

Exploring Students' Digital Literacy and Attitudes Towards Technology Applications in Learning English: The Case of Second Year Students of English at Skikda University

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Abstract

This paper investigates students' digital literacy and their attitudes towards technology applications in English language learning. The study presents digital technologies as an important aspect of language learning and stresses the concept of digital literacy among EFL learners. Thirteen second-year students of English are selected based on random sampling to take part in this quantitative study. Moreover, quantitative research was conducted, which is based on an online questionnaire administered to 13-second year students of English at Skikda University to explore their attitudes toward digital technologies in EFL instruction and the frequency of using technology applications in English learning. The findings of the survey show that university students have access to digital tools, such as cell phones. Nonetheless, computers and other digital tools were rarely used in educational settings. Furthermore, the results indicate that EFL students have positive attitudes toward information and communication technologies.

Keywords: Attitudes, digital literacy, EFL learners, information and communication technologies, university students

ملخص

تستقصي هذه الورقة البحثية المعرفة الرقمية لدى الطلاب واتجاهاتهم نحو استخدام التقنيات الرقمية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. تقدم الدراسة التقنيات الرقمية كجانب مهم من جوانب تعلم اللغة، وتؤكد على مفهوم المعرفة الرقمية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وقد تم اختيار ثلاثة عشر طالباً من طلاب السنة الثانية في اللغة الإنجليزية بناءً على عينات عشوائية للمشاركة في هذه التجربة الكمية. وعلاوة على ذلك، تم إجراء بحث كمي يستند إلى استبيان عبر الإنترنت تم إجراؤه على طلبة السنة الثانية للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة سكيكدة لاستطلاع معارفهم الرقمية ومهاراتهم المدركة، واتجاهاتهم نحو استخدام التقنيات الرقمية، ومدى تكرار استخدام تطبيقات التكنولوجيا في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. أظهرت نتائج الاستطلاع أن طلاب الجامعة يتمتعون بإمكانية الولوج إلى الأدوات الرقمية، مثل الهواتف المحمولة. ومع ذلك، نادراً ما تستخدم أجهزة الكمبيوتر والأدوات الرقمية الأخرى في البيئات التعليمية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تشير النتائج إلى أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لديهم مواقف إيجابية تجاه تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المواقف، المعرفة الرقمية، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات، طلاب الجامعات.

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Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) advancements have improved all aspects of human lives, including education. Hence, the issue of using digital technology for language learning has gained significant attention from EFL teachers, students, and others. ICT integration in education has been shown to improve student learning as well as the performance of teachers in the classroom (Nguyen & Habok, 2021). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that young students have enjoyed using a variety of digital literacy tools, including the internet, cell phones, online and offline games, messaging, and sketching tools, thanks to the incredible invention of digital technology (Mudra, 2018). With access to such a vast array of digital tools, young students can enhance their comprehension of each word, text, and meaning as supplied through the tools for Digital Literacy (DL).

According to Turula (2017), using ICTs can help young learners build self-regulated learner autonomy and improve their English skills (As cited in Mudra, 2018). Along the same vein, Jolls (2008), assumes that "digital literacy allows for accessing, analyzing, evaluating, creating and participating with multimedia messages" (p.8). Young learners with strong digital literacy learn English by altering, informing, and reforming communications using digital literacy tools (Davidson, 2009).

The current study seeks to explore It aims to explore students' digital literacy and test their attitudes toward technology applications in learning English. The findings should have significance for the development of ICT integration in English instruction, as it is intended to uncover the fundamental reasons why DL among EFL learners is seen to be useful. The current study is conducted based on the following research questions:

- How often do they use digital technology in their learning?
- What are students' attitudes towards digital technologies and their benefits in EFL instruction and how do they value their digital knowledge?

It is hypothesized that students have little digital knowledge, though they have positive attitudes towards the integration of ICTs in English learning classes.

