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Balancing Innovation and Integrity: Responsible Use of AI in Original Research and Academic Publishing

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing academic research and publishing, bringing with it unprecedented opportunities but also some extraordinary ethical challenges. While AI software claims in its promotional materials to support researchers throughout the research cycle, from literature review to publication, the uncontrolled or excessive use of such tools can threaten intellectual originality, academic integrity, and the authenticity of research papers. In this paper, we delve into the dual nature of AI and how it relates to the social sciences, as well as the challenge of qualitative interpretation and cultural nuances, which cannot be fully automated. Using examples from academia worldwide and the Indian research landscape, this paper demonstrates how we should consider these ethical questions surrounding the use of AI-based research approaches. From the perspective of encouraging transparency, relying on human creativity, and institutional accountability, this study emphasizes a balance that can best utilize AI without compromising fundamental principles of academic integrity.

Keywords: AI Tools, Research Ethics, Academic Integrity, Academia, Higher Education

Introduction:

The rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) over the past decade have dramatically transformed the nature of academic research and publishing. AI tools like ChatGPT and Cite.AI enable researchers to generate reference and literature summaries, perform data analysis, and improve final manuscripts. Our computers and AI, or Grammarly, are now equally important to the research process. These technologies are seen as helping scholars, especially those from non-English-speaking countries like India, overcome language and methodological barriers. But with the increasing application of AI technology, concerns are also growing about its ethical consequences.

The fundamental question here is the erosion of originality and its threat to intellectual autonomy. While AI, so powerful, can greatly aid research today, its misuse can render the

research paper read by the scholar inauthentic, promote fraud, and transform the nature of problem-solving into mere algorithmic output. This is particularly important in the social sciences, where interpretation, empathy, and understanding other cultures are fundamental to the researcher. But unlike computational data fields, social research is primarily based on human relationships and values things that cannot (and arguably should not) be fully automated.

Summary:

This paper examines the many ethical challenges posed by AI in academic publishing, from its benefits to its potential to undermine the scholarly strength and novelty of research. The focus is on how to embed AI tools responsibly, reinforced by the presence of faculty-wide policy and individual ethical commitments. This paper contributes to the ongoing debate on the future of research in the age of artificial intelligence, drawing lessons from international and Indian situations.

AI within the Research Ecosystem:

The term artificial intelligence refers to software and algorithmic machine-learning-powered assistants designed to simulate humans for various levels of research activities. These tools can include anything from basic grammar checkers or reference assistants, to more complex platforms that create research summaries and analyze vast datasets, or even write entire articles.

The research AI ecosystem includes: Academic Text Generation and Editing, NLP Tools, ChatGPT, Claude.

Citation and report discovery devices (Semantic Scholar, Scite. ai, Elicit) that assist in the identification of literature and in tracking argument creation.

Machine learning and deep learning frameworks (such as IBM Watson, Tableau AI, Python-based AI libraries)

Plagiarism checkers and Editor Tools (eg: Turnitin, Grammarly, ProWritingAid)

AI essay-writing assistants (ex: Paperpal, Jenni AI, Jasper AI etc.)

Access to these new tools is becoming more prominent in the research workflow of almost all fields. The same machine that can help write a research paper will not be as useful when rewriting an article or explaining a topic for theoretical concepts (like ChatGpt) and it is even less effective at generating detailed bibliographies with good references! AI is gaining traction in academic settings, giving rise to more debates about the ethical use of AI - especially in publishing.

Author vs. Aid When AI is nothing more than an aid, providing assistance with grammar, format or structuring your ideas, etc. it is still just a tool. But as soon as AI starts outputting key research content, interpretations, or even conclusions without human oversight, it can quickly begin to undermine academic integrity. This is the blurred line on which ethical guidelines for publishing need to be negotiated.

