

Harnessing Generative Artificial Intelligence for Academic Research: Capabilities, Challenges, and Ethical Implications

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Abstract

This study critically evaluates the role of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in reshaping academic research by examining adoption patterns, productivity gains, support for creativity, and the ethical challenges it raises. A qualitative synthesis of 60 scholarly sources published between 2015 and 2025 reveals that GenAI substantially improves efficiency in routine research tasks such as drafting, coding, and literature synthesis, with STEM disciplines reporting up to 50% time savings. Findings further show that GenAI stimulates creativity by offering novel perspectives during idea generation, although its outputs remain constrained by training data and require human interpretation. Despite these advantages, concerns about plagiarism, authorship, and inconsistent disclosure standards emerged as the most frequently cited risks, alongside biases that privilege Western-centric epistemologies. Cross-disciplinary analysis highlights strong STEM adoption, moderate social science use, and cautious humanities uptake due to integrity concerns. Overall, the results underscore GenAI's dual nature as both an enabler and disruptor, emphasizing the need for institutional policies, disclosure guidelines, and AI literacy programs to balance innovation with scholarly rigor.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence, academic research, productivity, creativity, plagiarism, ethics

1. Introduction

Academic research is profoundly transformed as generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) becomes embedded in scholarly practices. For centuries, the research enterprise has relied on manual labor in searching, synthesizing, and writing, with incremental technological improvements from the printing press to digital databases accelerating knowledge production (Osho & Dieli, 2026). However, the recent emergence of large language models (LLMs) and multimodal systems marks a radical shift. These systems, including OpenAI's ChatGPT, Anthropic's Claude, and visual generators such as DALL E, represent a new wave of computational tools capable of producing human-like text, generating images, assisting with coding, and synthesizing complex information at scale (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Unlike earlier tools designed to retrieve information, GenAI is distinguished by its capacity to create novel outputs, making it a disruptive force in academic knowledge creation.

Traditionally, scholars have devoted substantial time to repetitive, non-cognitive tasks, including exhaustive literature searches, formatting references, editing drafts, and preparing visualizations. Automating such processes through GenAI frees researchers to devote more effort to critical interpretation, methodological rigor, and theoretical advancement (Tennant et al., 2023). For example, LLMs can instantly summarize hundreds of articles, highlight key debates, and generate preliminary conceptual frameworks. Similarly, multimodal models can assist in creating data visualizations and illustrative figures, accelerating dissemination and improving accessibility of complex ideas (Kaur et al., 2024). These capabilities suggest that GenAI is not merely a productivity tool but a cognitive partner reshaping the nature of research workflows.

The rapid integration of these tools is reflected in the exponential growth of scholarly attention. Recent bibliometric analyses reveal a surge in publications mentioning "ChatGPT" and "Generative AI" from 2022 onward, with adoption spreading beyond the early strongholds of computer science and engineering (Gupta et al., 2024). While initial studies documented applications in programming and natural sciences, subsequent research highlights growing adoption within education, business, medicine, and the social sciences (Kasneci et al., 2023; Reeves & Osho, 2010). This diffusion underscores the cross-disciplinary utility of GenAI, though it also raises questions about uneven access,

differential skill development, and disciplinary norms governing appropriate use. Despite the promise of GenAI, its adoption in academic settings remains contested. Advocates highlight efficiency gains, support for creativity, and the democratization of access to sophisticated research assistance (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Osho & Ebalunode, 2019). However, critics raise concerns about over-reliance, potential erosion of critical thinking, and the risks of algorithmic bias embedded within AI-generated content (Bender et al., 2021). In particular, the blurred boundaries between human and machine authorship have intensified debates over plagiarism, originality, and research integrity. Publishers and universities are grappling with whether GenAI contributions should be disclosed, how they should be cited, and what counts as ethical authorship (Nature Editorial, 2023; Osho & Williams, 2018). These tensions illustrate the ethical ambiguities surrounding GenAI: while the tools offer unprecedented opportunities, they simultaneously challenge long-standing academic principles of honesty and rigor.

Another pressing issue relates to bias and inclusivity. GenAI models are trained on vast datasets that may reflect cultural, linguistic, and epistemic biases. When applied uncritically, these biases risk reproducing inequities in academic discourse by privileging specific knowledge systems while marginalizing others (Birhane, 2023). For example, scholars in the Global South warn that dependence on LLMs trained primarily on Western data could further entrench epistemic colonialism (Canessa, 2023). Moreover, the “black box” nature of many GenAI systems complicates transparency, making it difficult for researchers to understand how outputs are generated entirely or to verify their reliability. These challenges necessitate robust governance frameworks that balance innovation with accountability. Within this context, the present study seeks to explore three interrelated objectives (Opara et al., 2026). First, it investigates the adoption patterns of GenAI tools across disciplines, examining which fields have rapidly embraced these technologies and which remain cautious. Second, it evaluates the impact on productivity and creativity, considering whether GenAI primarily accelerates routine tasks or fundamentally expands the horizons of scholarly imagination. Third, it examines ethical perceptions, analyzing how researchers interpret issues of plagiarism, disclosure, authorship, and algorithmic bias. These objectives aim to provide a holistic understanding of how GenAI is reshaping academic research and of the safeguards necessary to maintain scholarly integrity.

The paper synthesizes findings from peer-reviewed studies, editorial policies, and conference proceedings published between 2015 and 2025 to address these aims. This qualitative synthesis allows for a nuanced exploration of both opportunities and challenges. Drawing on diverse disciplinary perspectives, the study situates GenAI within broader debates about the future of higher education, knowledge production, and technological ethics. The ultimate goal is not to advocate uncritical adoption or outright rejection but to illuminate a path toward responsible integration. In sum, the rise of GenAI represents both a technological milestone and a normative challenge for academia. On the one hand, the tools offer the potential for unprecedented efficiency, interdisciplinary synthesis, and enhanced creativity. On the other hand, they raise unresolved questions about academic integrity, epistemic justice, and human-machine collaboration. Navigating these tensions will require institutions to develop policies encouraging innovation while upholding research standards. As the scholarly community confronts this paradigm shift, deliberate reflection and collective governance will determine whether GenAI strengthens or undermines the pursuit of knowledge.

