A3	CP	23%	0%	Student paper + Internet Source
P022	A2+A3	CP+ALAP	20%	67%	Student Paper+ AI Tool
P023	A1+A2+A3	ALAP	73%	0%	Internet Sources
P024	A1+A2+A3	ALAP	0%	64%	Internet Source + ALAP
P025	A1+A2	CP+ALAP	15%	22%	Student Paper + Internet
	Mean (X)		14%	49%	
	Standard Deviation (SD)		0.156963	0.392312	
	Variance (VAR)		0.00714233	0.13854	
	Range (R)		32	100	

*Notes: CA: Copy-Paste Plagiarism and AIAP: AI-assisted Plagiarism

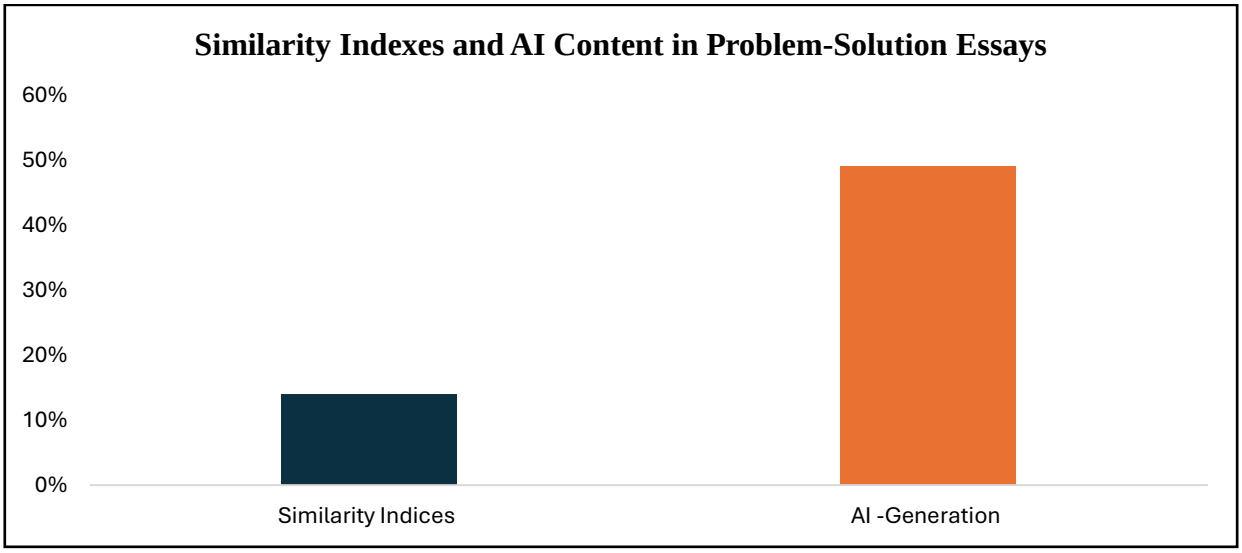


Figure 2. Similarity Indexes and AI Content in Problem-Solution Essays

(b). Key Findings Discussion of Problem-Solution Essays

According to the data presented in Table 2 and Figure 2, the analysis of problem-solution essays composed by 25 participants reveals that approximately 14% of the written content aligns with material from external sources. Furthermore, 49% of the content is attributed to artificial intelligence generation. The statistics demonstrate that the selected essays' similarity indices and AI-generated content exhibit considerable variability, with mean values of 0.156963 for similarity and 0.3923 for AI-generated content. Additionally, the data illustrates a significant distribution percentage regarding the similarity indices and AI content generation, with the lowest indices ranging from 32 to 100.

Given the facts presented, it may be argued that specific essays have a higher similarity index or more AI-generated content than others. The implication is that there appears to be an increase in the use of AI tools for academic writing, which is detrimental to the originality of students' work (Kim et al., 2024; Choudhuri et al., 2023). The presence of a high similarity index and AI-generated content in these essays could support one's argument about integrity issues relating to the use of AI within the institution framework. Such a scenario would raise concerns about enforcing existing regulations (Oxford University, 2024; Harvard University, 2024). In summary, the elaborations and findings covered all the essential aspects concerning plagiarism and the use of AI-based tools in ongoing assessments of EFL writing at GE. Based on this, there is a need for further investigations of this type to delve deeper into this issue and obtain more extensive results to address concerns about originality and integrity in evaluating student work.