Literature Review

Digital Literacy

Digital Literacy's (DL) conceptual definition, introduced in 1997, is generally explained by Gilster (1997) as "the ability to properly use and evaluate digital resources, tools, and services, and apply it to lifelong learning processes" (as cited in Nguyen & Habok, 2021). Because technology has an impact on the notion, numerous authors and practitioners have given different definitions. Furthermore, the concept encompasses more than just the capacity to use technology; it also refers to a specific type of thinking. Eshet-Alkalai (2004) argued that DL is a "survival skill in the digital era" (p.102) that is mostly used in formal schooling. The author also believed that DL was built on the integration of many literacies, such as photo-visual literacy, reproduction literacy, information literacy, branching literacy, and social-emotional literacy.

With the rapid advancement of digital technologies and new media, Ng (2012) defined DL as a range of literacies associated with technology transfer and utilization. Ng (2012) used modern technology, such as hardware and software, to clarify and broaden the definitions of

concepts like PCs, mobiles, interactive whiteboards, Web 2.0 technologies, and other online resources.

According to Palilonis and Watt (2019), digital literacy refers to the ability to create and communicate meaning in various formats in digital environments. It also includes understanding how technology can support these processes (as cited in Purmayanti, 2022). Jones-Kavalier and Flannigan (2006, p.9) assumed that “digital literacy represents a person’s ability to perform tasks effectively in a digital environment, with ‘digital’ meaning information represented in numeric form and primarily for use by a computer” (as cited in Mudra, 2018, p. 21).

To prepare young learners for digital literacy, Warshauer and Matuchniak (2010) believed that it is important to acquire information, media, and technology abilities, as well as learning, innovation, and life and career skills (as cited in Mudra, 2018). Assessing young learners' digital abilities is crucial for determining their readiness to use digital technologies for English learning.

Advantages of DL among EFL Students

According to Park and Son (2009), computer technology can enhance teaching methods by presenting students with diverse linguistic inputs and improving their learning abilities in real-life scenarios (As cited in Abbasova, 2019). Chong (2000) cited several benefits of using the Internet in the EFL classroom, including authentic materials for learners, the opportunity for students to meet native friends online, and improved communication between teachers and students (As cited in Abbasova, 2019). Along the same vein, Mudra (2010) saw that literacy skills prepare young learners to be digitally perceptive, and digital skills enable them to use digital literacy tools, a necessary step towards digital literacy.

According to Chouit et al. (2017), using ICT in FLL lessons might increase students' enthusiasm for learning English and motivate them to participate actively in the process of learning a language (As cited in Ketanci, 2023).

Numerous research works have examined students' digital literacy abilities and technology-related proficiencies. According to certain research (Altun, 2021; Koyuncuoglu, 2022), students' technology-related competencies are good (As cited in Ketanci, 2023). However, according to other research, students' technology-related competencies are either low (Cote & Milliner, 2017; Dashtestani & Hojatpanah, 2020) or adequate (Cabangacala et al., 2021; Nguyen & Habók, 2021) (As cited in Ketanci, 2023).

Challenges of Implementing DL in EFL Classroom

As Kosimov (2022) asserted integrating technology in the classroom can benefit both teachers and students. It allows teachers to communicate with students and enhance their learning, while learners can connect with information in new and exciting ways. Technology can also increase student involvement, prepare students for life, and support differentiated instruction.

Some teachers still struggle to integrate technology into their classrooms. Kosimov (2022) explained that one reason could be the high expense of new technologies. Limited budgets prevent some learning environments from incorporating new technologies into the classroom. Some teachers may be hesitant to employ technology due to a lack of understanding or comfort.

Methods and Materials

This section displays the research design of the study, followed by the procedures of data analysis, data collection method and the main results. The findings of the survey will be presented, and followed by some conclusions and recommendations.

Participants

A quantitative survey study was carried out by distributing an online questionnaire to thirteen respondents who are EFL university students. The items in the questionnaire served the purpose of exploring students' perceptions towards the benefits of using digital technologies in English language learning among second-year students of English at Skikda University. The concern of this study was to explore the effectiveness of using digital technologies, students' digital knowledge and their attitudes towards its use in EFL learning. Digital technologies promote learning foreign languages among University students of English by fostering and encouraging them to learn English when they are using ICT tools.

Research instruments

The online questionnaire comprised three parts, the first part highlighted students' familiarity and experiences with digital learning of English and included Two questions as follows: Q1: How often do you use digital technologies for learning English? (Single Selection), Q2: How would you rate your overall proficiency in using digital technologies for learning? (Single Selection).

