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Generative AI in Academic Publishing: A Bibliometric Analysis and Emerging Debates on Integrity, Authorship, and Language Equity

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, particularly large language models such as ChatGPT, has generated significant debate within the academic publishing community. This study examines emerging research trends and discussions surrounding the use of generative AI in scientific writing and publishing. Using a bibliometric approach, the study analyses 311 documents indexed in the Scopus database and published between 2023 and 2025. The dataset was processed using the Bibliometrix R package to identify publication trends, frequently used keywords, and thematic relationships. Visualisation techniques, including a word cloud and a keyword co-occurrence network, were employed to map the conceptual structure of the field. The analysis reveals three primary thematic clusters: a technological cluster focused on AI tools and scientific writing, a biomedical-ethical cluster addressing clinical and educational implications, and a publishing-integrity cluster concerned with research ethics, authorship, plagiarism, and peer review. The findings indicate that debates about generative AI in academic publishing are strongly connected to issues of transparency, accountability, and the reliability of scholarly communication. The study highlights the importance of clear editorial policies, responsible AI use, and disclosure practices to maintain research integrity while supporting accessibility and linguistic equity in academic publishing.

1. Introduction:

The rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT has started an unprecedented debate in the academic community. While large language models (LLMs) offer remarkable capabilities in text generation, summarisation, and language improvement, recent studies show that their competence extends far beyond linguistic tasks. For example, ChatGPT achieved performance at or near the passing threshold of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), not only in factual recall but also clinical reasoning and the ability to produce well-structured explanations (Kung et al., 2023). Such results suggest that generative models can reach, and in some contexts exceed, human-level proficiency in complex cognitive tasks, further intensifying the debate about their appropriate role in scientific writing. At the same time, these advances raise vital questions about research integrity, authorship, and the credibility of scholarly communication (Thorp, 2023; Stokel-Walker & Van Noorden, 2023).

Major academic publishers, including *Science*, *Nature*, and *JAMA*, have already issued guidelines that restrict or clarify the use of AI tools in manuscript preparation (Flanagin et al.,

2023; Nature Editorial, 2023). Central concerns include the tendency of generative AI to produce hallucinated references—convincing but non-existent citations (Gao et al., 2023)—and the difficulty of ensuring accountability when machine-generated text is incorporated into academic discourse.

At the same time, proponents argue that AI can enhance efficiency in writing and reviewing manuscripts, assist non-native English speakers, and even improve accessibility of scientific knowledge (van Dis et al., 2023). This tension between opportunity and risk has created a growing body of literature across disciplines, particularly in medicine, education, and the social sciences.

The present **study aims to map and analyse current research trends on generative AI in academic publishing** by conducting a bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed literature published between 2023 and 2025. By visualising the thematic structure through keyword analysis and co-occurrence mapping, the study identifies dominant clusters of debate and highlights the implications for future research and editorial practice.

The article not only describes the state of research, but also addresses the most controversial issue in academia: To what extent can (or should) academia accept texts generated by AI?

2. Research Method

This study employs a **bibliometric and content-based literature review** to examine recent research on the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in academic publishing. The analysis was designed to capture the state of scholarly discourse on ChatGPT and related large language models (LLMs), with particular attention to issues of authorship, scientific writing, and research integrity.

2.1 Data Source and Search Strategy

The data were retrieved from the **Scopus** database, which was selected for its broad multidisciplinary coverage and reliable metadata. The search was conducted in **November 2025** and limited to documents published between **2023 and 2025**, corresponding to the period following the public release of ChatGPT.

The following search string was used in the **TITLE-ABS-KEY** fields:

TITLE-ABS-KEY (("ChatGPT" OR "generative AI") AND ("academic publishing" OR "scientific writing" OR "research integrity"))

This query yielded **311 documents**. All available bibliographic information (authors, titles, abstracts, keywords, references, and citations) was exported in **BibTeX format**, with the “All available information” option enabled to ensure data completeness.

