



University Students' Adoption and Perceptions of AI Tools in Public Relations Content Writing

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Abstract. Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative tool across professional domains, including the generation of text-based content such as public relations (PR) materials. In academic settings, students are increasingly leveraging AI as a resource for discussion and assignment completion. This study aims to explore the integration and utilization of AI in the production of PR content texts among public relations major students. Employing a qualitative approach, this research seeks to understand the nuanced ways students incorporate AI into their creative and strategic PR content production processes. Data were collected through surveys designed to analyze differences in students' perceptions, applications, needs, and adherence to regulations regarding AI use in the field. The findings offer critical insights into the potential benefits and inherent challenges of AI utilization within public relations education, highlighting key implications for developing student competencies in the rapidly evolving digital era.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, University Students, PR Content Writing.

1 Background

Effective communication is foundational for successful partnerships and collaborations, directly aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17: Partnerships for the Goals. Within this strategic framework, Public Relations (PR) plays a crucial role in facilitating seamless and targeted message delivery among diverse global stakeholders. Recent technological advancements, particularly in automated text generation and Artificial Intelligence (AI), are significantly transforming how these essential written messages are conceptualized and created [9].

The integration of technology into writing pedagogy and professional practice has been extensively studied. A robust meta-analysis of 20 empirical studies (spanning 1990–2020) demonstrated that technology integration not only improves the qualitative aspects of writing but also significantly increases overall writing productivity [14]. This body of research suggests a critical shift in technology's role from a mere facilitating tool to a genuine driver of enhanced output. Furthermore, research indicates that specific technological interventions enhance creative writing skills, positively affecting performance, lexical ability, and imagination, thereby confirming a contribution to the creative process beyond basic formatting or spell-checking functionalities [2].

More specifically, across the three standard stages of writing production—planning, drafting, and editing—technology, particularly advanced word processing applications, exhibits a significant positive impact on writing quality. This effect is maximized when technology is strategically utilized to support explicit instruction in writing strategies, such as structured planning and critical revision [7]. The positive influence of technology has been consistently documented across various writing contexts, extending to improvements in lexical selection, textual cohesion, and overall composition quality [8].

In the contemporary educational landscape, AI is introducing major changes to pedagogical approaches. While offering unprecedented opportunities for efficiency, there is a recognized concern regarding its potential to diminish the development of essential critical thinking skills among students [3]. The debate centres on whether convenience compromises cognitive development.

The use of AI among modern university students is increasingly unavoidable, driven by their inherent familiarity with daily digital technology use. This reliance on AI for completing coursework is prevalent; however, excessive dependence on AI for decision-making processes may lead to a subsequent loss of critical thinking and analytical skills, potentially resulting in unpredictable or erratic professional outcomes in organizational settings [13].

When completing university-level writing assignments, AI is emerging as a powerful, double-edged sword across every stage of production. For PR writing assignments—which often involve less formal, academic writing but require a strong alignment with an organization's specific identity and brand image—the use of AI necessitates careful consideration. AI can expedite the production process significantly, yet often struggles to capture the nuanced institutional identity or produce highly incisive, strategic messaging required for effective public relations.

For educators and practitioners alike, it is vital to emphasize the ethical considerations associated with AI integration. [5] note that while AI can substantially boost the efficiency and effectiveness of PR tasks, understanding its ethical implications is paramount for maintaining professional integrity and public trust. The introduction of AI poses significant ethical challenges that must be navigated thoughtfully [4]. Therefore, while the potential benefits in efficiency and creativity are considerable, the rapid adoption of these tools necessitates careful deliberation and a clear rationale regarding their responsible implementation.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the use of AI among students in producing public relations texts. The specific research subjects are fifth-semester students at Universitas Gadjah Mada who have completed prerequisite writing courses and are currently engaged in PR content writing assignments. The research specifically focuses on identifying when and how AI is utilized during the content production workflow, and assessing their understanding of the regulatory or control mechanisms that should govern AI use in future professional settings. This research contributes to understanding the practical integration of AI within university environments and its implications for future professional communication practices.

2 Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research design with the primary objective of understanding how students, acting as nascent content creators within an academic environment, utilize Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Public Relations (PR) content production process. A qualitative approach was specifically chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex human perceptions, motivations, and interactions within a specific educational context, which is often difficult to quantify [6].

Data were systematically collected using surveys containing a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions. This methodological triangulation in data collection helps to capture both broad trends and nuanced individual experiences [10]. The survey instrument was meticulously designed to elicit differences in students' perceptions, practical applications, perceived needs, and self-reported adherence to ethical guidelines and institutional regulations regarding AI use in the field of communications. This comprehensive data gathering strategy aims to provide rich insights into the pedagogical implications of AI integration in higher education settings [7].