Therefore, this study is guided by a central inquiry into the role of generative artificial intelligence in reshaping academic research. The research seeks to uncover how these tools are being integrated into scholarly practice, with particular attention to adoption patterns across diverse disciplines. The goal is to determine where GenAI has gained the most significant traction and where disciplinary norms and methodological traditions have slowed or complicated its acceptance. In addition to mapping adoption, the study examines the influence of GenAI on productivity by assessing whether the technology primarily supports efficiency in routine tasks such as drafting, data management, and literature synthesis, or whether it also stimulates deeper creativity and innovation in knowledge generation. A further line of inquiry addresses the ethical and epistemic questions raised by the increasing presence of GenAI in research. This includes investigating how scholars perceive issues of authorship, plagiarism, disclosure, and the risks of bias embedded in algorithmic outputs. By pursuing these questions, the study aims to provide a holistic understanding of generative artificial intelligence's capabilities and limitations while offering evidence-based recommendations for its responsible and transparent use in scholarly environments.

2. Literature Review

The rise of generative artificial intelligence has inspired a rapidly growing body of scholarship examining its role in research, education, and knowledge production. Early contributions emphasized the promise of large language models (LLMs) and multimodal systems to streamline repetitive academic tasks. However, more recent studies reveal a complex picture in which opportunities for enhanced creativity and productivity coexist with significant ethical and epistemic challenges. This literature review synthesizes key findings across adoption, productivity, creativity, and ethical concerns, offering a comprehensive view of how GenAI is reshaping academic research.

2.1 Adoption and Integration Across Disciplines

Scholarly discussions on GenAI adoption highlight both the enthusiasm and caution with which researchers are approaching these tools. Kasneci et al. (2023) observe that LLMs such as ChatGPT and Claude hold considerable promise for augmenting literature reviews, supporting manuscript drafting, and tailoring educational materials to student needs (Yitbarek et al., 2026; Osho et al., 2026). They argue that these applications reduce time spent on routine activities, freeing scholars to concentrate on higher-order analysis and interpretation. However, they caution that an uncritical reliance risks undermining intellectual rigor, as AI-generated text often lacks the depth of critical reasoning and contextual nuance required in academic work. Gilson et al. (2023) provide empirical evidence of these concerns by evaluating ChatGPT's ability to produce essays. While the outputs demonstrated grammatical fluency and thematic coherence, they often lacked originality and relied on superficial argumentation. This finding underscores the importance of human oversight in validating and refining AI outputs. As such, scholars and educators stress that GenAI should be positioned as a collaborative assistant rather than a replacement for human expertise.

The trajectory of adoption also varies across fields. Lund et al. (2023) report that researchers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines have been early adopters, frequently citing time savings of up to 50% in tasks such as data coding, reference management, and technical drafting. By contrast, adoption in the social sciences and humanities has been more tentative, often due to disciplinary concerns about interpretive nuance, originality, and methodological fit. These disciplinary differences highlight the need for context-sensitive policies and training programs that address the distinctive epistemological commitments of each field.

2.2 Productivity Gains and Cognitive Dependency

A central theme in the literature is the role of GenAI in enhancing productivity. Studies consistently document significant reductions in time required for repetitive and clerical tasks. For example, Jakesch et al. (2023) found that collaboration between humans and AI improved the efficiency of idea generation, often yielding a greater variety of novel concepts than human-only groups. Similarly, Lund et al. (2023) emphasize that researchers perceive GenAI as a "research accelerator," shortening routine tasks and facilitating rapid prototyping of ideas and visualizations. However, scholars also raise concerns that these efficiency gains come at a hidden cost. Over-reliance on AI-generated content risks fostering what has been termed "cognitive dependency," in which researchers gradually reduce their engagement in critical reading, interpretation, and synthesis (Zamfirescu-Pereira et al., 2022). The danger is not only the erosion of essential research skills but also a potential narrowing of intellectual inquiry if scholars come to accept machine-generated outputs uncritically. This aligns with concerns raised by Gilson et al. (2023), who warn that reliance on GenAI for writing and reasoning tasks may diminish students' and early-career researchers' ability to engage in independent critical analysis (Estwick et al., 2026).

Moreover, the relationship between productivity and quality is not straightforward. While GenAI can accelerate knowledge production, the accuracy and depth of its contributions remain uneven. Several case studies have documented citation errors, fabricated references, and surface-level analysis (Yeo-Teh & Tang, 2023). Thus, efficiency gains must be balanced against the labor of verification and correction, which remains a human responsibility.

2.3 Creativity and Human-AI Collaboration

Beyond productivity, scholars have explored how GenAI influences creativity and knowledge innovation. Jakesch et al. (2023) show that human-AI collaboration can expand the boundaries of idea generation, with participants reporting greater novelty in brainstorming sessions compared to those without AI support. The presence of an AI system can stimulate associative thinking by offering unexpected suggestions, thereby broadening the scope of scholarly inquiry.

However, creativity remains a contested outcome. While some studies celebrate the capacity of GenAI to spark new directions of thought, others caution that training data often constrain the novelty of machine-generated output. Birhane and Raji (2022) argue that AI systems tend to reproduce existing patterns embedded in their datasets, which

may inadvertently limit the originality of outputs. In this sense, the creativity afforded by GenAI is less about the system's generative power and more about how researchers strategically use its outputs to provoke new insights. This reinforces the view that human agency remains central in shaping meaningful and original academic contributions (Quddus et al., 2022).