(c). Analysis of Questionnaire Results

The analysis of survey responses from 65 experienced students revealed insights into their views on AI-generated content and concerns about plagiarism. As shown in Appendix 1, 47.7% feared accusations of plagiarism. Most (84.6%) deemed original work essential (see Appendix 2). Appendix 3 presents varied worries about AI-generated content, with 53.8% somewhat concerned and 33.8% very concerned; 12.3% were unconcerned. Attitudes toward AI tools were diverse: 41.5% were neutral, 36.9% supported their use, while 6.2% and 4.6% opposed it (Appendix 4). To prevent plagiarism, participants often paraphrased (61.5%), wrote all content themselves (46.2%), and utilized original ideas (46.2%). Opinions on AI-generated content as cheating were mixed, with 41.5% uncertain, 35.4% saying no, and 23.1% saying yes (Appendix 4). Many students (47.7%) worry about plagiarism, while 84.6% value original submissions. Concerns about AI usage are significant, with 87.6% expressing some worry (53.8% somewhat, 33.8% very concerned). Attitudes toward AI in writing are mixed: 41.5% neutral, 36.9% accepting, indicating some acceptance but uncertainty about its role. Proactive plagiarism avoidance measures such as paraphrasing (61.5%), independent writing (46.2%), and utilizing original ideas reflect students' commitment to academic honesty. Lastly, perceptions of AI-generated content as cheating are divided; 41.5% are uncertain, 35.4% do not view it as cheating, and 23.1% see it as cheating, highlighting the need for more precise guidelines on AI ethics in academics.

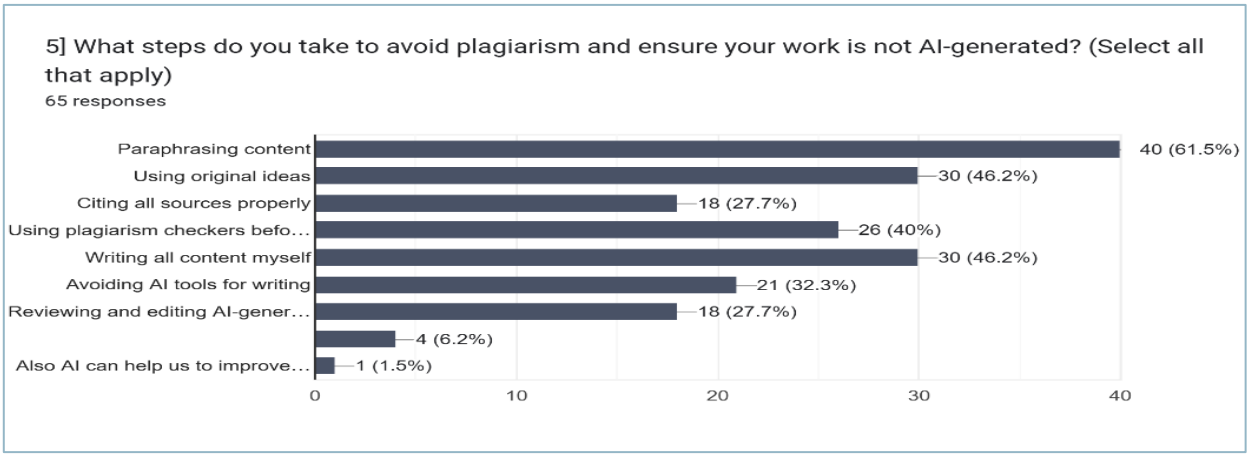


Figure 3. Common Steps Taken by Participants to Avoid Plagiarism and Ensure Originality

B. Research Question 2: What Demographic and Contextual Factors Drive Higher Plagiarism Rates or Reliance on Ai-Generated Content in Writing Assessments?

Table 3 and Figure 4 provide an analysis focused on uncovering demographic patterns that influence academic integrity. Subsequently, a quantitative analysis of teachers' interviews offers additional context and insights into these factors.

TABLE 3
DEMOGRAPHIC PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION

Participant Code	Age	Gender	Level	GPA	No. Repeats
P001	20	F	Freshman	1.59	-
P002	22	F	Freshman	0.85	-
P003	21	F	Freshman	1.18	1
P004	21	F	Freshman	1.43	-
P005	21	M	Freshman	1.18	-
P006	21	M	Freshman	1.85	-
P007	21	F	Freshman	1.47	-
P008	21	F	Freshman	1.68	-
P009	21	F	Freshman	2.20	-
P010	21	F	Freshman	0.93	-
P011	21	F	Freshman	1.90	-
P012	21	M	Freshman	1.43	-
P013	21	F	Freshman	2.14	1
P014	21	F	Freshman	1.73	-
P015	21	M	Freshman	1.55	-
P016	21	F	Freshman	2.28	2
P017	21	F	Freshman	0.93	-
P018	21	F	Freshman	2.18	1
P019	21	M	Freshman	0.93	-
P020	21	F	Freshman	1.00	-
P021	21	F	Freshman	1.47	-
P022	21	M	Freshman	1.10	-
P023	21	F	Freshman	0.77	-
P024	21	F	Freshman	2.14	-
P025	21	F	Freshman	1.60	-