3 Results and Discussions

This section presents the findings from a survey of 64 fifth-semester students from the English for Public Relations Study Program regarding their use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for PR content assignments. The results highlight prevalent usage patterns, preferred tools, and significant variations in perceptions regarding the benefits, challenges, and reliability of AI in academic writing.

3.1 AI Usage Demographics and Frequency

The study reveals near-universal adoption of AI tools among the respondents. Of the 64 students surveyed, an overwhelming majority ($n = 63$, or 98.4%) admitted to having utilized AI for their PR content production assignments (see Fig. 1). Only one student (1.6%) reported never using these tools.

Apakah Anda pernah menggunakan AI dalam pembuatan konten untuk tugas kuliah?
64 responses

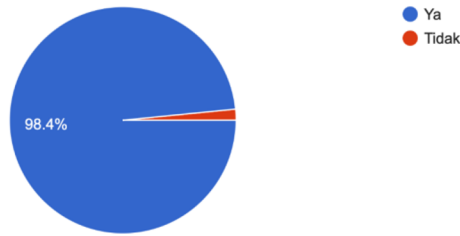


Fig. 1. The AI usage for PR content writing production

Analysis of usage frequency indicated that AI integration is a regular occurrence:

- 39.1% ($n = 25$) of respondents sometimes use AI.
- 35.9% ($n = 23$) frequently use AI.
- 9.4% ($n = 6$) use AI very frequently.

A smaller segment of the cohort rarely uses AI (14.1%, $n = 9$), with one respondent reiterating they never use it (1.6%) (see Fig. 2).

Seberapa sering Anda menggunakan AI pembuatan konten untuk tugas kuliah produksi konten humas?
64 responses

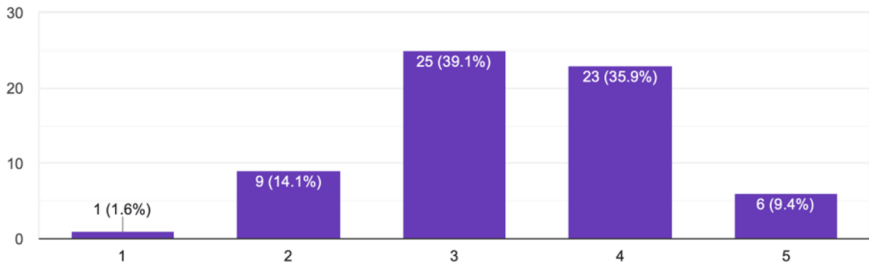


Fig. 2. The frequency of AI usage for PR content writing production

3.2 Preferred AI Tools and Application Stages

Most students reported varying degrees of benefit from incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into their PR content writing assignments. Specifically, a majority of respondents found AI helpful to some extent: 43.8% ($n = 28$) agreed that AI provided adequate assistance, 26.6% ($n = 17$) reported being "quite benefited," 21.9% ($n = 14$)

were "benefited," and 6.3% ($n = 4$) were "very benefited." Only 1.6% ($n = 1$) of students reported receiving no benefit at all from using AI tools for these tasks (see Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. The benefit degree of AI usage for PR content writing production

The adoption of specific tools is heavily concentrated on prominent generative AI platforms. ChatGPT emerged as the dominant tool, used by 93.8% ($n = 60$) of the respondents. Other tools used include Grammarly (40.6%, $n = 26$), Gemini (18.1%, $n = 18$), Copilot (3.1%, $n = 2$), and niche tools like Deepseek and Quillbot (each 1.6%, $n = 1$) (see Fig. 4).

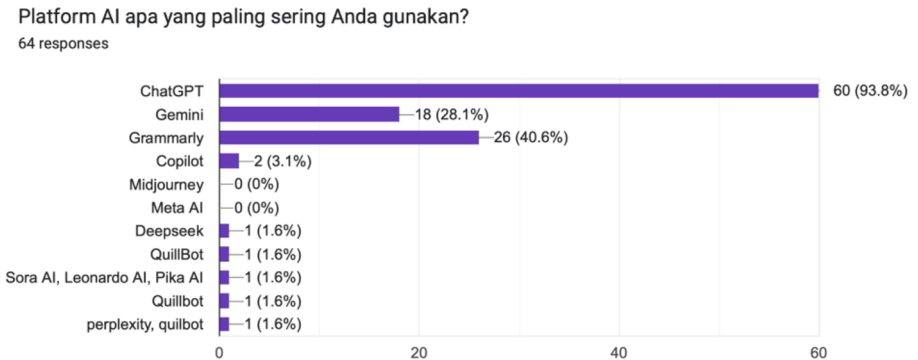


Fig. 4. The preferred AI tools for PR content writing production

Students integrate AI across various stages of their content creation workflow, confirming claims that AI provides assistance throughout the entire writing process [12]. The primary applications identified were:

- Brainstorming/idea generation: 90.6% ($n = 58$)
- Grammar checking: 67.2% ($n = 43$)

- Brief making: 48.4% ($n = 31$)

Other uses included translating 28.1%, ($n = 18$) and revising text 25%, ($n = 16$) (see Fig. 5).

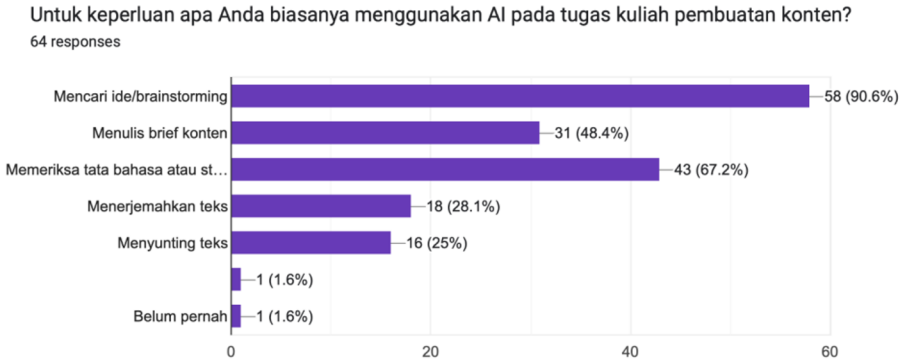


Fig. 5. The application of AI usage for PR content writing production

When categorizing usage into the three main stages of production (pre-production, production, and post-production), data showed a clear preference for initial stages:

- Pre-production (brainstorming and brief writing): 76.6% ($n = 49$) (see Fig. 6)
- Post-production (editing and revising): 36% ($n = 23$) (see Fig. 7)
- Production (drafting original content): 17.2% ($n = 11$) (see Fig. 8)

Saya menggunakan AI untuk di awal proses pembuatan konten (brainstorming ide)

64 responses

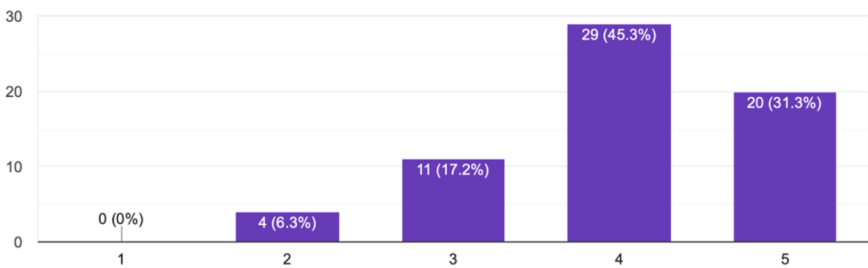


Fig. 6. The application of AI at pre-production stage

Saya menggunakan AI untuk di akhir proses pembuatan konten (edit, proofread, revisi)
64 responses