2.2 Data Processing and Analysis

The dataset was processed using the **Bibliometrix R package** (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). The convert2df() function was applied to transform the Scopus export into an analyzable data frame. Descriptive statistics were first generated using the biblioAnalysis() function to identify publication trends and frequent keywords.

To explore the conceptual structure of the field, two complementary visualisations were produced:

1. **Word cloud** – representing the relative frequency of keywords and key terms (square-root scaling was applied to balance dominant and less frequent terms).
2. **Co-occurrence network of authors' keywords** – constructed with the biblioNetwork() and networkPlot() functions, using the *association strength* normalization and *Fruchterman–Reingold* layout algorithm.

The resulting maps provided a visual overview of dominant research areas and thematic clusters within the literature on generative AI in academic publishing. The analysis focused on identifying (a) major thematic domains, (b) the relationships between technological and ethical discourses, and (c) disciplinary differences, especially the dominance of biomedical research in early publications.

3.Results

A bibliometric search in Scopus identified 311 documents (2023–2025) on generative AI in academic publishing. A word cloud (Fig. 1) and a co-occurrence network of authors' keywords (Fig. 2) were generated using the bibliometrix R package to visualise the thematic landscape of the field.

Fig. 1. Word cloud of the most frequently occurring authors' keywords (2023–2025) in the Scopus dataset related to generative AI in academic publishing.

The word cloud (Fig. 1) highlights the dominance of terms such as *ChatGPT*, *artificial intelligence*, *writing*, *publication*, *plagiarism*, *peer review*, and *ethics*. The strong presence of biomedical expressions (e.g., *biomedical research*, *medical education*, *clinical practice guidelines*) confirms that early debates have been particularly intense in medical disciplines, where research integrity concerns translate directly into potential consequences for patient care.

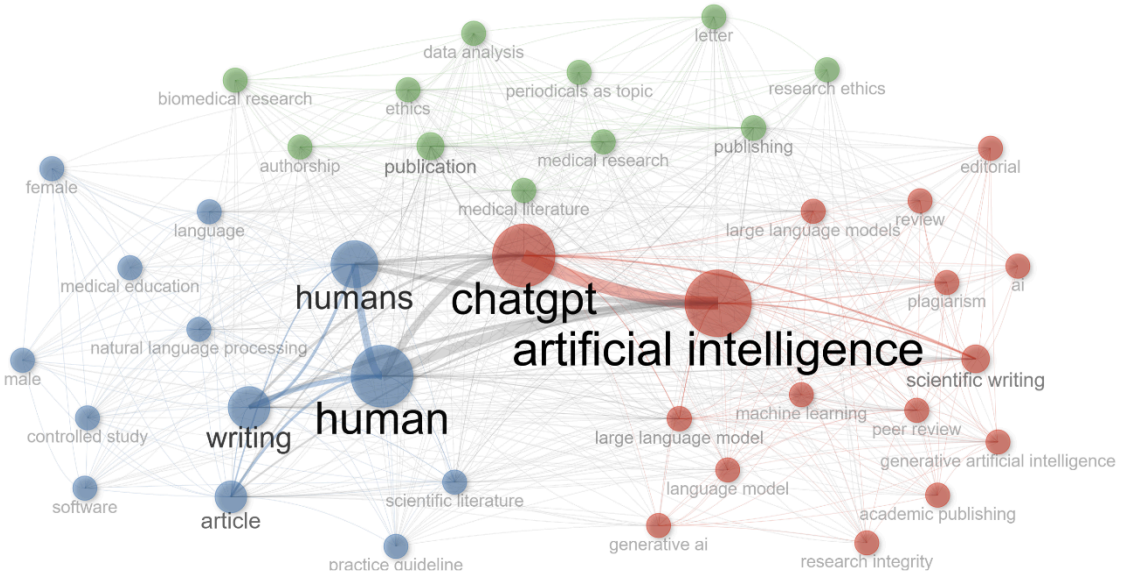

Fig. 2. Co-occurrence network of authors' keywords, generated using the bibliometrix R package. The network reveals three major clusters: a technological cluster (red), a medical-ethical cluster (blue), and a publishing-integrity cluster (green).