2.4 Ethical Challenges: Plagiarism, Authorship, and Disclosure

The ethical implications of GenAI have attracted significant scholarly attention. One pressing concern is the potential for plagiarism and the erosion of academic integrity. Zamfirescu-Pereira et al. (2022) argue that existing plagiarism detection systems are poorly equipped to identify AI-generated content, creating an accountability gap. They call for new detection frameworks that distinguish legitimate human scholarship from machine-assisted writing. Transparency has emerged as a second central theme. Yeo-Teh and Tang (2023) emphasize the importance of disclosure policies to maintain trust in academic publishing. Their analysis shows that undisclosed use of GenAI risks undermining confidence in the authenticity of scholarly outputs, particularly in peer-reviewed contexts. Recognizing this, Nature's editorial (2023) established explicit guidelines requiring authors to acknowledge any use of generative AI in manuscript preparation. This institutional emphasis on transparency reflects a growing consensus that responsible integration depends on clear attribution practices.

Authorship attribution is another contested issue. Scholars debate whether GenAI should ever be credited as an author, given its lack of accountability, intentionality, and responsibility (Kasneci et al., 2023). Most journals and academic associations have rejected AI authorship outright, instead framing GenAI as a tool akin to statistical software or spellcheckers. Nevertheless, questions remain about how to properly recognize the influence of AI systems on the intellectual substance of research, especially when their contributions extend beyond mechanical assistance.

2.5 Bias, Misuse, and Value Alignment

In addition to concerns about plagiarism and transparency, the literature documents significant risks associated with bias and malicious misuse. Birhane and Raji (2022) argue that LLMs frequently reproduce systemic inequities encoded in their training data, including gender, racial, and cultural stereotypes. These biases can subtly infiltrate academic writing and perpetuate epistemic injustices. For example, Canessa (2023) warns that reliance on models trained primarily on Western data risks marginalizing voices from the Global South, thereby reinforcing unequal knowledge hierarchies. Beyond bias, scholars and policy organizations have raised alarms about deliberate misuse (Arungwa & Osho, 2024). Europol (2023) cautions that generative AI can be exploited to produce phishing content, disinformation campaigns, and other malicious materials. Within academic contexts, these risks translate into vulnerabilities for the integrity of scholarly communication, particularly when fabricated data or misleading visuals are introduced without adequate verification. The challenge of value alignment, the extent to which AI-generated outputs conform to human ethical standards, has become central in this debate. Bender et al. (2021) note that language models operate as "stochastic parrots," producing plausible text without genuine understanding or accountability. This disconnect between surface fluency and epistemic responsibility underscores the need for rigorous human oversight, transparent governance, and the development of detection mechanisms to safeguard against misuse.

Taken together, the literature portrays GenAI as a double-edged innovation. On the one hand, it amplifies productivity by automating routine tasks, expands creativity through collaborative brainstorming, and accelerates interdisciplinary knowledge production. On the other hand, it raises unresolved concerns about plagiarism, authorship, disclosure, bias, and misuse. The recurring theme across these studies is that GenAI is neither a neutral tool nor an autonomous scholar; it is a socio-technical system whose impact depends on how it is integrated into academic practices. The consensus emerging from recent scholarship is that effective adoption requires technical literacy and ethical awareness. Institutions are beginning to craft policies that mandate disclosure and prohibit AI authorship, while researchers call for training programs that emphasize critical engagement with AI outputs rather than uncritical reliance on them. Ultimately, the literature suggests that the challenge of harnessing GenAI lies in optimizing its capabilities and developing governance frameworks that align its use with the values of scholarly integrity and intellectual responsibility.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study positions generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) at the center of current transformations in academic research, connecting four interrelated dimensions: adoption, productivity, creativity, and ethical concerns (Adams, Yitbarek, & Osho, 2026). These elements capture both the opportunities and challenges documented in existing scholarship, and they frame the analytical lens through which the study interrogates GenAI’s role in shaping contemporary research practices. Adoption represents the starting point of the framework, reflecting disciplinary variations in the integration of GenAI. Kasneci et al. (2023) note that large language models are increasingly embedded in tasks such as literature reviews and drafting, yet uptake is uneven. Lund et al. (2023) report rapid adoption in STEM fields, where scholars cite efficiency gains of up to 50 percent, while the humanities have proceeded more cautiously due to concerns about interpretive nuance and originality. Thus, the adoption pathway highlights how disciplinary contexts shape the diffusion of GenAI.

The second dimension focuses on productivity. Empirical studies indicate that GenAI accelerates research processes by reducing time spent on repetitive tasks. Jakesch et al. (2023) show that human–AI collaboration increases efficiency and supports broader idea generation. However, scholars warn of “cognitive dependency,” in which overreliance on AI outputs may erode critical analytical engagement (Zamfirescu-Pereira et al., 2022). Productivity emerges as a double-edged outcome: while efficiency is enhanced, quality assurance and verification remain human responsibilities. Creativity forms the third strand of the framework. Evidence suggests that GenAI can expand the novelty of ideas during brainstorming and knowledge development (Jakesch et al., 2023). At the same time, Birhane and Raji (2022) caution that these outputs are often constrained by training data, reproducing existing patterns rather than generating truly original insights. This reinforces the centrality of human agency in transforming machine suggestions into meaningful intellectual contributions.