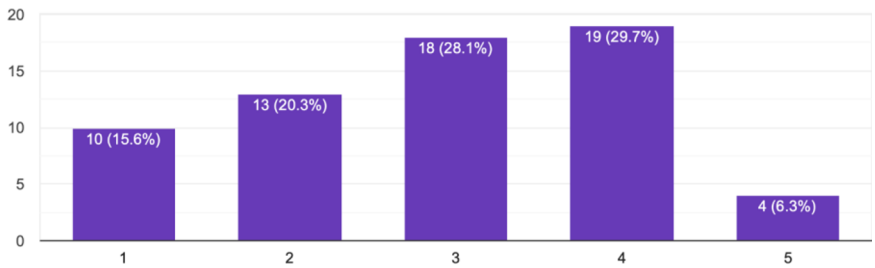


Fig. 7. The application of AI at post-production stage

Saya menggunakan AI untuk di tengah proses pembuatan konten
64 responses

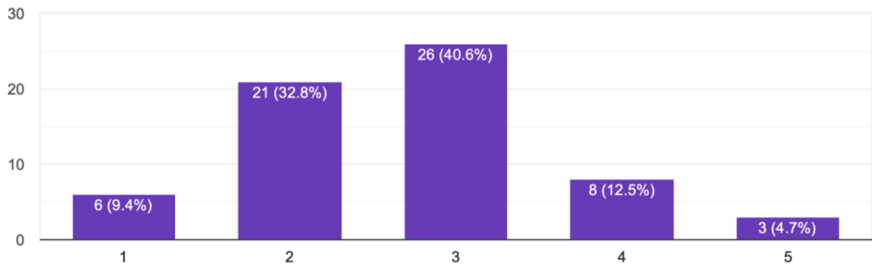


Fig. 8. The application of AI at production stage

3.3 Preferred AI Tools and Application Stages

Respondents largely agreed that AI facilitates the work process and increases efficiency. A significant majority 84.4%, ($n = 54$) agreed that AI makes their work easier, while 73.5% ($n = 47$) agreed that AI makes their work faster.

However, perceptions regarding the qualitative benefits of AI use were more mixed and showed less consensus (see Table 1):

Table 1. Perceived benefit of AI usage for PR content writing production

Perceived Benefit	Agree (%)	Unsure (%)	Disagree (%)
Makes work <i>better</i>	43.8% ($n = 28$)	42.2% ($n = 27$)	14.0% ($n = 9$)
Encourages <i>creativity</i>	43.8% ($n = 28$)	28.1% ($n = 18$)	28.1% ($n = 18$)

Encourages <i>critical thinking</i>	45.3% (n = 29)	35.9% (n = 23)	18.7% (n = 12)
Improves <i>confidence</i>	32.8% (n = 21)	43.8% (n = 28)	23.5% (n = 15)

Interestingly, when asked about passivity, the majority 43.8%, $n = 28$) disagreed with the statement that AI makes them passive, while 28.1% ($n = 18$) agreed, and 28.1% ($n = 18$) remained unsure. This indicates a complex relationship where students feel enabled rather than entirely replaced by the technology.

3.4 Reliability and Need for Human Oversight

Despite high usage rates, students demonstrated scepticism toward the reliability and relevance of AI-generated output. This aligns with academic concerns regarding the need for human oversight to ensure content quality and integrity [1].

- Reliability: 64.1% ($n = 41$) of respondents considered AI output "not reliable," while only 4.7% ($n = 3$) deemed it reliable (see Fig. 9).

Saya merasa hasil yang dihasilkan AI sangat akurat dan dapat dipercaya
64 responses

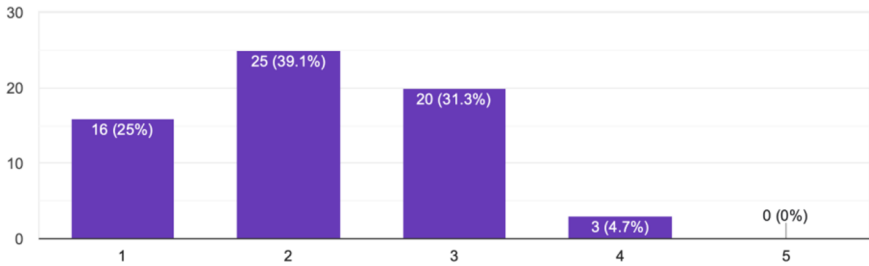


Fig. 9. The reliability of AI usage for PR content writing production

- Relevance: 40.6% ($n = 26$) boldly claimed AI results were "not relevant" to their needs, with only 7.8% ($n = 5$) finding them highly relevant (see Fig. 10).

Saya merasa hasil yang dihasilkan AI sangat relevan
64 responses

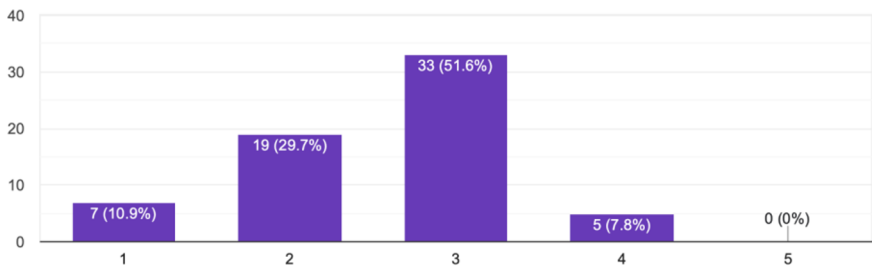


Fig. 10. The relevance of AI usage for PR content writing production

Crucially, an overwhelming majority of students 92.2%, ($n = 59$) agreed that they still needed to manually edit the AI-generated results, confirming that AI currently functions more as a drafting assistant requiring substantial human revision rather than a fully autonomous content creation tool (see Fig. 11).