AI as a Boons: Opportunities and Extensions

While always ethical, AI has broadened researchers' horizons, freed them from countless problems related to resource constraints, language barriers, and the biggest obstacle: time. Some of its benefits are listed here:

a. Efficiency and Time-Saving:

AI can be used for writing the long articles, for summarizing, for proofreading and even for doing citation. This means it can assist or even write a full academic article along with doing data coding. It led to the enhancement of the thinking and analytical skills of researchers. In 2023, a survey report by Elsevier showed that more than 60% of researchers who were in their early career regarded AI as a beneficial tool that tends to enhance their efficiency in research work.

b. Enhancing Accessibility:

AI tools prove useful for the scholars in the Global South, which includes India as well, to bridge these digital and language divide. Many researchers in India are being assisted by AI tools such as Grammarly or Quillbot to refine the language of the manuscript. This increases the accessibility of the research article.

c. Improved Data Analysis:

Certain AI-driven tools can help in organizing and analyzing large data both qualitative and quantitative that would be time consuming if done manually. Platforms like NVivo and Atlas. Tools like ti, that are becoming more AI-integrated, help researchers expose patterns within interview transcripts, policy texts and ethnographic material.

d. Literature Review and Discovery:

AI-powered search engines like Scite. By way of another example and currently for the academic literature, ai and Elicit enable researchers to more efficiently map out literature (and its attributes) including not just what is cited, but how it is cited (i.e. supporting/ disputing/ neutral). This speeds up the process of designing for research.

e. Support for Academic Writing:

More Than Language and Style: Writing assistance tools do more than merely improve language and style; they also provide critical structural considerations. This is particularly useful when you are writing your very first academic article, whether it be an essay for university or a research PhD.

There are several examples how integrating AI with research are helpful in research process. In an interview from 2023 with Economic and Political Weekly, a scholar at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi spoke about brainstorming theoretical frameworks on gender and urban spaces with the help of ChatGPT. But in relation to the process of interpretations or conclusions of her writing, she made a deliberate effort not to do so, understanding the necessity for keeping one's writing and research voice separate.

Even though these benefits are real, they should still be used cautiously. We will now discuss about the ethical problems and long-run repercussions for reliance on those gadgets.

Ethical Concerns and Risks:

It is important to recognize that, although there are many benefits to AI technology, it also presents significant ethical problems in academic research and publishing across the spectrum. Scholars, ethics boards and publishing houses have talked at length about the subsequent worries:

a. Plagiarism and Ghost Authorship:

The biggest problem though, would be the possibility of un-intentional or intentional Plagiarism. AI tools that use prompts to generate content might be prone to repeating old

ideas without proper credit. In addition, to do the majority of a paper automatic writing with no attribution is a ghost authorship and also violative of COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) guidelines. COPE (2023): Researchers should disclose at submission when writing a paper if they have made extensive use of AI tools in preparing the manuscript to support transparency in authorship.

b. Fabrication and Falsification of Data:

Hence, we have AI tools that can generate synthetic data or simulate results, and which can be abused to counterfeit results. This does not only infringe (the ethical norms of) science, it also endangers the reliability and replication of scientific information. Given field data are a basic requirement for much social science research in India, having AI-generated responses allows us to basically gamify even the most contextually rich and authentic work finished by someone.

Published in Research Integrity and Peer Review (2023) a cautionary tale advocates the misuse of AI-generated datasets bypassing the demanding standards of field research particular menacing for qualitative inquiry.

c. Erosion of Critical Thought and Originality:

Relying heavily upon AI in conducting literature reviews, developing arguments, or even framing theoretical reflections may discourage independent thought and critical engagement. While AI can combine existing opinions, it cannot question preconceptions, parse inconsistencies and therefore synthesis or build new paradigms which are essential to original research.

Bender et al. (2021) On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots paper suggested that, due to the limitations in “understanding” and being creative large language, models may end up reinforcing dominant knowledge systems without critical intervention.

Bias and the Perpetuation of Inequality:

AI is learning from historic and structural biases entrenched in data for example, if AI is deployed to help in theory generation or citation suggestion; it might prefer to reinforce epistemic injustice by suggesting Eurocentric/ Male dominated/Euro phobic perspectives which are primarily English based.

