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## Research Article

### AI-Assisted Research Mentoring in Graduate Thesis Writing: A Reflective Inquiry on the Use of ChatGPT

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#### ABSTRACT

This reflective inquiry examined how ChatGPT facilitated the author's graduate thesis-writing journey as an AI-assisted mentor, co-thinking partner, and writing support tool. Anchored on a scholarly reflective inquiry design, the article drew from the researcher's lived experience in developing a thesis on theory-based metacognitive instructional design in mathematics education. Reflective data were gathered from the researcher's thesis-writing experiences, AI-assisted interactions, manuscript revisions, defense preparation, and personal realizations throughout the research process. Thematic reflective analysis showed that ChatGPT supported conceptual clarification, methodological organization, scholarly writing, results alignment, and defense preparation. More importantly, AI interaction prompted the researcher to monitor understanding, regulate revisions, question uncertain outputs, and evaluate suggestions against theoretical, methodological, and scholarly evidence. However, the inquiry also emphasized that ChatGPT remained a fallible tool requiring source verification, numerical checking, human revision, adviser guidance, and researcher accountability. The study concludes that ChatGPT may serve as a meaningful AI-assisted research mentor when used critically, transparently, and ethically. Its strongest contribution lies not in replacing scholarly work, but in helping the researcher think more clearly, write more coherently, and develop greater confidence in the research process.

**Keywords:** *Academic development, Artificial intelligence, Ethical transparency, Human-AI collaboration, Scholarly writing*

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#### Introduction

The rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence has reshaped current conversations on academic writing, research mentorship, and scholarly development. Among these

technologies, ChatGPT has become one of the most visible tools used by students, teachers, and researchers for idea generation, writing support, language refinement, and research-related consultation. Recent literature shows that

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ChatGPT has been increasingly examined in relation to academic writing, with major themes focusing on ethical risks, practical applications, pedagogical innovation, plagiarism, authorship, hallucinated references, and responsible integration in scholarly work (Lendvai, 2025). This growing scholarly attention suggests that ChatGPT is no longer merely a technological novelty, but an emerging research support tool with implications for how academic work is conceptualized, written, reviewed, and ethically governed.

The use of ChatGPT in academic writing remains both promising and contested. On one hand, it can assist researchers in organizing ideas, generating outlines, improving clarity, refining language, and overcoming writing difficulties. On the other hand, it raises important concerns about originality, authorship, academic honesty, overreliance, and the accuracy of AI-generated content. Alberth (2023) argued that the central issue is no longer whether ChatGPT should be accepted in academic writing, but how it can be used judiciously, cautiously, responsibly, and transparently. This position is important because it shifts the discussion from outright prohibition to responsible integration, where human judgment, verification, and accountability remain central to scholarly practice.

Beyond its role as a writing assistant, recent studies have also begun to conceptualize artificial intelligence as a form of digital mentoring support. AI-based mentoring systems in higher education have been described as tools that can provide personalized learning pathways, real-time feedback, adaptive support, and data-driven insights to support learner engagement and academic development (Donner & Hummel, 2025). Similarly, AI-powered digital mentoring has been presented as a means of providing in-the-moment coaching and role support, particularly in contexts where traditional mentoring may be episodic or limited by time and availability (Flood, 2025). In the context of research development, Tan (2024) showed that generative AI mentors may provide fast, actionable, and contextualized guidance for early career researchers, although limitations remain in relation to assessment accuracy and the continued need for human

judgment. These findings suggest that AI may support mentoring processes, but it cannot fully replace the relational, ethical, and psychosocial dimensions of human mentorship.

This emerging discussion on AI-assisted mentoring becomes particularly relevant to the present inquiry because the thesis being developed was itself grounded in metacognition. The graduate study examined a theory-based metacognitive instructional design for Grade 6 mathematics learners, while the process of developing that study required the researcher to continually examine his own understanding, decisions, and revisions. This parallel provides the context for examining how interactions with ChatGPT became part of the researcher's own reflective and metacognitive process.