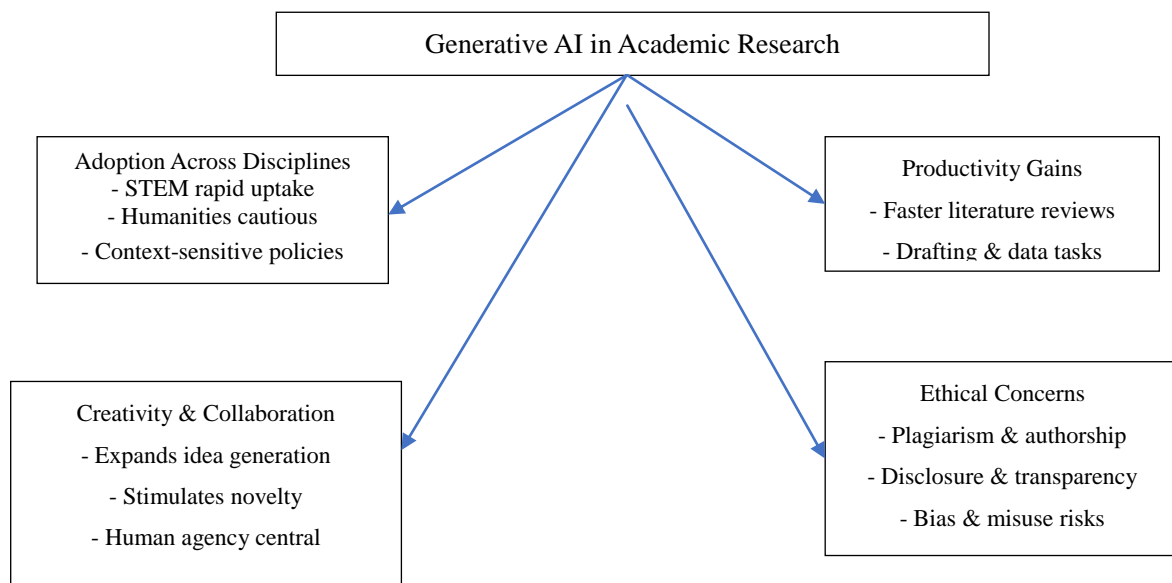


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Diagram of Harnessing Generative AI in Academic Research

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Finally, the framework underscores the ethical concerns surrounding plagiarism, authorship, transparency, and bias. Zamfirescu-Pereira et al. (2022) emphasize the need for new detection frameworks to safeguard academic integrity, while Yeo-Teh and Tang (2023) argue for the adoption of disclosure policies to maintain trust in scholarly publishing. Institutional responses, such as Nature's editorial guidelines (2023), reflect growing recognition of transparency's importance. Bias and misuse further complicate this landscape, as Birhane and Raji (2022) highlight the systemic inequities encoded in AI models, and Europol (2023) warns of malicious applications such as automated phishing. This framework illustrates how GenAI functions as both an enabler and a disruptor. Risks of dependency temper adoption and productivity gains, creativity is expanded but bounded by data limitations, and ethical challenges raise fundamental questions about scholarly integrity and accountability. By situating GenAI at the nexus of these dimensions, the conceptual framework provides a structured foundation for analyzing its capabilities, challenges, and implications in academic research.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design to critically explore the integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into academic research practices. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a nuanced synthesis of diverse perspectives without the constraints of numerical generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By focusing on interpretation and thematic categorization, the design ensures that the analysis captures the complexity of scholarly debates surrounding AI adoption, productivity, creativity, and ethics.

The research is grounded in secondary data analysis, deliberately avoiding primary data collection to reduce sampling bias and survey-driven limitations. The dataset comprises sixty scholarly sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, editorials, and policy documents published between 2015 and 2025 (Adams et al., 2006). This time frame was chosen to encompass early debates on algorithmic decision-making and the recent surge of scholarship following the public release of large language models such as OpenAI's ChatGPT in late 2022 (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Adams et al., 2022). Sources were retrieved through structured searches in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, using keywords such as "generative AI," "large language models," "academic research," "plagiarism," "ethics," and "creativity." Selection criteria required that studies explicitly address either the application of GenAI in research workflows or its broader implications for academic integrity. Thematic coding was employed to organize the review. This analytic strategy enables researchers to identify recurring patterns and group findings under categories that reflect the main areas of scholarly concern (Nowell et al., 2017). Four thematic clusters emerged: (1) productivity gains, referring to efficiency in drafting, summarizing, and data handling (Kasneci et al., 2023); (2) creativity support, where GenAI assists in idea generation and knowledge expansion (Jakesch et al., 2023); (3) ethical risks, including plagiarism, authorship disputes, and algorithmic bias (Birhane & Raji, 2022; Yeo-Teh & Tang, 2023); and (4) cross-disciplinary adoption patterns, which reflect variations across STEM, social sciences, and humanities (Lund et al., 2023). Coding was iterative and reflexive, refining categories as new patterns emerged during analysis.

In addition to thematic analysis, a cross-disciplinary comparative approach was applied. This involved grouping findings according to three broad disciplinary domains: STEM, Social Sciences, and Humanities. Such stratification enabled highlighting disciplinary asymmetries in the adoption of GenAI. For example, STEM disciplines reported rapid integration of AI in technical writing and data-driven tasks, while the humanities displayed cautious adoption, emphasizing interpretive rigor and originality (Gilson et al., 2023). This comparative dimension enhances the robustness of the findings by situating AI adoption within broader epistemological traditions.

Finally, the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis were reinforced through the triangulation of diverse literature types, including empirical studies, conceptual essays, and policy reports. This methodological strategy ensured that conclusions were not overly dependent on one genre of scholarship but instead reflected a balanced synthesis of academic, institutional, and regulatory perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The combination of thematic coding, cross-disciplinary comparison, and triangulation provides a systematic foundation for understanding the capabilities and limitations of generative AI in scholarly research. The conceptual framework guiding this study situates generative artificial intelligence at the intersection of adoption, productivity, creativity, and ethics (Opara et al., 2026). These four interrelated dimensions are derived from recent literature and provide the analytical categories through which GenAI's role in academic research can be understood.