As commented by Indian social scientists, AI-based literary tools generally do not consider research in regional languages and indigenous frameworks making alternate knowledge tradition marginalized (Deshpande, 2023). i.e. Peer Review Gating and Publication Fraud

AI is also being used for fake peer review where an automatic writer prepares the manuscript, write misleading cover letters, and corrupt journal selection tools. Currently, Springer and Elsevier are devising AI-detection software to screen fraudulent submissions.

All original research articles produced almost entirely by AI without any human co-authorship and submitted for peer review to the Springer Nature will be rejected. Springer Nature (2023) also published an editorial announcing that in post-publication identification, manuscripts previously carrying no any hints of, or statements related to, input from humans would be retracted.

Challenges in Social Science Research:

The nature of social sciences introduces particular methodological and epistemological obstacles that go against the possibility to AI in groundbreaking research. The question here arises if it's possible for AI to reproduce anything that has human depth and line of questioning.

a. Context, Emotion, and Interpretation:

But social science research is interpretive, and it operates within a specific context. AI does not possess the empathetic, rapport-building and immersion-driven mindset necessary to understand caste relations in rural India or unpaid gendered labor in informal sectors or indigenous belief systems. There is no easy automation of partial judgment albeit some summaries or analyses are conducted.

Example: An ethnographic study of menstrual hygiene practices among Gaddi tribal adolescent girls in Himachal Pradesh deals with methods, idioms and embodied experiences that cannot be so easily picked up by machine generated analytics.

b. Ethics of Human Interaction:

Social science fieldwork requires thinking about ethics of informed consent, positionality and relational ethics. The use of AI to have conversations with people, give responses that would be unrealistic from a human or provide quotes from someone who didn't say them is ethically fraught and intellectually vacant.

c. Limitations of Predictive Modelling:

AI is good at recognising correlations; it is completely incapable of understanding causality, reflexivity and theory of abstraction — the essence of what sociologists and anthropologists do. Eg: AI can internalize data on unemployment numbers but cannot speculate about alienation, or resistance unless directly taught by a human.

d. Loss of Theoretical Depth:

Social science researchers must ground themselves heavily in theory, many researchers have this perspective. AI-based framework "recommendation" risks triggering a superficial combination rather than a dialectical synthesis. A little too much reliance on AI suggestions is detrimental to the originality of thought with contradictions. Philosophical debates are also being ignored which is essential for scientific demure. Nussbaum (2020) insists on the supportive role that AI plays in social sciences, according to him machine is not competent of moral or interpretative competence that are required for humanistic scholarship.

Responsible Use and Ethical Guidelines:

Use of AI in academia is increasing in day by day, which is why it is necessary to implement the use of ethical framework to ensure the ethical usage. Neither we can excessively use AI nor we can stop using it, so to maintain the veracity and integrity of academic work it is better to come to a middle ground which is responsible use of AI.

a. Transparency and Disclosure:

According to the Elsevier Author Guidelines (2023), authors should disclose any AI assistance used in preparation of their manuscript, but are still responsible for the content as human authors. Authors should also describe in their manuscripts exactly which AI tool and what goals it played during any part of the research and narrative process. These can be writing support, statistical guidance or literature generation II. For its part, top journals like

Nature and Science have begun demanding that authors flag use of big language models or AI editing tools in the methodology section or acknowledgements, respectively.

b. Human Control and Critical Engagement:

These AI tools should work as assistants and not replace user adjudication. Finally, any output produced by AI should be verified, critiqued, and contextualized by researchers. However, this is also not a big issue because it is perceived that if a researcher uses ChatGPT to explain the idea then it can be considered as a form of automation but will still be in line with their disciplinary theoretical position.