Saya merasa hasil yang dihasilkan AI tidak perlu penyuntingan lebih lanjut
64 responses

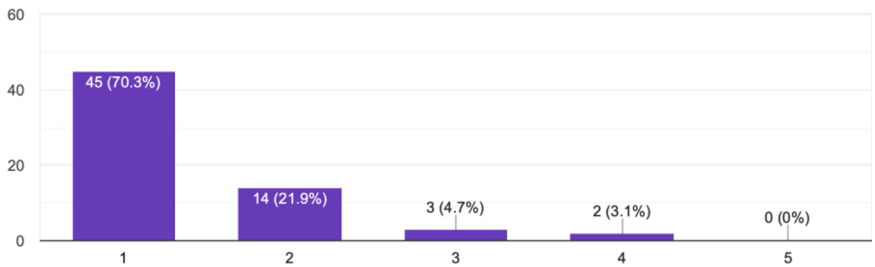


Fig. 11. The needs of editing of AI usage for PR content writing production

3.5 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers numerous advantages across various domains, supporting enhanced productivity and decision-making processes. According to the survey, AI significantly aids in brainstorming by generating innovative ideas and solutions, thereby stimulating creativity, and expanding cognitive horizons. Secondly, it enhances time efficiency by automating repetitive tasks, which allows individuals and organizations to allocate resources more effectively. Furthermore, AI simplifies complex processes, making them more accessible and manageable for users. Additionally, AI excels in rapid information collection, enabling quick access to vast datasets and facilitating

informed decision-making. Moreover, AI tools assist in editing and content refinement, providing constructive criticism and valuable suggestions to improve output quality. Overall, these capabilities underscore AI's pivotal role in streamlining workflows and augmenting human capabilities across diverse sectors.

However, some disadvantages also revealed from the survey. This research identifies that one of the primary limitations of AI is its tendency to provide less accurate data, which can lead to misinformation or incorrect conclusions. Despite advanced algorithms, AI systems may still produce outputs that lack precision, especially when trained on incomplete or biased datasets. This underscores the necessity for continuous validation and human oversight to ensure data reliability. Furthermore, AI often presents information that lacks relevance to the specific context or inquiry of the user. This issue arises from its difficulty in discerning nuanced user needs or complex situational details, which can result in irrelevant suggestions or responses. Consequently, users must exercise caution and critical judgment when utilizing AI-generated information.

The study also highlights that AI tools generally do not rely on verifiable or authoritative sources, raising concerns about the credibility and trustworthiness of the outputs. The absence of citation or referencing mechanisms reduces transparency and makes it challenging to assess the validity of the responses produced by AI systems. Additionally, AI-generated content can sometimes be out of context, misinterpreting the intent or missing the subtleties of a query. This misalignment can impair effective communication and lead to misconceptions, emphasizing the importance of contextual understanding that human oversight can provide.

Finally, the reliance on AI services often requires a premium subscription, which may limit access for some users or organizations. The associated costs can restrict widespread adoption and create disparities in the availability of advanced AI tools, especially in resource-constrained settings.

4 Summary

The results highlight a near-universal adoption of AI tools among the respondents:

- Prevalence of Use: An overwhelming majority (98.4%) of students reported using AI for PR content assignments, with ChatGPT being the dominant tool (93.8%) (pp. 2-3).
- Application Stages: AI is primarily utilized during the pre-production phase (76.6%) for tasks such as brainstorming and idea generation (90.6%). Usage during the production (drafting) stage was significantly lower (17.2%) (p. 3).
- Perceived Benefits: Students largely agreed that AI makes their work faster (73.5%) and easier (84.4%).
- Qualitative Limitations & Oversight: Despite high usage rates, students demonstrated skepticism regarding output quality. A majority found AI results "not reliable" (64.1%) and "not relevant" (40.6%), confirming that 92.2% of students manually edit AI-generated content (p. 4). Perceptions regarding AI's ability to enhance creativity, critical thinking, or confidence were mixed or inconclusive (p. 4).

Overall, the study concludes that AI functions as a widely adopted, yet supplementary, assistant in academic PR writing workflows, primarily enhancing efficiency in early production stages rather than acting as an autonomous content generator. The reliance on human oversight for quality control and the noted variations in existing ethical regulations underscore a critical need for clearer pedagogical guidelines within PR education to foster responsible AI integration while preserving core competencies like critical thinking and organizational identity representation.

Disclosure of Interests. The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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