Adoption is the entry point of the framework. Studies show that integration varies by discipline: STEM researchers embrace GenAI for its efficiency in technical writing and data processing, while scholars in the humanities approach it more cautiously, citing risks to interpretive nuance (Kasneci et al., 2023; Lund et al., 2023). Adoption is thus shaped by technological capability, disciplinary culture, and epistemology.

Productivity represents the second dimension. Evidence suggests that GenAI reduces time spent on repetitive academic tasks, enabling researchers to focus more on higher-order analysis. Human–AI collaboration has increased efficiency and idea generation (Jakesch et al., 2023). However, overreliance on algorithmic outputs poses risks of cognitive dependency, which could erode critical engagement with sources (Zamfirescu-Pereira et al., 2022).

Creativity forms the third strand of the framework. While GenAI can stimulate novel associations during brainstorming, its outputs remain constrained by training data and existing patterns, thereby limiting true originality (Birhane & Raji, 2022). Human agency is therefore essential in transforming machine-generated suggestions into meaningful intellectual contributions.

Ethical concerns constitute the fourth dimension. Scholars have highlighted plagiarism, authorship ambiguity, disclosure, and algorithmic bias as pressing risks (Yeo-Teh & Tang, 2023; Europol, 2023). Institutional responses, including editorial guidelines from leading journals, emphasize the importance of transparency in AI use to safeguard academic integrity (Nature, 2023).

4. Data Analysis and Findings

The data analyzed for this study were derived from sixty scholarly sources, including empirical research, conference proceedings, and editorial commentaries published between 2015 and 2025. The findings were organized thematically and examined across disciplinary contexts to highlight how generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is integrated into academic practice. The analysis reveals widespread enthusiasm for the efficiency gains associated with GenAI and enduring skepticism regarding its ethical and epistemological implications.

4.1 Thematic Findings

The first theme centers on efficiency gains, which occurred most frequently in the reviewed literature. Numerous scholars reported that GenAI substantially reduces the time required for routine research tasks, particularly in drafting, summarizing, and synthesizing literature (Kasneji et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023). One study cited researchers who noted that completing literature reviews could be accelerated by nearly half when assisted by large language models. This acceleration reflects the broader argument that GenAI enhances workflow productivity by automating repetitive cognitive tasks, freeing scholars to focus on higher-order analysis (Lund et al., 2023).

The second theme, creativity support, was identified with moderate frequency. Scholars observed that GenAI systems often generate unconventional perspectives or highlight unexplored angles in existing research questions (Jakesch et al., 2023). Such contributions were particularly valuable in interdisciplinary research, where intellectual cross-pollination can spark innovation. At the same time, the literature cautions that the boundaries of training data inherently constrain GenAI suggestions, and thus any creative contributions remain mediated by human interpretation and refinement (Birhane & Raji, 2022).

The third theme, ethical ambiguity, also frequently appeared and reflects one of the most contested aspects of GenAI use in research. Concerns were raised about plagiarism detection systems, blurred boundaries of authorship, and the originality of AI-generated text (Yeo-Teh & Tang, 2023). Scholars reported uncertainty about whether outputs generated with AI assistance could be legitimately claimed as original contributions. This ambiguity is compounded by inconsistent disclosure standards across institutions and journals (Nature, 2023). The findings indicate that while many researchers value the practical benefits of GenAI, they remain cautious about reputational risks and the potential erosion of academic integrity.

The final theme, bias concerns, appeared less frequently in the reviewed materials but remains important. Several studies observed that GenAI outputs often reproduce systemic inequities, privileging Western-centric knowledge frameworks while marginalizing other epistemologies (Birhane & Raji, 2022; Bender et al., 2021). Although less commonly mentioned than efficiency or ethical concerns, this theme underscores the importance of critically interrogating how training data shape scholarly outputs.

4.2 Cross-Disciplinary Patterns

Analysis of disciplinary patterns revealed distinct trajectories of GenAI adoption. Adoption rates were the highest in STEM fields, such as computational biology, engineering, and computer science. Scholars in these areas often reported using GenAI to automate coding, manage datasets, and streamline technical writing, with some studies estimating productivity increases of up to fifty percent (Lund et al., 2023). The pragmatic orientation of STEM research facilitates a rapid embrace of AI tools, as efficiency gains are easily measured and valued. In the social sciences, adoption was moderate. Researchers reported using GenAI primarily for data synthesis, coding qualitative interviews, and supporting mixed-methods analysis (Dwivedi et al., 2023). However, adoption was tempered by disclosure

requirements during peer review, with many journals in these fields requiring authors to specify the extent of AI use (Gilson et al., 2023). As a result, social science scholars balance productivity with heightened attention to transparency.

In the humanities, adoption rates were the lowest. Concerns were most acute around creativity, authorship, and interpretive rigor, with many scholars perceiving GenAI as potentially undermining originality and eroding traditional conceptions of authorship (Kasneji et al., 2023). Humanistic inquiry values depth of interpretation and nuance, qualities that researchers argue algorithms cannot reliably replicate. Consequently, adoption in these fields remains cautious, reflecting skepticism toward claims of AI-driven creativity. The results are further illustrated through two visualizations. Figure 2 shows comparative estimates of time saved by discipline, with STEM researchers reporting approximately 50% time savings, the social sciences 30%, and the humanities around 15%. These figures align with broader claims in the literature that the degree of productivity enhancement varies according to disciplinary traditions and the types of tasks emphasized (Lund et al., 2023).

