

# Students' Perception in Writing Essays by Using Chat GPT, Students of the Islamic Education Department, IAI Al-Khairat, Pamekasan

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## Abstract

This study explores students' reflective and selective use of Chatgpt in academic essay writing in Islamic-based higher education. Using a qualitative approach of the phenomenological type, this study aims to understand students' experiences and perceptions of the integration of generative artificial intelligence technology in scientific writing practices. The research was conducted at the Islamic Education Study Program of IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan, with informants purposively selected based on certain criteria: active students who have used Chatgpt at least twice in essay writing, and are willing to be interviewed openly. Data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, observation of Chatgpt usage patterns, and document analysis in student essays. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, with validation using data triangulation and confirmation to informants (member checking). The results showed that students positioned Chatgpt as a cognitive tool in initiating ideas and structuring writing, not as a substitute for academic thinking. Although it facilitates initial drafting, Chatgpt's output is general and less contextualised, especially in integrating Islamic values. Students overcame this by adding references from the Qur'an, hadith, and classical Islamic literature. In terms of ethics, students showed awareness of the potential for plagiarism and tried to maintain academic integrity through processing and re-understanding the AI results. The technology also affected confidence in writing, both positively and negatively. This study emphasises the importance of a balance between the use of technology and strengthening value-based academic literacy in an Islamic educational environment.

**Keywords:** Chatgpt; academic writing; student perception, ethics.

## Introduction

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, particularly language models such as Chatgpt, has significantly changed the way students complete academic tasks, including essay writing. This phenomenon has become more widespread due to the easy access to these technologies through online platforms. According to a survey conducted by Intelligent.com, (2023) About 30% of students in the United States admitted to having used Chatgpt to complete college assignments, including essay writing. Similar conditions are spreading to various parts of the world, including Indonesia, where students are increasingly familiar with using AI as an academic tool. In the Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI), this phenomenon is also starting to attract attention because it involves ethical aspects, digital literacy competence, and originality of scientific work.

Experts highlight the potential and challenges of using AI in learning, especially in writing skills. Kizilcec et al., (2025) AI, such as Chatgpt, can reduce students' cognitive load and increase the efficiency of assignment preparation. However, at the same time, it can create dependency and reduce critical thinking skills if not used wisely. On the other hand, (Wang & Wen, 2023) Asserts that AI technology in writing can be a medium for training reflective thinking if directed appropriately. Thus, students' perception of using Chatgpt in essay writing is an essential indicator of understanding this dynamic.

Despite the widespread use of Chatgpt among university students, an in-depth understanding of their perceptions of the effectiveness, benefits and challenges of writing essays using this technology is still very limited. Moreover, not many studies have specifically explored how students in the Islamic Education Study Program interpret Chatgpt from an academic, ethical, and religious perspective. This lack of empirical studies in the local context and Islamic scholarship creates a knowledge gap in artificial intelligence-based education literature. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study that examines the perceptions of Islamic Education students of IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan towards the use of Chatgpt in essay writing, to provide a comprehensive and contextualised picture of the integration of AI technology in their academic practice.

Several studies have been conducted on similar themes. First, a study by (Kasneci, Sessler, Krosse, and Bannert (2023) concluded that Chatgpt can improve writing structure but not replace writers' critical thinking skills. Second, (Lee, Davis, & Lee, 2024). Students' perceptions of Chatgpt are closely related to their digital literacy. Third, Mohammadi & Ayaz (2022) showed that using Chatgpt effectively increases confidence in writing but creates

ethical dilemmas related to plagiarism. Fourth, a study by Zhang and Su (2023) noted that students from humanities backgrounds tended to be more positive about using AI for writing tasks. Fifth, a study by Purwanto, Asbari, and Santoso (2023) in Indonesia showed that the understanding of Chatgpt's function is still low and is often used without strict academic control. These five studies have limitations regarding local context, Islamic academic culture, and in-depth qualitative-based perceptual approaches.

Unlike previous studies focusing on the global or technical context of using Chatgpt, this research explicitly addresses students' perceptions from the Islamic Education Study Program at IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan, which is in an Islamic value-based educational environment. The novelty of this research lies in the contextual approach that considers religious values, the locality of Islamic institutions, and students' subjective meanings of the use of AI technology in essay writing. This focus expands the understanding of AI technology integration in value-based higher education.