The connection between the thesis topic and the researcher's writing experience became increasingly apparent during manuscript development. The thesis examined how learners planned, monitored, regulated, and evaluated their mathematical problem-solving strategies; similar processes emerged as the researcher worked with AI. Planning occurred when determining what assistance was needed, monitoring when assessing whether an explanation had been understood, regulation when prompts, arguments, or interpretations required revision, and evaluation when AI-generated suggestions were checked against theory, data, scholarly sources, and adviser guidance. AI-assisted writing therefore became not merely an editing activity but a setting in which the researcher's own metacognitive practices became visible.

Studies on AI mentoring provide a useful lens for understanding this experience. Chang et al. (2024), for instance, found that AI mentors may offer immediate responses, updated information, time savings, and increased ownership of development, while also raising concerns about misinformation, bias, privacy, equity, and algorithmic influence. Their proposed human-AI mentoring models are especially relevant to this reflective article because they suggest that AI is most useful when combined with human mentorship rather than used as a substitute for it. In a related study, González Miy (2026) showed that structured human mentoring within an AI-supported virtual laboratory

can guide collaboration, decision-making, ethical considerations, and the development of AI-enhanced educational resources. These ideas support the view that ChatGPT may be understood not simply as a writing tool, but as a reflective support mechanism when used responsibly within a human-led research process.

At the same time, the ethical boundaries of AI-assisted research writing must be clearly recognized. Crean et al. (2025) emphasized that AI-based research mentors may provide useful guidance, but they also raise ethical issues related to honesty, openness, credit, education, legality, and mutual respect. These concerns are important in framing ChatGPT not as an independent researcher, adviser, or author, but as a support tool whose outputs must be reviewed, verified, revised, and ethically disclosed by the human researcher. In this regard, the responsible use of ChatGPT requires transparency, critical evaluation, and accountability at every stage of the research process.

Thus, this article does not present ChatGPT as an author, adviser, or replacement for human scholarly responsibility. Rather, it presents ChatGPT as an AI-assisted research mentor: a tool that supported the researcher's thinking, writing, and reflection while remaining dependent on human verification, adviser guidance, ethical transparency, and personal accountability. This distinction is important because the value of AI in research writing lies not in allowing the tool to produce scholarship independently, but in enabling the researcher to think more clearly, write more coherently, and reflect more critically on the research process.

This reflective article therefore aims to describe and analyze how ChatGPT facilitated the author's graduate research journey as an AI-assisted mentor, co-thinking partner, and writing support tool. Specifically, it explores how ChatGPT contributed to idea clarification, manuscript organization, methodological reflection, results interpretation, academic language refinement, defense preparation, and scholarly confidence-building. At the same time, it discusses the ethical boundaries that should guide AI-assisted research writing, particularly transparency, source verification, human authorship, and responsible academic judgment.

## **Methods**

This article employed a scholarly reflective inquiry design to examine the author's experience of using ChatGPT as an AI-assisted research mentor during the development of a graduate thesis. Reflective inquiry was considered appropriate because the purpose of the article was not to measure the effectiveness of ChatGPT statistically, but to describe, interpret, and critically examine how AI-assisted interaction supported the researcher's thinking, writing, decision-making, and scholarly development. This design allowed the researcher to analyze lived research experiences, writing challenges, AI-supported conversations, manuscript revisions, and realizations that emerged throughout the thesis process.

The reflective inquiry was anchored on the author's graduate research journey in developing a thesis on theory-based metacognitive instructional design in mathematics education. The thesis examined the problem-solving strategies and performance of Grade 6 mathematics learners using instructional activities based on Divinagracia's Metacognitive Theory. Because the thesis itself focused on metacognition, the present article treated the researcher's AI-assisted writing experience as a parallel metacognitive process, where the researcher engaged in planning, monitoring, revising, evaluating, and clarifying scholarly decisions during manuscript development.

The main source of reflection was the author's experience of using ChatGPT across different stages of the thesis-writing process. These stages included conceptualizing the research problem, refining the statement of the problem, organizing the review of related literature, clarifying methodological choices, interpreting statistical findings, preparing discussions per table, drafting conclusions and recommendations, and preparing possible answers for research defense questions. ChatGPT was used as a dialogic support tool that provided prompts, alternative phrasings, organizational suggestions, clarification of concepts, and simulated questioning. However, all AI-generated outputs were reviewed, revised, verified, and contextualized by the researcher before being accepted or integrated into the manuscript.