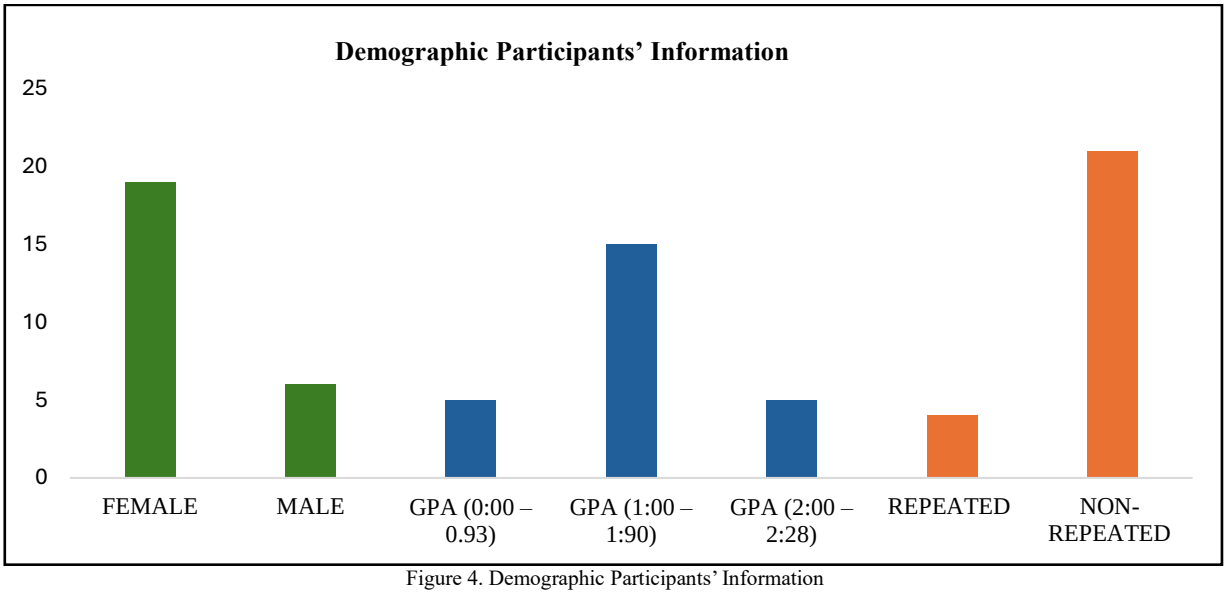


Figure 4. Demographic Participants' Information

(a). Key Findings Discussion of Demographic Information

Table 3 and Figure 4 show that most participants were freshmen aged 20 to 22; thus, according to Smith et al. (2020), their limited experience may make them more susceptible to plagiarism due to academic pressures. With all participants being freshmen, their understanding of plagiarism and academic integrity is likely insufficient. Williams (2019) emphasizes that this is crucial to academic ethical standards. Although 17 out of 25 participants are female, this does not imply that females are more prone to plagiarism; literature indicates no clear correlation between gender and plagiarism (Jones & Sheridan, 2015; Brown, 2018). This research investigates whether female students are more prone to plagiarism, aiding coping strategy development. Previous research indicates that students' perceptions of ethical values vary by gender. Jereb et al. (2018) warn against overemphasizing gender in plagiarism analysis. Ahmad et al. (2022) reported no significant differences in gender plagiarism awareness, necessitating further investigation. Participants' GPAs range from 0.77 to 2.28, reflecting varying academic performance. Johnson and Lee (2021) note that plagiarism is common among lower-performing students who may resort to unethical GPA-boosting methods. Other coursework may add stress that impacts performance, leading to embarrassment or dishonesty (Williams, 2019). Smith et al. (2020) suggest a strong link between restrictive academic cultures and plagiarism tendencies, particularly among first-year students. Most females do not align with a gender pattern; findings on gender and academic dishonesty vary (Jones & Sheridan, 2015; Brown, 2018). However, correlations exist between gender and plagiarism attitudes, with studies indicating females may condemn plagiarism more than males (Jereb et al., 2018). This study's participants represent a wide GPA range, implying lower grades correlate with increased academic dishonesty, including plagiarism (Johnson & Lee, 2021). Repeating courses may increase academic stress, potentially contributing to plagiarism (Williams, 2019). Educators are urged to teach students about academic ethics to counteract such misconduct (Ahmad et al., 2022).