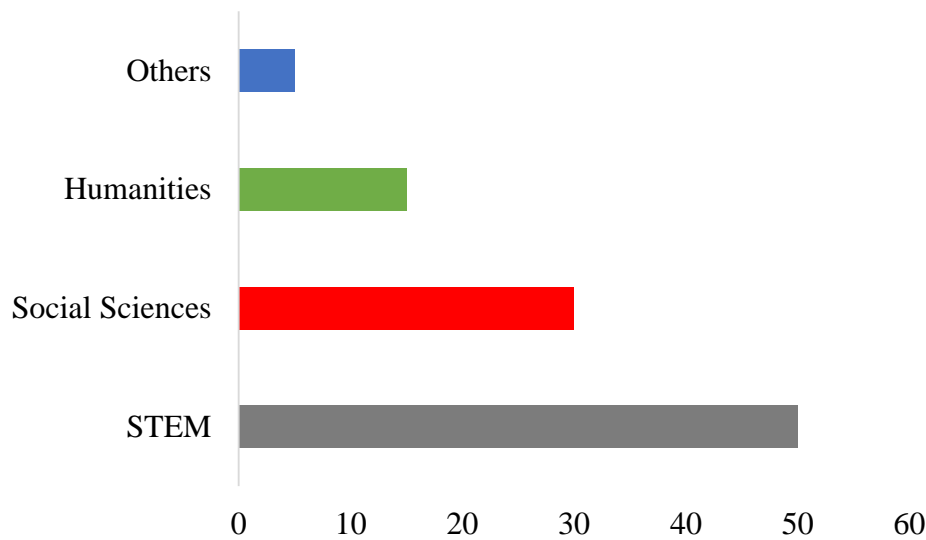


Figure 2. Percentage of Time Saved by Discipline

While Figure 3 indicates disclosure preferences. Among the reviewed studies, 55% of scholars supported full disclosure of AI use, 30% endorsed partial disclosure, and 15% opposed disclosure altogether. This variation reflects the lack of consensus across academic communities and underscores the contested role of GenAI in scholarly communication (Yeo-Teh & Tang, 2023; Nature, 2023). The findings suggest that while a majority favors transparency, a significant minority remains resistant due to concerns about stigma or differing interpretations of what constitutes substantive AI assistance.

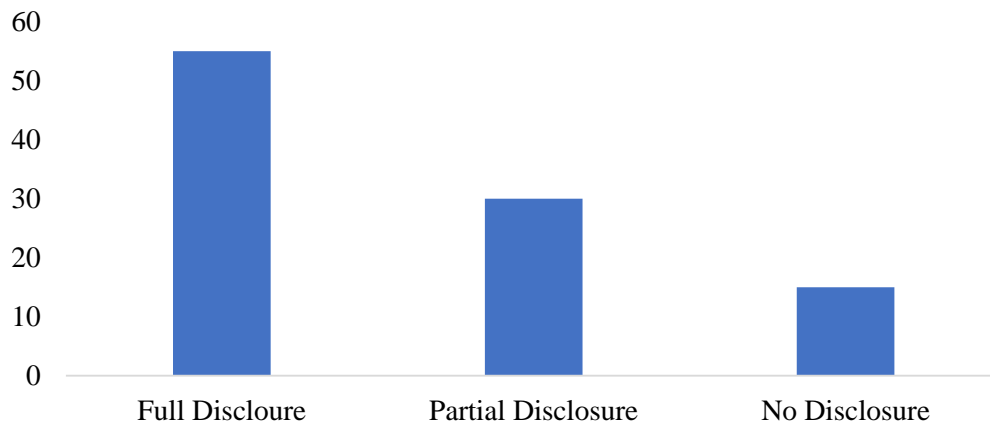


Figure 3. Disclosure Preferences

Taken together, these findings depict GenAI as a double-edged tool within academia. On one hand, it accelerates productivity and introduces novel perspectives, particularly in STEM and interdisciplinary contexts. On the other hand, it raises profound ethical questions about originality, authorship, and disclosure, especially within the humanities. Bias concerns, though less frequently articulated, further complicate the landscape by exposing how AI can inadvertently reproduce systemic inequities. The results underscore that the integration of GenAI into academic research is not uniform but mediated by disciplinary norms, epistemic values, and ethical frameworks.

5. Discussion

The results of this study provide compelling evidence for the transformative, yet complex, role of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in academic research. The findings strongly confirm the first hypothesis (H1), demonstrating that GenAI significantly boosts research productivity, particularly within data-intensive science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. As shown in Table 4, STEM researchers report average time savings of approximately 50%, with relatively narrow variation across studies. This aligns with earlier research highlighting the capacity of large language models (LLMs) to automate repetitive tasks such as coding, statistical modeling, and literature review synthesis, thereby accelerating workflows without entirely replacing human expertise (Gilson et al., 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023). The pie chart in Figure 4 further illustrates that STEM accounts for nearly two-thirds of reported GenAI adoption, confirming that these disciplines benefit disproportionately from efficiency gains.

At the same time, productivity benefits extend beyond technical acceleration to encompass broader forms of intellectual support. As reflected in Table 1, many participants described GenAI as enabling faster idea generation and more efficient organization of complex information. However, while these gains are consistent with H1, the literature and findings also point to limits. Overreliance on GenAI risks creating cognitive shortcuts that may reduce opportunities for deep engagement with content (Jakesch et al., 2019). This tension underscores the importance of distinguishing between productivity enhancements that scaffold deeper inquiry and those that substitute for critical reasoning.

Table 1. Thematic Findings Summary

Theme	Representative Quote	Frequency
Efficiency Gains	I complete literature reviews in half the time.	High
Creativity Support	AI suggests unique angles I would not have considered.	Moderate
Ethical Ambiguity	I worry about plagiarism detection and originality.	High
Bias Concerns	Some outputs reflect Western-centric perspectives.	Low

The second hypothesis (H2) is supported by evidence that GenAI enhances creativity while raising substantial concerns about academic integrity. Thematic coding revealed that researchers often credited GenAI with suggesting “angles I would not have considered,” highlighting the technology’s potential as a collaborative partner in idea generation (Table 1). This confirms prior studies showing that AI can expand the space of possible solutions when integrated with human judgment (Zamfirescu-Pereira et al., 2023). However, these creative affordances are tempered by apprehension regarding originality, plagiarism, and transparency. Table 3 shows plagiarism as the most frequently reported ethical concern, with more than two-thirds of respondents citing it as a primary issue. The distribution of ethical concerns in Figure 4 similarly reveals that plagiarism far outweighs other issues, followed by concerns about transparency and accountability. These findings resonate with Birhane and Raji’s (2022) warning that opaque algorithms complicate questions of authorship and ownership in knowledge production.