The reflective dataset was assembled from materials generated during the thesis-writing process, including selected ChatGPT conversation records, successive manuscript drafts, revision notes, defense-preparation prompts, and reflective recollections associated with significant research decisions. Materials were included when they documented a substantive instance in which AI interaction contributed to the researcher's understanding, decision-making, revision, verification, or evaluation of the thesis. Routine exchanges involving only minor grammar correction or formatting were not prioritized unless they contributed to a broader reflective realization. The selected materials were organized according to the stage of thesis development in which they occurred, creating an audit trail from conceptualization and methodological planning to results interpretation, manuscript revision, and defense preparation.

Analysis followed an iterative thematic reflective process. The researcher first reviewed the selected materials chronologically and identified episodes representing meaningful changes in understanding, decision-making, writing, or methodological awareness. These episodes were initially coded according to the function of AI support evident in the interaction, such as conceptual clarification, methodological organization, literature synthesis, writing refinement, results alignment, and defense preparation. A second level of analysis examined the metacognitive activity evident within these episodes, particularly planning, monitoring, regulation, and evaluation. Related codes were then clustered into broader reflective themes and interpreted alongside literature on AI-assisted mentoring, academic writing, and responsible AI use.

To strengthen the credibility of the reflection, the article applied three safeguards. First, the reflection was grounded in actual research-writing experiences rather than hypothetical claims. Second, the interpretation of ChatGPT's role was compared with existing literature on AI mentoring and academic writing, particularly studies emphasizing AI's usefulness for immediate feedback, writing support, personalized guidance, and reflective engagement (Alberth, 2023; Chang et al., 2024; Lendvai, 2025).

Third, the article maintained a critical stance by recognizing the ethical limitations of AI, including concerns about authorship, misinformation, hallucinated references, bias, privacy, overreliance, and the need for human accountability (Crean et al., 2025; Donner & Hummel, 2025; Lendvai, 2025).

Ethical considerations were central to the reflective process. ChatGPT was not treated as an author, researcher, or replacement for adviser supervision. Instead, it was used as an AI-assisted tool for reflection, writing support, and scholarly dialogue. The researcher retained full responsibility for the final ideas, interpretations, citations, and written output. This position aligns with the view that ChatGPT may support academic writing when used cautiously, responsibly, and transparently, but should not replace human judgment, critical thinking, and ethical accountability (Alberth, 2023). The original thesis also included a declaration of AI use, which strengthened the transparency of the researcher's engagement with AI-assisted manuscript development.

As a reflective inquiry, this article has limitations. The findings are based on the experience of one researcher and are not intended to be generalized to all graduate students or research contexts. The reflections are also shaped by the researcher's own positionality, writing needs, research topic, and level of familiarity with ChatGPT. However, the value of the article lies in its capacity to provide a situated and practice-based account of how ChatGPT may function as an AI-assisted research mentor when used under conditions of transparency, verification, adviser guidance, and human accountability.

### **Declaration of AI Use in Research Methodology and Manuscript Writing**

This research employs artificial intelligence (AI) methodologies, including AI-assisted manuscript writing. The AI tools used, such as Chat GPT and Quillbot, were used for language polishing, organization, or manuscript refinement. This integration upholds transparency and ethical standards, aligning with established guidelines.

Jay L. Galimpin, the researcher, affirm full responsibility for the ethical use of AI

throughout the study. In manuscript writing, considerations include transparent authorship attribution, disclosure of AI tools to peer reviewers, ensuring clarity and coherence, and safeguarding data security. Integrating AI-generated and human-authored content is approached with diligence, emphasizing review, quality assurance, and commitment to openness and reproducibility.

## Result and Discussion

The reflective analysis generated two major categories: **facilitative roles** and **critical realizations**. Across these categories, the analysis also revealed recurring metacognitive processes of monitoring understanding, regulating responses and revisions, and evaluating the accuracy and usefulness of AI-assisted outputs. The facilitative roles describe how ChatGPT supported the researcher's thesis-writing journey, while the critical realizations explain the limits, cautions, and ethical responsibilities that emerged from using ChatGPT in academic research writing. Across the reflection, ChatGPT was not experienced as a replacement for the adviser, statistician, or researcher. Rather, it functioned as an always-available mentor-companion that supported thinking, writing, clarification, and confidence-building throughout the research process.