(b). Qualitative Analysis of Interviewees' Responses

The qualitative analysis of interviewees' responses identified themes and insights about the demographic and contextual factors likely to increase plagiarism rates or the use of AI-generated content in academic writing.

Interview Question 1: Do demographic factors like age, gender, academic level, and course repetitions influence the likelihood of plagiarism or using AI-generated content in academic writing?

The demographic behaviors of freshmen students significantly contribute to AI content generation and plagiarism. New university students often lack experience, making them vulnerable to unethical academic practices. In contrast, sophomore and senior students better understand AI tools, raising concerns about their usage, as some may resort to them to evade academic responsibilities. Societal influences, including gender, shape students' motives for misusing AI. Studies suggest that a culture of excessive professional practice may drive female students more than their male counterparts to use AI tools, while males often fear these technologies. Recent high school graduates exhibit lower ethical standards due to a limited understanding of academic integrity. For many students, frustration plays a role in plagiarism, especially when completing assignments. Those with lower GPAs often turn to AI-generated resources for quicker improvement, particularly given the pressure of possibly having to repeat courses. Comparing findings from Nketsiah et al. (2023) reveals commonalities and differences. Both highlight specific demographic traits, such as age, academic performance, and course repetition frequency. First-year and younger students are more prone to misunderstandings about academic integrity. Low-performing students may feel pressured to quickly raise their grades, risking course responsibilities and resorting to AI-generated content. Students who retake a course experience coercive pressure to finish the curriculum, which may lead to plagiarism. The respondents did not identify gender or academic level as influential factors, whereas

the previous study concluded that these were insignificant in explaining plagiarism among students. The respondents primarily linked plagiarism or AI usage to academic underperformance, although the earlier study did not provide details on this pressure.

Interview Question 2: What contextual factors contribute to higher instances of plagiarism or AI-generated content?

Respondents identified several factors contributing to plagiarism and using AI-generated content. Academic pressure often drives overwhelmed students to seek unethical quick fixes, such as plagiarism or AI assistance. This issue is particularly serious for those unaware of prevention methods. Specific degree programs can also drive academic dishonesty, as students may take shortcuts to manage their workload. Cultural differences in perspectives on cheating can create misunderstandings about plagiarism. Students from diverse educational backgrounds may feel confused and regret crossing boundaries, aligning with previous research indicating that cultural misinterpretations of academic dishonesty contribute to unintended cheating. For instance, Hendy et al. (2021) found that culture accounts for nearly 50% of the variance in academic misconduct. Thompson et al. (2017) revealed that Asian students may misunderstand self-plagiarism due to differing perspectives on knowledge. A lack of awareness regarding plagiarism rules can escalate academic dishonesty. Nationalistic sentiments may drive students toward plagiarism and AI-generated content for academic relief. Furthermore, Hendy et al. (2021) found that perceptions of peer cheating influence self-reported cheating, and increased Internet access has resulted in more AI-related content plagiarism than reported in interviews. Despite warnings against academic dishonesty, Thompson et al. (2017) noted that universities in the U.S. often emphasize consequences rather than policy clarity.