Node size reflects keyword frequency, and edge thickness represents the strength of co-occurrence links. Several terms occupy boundary positions between clusters—for example, *medical research* and *medical literature* link biomedical topics with publishing-integrity debates—illustrating that thematic boundaries in the literature are empirical rather than strictly disciplinary.

The keyword co-occurrence network (Fig. 2) reveals three major clusters:

1. Technological cluster (red)

Centred on ChatGPT, artificial intelligence, large language model, and scientific writing, this cluster highlights the technical and practical dimensions of using AI tools in scholarly work. It encompasses terms related to machine learning, natural language models, writing assistance, and academic publishing workflows. These patterns are consistent with studies analysing generative AI as a writing and learning tool in academic contexts, including the systematic review by Imran and Almusharraf (2023) and domain-specific investigations of AI adoption in professional environments such as logistics and supply chain management (Richey et al., 2023).

2. Medical-ethical cluster (blue)

This cluster includes terms such as human, humans, medical education, controlled study, and natural language processing, reflecting biomedical concerns regarding clinical applications, methodological rigour, and teaching practices. Its prominence aligns with the rapid expansion of medical literature evaluating AI in clinical and educational contexts, for

example Sallam's (2023) synthesis of ChatGPT in healthcare or Salvagno et al.'s (2023) assessment of AI-assisted scientific writing in intensive-care medicine.

3. Publishing and integrity cluster (green)

Comprising terms such as publishing, peer review, research ethics, authorship, editorial, publication, and plagiarism, this cluster emphasises debates about ethical standards, scholarly communication, and vulnerabilities in editorial workflows. It also contains medically oriented terms such as medical research and medical literature, which frequently appear in discussions about publication standards and integrity. This cluster corresponds closely to concerns regarding research reliability, as demonstrated by evidence that AI systems may generate fabricated or authentic-looking but unreliable scientific content (Májovský et al., 2023; Macdonald et al., 2023).

Although the three clusters broadly correspond to technological, biomedical, and publishing-integrity themes, some keywords appear in clusters that do not fully align with their semantic domain. For example, medical research and medical literature cluster with publishing-integrity terms because they frequently co-occur in discussions on editorial standards and research ethics, whereas medical education remains positioned within the biomedical cluster. Such cross-cluster placements are typical in co-occurrence networks and reflect empirical patterns of discourse rather than strict disciplinary boundaries.

4.Discussion

The results highlight that research on generative AI in publishing is **multifaceted and interdisciplinary**, but three lines of debate dominate:

Tool-centred perspectives – focusing on ChatGPT and large language models as writing aids, raising questions of authorship and technical integration.

Biomedical applications and risks – reflecting heightened scrutiny where errors or fabricated citations could directly affect patient outcomes.

Academic integrity and publishing processes – addressing plagiarism, peer review, and ethical responsibilities of authors, editors, and publishers.

Notably, the visual analysis demonstrates that discussions of *ethics* and *integrity* are not peripheral but central, tightly connected to the technological core (AI tools) and publishing practices. This suggests that the credibility of scholarly publishing in the age of generative AI depends not only on technical advances but also on transparent editorial policies and verified references.

The stakes differ by discipline. In biomedical fields, erroneous claims or fabricated references can lead to harmful clinical decisions, whereas in management, the immediate harm is usually reputational. Nevertheless, the integrity of the scholarly record is universal.