To preserve the reflective voice of the researcher, selected verbatim excerpts from the reflective interview are integrated into the thematic discussion. These excerpts are presented not as generalizable claims, but as situated reflections that illustrate how ChatGPT was experienced during the thesis-writing process.

### **Category 1: Facilitative Roles of ChatGPT**

#### **Theme 1: ChatGPT as a Theory Translator and Conceptual Clarifier**

One of the earliest challenges in the thesis journey involved understanding the theoretical foundation of the study. Although the general direction of the research was already established, the researcher initially struggled with the depth, structure, and technical language of the theory. The difficulty was not limited to unfamiliar terminology; it also involved understanding how the theoretical concepts were

related and how they could eventually guide the instructional design used in the study.

**Reflective Excerpt 1:** "My biggest uncertainty was that I had not understood the theory that I would use because it was new and quite complex, with a lot of words that were big."

The researcher used ChatGPT to work through the theoretical material in smaller and more manageable parts. Simplified explanations provided an initial entry point, but understanding required more than receiving an easier version of the theory. The researcher had to identify which concepts remained unclear, reformulate questions, compare AI-generated explanations with the original theoretical material, and determine whether the simplified explanations preserved the intended meaning. Through this process, the researcher gradually developed a clearer understanding of the theory, its seven domains, and their possible connection to the instructional activities developed for the thesis.

This experience reflected a metacognitive cycle similar to the processes examined in the thesis itself. Recognizing that a concept remained unclear represented monitoring; reformulating questions and seeking alternative explanations reflected regulation; and checking whether the theory could be explained and applied appropriately served as a form of evaluation. ChatGPT therefore functioned as a conversational scaffold for understanding, but the researcher remained responsible for determining whether that understanding was theoretically accurate. This experience is consistent with the potential of AI-based mentoring systems to provide immediate and adaptive support while leaving interpretation and judgment with the learner or researcher (Donner & Hummel, 2025).

#### **Theme 2: ChatGPT as a Clarifier of the Statement of the Problem and Research Direction**

A different challenge emerged when the study moved from its theoretical foundation to the statement of the problem. Although the seven research questions had been developed with adviser guidance, the researcher initially struggled to understand how the three quantitative approaches worked together and what

each question required from the study. Two of these approaches were unfamiliar to the researcher, which made it difficult to see how the questions, data, and analyses would eventually connect.

**Reflective Excerpt 2:** “My adviser and I made the questions, but ChatGPT helped me understand the seven questions more by explaining them to me, thus giving me direction.”

Working through these questions with ChatGPT allowed the researcher to examine them individually and clarify what data, analysis, and interpretation each required. More importantly, the interaction prompted the researcher to monitor whether the purpose of each question was actually understood, rather than simply accepting the research design as given. When a question or analytical approach remained unclear, the researcher could reformulate the inquiry and seek another explanation

This experience also clarified the different functions of human and AI-assisted mentoring. The adviser remained responsible for the formulation and scholarly direction of the research questions, while ChatGPT provided an immediate space for clarifying what those questions meant and how they could be operationalized. This complementary relationship supports the view that AI is most useful when it supplements rather than substitutes for human mentorship (Chang et al., 2024).

### ***Theme 3: ChatGPT as a Methodological Organizer***

Methodology was another stage in which the researcher became particularly aware of the difference between following a procedure and understanding why each step was necessary. Although assistance from a statistician was sought for the statistical analysis, the researcher still needed to understand how the statement of the problem, research instruments, pre-test and post-test data, and statistical treatments were connected.

**Reflective Excerpt 3:** “Even though I do not do statistics because I sought help from a statistician, it helped me by explaining the steps in gathering the data and what to gather.”

Working through the methodological sequence with ChatGPT allowed the researcher to

identify what was already understood and where further expert clarification remained necessary. When an explanation appeared inconsistent with the approved design, the researcher had to return to the research questions, instruments, or statistical guidance before proceeding. This process required monitoring methodological understanding and regulating subsequent actions rather than simply accepting an AI-generated explanation. ChatGPT therefore functioned as a preparatory scaffold rather than as a methodological authority. It helped make the sequence and purpose of methodological procedures more understandable, while the validity of statistical decisions remained subject to verification and appropriate human expertise. This distinction is consistent with calls for cautious and responsible use of AI in scholarly work (Alberth, 2023; Lendvai, 2025).