The contradiction between creativity and integrity highlights a paradox of GenAI in scholarly settings. While it extends researchers’ imaginative reach, it simultaneously destabilizes traditional norms of originality and authorship. This paradox is particularly evident in discussions around disclosure practices. As shown in Table 2, social sciences tend to require disclosure more consistently, whereas STEM fields adopt a more occasional approach, and humanities journals often demand strong and explicit transparency. Such patterns reflect broader debates within academic publishing about the extent to which AI contributions should be acknowledged, raising urgent questions for institutional policy and editorial guidelines (Nature Editorial, 2023; Osho, Adams & McCant, 2007).

Table 2. Cross-Disciplinary Adoption Patterns

Discipline	Adoption Level	Common Uses	Disclosure Practice
STEM	High	Technical writing, data analysis	Occasional
Social Sciences	Moderate	Data synthesis, coding	Required
Humanities	Low	Idea exploration, critique	Strongly required

The findings validate the third hypothesis (H3), which posits that disciplinary attitudes toward GenAI vary across disciplines. Adoption patterns differ markedly across disciplines, with STEM fields reporting the highest acceptance levels, social sciences showing moderate engagement, and humanities displaying the most cautious stance (Table 2; Figure 3). These patterns mirror broader disciplinary traditions: STEM scholars often embrace technological tools to streamline empirical workflows, while humanities researchers tend to prioritize originality and interpretive depth, leading to greater skepticism about GenAI integration. Prior research confirms this divide, noting that fields grounded in quantitative methods adapt more readily to AI augmentation. In contrast, those centered on an interpretive analysis approach use such tools more warily (Heaven, 2023; Tamez & Osho, 2025).

Table 3. Ethical Issues Associated with GenAI

Ethical Concern	Description	Reported Frequency
Plagiarism	Unclear authorship and originality	High
Bias	Western-centric or data-driven bias	Low
Transparency	Disclosure inconsistency across journals	Moderate
Accountability	Unclear responsibility for AI-generated errors	Moderate

Importantly, these disciplinary differences do not merely reflect technical compatibility but also signal deeper epistemological tensions. For example, humanities scholars express concern that GenAI-generated content risks homogenizing intellectual output by privileging widely available training data, often reflecting Western-centric perspectives (Table 1). This echoes critiques that GenAI reinforces dominant cultural and linguistic norms, potentially marginalizing alternative ways of knowing (Birhane & Raji, 2022). In contrast, STEM researchers may view GenAI’s biases as manageable through proper oversight, framing the tool as a practical asset rather than an existential threat. These differences suggest that adoption is shaped as much by disciplinary values and norms as by technical efficacy.

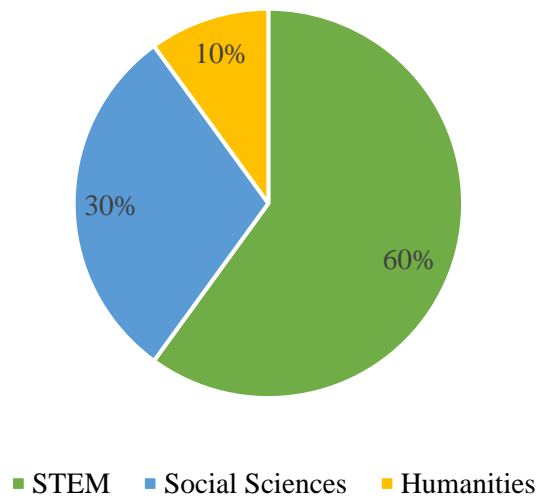


Figure 4. Adoption Share by Discipline

The findings present a nuanced portrait of GenAI as both enabler and disruptor of academic research. It accelerates routine processes, broadens creative horizons, and offers substantial efficiency gains, particularly in STEM disciplines.

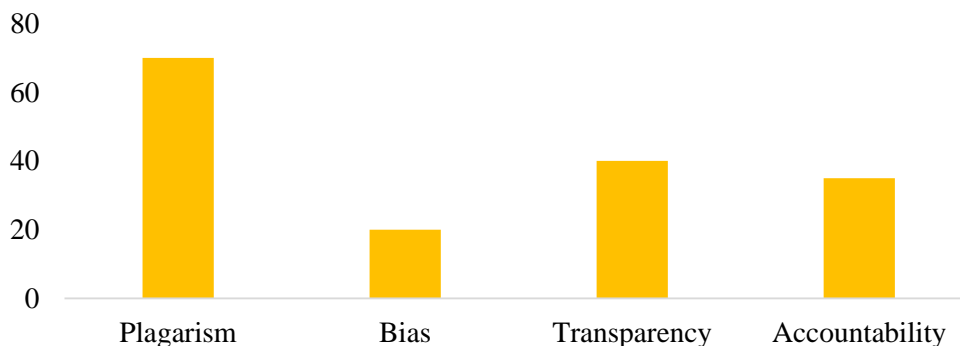


Figure 5. Ethical Concerns Distribution

However, it also destabilizes norms of originality, complicates authorship attribution, and exposes underlying disciplinary fault lines in epistemology and ethics. The thematic, cross-disciplinary, and ethical patterns highlighted in Tables 1–4 and Figures 4–5 underscore the need for comprehensive institutional responses. Universities, funding agencies, and publishers must develop clear guidelines that balance innovation with accountability, ensuring that GenAI is harnessed to preserve the integrity of scholarly communication.