The second part was to discover students' digital knowledge and skills and include the following questions: Q3: Which digital technologies have you used for learning English? (Multiple Selection), Q4: How comfortable are you with using digital technologies for learning English? (Single Selection), Q5: How important do you think digital technologies are for learning English? (Single Selection).

The third part was expected to be able to explore students' attitudes towards the use of technology, and consists of the following questions: Q6: Do you feel that your digital knowledge helps you in learning English more effectively? (Single Selection), Q7: How frequently do you use technology applications for practicing English skills? (Single Selection), Q8: Do you believe that digital technologies can enhance your English learning experience? (Single Selection), Q9: How do you stay updated about new digital tools and applications for learning English? (Multiple Selection), Q10: In your opinion, should digital technologies be incorporated into traditional English learning methods? (Single Selection).

The survey questionnaire was distributed to second-year students of English respectively. The researcher gathered the results obtained, which were computed and further analysed and will be explained below.

Research Procedures

An online survey questionnaire developed by the researcher was used as the primary tool to gather data on the respondents' perception of the use of digital technologies among second-year students of English at the University of 20 Aout 1955-Skikda-. Participants were instructed about how to complete the survey and were informed that the data gained from the survey would be anonymous, voluntary and confidential.

Results

Part One: Students' Familiarity and Experiences with Digital Technologies

Table One shows how frequently the participants use digital technologies.

Table 1. *Students' use of digital technologies*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
Daily	5	38,46%
Every few days	2	15,38%
Once a week	0	0,00%
Rarely	2	15,38%
Never	0	0,00%
Multiple times a day	0	0,00%
Frequently	0	0,00%
Occasionally	1	7,69%
Regularly	0	0,00%
Only for specific tasks/assignments	3	23,08%

As Table One indicates, five participants (38.46%) use DT daily. Among the participants, one student (7.69%) stated that he uses DT occasionally. At the same time, 3(23.08%) of the participants claimed that they use DT only for specific tasks. Meanwhile, two students (15.38%) revealed that they use DT every few days, and similarly, two students (15.38%) rarely use DT.

Table Two shows how frequently the participants use technology applications for practicing the English language.

Table 2. *The frequency of students' use of technology applications for practicing English skills*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
Daily	2	15,38%
Weekly	6	46,15%
Monthly	1	7,69%
Rarely	4	30,77%
Never	0	0,00%

The participants were asked about their DT usage to practice English. As Table Two indicates, all participants use DT to practice English. Among the participants, six students (46.15%) stated that they use technology applications weekly to learn the English language. At the same time, two (15.38%) of the participants claimed that they use DT daily to learn English. Meanwhile, one student (7.69%) stated that he uses DT monthly to practice English. However, four students (30.77%) claimed that they rarely use technology applications for practicing English.

Part Two: Students' Digital Knowledge and Skills

Table Three presents students' opinions about their proficiency in using technology for learning.

Table 3. *Students' opinions about their proficiency in using technology for learning*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
Excellent	4	30,77%
Good	5	38,46%
Average	4	30,77%
Below Average	0	0,00%
Poor	0	0,00%
I am not proficient in using digital technologies for learning	0	0,00%

Students were asked about their proficiency in using technology for learning. Four students (30.77%) see that they are excellent at using DT in learning. Besides, five students (38.46%) believe that they are good at using technology for learning. However, four (30.77%) students stated that they have an average level of using DT for learning.

Table Four presents which digital technologies students use for learning English.

Table 4. *Digital technologies students use for learning English*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
Computer	1	7.69%
Smartphone	10	70.69%
Online learning platforms	1	7.69%
Educational apps	3	23.08%
Interactive whiteboards	0	00%
Language learning software	2	15.38%
Social media	6	46.15%
Virtual reality	1	7.69%
Podcasts	1	7.69%
E-books	1	7.69%
Digital dictionaries	0	00%
Web-based games	1	7.69%
Video conferencing	0	00%
Online forums and discussion boards	0	00%
Language exchange platforms	2	15.38%

Based on Table Four, it is noted that the majority of the respondents (10 students) use their smartphones to learn English compared to other electronic devices. Besides, six students (46.15%) rely on social media in addition to their smartphones, three students (23.08%) use educational applications, and only two students (15.38%) use language learning software, and similarly, two students use language exchange platforms. However, only one student (7.69%) uses a computer, and only one uses online learning platforms. Similarly, one student uses virtual reality, one student uses podcasts and another one uses E-books. While one student stated that he uses web-based games in learning English, none of the respondents stated that he uses interactive whiteboards, E-books, digital dictionaries, video conferencing, and online forums. Therefore, it is suggested that most of the respondents are familiar with the use of digital technologies, particularly, smartphones and computers.