Therefore, journals—especially new ones—must adopt proportional but non-negotiable safeguards: mandatory trial registration and ethics approval for clinical studies, adherence to reporting guidelines (CONSORT, STROBE, PRISMA), explicit declarations of AI usage, and routine verification of citations via CrossRef/Scopus. Only a combination of technical checks and domain-expert peer review can prevent the propagation of AI-generated hallucinations into the literature (Thorp, 2023; Flanagin et al., 2023; Nature Editorial, 2023). Despite these concerns, ongoing research in natural language generation continues to address the problem of fabricated or unverifiable content. A comprehensive survey by Ji et al. (2023) highlights multiple technical strategies—such as improved training objectives, fact-checking modules, and retrieval-augmented architectures—designed to reduce the likelihood of hallucinated outputs.

At the same time, recent developments also include AI-powered tools for citation auditing, such as the protocol proposed by Janse van Rensburg (2025), which demonstrates that automated reference verification can effectively support the detection of fabricated or unreliable citations.

These developments suggest that, while the risks associated with generative models are significant, the technical community is actively developing methods to enhance reliability and reduce epistemic uncertainty in AI-assisted writing.

5. The Debate on AI-Generated Text in Scholarly Publishing

5.1 Between Restriction, Transparency, and Linguistic Equity

The rapid diffusion of generative AI tools has forced the academic community to reconsider long-standing assumptions about authorship, originality, and the boundaries of acceptable assistance in scientific writing. As demonstrated in our bibliometric analysis, concerns relating to ethics, plagiarism, peer review, and research integrity have emerged as central topics in the discourse. These concerns have materialised in various institutional responses, ranging from explicit prohibitions to more nuanced disclosure requirements.

While many institutions are moving toward restrictive or cautious approaches, some authors and journals have chosen an opposite—highly transparent—model that redefines the boundaries of acceptable AI use. A notable example is provided by Biswas (2023), who published an article in the *Annals of Biomedical Engineering* openly stating that “the majority of this article was written by ChatGPT,” with the human author supplying only the headings, prompts, and final edits. Rather than rejecting the submission, the journal accepted it, signalling that transparency and accountability may, in some contexts, be valued over strict prohibitions on AI-generated prose. This example illustrates the diversity of emerging norms and highlights that the debate on appropriate AI use in scholarly publishing remains far from settled.

5.2 Increasing Restrictions in Conferences and Academic Institutions

Several conferences and publishers have introduced stringent rules regarding AI usage, often requiring authors to declare that generative tools were not used to produce scientific content. For instance, in the 2024 and 2025 calls for papers of events such as SIMDTE and SEEU, submissions were required to show no signs of AI-generated text. Similar constraints have been incorporated into plagiarism-checking systems used to evaluate students' theses, where AI-detection modules flag text deemed machine-generated.

These policies reflect a growing apprehension that AI may obscure authorship, mask insufficient understanding of the topic, or lead to fabricated references, which was substantiated by recent studies documenting the risk of hallucinated citations (Gao et al., 2023). Such measures underscore the institutional preference for precaution and control, especially in educational settings where academic integrity is seen as particularly vulnerable.

Yet, this precautionary stance is not the only perspective represented in current scholarship. While many institutions respond to these challenges by strengthening detection systems and restricting the use of generative models in student theses, the educational literature suggests an alternative approach. Kasneci et al. (2023) argue that, when used responsibly and supported by appropriate guidance, generative AI can help students understand the societal biases, limitations, and risks of AI technologies instead of encouraging superficial compliance with prohibitions. This perspective shifts the emphasis from restriction toward education, framing AI not merely as a threat to academic integrity but also as a pedagogical opportunity.

5.3 A More Balanced Approach: Transparency Rather Than Prohibition

However, prohibiting AI outright is neither widely enforceable nor pedagogically sound. A more balanced model is exemplified by the submission guidance of the Information Systems Development (ISD) conference—one of the most established venues in the field. In 2025, ISD required authors to explicitly disclose any use of generative AI beyond basic language correction:

"Authors are required to disclose the use of Generative AI for any aspect of the work that goes beyond verifying spelling, grammar, and punctuation. If Generative AI has been used beyond these functions, the manner of its utilization must be described in the Acknowledgment section."