This study explores students' perceptions of using Chatgpt when writing academic essays, including its perceived benefits, challenges, and ethical implications. The contribution of this research is not only to provide an empirical picture for study program managers and lecturers in designing policies for the wise use of AI, but also to enrich the scientific literature related to AI in Islamic education. The results of this study are expected to be a reference in developing digital literacy policies that align with scientific and Islamic values.

## **Research Methodology**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study. (Kahija, 2020). This approach is used to explore in depth the experiences and perceptions of students in using Chatgpt when writing academic essays. The research was conducted at the Islamic Education Study Program of IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan. The research subjects are active students who have used Chatgpt to help write essays. Informants were selected purposively: students who met specific criteria, actively studied, had used Chatgpt at least twice for essays, and were willing to be interviewed openly. The number of informants was determined based on data saturation, i.e. the interview was stopped when the information obtained was repetitive.

Data were collected through three main techniques: (1) in-depth interviews with students, (2) observation of the patterns of Chatgpt usage in essay writing, and (3) documentation of sample essays produced. Interviews were conducted sequentially to keep

the focus and allow for the exploration of students' personal experiences. Analysis was conducted through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1992). Relevant data were categorised based on specific themes, such as ease of use, academic benefits, and ethical dilemmas. Furthermore, researchers compiled thematic narratives to explain the pattern of student perceptions. To maintain the validity of the findings, data triangulation techniques were used, namely comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documents. The researcher also confirmed the data (member checking) with informants, so the interpretation is based on experience.

## DATA EXPOSURE AND DISCUSSION

### Dynamics of Chatgpt Usage in Essay Writing by College Students

#### 1. Motivations for Using Chatgpt: Between Time Efficiency and the Limitations of Academic Rhetoric

Most informants stated that using Chatgpt in essay writing was triggered by time constraints and difficulties formulating systematic academic arguments. They did not see Chatgpt as an instant shortcut but as an initial facilitator in the thinking process. Informant (M1) said that using Chatgpt helped build basic ideas and initial paragraph structure, which had been an obstacle in the writing process: *"I use Chatgpt because I often do not know where to start. At least I got the initial idea and basic paragraph structure."*

This statement aligns with another informant (M4) 's opinion that Chatgpt acts as a *brainstorming tool*, not as a copying machine: *"Not for raw copying, but I see it as a reference for academic sentence structure and redaction examples."* Some informants' answers illustrate that Chatgpt is positioned as an early *digital co-writer* partner in developing ideas and writing structures, not a total replacement for the writer's role.

#### 2. Chatgpt Output Quality: Between Helplessness and Contextual Voidness

Most informants indicated that although Chatgpt can organise texts with a neat structure, the content is often considered *too general* and lacks the depth of academic thought, let alone an Islamic one.

Informant M6 explained: *"If you only rely on Chatgpt, it looks like a general essay; there is no Islamic nuance or distinctiveness to my thinking."* The main problem that emerged was the lack of local context, Islamic academic culture, and the weak argumentative depth of the resulting text. Therefore, most students felt the need to revise significantly, especially by

adding primary references from the Qur'an, hadith, and works of classical scholars to maintain academic authenticity.

### 3. Ethical Dimensions and Academic Concerns

There were consistent concerns among informants regarding the academic legitimacy of using Chatgpt. These concerns included potential accusations of plagiarism and anxiety that an overly perfect writing style might invite the lecturer's suspicion.

Informant M2 stated: "*I am worried that it will be considered plagiarism because it is not the result of original thought.*" However, there is also a counter view that the use of AI is still valid as long as it is done with reflective principles and does not copy raw: "*The important thing is that I process it again, I check it, and I understand the content. So it is still my responsibility.*" (M5)

Thus, ethical awareness appears to be one of the students' primary considerations. They tend to establish personal ethical boundaries on how and to what extent technology can be used in academic writing.

### 4. Influence on Independent Writing Skills

The findings show a notable difference in attitudes regarding the impact of using Chatgpt on the independence of thought. Some students felt that the AI helped them to build confidence in their writing, as there was an initial structure to refer to.

However, others are concerned about the potential for "cognitive dependence" on technology, which could eventually reduce critical thinking and writing skills from scratch. Informant M3 said: "*If we use it too often, we might get used to taking shortcuts and not practising writing from scratch.*" On the contrary, informant M7 stated that Chatgpt can break *writer's block* and trigger enthusiasm to keep writing.

### 5. Integration of Islamic Values in Writing

All informants agreed that Chatgpt has been unable to present content full of Islamic values adequately. It cannot contextualise authoritative sources such as tafsir, hadith, and scholarly opinions in Islam. Informant M8 described their integrative approach: "*I usually take the basic concept from Chatgpt, then I combine it with Imam Al-Ghazali's opinion or relevant verses.*"

This shows that in Islamic education, students are still in complete control of instilling religious values, and are not entirely dependent on AI technology in composing religious academic narratives.