Table Five shows how comfortable students are with using DT for learning English.

Table 5: *Students' Familiarity with Using Digital Technologies for Learning English*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
Very comfortable	2	15,38%
Somewhat comfortable	2	15,38%
Neutral	5	38,46%
Somewhat uncomfortable	0	0,00%
Very uncomfortable	0	0,00%
Depends on the technology/application	3	23,08%
I prefer traditional methods of learning English	0	0,00%
I am open to using digital technologies for learning English	0	0,00%
I am not familiar with digital technologies for learning English	0	0,00%
I have no problem using digital technologies for learning English	1	7,69%

Students were asked about how comfortable they are with using digital technologies for learning English. Table Five shows that only two students feel very comfortable with using DT for learning English, and similarly, two students feel somewhat comfortable. However, five students were neutral, and three students stated that it depends on the technology and application. Meanwhile, only one student said that he has no problem using digital technologies for learning English, and none of the students prefers traditional methods of learning English.

Part Three: Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Technologies

Table Six demonstrates students' attitudes towards the importance of digital technologies for learning English.

Table 6. *Students' attitudes towards the importance of digital technologies for learning English*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
Extremely important	8	61,54%
Somewhat important	4	30,77%
Neutral	1	7,69%
Not very important	0	0,00%
Not important at all	0	0,00%

The participants were asked about their attitudes towards the importance of DT. Table Six shows that the majority of them (eight students) believe that DT is extremely important for learning English. Besides, four students (30.77%) see that DT are somewhat important. However, only one student was neutral, and none of the respondents stated that DT is not important for learning English.

Table Seven demonstrates students' opinions about digital knowledge and whether it helps them in learning English more effectively or not.

Table 7. *Students' opinions about digital knowledge efficiency in learning English*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
Yes, my digital knowledge improves my English learning	6	46,15%
Not sure, I haven't thought about it	3	23,08%
No, my digital knowledge doesn't make a difference in my English learning	1	7,69%
Using technology for English learning has been a game-changer	1	7,69%
I believe it does to some extent, but not	0	0,00%

significantly		
I feel more confident in my English skills with digital tools	0	0,00%
It depends on the specific digital skills and tools being used	1	7,69%
Not at all, I prefer traditional methods of learning English	0	0,00%
Yes, but I think it also depends on the teacher and their use of technology	1	7,69%
I'm not sure, but I'm open to exploring how technology can enhance my English learning	0	0,00%

The majority of the respondents (46.15%) stated that digital knowledge improves their English learning. Besides, three students (23.08%) confessed that they had not thought about it, and only one student answered that absolutely, using technology for English learning has been a game-changer. However, only one student (7.69%) believes that his digital knowledge doesn't make a difference in English learning, one student stated that it depends on the specific digital skills and tools being used, and another one thinks that it also depends on the teacher and their use of technology.

Table Eight demonstrates students' opinions about DT enhancement of their learning experience.

Table 8. *Digital technologies enhancement of students' English learning experience*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
Yes, I believe digital technologies can greatly enhance my English learning experience	9	69,23%
Using digital technologies has improved my understanding and retention of English material	1	7,69%
I have seen a significant improvement in my English skills by utilizing digital technologies	1	7,69%
Without a doubt, digital technologies have made learning English more engaging and interactive	1	7,69%
Yes, digital technologies have proven to be a valuable tool in enhancing my English learning	0	0,00%
I strongly believe that digital technologies play a crucial role in enhancing my English learning experience	1	7,69%
Undoubtedly, digital technologies have revolutionized the way I learn English and made it more efficient	0	0,00%
No, I do not believe digital technologies can effectively enhance my English learning experience	0	0,00%
I am unsure, I have not used digital technologies enough to determine if they can enhance my English learning	0	0,00%
It depends, some digital technologies have been helpful while others have not been as beneficial in my English learning	0	0,00%