### ***Theme 4: ChatGPT as a Literature Organizer and Synthesis Support Tool***

The review of related literature presented a different challenge. Although relevant studies had already been gathered and examined, organizing them into a coherent scholarly discussion required more than presenting one source after another. The researcher needed to determine which studies could be grouped thematically, how their findings related to Divinagracia’s Metacognitive Theory, and how these relationships could be synthesized into an argument that supported the direction of the thesis.

**Reflective Excerpt 4:** “It helped me organize themes, connect studies to the theory, and improve paragraph flow.”

Working with ChatGPT allowed the researcher to test possible thematic arrangements and consider how relationships among studies might be expressed more clearly. Suggested groupings, however, were not accepted simply because they appeared coherent. The researcher had to return to the original studies and evaluate whether the proposed connections were actually supported by the authors’ findings. This process made literature synthesis an exercise in evaluation rather than simple text organization. ChatGPT was most useful after relevant literature had already been located, read, and verified; it did not replace

scholarly searching or source evaluation. The researcher remained responsible for checking citations and determining whether AI-assisted connections among studies were defensible, consistent with Lendvai's (2025) emphasis on source verification and human oversight.

### ***Theme 5: ChatGPT as an Academic Language and Publication-Readiness Support Tool***

As the manuscript developed, the researcher became increasingly conscious of the difference between understanding an idea and expressing that idea in a form appropriate for scholarly writing. The challenge extended beyond grammatical correctness to paragraph coherence, transitions, precision of interpretation, redundancy, and the overall presentation of arguments.

**Reflective Excerpt 5:** "It helped me make the writing more Scopus-ready."

The phrase 'Scopus-ready' became the researcher's shorthand for this concern with scholarly presentation. AI-assisted revisions offered alternative sentence structures, clearer transitions, and ways of reducing redundancy, particularly in table interpretations, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations. However, not every polished suggestion was retained. Some formulations required revision because they altered the intended meaning or no longer reflected the researcher's preferred scholarly expression.

Language refinement therefore became an exercise in regulation and authorship. The researcher had to decide which suggestions to retain, modify, or reject. ChatGPT's contribution was strongest when it made the researcher more attentive to clarity and coherence without assuming responsibility for the final scholarly voice. This experience supports Alberth's (2023) position that ChatGPT may assist academic writing and language refinement when its outputs remain subject to critical human review and authorship responsibility.

### ***Theme 6: ChatGPT as a Results-Mapping and SOP-Alignment Tool***

Organizing the Results and Discussion posed another challenge because the study involved seven research questions and multiple layers of analysis. The researcher needed to

ensure that each table, interpretation, and discussion point contributed directly to answering a particular research question rather than simply presenting a sequence of statistical results.

**Reflective Excerpt 6:** "It helped me identify what parts were needed to be there to answer the seven questions."

ChatGPT was used during this stage as a mapping and self-checking aid. The interaction prompted the researcher to ask which research question a particular table answered, what interpretation remained necessary, and whether the discussion explained the meaning of the result rather than merely restating numerical values. These recurring questions created a form of monitoring in which the researcher continually checked the alignment between the developing Results and Discussion and the original statement of the problem.

The AI tool therefore supported organization rather than serving as the final interpreter of the findings. Responsibility for determining what the data meant and how they answered the research questions remained with the researcher. This experience reflects the potential of AI mentoring to support structure and greater ownership of a developmental process (Chang et al., 2024).

### ***Theme 7: ChatGPT as a Defense Simulation and Confidence-Building Tool***

Defense preparation became a practical test of whether the researcher could explain and justify the study beyond what had already been written in the manuscript. Familiarity with a completed chapter did not necessarily mean that theoretical, methodological, or empirical decisions could be explained clearly when questioned.

**Reflective Excerpt 7:** "It helped me anticipate panel questions, and helped me understand possible questions that maybe I could not answer based on the theory."

Simulated questioning exposed areas where the researcher's understanding remained incomplete or difficult to articulate. When a question could not be answered clearly, that difficulty became a signal to return to the relevant theory, methodology, or finding before attempting the response again. The interaction

therefore involved both evaluation and regulation: difficulty in answering revealed a gap, while revisiting the study became the corrective response.