## Discussion

This study reveals that students of the Islamic Education Study Program of IAI Al-Khairat Pamekasan utilise Chatgpt as a cognitive aid in writing academic essays. The findings show that students do not rely on this technology passively, but instead use it selectively to build the initial structure of writing, find argumentative inspiration, and compose rough drafts. This indicates that students' perceptions of Chatgpt are based on pragmatic needs, not technological dependence.

This finding supports the views of Fujii & Hook, (2024) , who found that EFL students in Japan utilised Chatgpt not as a substitute for writers, but as a facilitator of early writing to overcome writer's block and build ideas. Similar results were also reported by Bekturova, Tulepova, & Zhaitapova, (2025) , who highlighted that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are key determinants in the adoption of AI-based generative technologies in the context of higher education.

However, the context of Islamic education provided a unique dimension to the use of Chatgpt. Students claimed that the output of Chatgpt often did not reflect the depth of Islamic values or accurately represent theological references. Therefore, they felt the need to manually insert elements typical of Islamic studies, such as quotations from the Qur'an, hadith, and opinions of classical scholars. This finding has not been found in previous literature, thus broadening the scope of understanding about using AI in a value-based education ecosystem.

On the ethical side, most informants showed a critical awareness of the potential misuse of Chatgpt. Concerns about plagiarism, violations of academic integrity, and the gap between technology results and students' actual abilities reflect the ethical literacy that has developed among students. This is in line with the study by Janković & Kulić, (2025) , which found that students tend to be ambivalent about using Chatgpt: on the one hand, they find it helpful, but on the other hand, they are afraid that their writing will be considered unoriginal.

Furthermore, the integration of Chatgpt in the learning process also impacted the formation of independent writing skills. Some students claimed to be more confident in writing because they felt they had structural guidance. In contrast, others expressed concerns that using Chatgpt could reduce critical thinking skills if used excessively. This confirms the findings from He (2025), which states that students with high levels of digital literacy tend to manage interactions with AI reflectively and productively.

Another important finding is the position of students as active users who modify Chatgpt output. In this case, students act not only as recipients of information but as epistemic actors who filter, revise, and adjust the resulting text to suit academic standards and institutional values. This perspective extends the idea in the *Technology Appropriation* approach that technology adoption is not linear, but rather influenced by cultural and value mediation. (Selwyn, 2019) .

This research offers a substantial contribution to the development of academic literature on implementing artificial intelligence in higher education, highlighting at least three main points: Contextualization in Islamic Education. Unlike most previous studies that focus on the context of general education and technology, this research addresses how Islamic values and theological considerations shape students' perceptions of AI use. This makes a new contribution to the value-oriented educational technology literature. Second, Ethics and Student Agency; The findings confirm that students have agency in deciding the ethical boundaries of technology use. They are not just passive users, but actors who carry out *moral reflection* in their academic practice, as emphasised. by Ayuni, Muhamad, & Masdoki, (2024) In the context of the International Baccalaureate. Fourth, Balance between Technology and Academic Literacy; This study also shows that the existence of Chatgpt can be a catalyst for learning if it is positioned as a tool, not a substitute. This reinforces the ideas of Markovic, Petrovic, & Pavlovic, (2025) Who suggests a pedagogical approach based on digital literacy and critical thinking so that AI technology can be used productively and ethically?

## Conclusion

This study shows that students' use Chatgpt in academic essay writing is selective and reflective. Students do not use Chatgpt as an instant tool but as an initial companion to organise ideas and writing structures. This shows a good understanding of the function of technology as a tool, not as a substitute for the academic thinking process. The results of Chatgpt are often considered too general and do not reflect the depth of the argument, especially in the context of Islamic education. Students needed to add references from the Qur'an, hadith, and scholarly thought to keep the writing authentic and contextual. This reflects the importance of integrating Islamic values in the use of technology.

In terms of ethics, students showed awareness of the potential for plagiarism and the importance of academic responsibility. They limit the use of AI so as not to lose the characteristics of personal thought and still adhere to the principle of scientific honesty. The

use of Chatgpt also had an impact on confidence in writing. Some found it helpful because it made it easier to start writing, while others were concerned about dependency that could reduce critical thinking. This confirms the importance of balancing technology and strengthening academic literacy.



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