This policy neither discourages linguistic assistance nor bans the use of AI tools outright. Instead, it emphasises accountability and transparency:

- AI may be used to improve clarity and readability,
- but scientific reasoning, argumentation, and interpretation must originate from the authors,

- and any broader use of AI must be openly acknowledged.

A growing body of recent literature supports this balanced, transparency-oriented approach. Cheng, Calhoun and Reedy (2025) propose a set of ethical recommendations for AI-assisted academic writing, emphasising that generative tools may be used responsibly provided that their contribution is fully disclosed, their outputs are critically evaluated by human authors, and editorial oversight remains uncompromised. Their framework illustrates that effective integration of AI into scholarly communication does not require prohibition but rather clear guidelines, accountability, and continued human responsibility.

5.4 Linguistic Inequality and the Role of AI for Non-Native Speakers

A strict interpretation of "AI-free writing" risks reinforcing existing inequalities within global academia. Non-native English speakers face disproportionate barriers in publishing internationally—barriers that generative AI can help mitigate. High-ranking journals often impose high linguistic standards, yet simultaneously discourage or prohibit tools that enable authors to meet these expectations. As van Dis et al. (2023) argue, language-support AI may improve equity in scientific communication by reducing linguistic disadvantages and enabling a clearer presentation of research findings.

This tension—between integrity and accessibility—forms one of the unresolved challenges in contemporary academic publishing. While the scientific community must prevent the outsourcing of intellectual tasks to AI systems, it must also avoid policies that inadvertently penalise competent researchers for linguistic rather than scientific shortcomings.

Recent empirical evidence reinforces this argument. Prakash et al. (2025), analysing more than one million English-language abstracts from the Web of Science, demonstrate a marked global improvement in academic writing quality over the past decade, with the most significant gains occurring in non-native English-speaking countries. Their study shows that enhanced digital infrastructure and the adoption of AI-assisted writing tools have contributed to a gradual convergence in writing complexity between traditionally dominant regions and emerging scholarly communities. These findings indicate that, rather than amplifying inequality, large language models can help mitigate long-standing linguistic barriers and expand global participation in academic publishing.

5.5 Towards Consistent and Reasonable Guidelines

Taken together, the developments discussed above suggest that the future of AI policies in scholarly publishing will likely converge on three foundational principles: **transparency**, **accountability**, and **fairness**. These principles align with the emerging positions of major publishers such as *Nature*, *Science*, and *JAMA*, which permit AI-assisted editing while prohibiting AI authorship and requiring explicit disclosure of substantial AI involvement (Flanagin et al., 2023; Nature Editorial, 2023).

Comparable guidance has been issued by MDPI, one of the largest open-access publishers. In its 2023 update on AI and authorship, MDPI states explicitly that generative AI tools such as ChatGPT cannot be listed as authors because they cannot assume responsibility for published claims. While AI-assisted writing is permitted, authors must disclose its use, describe in the Methods section how the tools contributed to manuscript preparation, and accept full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final text (MDPI, 2023). This position is aligned with the COPE statement on AI-assisted writing, reinforcing the principle that transparency and human accountability remain central to publication ethics.

Taylor & Francis, one of the largest academic publishers globally, issued a comprehensive AI policy stating that generative tools may be used for language editing, idea generation, literature search or coding assistance—but must not be credited as authors, and any AI use must be clearly disclosed, including tool name, version, and purpose of use. (Taylor & Francis, 2024).

These publisher policies closely follow the guidance issued by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), which states that AI tools cannot be credited as authors, that their use must be transparently disclosed, and that human authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy and integrity of the published work (COPE, 2023).

To operationalise these principles, authors, reviewers, and editors can rely on a set of practical guidelines that translate ethical expectations into concrete actions.

Recommendations for Authors

1. Disclose meaningful use of generative AI beyond spelling and grammar correction, specifying how and where the tool supported writing.
2. Verify all references manually, especially when AI tools have been used to produce summaries or draft sections, as hallucinated citations remain a documented risk.
3. Ensure that argumentation, methodological choices, and interpretations are entirely human-generated, even if AI-assisted phrasing is used.
4. Use AI responsibly to reduce linguistic barriers—particularly for non-native English speakers—while retaining full accountability for content.

