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AI Usage in Academic Writing: Perspectives of Stakeholders

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A B S T R A C T

This qualitative study examines the complex attitudes, ethical considerations, and practical implications of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) in academic writing across key stakeholder groups, including university professors and students. Using semi-structured interviews with 40 participants (20 students and 20 faculty members) from diverse disciplines and institutional contexts, the research reveals divergent perspectives on AI's role in academia. Faculty respondents expressed significant concerns about academic integrity, erosion of critical thinking, and the limitations of AI detection tools, which frequently misidentify human-written text as AI-generated. Conversely, students viewed AI as an essential productivity tool for overcoming writer's block, refining ideas, and managing workload, though they acknowledged ethical ambiguities in its deployment. A critical tension emerged between AI's perceived benefits—enhanced efficiency, personalized feedback, and accessibility—and its risks, including algorithmic bias, surveillance culture, and threats to student agency. Stakeholders agreed that institutional policies lag behind technological adoption, with current frameworks inadequately addressing transparency, data privacy, or equitable implementation. The study also identifies disciplinary variances: STEM educators favored AI for technical drafting, while humanities faculty emphasized its threat to authentic voice development. The findings advocate for a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach to AI governance, emphasizing pedagogical redesign, ethical guidelines for explainable AI, and professional development to bridge digital literacy gaps. This research underscores the urgency of reimagining academic writing in the AI era, balancing innovation with the preservation of core educational values.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence (AI), Academic Writing, Generative AI, Faculty Perspectives, Student Perspectives*

1. Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into academic writing has triggered a transformative shift in higher education, redefining processes of text creation, revision, and evaluation while raising critical questions about authorship, academic integrity, and pedagogical practice (Conde et al., 2024; Rabbianty et al., 2023). Advances in natural language processing and large language models, such as GPT-3 and its successors, have enabled AI tools to generate coherent, contextually relevant prose, streamline drafting, and provide real-time feedback, thereby alleviating challenges like writer's block and enhancing linguistic inclusivity for diverse learners

(Abduljawad, 2024; Thong et al., 2023). These capabilities promise unprecedented productivity gains, particularly for students navigating linguistic barriers or complex writing tasks (Demirel, 2024; Ya'u & Mohammed, 2025). However, the same affordances have sparked intense debate among stakeholders, with faculty expressing concerns over the erosion of critical thinking, academic integrity, and authentic voice, compounded by the limitations of current AI detection tools (Schneider et al., 2025).

The rapid adoption of AI writing tools has outpaced the development of institutional policies and ethical frameworks, creating a fragmented landscape where stakeholders—students, faculty, and administrators—navigate uncertain ethical and practical terrains (Alenezi, 2024; Wu et al., 2024).Faculty often highlight risks such as undetected AI-authored submissions, algorithmic bias in generated content, and the potential homogenization of scholarly expression, which may undermine the cognitive and rhetorical skills central to academic inquiry (Lin et al., 2024; Parker et al., 2024). Conversely, students embrace AI as a supportive tool for overcoming compositional inertia and enhancing fluency, yet they grapple with ethical ambiguities surrounding attribution and over (Bimpong et al., 2024; Sudrajad et al., 2024). Disciplinary differences further complicate this dynamic, with STEM fields demonstrating greater receptivity to AI for technical drafting, while humanities scholars caution against its impact on interpretive nuance (Bimpong et al., 2024; Chanpradit, 2025). The absence of comprehensive, stakeholder-informed policies exacerbates these tensions, leaving institutions ill-equipped to balance AI's innovative potential with the preservation of core educational values like critical thinking, originality, and equity (Gao et al., 2025; Rabbianty et al., 2023).

Despite extensive scholarly discourse on AI in higher education, a notable gap persists in qualitative research that captures the nuanced, lived experiences of both faculty and students across diverse disciplinary and institutional contexts. While quantitative surveys have mapped broad attitudes (BaHammam, 2023; Onal et al., 2025), they often overlook the contextual rationales, ethical tensions, and interdisciplinary variances that shape AI adoption. This study addresses this specific gap by employing a phenomenological lens to explore these underexplored dimensions, foregrounding voices from underrepresented regions like Iran. In Iran, the academic landscape is characterized by a mix of public, private, and semi-public institutions (e.g., Azad University and Payame Noor University), where cultural emphases on ethical scholarship intersect with technological barriers such as limited access to advanced AI tools due to international sanctions and uneven digital infrastructure. These factors create a unique context where AI adoption is both aspirational and fraught, amplifying global debates on equity and accessibility while highlighting the need for culturally sensitive governance.

This qualitative study aims to address these gaps by systematically exploring the divergent perspectives of university faculty and students regarding AI's role in academic writing. The primary objectives are fourfold: (1) to elucidate faculty concerns about academic integrity, critical thinking, and the efficacy of AI detection mechanisms; (2) to examine student experiences of AI as a productivity and creativity enhancer; (3) to identify tensions between AI's functional benefits and its ethical and pedagogical risks; and (4) to generate actionable insights for developing collaborative governance frameworks and pedagogical strategies that align technological innovation with scholarly values. By employing semi-structured interviews, this research seeks to capture nuanced, lived experiences and contextual rationales, offering a holistic understanding of AI's impact on academic writing practices.

These objectives are conceptually bridged to multi-stakeholder governance frameworks (Perkins & Roe, 2023) and principles of explainable AI (Gao et al., 2025), which emphasize transparency, accountability, and stakeholder inclusion. A simplified conceptual model guiding this study can be visualized as follows: At the center is AI integration in academic writing, influenced by inputs from stakeholder perspectives (faculty and students) and moderated by ethical risks (e.g., bias, privacy) and benefits (e.g., efficiency, accessibility). Outputs include policy recommendations and pedagogical redesign, looped back through governance mechanisms to ensure iterative refinement. This model integrates phenomenological inquiry to unpack experiential data, aligning theoretical frameworks with empirical findings.