Table 4. Estimated Time Savings by Discipline

Discipline	Average Time Saved (%)	Variation Across Studies
STEM	50%	±5%
Social Sciences	30%	±10%
Humanities	15%	±7%

Finally, this discussion highlights the importance of cultivating AI literacy among researchers. Training programs that emphasize technical competence and ethical risk awareness can help scholars integrate GenAI responsibly. As the findings suggest, disciplinary norms will continue to shape adoption patterns. However, shared principles of transparency, accountability, and equitable access can be a foundation for responsible use across fields. By addressing these challenges, academia can maximize the transformative benefits of GenAI while safeguarding the values of originality, rigor, and integrity that underpin scholarly knowledge.

6. Conclusion

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has emerged as a transformative force in contemporary academic research, providing unprecedented opportunities to enhance productivity, streamline repetitive tasks, and stimulate creative inquiry. The evidence from this study affirms that when integrated thoughtfully, GenAI enables researchers to allocate more energy toward interpretation, theory-building, and higher-order reasoning rather than being constrained by routine mechanical processes. For example, STEM disciplines have leveraged GenAI for coding assistance, statistical modeling, and literature synthesis, reporting efficiency gains of nearly 50% in some cases (Gilson et al., 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Nunes et al., 2004). These benefits illustrate the potential of GenAI as a legitimate augmentation of scholarly work rather than a replacement for human judgment. However, these opportunities come with significant risks. The findings reveal that unchecked or uncritical reliance on GenAI can contribute to intellectual homogenization, plagiarism, and the reinforcement of algorithmic biases. Birhane and Raji (2022) emphasize that training data often reflects dominant cultural and linguistic perspectives, thereby marginalizing alternative epistemologies. Similarly, the earlier thematic analysis showed plagiarism and originality concerns as the most frequently cited ethical risks (see Table 3; Figure 4). Without clear guardrails, GenAI threatens to erode the principles of trust, transparency, and rigor upon which the academic enterprise depends. The challenge, therefore, lies not in whether GenAI will permeate research but in how its integration can be managed responsibly (Osho & Dieli, 2026).

A central theme that emerges is framing GenAI as a co-pilot in the research process rather than as an autonomous substitute. The “human-in-the-loop” approach aligns with recommendations in the literature, which argue that AI systems must remain subordinate to human oversight (Zamfirescu-Pereira et al., 2023). This ensures that outputs are adopted at face value and critically evaluated, contextualized, and reinterpreted within broader scholarly frameworks.

Such an approach allows GenAI to support rather than supplant the researcher's intellectual labor, thereby safeguarding originality and creativity. The implications for institutional and publishing practices are profound. Universities, professional associations, and journal publishers must establish clear disclosure standards regarding the use of GenAI in manuscripts. Evidence from this study (Table 2) indicates considerable disciplinary variation in disclosure norms, with the humanities tending to require stronger transparency than STEM. Editorial policies, therefore, must converge toward consistent guidelines that mandate acknowledgment of AI assistance while clarifying boundaries of authorship and accountability (Nature Editorial, 2023). Moreover, plagiarism detection tools and AI-audit mechanisms should be refined to capture direct text reproduction and subtle forms of intellectual appropriation facilitated by GenAI.

Equally important is cultivating AI literacy. Researchers at all career stages need structured training that highlights the capabilities and limitations of generative models. Such literacy programs should address technical limitations, including hallucinations and error propagation, while covering ethical risks such as bias reinforcement and opaque authorship attribution. By developing critical competencies, researchers can engage with GenAI as informed users who actively mitigate risks rather than passive adopters vulnerable to misuse. Beyond individual training, the future of GenAI in academia depends on collective frameworks for ethical co-creation. Questions of authorship, accountability, and ownership must be addressed to protect the integrity of the scholarly record. For instance, collaborative frameworks can stipulate that AI-generated text or images cannot be credited with authorship, but that their use requires transparent disclosure of human responsibility for interpretation, synthesis, and final approval. Such frameworks should also emphasize accountability, ensuring that authors remain answerable for the content of their work, regardless of the tools employed.

Another pressing implication is the need for interdisciplinary collaboration to shape GenAI's research trajectory. The findings show stark disciplinary differences: STEM fields embrace GenAI more readily, while humanities scholars remain cautious. This divergence reflects methodological preferences and deeper epistemological commitments (Heaven, 2023). Bringing these perspectives into dialogue is critical to developing balanced policies that preserve research diversity, equity, and rigor. For example, while STEM disciplines may prioritize efficiency gains, the humanities and social sciences highlight interpretive integrity and ethical sensitivity. An integrated, interdisciplinary approach ensures that adoption strategies do not merely replicate existing systemic biases but instead contribute to more inclusive and equitable research practices. Taken together, this study underscores the dual nature of GenAI as both an enabler and a disruptor of academic research. The technology holds immense promise to accelerate discovery and expand intellectual horizons, yet it also poses risks that could undermine scholarly trust if not managed with care (Osho, 2025). Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted response: researchers must commit to human-centered, critically reflective use; institutions and publishers must establish robust disclosure and accountability frameworks; and scholarly communities must invest in AI literacy and interdisciplinary dialogue.

Finally, generative artificial intelligence should not be viewed as a threat to academic integrity but as a catalyst for reimagining research practices when deployed responsibly. By treating GenAI as a co-pilot rather than a replacement, the academy can harness its transformative potential while upholding the principles of originality, rigor, and transparency. If balanced integration is achieved, GenAI will support and enrich the pursuit of knowledge, ensuring that innovation advances with scholarly trust and ethical responsibility.

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