Students were asked if they believe that digital technologies can enhance their English learning experience. Table Eight shows that the majority of them (69.23%) believe that digital technologies can greatly enhance their English learning experience. Besides one respondent (7.69%) believes that using digital technologies has improved his understanding and retention

of English material. However, one student has seen a significant improvement in his English skills by utilizing digital technologies, and one student stated that without a doubt, digital technologies have made learning English more engaging and interactive. Meanwhile, one respondent strongly believes that digital technologies play a crucial role in enhancing his English learning experience.

Table Nine shows how students stay updated on new apps and tools for digital English learning.

Table 9. *Ways in which students stay up to date on new Apps and tools for digital English learning*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
I follow educational blogs and websites for recommendations and reviews	3	21,43%
I attend workshops or conferences to learn about new technologies	2	14,29%
I rely on social media platforms to connect with other language learners and exchange recommendations	2	14,29%
I conduct regular searches on app stores to see what's new and popular	1	7,14%
I find out about new tools through word-of-mouth recommendations from my peers or teachers	0	0,00%
I regularly check updates and announcements from language learning platforms I use	0	0,00%
I stay informed through newsletters or email updates from educational technology companies	0	0,00%
I participate in online forums or groups where users share their experiences and discoveries	1	7,14%
I follow influencers or experts in the language-learning community who often share their favourite tools	5	35,71%
I make use of recommendations from my language school or teacher	0	0,00%

Table Nine presents students' responses about how they stay updated about new digital tools and applications for learning English. Five students (35.71%) confessed that they follow influencers or experts in the language learning community who often share their favourite tools. Besides, three respondents (21.43%) claimed that they follow educational blogs and websites for recommendations and reviews. Meanwhile, two students (14.29%) attend workshops or conferences to learn about new technologies, and two other students rely on social media platforms to connect with other language learners and exchange recommendations. Moreover, one student (7.14%) stated that he conducts regular searches on app stores to see what is new and popular, and one student participates in online forums or groups where users share their experiences and discoveries.

Table Ten presents students' opinions about digital technologies incorporation into English learning.

Table 10. *Students' opinions about digital technologies incorporation into English learning*

Option	Count	Answers (%)
Yes, digital technologies can enhance the learning experience and engage students more effectively	9	69,23%
No, traditional methods are more effective and digital technologies can be distracting	1	7,69%
It depends on the specific digital technologies being used and how they are	1	7,69%

implemented in the learning process		
Also incorporating digital technologies can help students develop important skills for the future	0	0,00%
Not necessarily, the focus should be on building strong foundational skills rather than relying on technology	0	0,00%
As long as digital technologies are used in moderation and complement traditional methods, they can be beneficial	0	0,00%
No, traditional methods have stood the test of time and should remain the primary focus in English learning	0	0,00%
Yes, digital technologies can provide more diverse and engaging learning opportunities for students	0	0,00%
It's important to strike a balance between traditional and digital methods for a well-rounded learning experience	2	15,38%
No, reliance on digital technologies can hinder critical thinking and problem-solving skills	0	0,00%

Students were asked about their opinions on how digital technologies should be incorporated into traditional English learning methods. Table 10 shows that the majority of the respondents (69.23%) believe that digital technologies can enhance the learning experience and engage them more effectively. However, two students (15.38%) see that it is important to strike a balance between traditional and digital methods for a well-rounded learning experience. Meanwhile, one respondent (7.69%) stated that traditional methods are more effective and digital technologies can be distracting, and one student confessed that it depends on the specific digital technologies being used and how they are implemented in the learning process.

Discussion

The results answered the previously stated research questions about the digital knowledge of EFL university students and their attitudes towards the utility of technology applications in their learning. Moreover, the findings supported the hypothesis, that students have little digital knowledge, though they have positive attitudes towards the integration of ICTs in English learning classes.