For example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2021 UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence) recommends that AI must be subject to human control especially in education and research.

c. Avoiding Undeclared Co-Authorship:

That includes AI, which AI cannot be an author. It neither fulfils the requirements of intellectual contribution, responsibility, nor informed consent. This has been appropriately encapsulated in the ICMJE authorship guidelines which lay out that only true human contributors to the work can be considered authors and this condition should never be altered.

d. Institutional Ethics Committees:

Research ethics policies of academic institutions need to be revised with the inclusion of use of AI. The best of such policies should be the models allowing researchers to:

- Academic, AI-generated title thinker or text-citer.
- We discourage the use of AI-generated synthetic data, unless specified
- Statement of AI tools in field design/ interview transcription/ language edit

In 2024, the University Grants Commission (UGC) came up with advisory notes for Indian Universities to implement AI literacy and ethics in research methodology. The emphasis was on teaching Reviewers and editors not only to AI but also to detect red flags. Overuse of AI can have a negative impact on research and writing skills as it focuses on formulaic writing, lack of theoretical depth and generalized conclusions.

Recommendations for Researchers and Institutions:

Maintaining academic research innovation and integrity is important. To do so, it requires a strategy that addresses individual, institutional, and editorial accountability. These three work in a three-way partnership, in which each of them will be responsible to maintain the standard of research on their own way.

For Researchers:

First and foremost, would be AI literacy, a researchers should have knowledge of what AI software can and cannot do. Awareness is important to make better decisions. The AI can be used as a tool to enhance the quality of research but not as a replacement. It can be used to help with tasks like editing or summarizing. AI can also be used to maintain reflective behaviour, a research journal or reflective log so that it can distinguish insights from AI signals or outputs (Digital Society Initiative, University of Zurich).

Acknowledgment is also very important. All tools that are used, whether it is Grammarly or any other website should be given due credit where appropriate. Data can also be reproducing from certain AI if they are in accordance with journal or institutional policies.

For Academic Institutions:

All research program should introduce courses that focus on the ethical use of AI in research and publications.

Institutions can create guidelines for research ethics boards on the use of AI. A clear sets of rules on when and how to employ AI should be established, particularly for data collecting and authoring.

Regular workshops should be conducted by institutions to inform researchers about new tools and the risks of using them improperly. That could further hurt the entity that trained the model, the individual who collected the data, or the researcher themselves.

AI models are still developing, as of now there are certain tasks that AI cannot handle. Institutions should promote creative thinking, encourage research and dissertations that prioritize theoretical rigor, public scholarship, and creative thinking.

For Journals and Publishers:

Journal and publishers should also step up their game. They must revise their editorial policies. Develop a review process that can highlight content produced by AI and mandate AI disclosure. Journals should support moral and creative uses of AI in addition to conventional research methods, rather than penalizing its usage. They should provide a thorough explanation of plagiarism and AI use in author instructions so that peer reviewers can follow up.

Conclusion:

AI has the potential to be both a huge opportunity and a risk for the publishing and research. On the one hand, it seeks to give many scholars across the globe, the resources they need to finish academic assignments by assisting them with better use of language (English), searching for literature (citation ranking) and even in data analysis. However, an over-reliance on these techniques has the alarming capacities. Over-use can promote academic corruption, intellectual aridity, and the propagation of false ideologies within constrained boundaries, particularly in the interpretive-reflective domains that characterize the social sciences.

This paper reasons for the thoughtful and cautious application of AI. Searching a basic question of how far we are prepared to go in the name of advancement. This paper neither ask for ceasing the use of AI nor excessively using it. Rather, it is a call to rehumanize its use by promoting the idea that the researcher should be in charge, questioning, and responsible for all aspects of knowledge generation. Institutions, journals, and academics must work together to create transparent policies that need human monitoring and include context.

In situations like India where social research is rooted in the fields, oral traditions and multiple ways of knowing, human researchers will continue to play a significant role. This is not to completely support the idea that AI can take over for human intellectual labor, in so far as it involves theorizing and interpreting what the world means and how we are to ethically be within it. Even in publishing, the future will have to comply with norms that value originality and honesty respectively as well as celebrate the power of human inquiry.

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