Recommendations for Reviewers

1. Evaluate substance over style and avoid assuming that polished English necessarily reflects high-quality reasoning.
2. Cross-check key references to identify fabricated or unverifiable citations.
3. Assess the coherence and internal logic of the argument, which remain the clearest indicators of human intellectual contribution.

Recommendations for Editors and Publishers

1. Adopt clear AI-use disclosure policies, similar to emerging standards in venues such as ISD or journals from the *Nature* portfolio.
2. Permit AI-assisted language correction while prohibiting AI-generated substantive content unless fully acknowledged.
3. Develop fairness-oriented guidelines that support non-native English speakers without compromising research integrity.
4. Strengthen editorial workflows to include reference verification, detection of fabricated citations, and transparent communication with authors regarding permissible uses of AI.
5. Encourage contributions on AI ethics and publishing integrity, as these topics are central to the credibility of new journals.

Collectively, these recommendations outline a pragmatic path forward—one that neither rejects AI outright nor embraces it uncritically, but instead embeds it within a responsible framework that preserves scholarly credibility while supporting global participation in academic publishing.

6. Conclusions and Study Limitations

This study examined the rapidly expanding body of literature on generative AI in academic publishing through a bibliometric analysis of 311 Scopus-indexed documents published between 2023 and 2025. The results revealed three dominant research streams: technological perspectives on tools such as ChatGPT; biomedical concerns related to accuracy and potential harm; and ethical debates focusing on plagiarism, peer review, and editorial responsibility. Taken together, these findings illustrate that the academic community is no longer merely experimenting with AI-assisted writing—rather, it is actively negotiating the boundaries of legitimate, transparent, and equitable use of such tools.

Across disciplines, a central tension emerges: generative AI can improve clarity, accessibility, and workflow efficiency, but it also poses risks of fabricated citations, obscured authorship, and diminished accountability. The discussion presented in this paper shows that neither extreme—complete prohibition nor unrestricted adoption—is sustainable. Instead, the evolving practice in leading journals and conferences points toward a middle-ground model that prioritises transparency, scientific responsibility, and linguistic fairness.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the bibliometric analysis was based solely on Scopus-indexed publications. Scopus offers broad multidisciplinary coverage, but important discussions on generative AI—particularly those emerging in clinical, biomedical, and educational contexts—may be more extensively represented in specialised databases such as PubMed, MEDLINE, Embase, ERIC, or IEEE

Xplore. As a result, the present study may underrepresent certain disciplinary nuances, especially in fields where debates on research integrity and clinical risks are highly developed.

Second, the analysis relied on a single search strategy using predefined keyword combinations. While the chosen query captured key themes central to the emerging discourse on generative AI in academic publishing, alternative formulations might have retrieved additional documents addressing related issues such as AI-assisted peer review, automated editorial workflows, or discipline-specific ethical frameworks.

Third, the use of authors' keywords and metadata—although standard in bibliometric research—reflects the terminology selected by authors rather than the full conceptual content of the articles. Consequently, some themes (e.g., linguistic equity, conference submission policies, or AI detection tools) may appear only indirectly in the visualisations, even if they are highly relevant to ongoing debates.

Finally, this study focused on publications from 2023 to 2025, a period of exceptionally rapid technological and policy change. Editorial guidelines, disclosure requirements, and scholarly norms surrounding generative AI continue to evolve, which means that the findings represent a snapshot rather than a stable or mature research landscape. Future studies incorporating additional databases, broader search strategies, and longitudinal analysis would further refine our understanding of how generative AI is transforming academic publishing.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a timely and comprehensive overview of a rapidly evolving research domain and offers a foundation for future work on responsible, equitable, and transparent integration of generative AI into scholarly communication.

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