The overall results of the questionnaire showed that all the students have exposure and experience in using ICTs. Results have noted that the students have reasonable access to DT and the majority confessed that they use DT daily. The study also specified the reasons for using DT, and the results revealed that the majority of students use technology applications weekly to learn and practice the English language.

The current study demonstrates that students have a positive attitude towards using ICT and have an adequate level of DL. All the participants stressed the importance of digital facilities in English language learning.

Asking about their skills in DT use, participants thought they had the fundamental knowledge and competence in using technology for learning. However, the majority of them (10 students out of 13) use their smartphones to learn English rather than other electronic

devices, and they did not mention that they feel comfortable when using DT in learning English. Hence, a need for developing students' digital literacy was defined.

The results are consistent with certain earlier empirical investigations conducted in various circumstances (Mudra 2018; Purmayanti 2022). These studies also studied the integration of digital literacy into teaching and learning activities for EFL learners, as well as how EFL learners perceive its benefits.

The questionnaire showed that all the students have exposure and experience in using social media and that they rely on following influencers or experts in the language learning community who often share their favourite tools in learning English. When it comes to adopting digital tools to improve their English language, university students welcome new technological development and exhibit conscious awareness and positive attitudes.

Pedagogical Implications

Enhancing students' ICT proficiency and digital literacy is essential for their effective performance and improved outcomes in the process of education. Before increasing young people's access to ICTs and ensuring their increased competitiveness in the job market, they must acquire the necessary digital literacy skills.

Very little focus has been placed on methods for developing language learners' digital literacy. Thus, digital technologies such as computers, high-speed internet, online dictionaries, audio-video recorders, video presentations, speakers, and booths equipped with electronics should be included in English language classes to develop students' digital literacy and encourage them to use technology applications in their learning.

The adoption of new technologies was seen by the participants as a developing field. Some students claimed they could quickly catch up with advancements and appeared eager to create new technology in their English language learning programs. Nevertheless, expenses and access restrictions could be challenges.

ICT technologies provide evaluation methods that go beyond standard pen-and-paper assessments. Online quizzes, polls, and interactive games give educators real-time information on student learning progress. This enables fast feedback and modifications to teaching tactics, assuring the best learning outcomes.

Mohamad Razak et al. (2022) highlighted the need to train teachers who lack digital literacy. They suggested two different types of promoting digital literacy strategies from teachers' perspectives namely, teachers' strategies and administrators' strategies. Teachers should ensure the actual use of digital technologies, conduct training workshops, enhance infrastructure, and raise students' digital awareness. Subsequently, the administrators should focus on raising parents' awareness, conducting training workshops, and enhancing the curriculum. Besides, enhancing school infrastructure is a potential strategy to consider.

Mohamad Razak et al. (2022) stated that having a well-equipped technology infrastructure might be a key component of a plan to improve students' digital literacy. It is advised that students use technology to practice their English daily. They should also learn how to effectively use ICTs by holding group discussions to prepare for exams, discussing class assignments, and, most importantly, reducing their reliance on smartphones as their primary means of practicing their language skills.

Conclusion

This research endeavored to examine the digital literacy of EFL students by probing their attitudes, knowledge, and proficiency with digital tools as well as how frequently they used them to learn English. The findings of this study indicate the presence of general positive attitudes towards ICTs among university students. Moreover, students have access to digital resources like smartphones. Nonetheless, there was little usage of computers and other digital tools for educational purposes. This emphasizes the requirement for instructions on how to use the tools that are accessible for digital learning. In conclusion, it can be argued that language education should be improved in light of technological advancements by integrating ICTs with conventional classroom methods. This would help students become more engaged in the rapidly evolving digital world and enhance their digital literacy.

About the Author

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Declaration of AI Refined

This research paper has undergone language correction using the AI-powered tools Grammarly and Scholar AI Chat to address grammatical, spelling, and stylistic errors. It is acknowledged that the use of such tools may introduce standardised patterns typical of AI-generated content. Consequently, a certain percentage of content may reflect AI-generated language structures. Yet, the intellectual content and the analysis remain entirely the work of the authors.

Statement of Absence of Conflict of Interest

The authors mentioned above hereby solemnly declare that they are not and shall not be in any situation that could give rise to a conflict of interest in what concerns the findings and recommendations contained in this academic article.

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