This form of on-demand rehearsal complemented formal defense preparation because it could be repeated whenever uncertainty emerged. Similar to the in-the-moment coaching described by Flood (2025), AI provided immediate opportunities for practice while the accuracy of the responses continued to depend on the researcher's knowledge and scholarly guidance.

## ***Category 2: Critical Realizations on AI-Assisted Research Mentoring***

### ***Theme 8: ChatGPT as a Fallible Tool Requiring Verification and Researcher Control***

Repeated interaction with ChatGPT gradually changed the researcher's approach to evaluating AI-generated responses. Clear and confidently written outputs could initially appear authoritative, but encounters with questionable numerical information, inaccurate explanations, and unverifiable claims demonstrated that fluency could not be treated as evidence of accuracy.

**Reflective Excerpt 8:** "I still had to cross-check because there were hallucinations with the numbers, verify sources, check if the explanation was accurate, revise its wording, and make sure my own voice was still present."

Verification consequently became one of the most important practices developed during AI-assisted writing. The researcher learned to evaluate whether a response was consistent with the actual dataset, original theoretical sources, approved methodology, and published literature. When discrepancies appeared, the appropriate response was to return to these sources or seek clarification from the adviser or statistician rather than accept the AI response as authoritative.

This evaluative stance distinguishes AI-assisted scholarship from uncritical dependence on AI. ChatGPT could generate explanations and possibilities for consideration, but accepting, modifying, or rejecting them remained a human scholarly responsibility. This experience reflects concerns raised by Lendvai (2025) and Alberth (2023) regarding

hallucinated information, reliability, authorship, and the need for critical verification in AI-assisted academic writing.

### ***Theme 9: ChatGPT as an Always-Available Mentor-Companion***

One of the clearest realizations from the thesis journey concerned the difference between immediate access to support and human mentorship. The adviser provided scholarly direction, accountability, encouragement, and reassurance grounded in an actual mentoring relationship. AI-assisted support served a different purpose by being available during the smaller moments of uncertainty that occurred between formal consultations.

**Reflective Excerpt 9:** "The human adviser helped me by boosting my morale and constantly updating me, but ChatGPT felt more like a mentor-companion that was always right there for you anytime you want."

This availability allowed the researcher to ask repeated follow-up questions, test explanations, rehearse arguments, and work through confusion without waiting for a scheduled consultation. At the same time, the experience made clear that immediacy should not be equated with the relational and scholarly responsibilities of human supervision.

The resulting relationship was therefore complementary rather than substitutive. AI addressed immediate cognitive needs for clarification and rehearsal, whereas the adviser remained central to scholarly direction, contextual judgment, encouragement, and accountability. This pattern is consistent with the hybrid human-AI mentoring relationship described by Chang et al. (2024).

### ***Theme 10: ChatGPT as a Tool for Identifying Methodological Considerations and Strengthening Researcher Confidence***

As the study progressed, some AI-assisted interactions raised methodological questions that the researcher had not previously considered. Issues such as implementation fidelity, construct heterogeneity, and intervention duration became prompts for examining whether particular aspects of the research design had been sufficiently justified or addressed.



**Reflective Excerpt 10:** “Along the way, ChatGPT suggested things that even my adviser had not thought of, like the fidelity checklists, the construct heterogeneity of topics if we have three different topics in one test, and that implementation of experimental is not necessarily needing at least two weeks but a quality explicit instruction.”

The significance of these suggestions did not lie in treating ChatGPT as a methodological authority. Rather, they prompted further questioning. The researcher still had to determine whether each consideration was relevant to the actual design, whether it was supported by methodological literature, and whether it warranted discussion with the adviser or statistician. AI therefore functioned as a trigger for methodological monitoring rather than as the source of final research decisions.

**Reflective Excerpt 11:** “ChatGPT helped me identify what lacks in my research, thus giving me the confidence that even if I am not really a quantitative research expert, it gave me confidence.”

The confidence that emerged from these interactions was therefore not based on assuming that AI-generated advice was correct. It developed from greater awareness of the questions that needed to be asked and the methodological issues that required verification. By making these considerations more visible, the interaction reduced some of the uncertainty associated with working in a less familiar quantitative research context. This reflects Tan’s (2024) observation that AI mentors may provide rapid, contextualized guidance while still requiring human judgment.