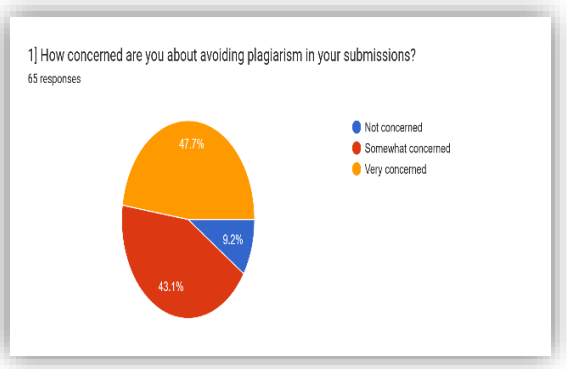
V. Conclusions and Limitations

This research examined academic integrity in the EFL context, revealing a complex interplay among students' perspectives on technology, institutional policies, and cycles of change. Students value creativity but are concerned about plagiarism and AI-generated content, driven by societal shifts toward increased digitalization. Ongoing education is crucial for upholding these ideals. Another significant finding highlights the necessity of understanding AI ethics, which should be integrated into the curriculum. Students recognize AI's benefits but criticize it for compromising authenticity, demanding proper ethical usage when incorporated into the educational process. Practices such as paraphrasing and independent work reflect students' commitment to educational principles despite external pressures from societal norms. Additional measures could be introduced to encourage ethical compliance. The analysis of academic dishonesty considered the demographic characteristics of participants, concluding that first-year students and those under stress are more likely to engage in dishonest behavior. Targeted interventions can address these issues. The analysis reveals that different types of essays exhibit varying rates of plagiarism and AI-generated content, with classification essays showing approximately an 11% similarity index and 38% AI content. Increased pressure and a lack of understanding exacerbate these challenges. Concerns regarding academic integrity in the new AI landscape must be addressed, as adequate guidelines and support systems are essential. Further research should explore how integrity can be maintained, as it remains one of the core components of higher education. While the study draws significant conclusions and offers valuable insights, it does have certain limitations. One limitation is that it relies on a small sample of 25 students from a single semester, which may not adequately represent the broader student population. Purposive sampling could introduce bias, and Turnitin may overlook some instances of plagiarism. Additionally, current AI content detection tools face challenges distinguishing between human and machine-generated text, potentially leading to misrepresentation.

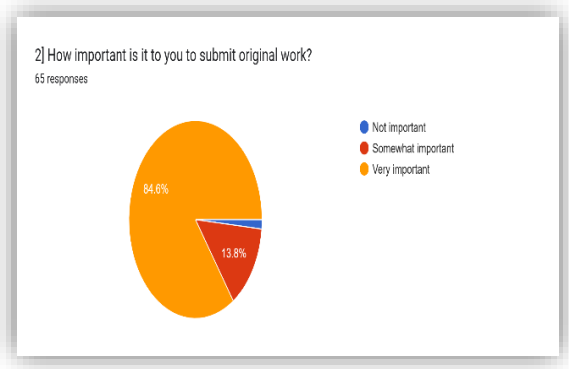
VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the research recommends fostering a culture of integrity within the student body by cultivating an environment that prioritizes integrity and transparency. Consequently, academic integrity can be regarded seriously within institutional values while promoting a balanced understanding of artificial intelligence, highlighting its potential benefits and drawbacks. The study also suggests that supporting first-year students and those experiencing high academic pressure may lower instances of academic dishonesty. Additionally, it advocates for establishing a culture that discourages academic dishonesty while encouraging and rewarding students dedicated to upholding academic integrity.

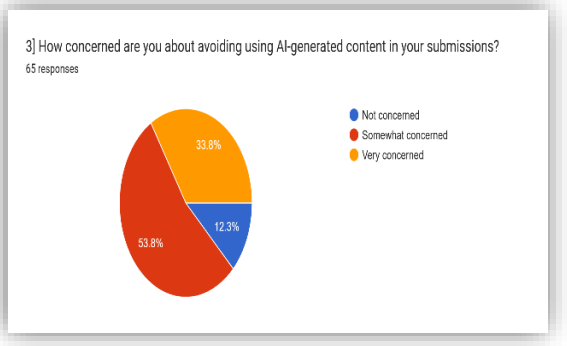
APPENDICES



Appendix 1. Demographic Participants' Information



Appendix 2. Demographic Participants' Information



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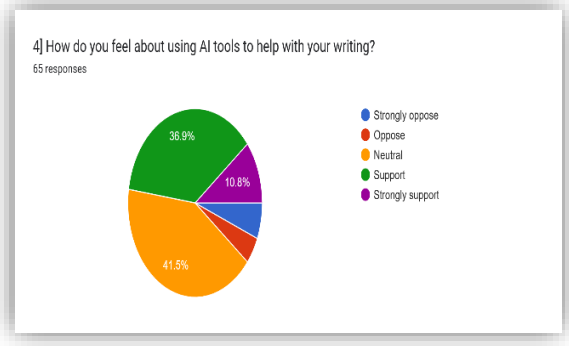
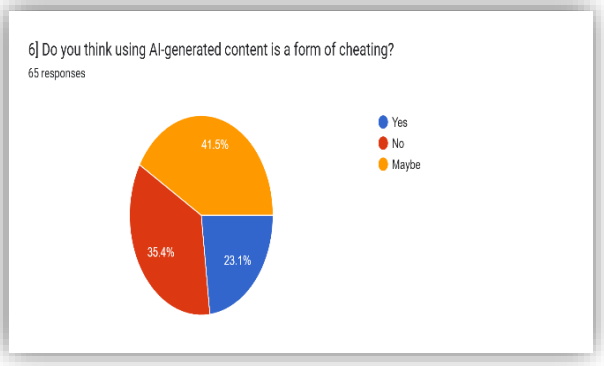


Appendix 4. Demographic Participants' Information



Appendix 5. Demographic Participants' Information

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