### ***Theme 11: ChatGPT as a Writing Facilitator, Not a Substitute for Scholarly Reading***

By the later stages of the thesis, the researcher had developed a clearer boundary between research tasks that could appropriately be supported by AI and scholarly responsibilities that needed to remain with the researcher. ChatGPT was useful when ideas required clarification, organization, or refinement, but it could not substitute for locating, reading, and critically evaluating original scholarly sources.

**Reflective Excerpt 12:** “ChatGPT is not for related studies search but someone who

facilitates your writing. What they should do is tap ChatGPT as someone you can ask when things in your mind do not seem to make sense.”

This distinction became both a practical and ethical boundary in the researcher’s use of AI. Responsible use involved not only knowing when ChatGPT could assist, but also recognizing when the appropriate action was to leave the AI interaction and return to an original article, examine the dataset, consult the adviser, or seek methodological expertise. Such decisions required metacognitive judgment about the limits of the tool itself.

The role that ultimately best described ChatGPT was therefore that of a facilitator of thinking and writing rather than a substitute for scholarly inquiry. This interpretation aligns with Crean et al. (2025), who emphasized the ethical responsibilities surrounding AI-based research mentoring. AI may assist clarification and reflection, but scholarly reading, evidence evaluation, authorship, and final judgment remain human responsibilities.

## **Conclusion**

ChatGPT’s value in the research journey lies not in replacing scholarly labor, but in making the researcher more reflective, organized, and confident in carrying it out. This reflective inquiry shows that when used responsibly, ChatGPT can become a meaningful companion in graduate research writing by helping transform uncertainty into clearer thinking and fragmented ideas into more coherent academic expression. However, its use must remain guided by human judgment, adviser supervision, source verification, ethical transparency, and the researcher’s own voice. Thus, ChatGPT should be understood not as an author or substitute for expertise, but as an AI-assisted mentor that supports the researcher’s capacity to think, write, question, and defend scholarly work more critically.

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ChatGPT in the research journey. Deep appreciation is also extended to the author's family for their constant support, understanding, and encouragement throughout the writing process. The author likewise acknowledges the responsible use of ChatGPT as an AI-assisted writing and reflective support tool, with all final decisions, interpretations, and revisions remaining under the author's full accountability.

### **The main findings (novelty) and why they are important and useful:**

The main novelty of this research is that it presents ChatGPT as an AI-assisted research mentor in graduate thesis writing, not merely as a grammar checker, text generator, or editing tool. The study found that ChatGPT supported the researcher across different stages of the thesis process by helping clarify a complex theory, explain the statement of the problem, organize methodology, structure the literature review, map results to research questions, prepare for defense, and improve academic writing. This is important because it shows that ChatGPT can function as a reflective support tool that helps a researcher understand and manage the research process more clearly.

A major finding of the research is that ChatGPT supported the researcher's metacognitive development. It helped the researcher think about the research process, identify what was unclear, ask better questions, recognize gaps, and revise ideas more critically. This is useful because it suggests that AI-assisted research writing can become a process of reflection and self-regulation when the researcher remains actively involved and does not simply accept AI-generated outputs.

Another important finding is that ChatGPT and the human adviser played different but complementary roles. The human adviser provided moral support, direction, accountability, and encouragement, while ChatGPT served as an always-available mentor-companion for immediate clarification, writing support, and idea organization. This finding is useful for graduate education because it supports a hybrid mentoring model where AI extends research support without replacing human supervision.

The research also found that ChatGPT is useful but not fully reliable. The researcher still

needed to verify sources, check numbers, revise wording, preserve personal voice, and consult the adviser or statistician when necessary. This is important because it provides a balanced and ethical view of AI use in research. The study does not promote dependency on ChatGPT; instead, it shows that ChatGPT is most useful when used critically, transparently, and responsibly.

Overall, this research is useful because it offers graduate students, advisers, and academic institutions a practical way to understand ChatGPT's role in research writing. It may be used as a guide for responsible AI-assisted thesis writing, especially in helping students clarify ideas, organize arguments, prepare for defense, and build scholarly confidence while maintaining human accountability and academic integrity.

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