The study contributes to the scholarly discourse on AI in higher education in three key ways. Empirically, it provides rich qualitative evidence of stakeholder perspectives, addressing the underrepresentation of student voices and the interdisciplinary nuances absent in prior surveys (BaHammam, 2023; Bimpong et al., 2024). Theoretically, it advances a multi-stakeholder governance framework that integrates ethical, pedagogical, and technological

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dimensions, emphasizing transparency, explainability, and disciplinary sensitivity (Al-Bukhrani et al., 2025; Conde et al., 2024). Practically, it offers recommendations for policy formulation, curriculum redesign, and professional development to bridge digital literacy gaps and foster responsible AI integration (Asmara & Kastuhandani, 2024; Subaveerapandiyan et al., 2025). By foregrounding the interplay of benefits and risks, this research illuminates pathways for institutions to harness AI while safeguarding intellectual integrity and epistemic diversity.

2. Review of the Literature

The rapid integration of AI technologies into academic writing has generated a complex and evolving body of research, critically examining its implications for scholarly practices, ethics, pedagogy, and stakeholder experiences. While AI promises transformative benefits like enhanced efficiency, personalized feedback, and drafting support (Msambwa et al., 2025; Shi et al., 2025), its adoption is fraught with significant ethical dilemmas, pedagogical concerns, and divergent stakeholder perspectives that demand careful synthesis (Pan, 2024; Suna & Özer, 2025; Wang, 2025; Yang, 2024).

2.1. Academic Integrity, Authorship, and Detection Challenges

A primary concern permeating the literature is the threat AI poses to traditional notions of academic integrity and authorship. Faculty express significant anxiety that AI-generated text blurs boundaries between human and machine contributions, facilitating academic dishonesty and complicating originality assessment (Amirjalili et al., 2024). This concern is amplified by the documented limitations of AI plagiarism detection and authorship attribution tools. Studies reveal these systems, while improving identification of verbatim copying, frequently generate false positives misclassifying legitimate student work as AI-generated, leading to unfair stigmatization and eroding trust (Ardito, 2024; Bing & Leong, 2025; Kar et al., 2024; Rasheed et al., 2025). The sophistication of generative models, capable of mimicking individual styles, further exacerbates detection difficulties, questioning the long-term viability of current systems and creating a persistent "arms race" (Ardito, 2024). Consequently, scholars emphasize that detection tools must be complemented by robust AI literacy initiatives and pedagogical strategies focusing on transparency and ethical use, rather than relying solely on punitive measures (Bing & Leong, 2025; Perkins & Roe, 2023).

2.2. Critical Thinking, Authentic Voice, and Pedagogical Impact

Closely linked to integrity concerns are faculty apprehensions about the potential erosion of students' critical thinking skills and authentic academic voice. Research suggests that the automation of idea generation and drafting may discourage deep analytical engagement, leading to passive acceptance of AI outputs and superficial content engagement (Nwokocha et al., 2025; Shalevska & Kostadinovska-Stojchevska, 2024). Faculty, particularly in the humanities, worry that over-reliance on AI could diminish the nuanced interpretive labor and authentic voice development central to their disciplines (Amirjalili et al., 2024; Hao et al., 2024; Rabbianty et al., 2023; Sullivan et al., 2023). This has spurred calls for pedagogical redesign that integrates AI not as a replacement for critical thought, but as a catalyst for deeper engagement. Proposed strategies include iterative AI-assisted workshops, reflective components documenting AI interactions, and assignments explicitly requiring critical evaluation of AI suggestions to preserve cognitive rigor and rhetorical skill development (Kong et al., 2024; Parviz, 2025).

2.3. Student Perspectives: Productivity, Accessibility, and Ethical Ambiguity

In contrast to faculty concerns, student perspectives often highlight the pragmatic benefits of AI tools. Students report leveraging AI to overcome writer's block, manage heavy workloads, structure arguments, receive real-time feedback on grammar and style, enhance language accuracy (especially for non-native speakers), and boost writing self-efficacy (Namjoo et al., 2023; Onal et al., 2025; Yang, 2024). AI is frequently framed as an indispensable aid for productivity and accessibility (Lai, 2025; Msambwa et al., 2025). However, students also navigate significant ethical ambiguity, acknowledging concerns about authorship, plagiarism risks, over-dependence, and uncertainty regarding institutional expectations and boundaries for acceptable use (Shi et al., 2025; Yang, 2024). This creates a tension between valuing AI's support and recognizing the potential compromises to authentic learning and academic standards.

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2.4. *Algorithmic Bias, Surveillance, and Threats to Agency:*

The literature consistently identifies algorithmic bias and surveillance culture as critical ethical risks associated with AI writing tools. Studies demonstrate that AI systems, trained on large corpora reflecting societal prejudices, can perpetuate biases in feedback quality, content recommendations, and even text generation, disproportionately affecting non-dominant linguistic and cultural groups (Ali et al., 2024; Qadhi et al., 2024). Furthermore, the proliferation of AI analytics for monitoring writing processes fosters a culture of surveillance and mistrust. Students report feeling constantly monitored, which heightens anxiety, compromises cognitive autonomy, and detracts from the creative and exploratory aspects of writing (Kouam, 2024; Lin et al., 2024). This necessitates strong accountability mechanisms, fairness audits, explainable AI (XAI) protocols, and a fundamental balance between efficacy and respect for student privacy and agency (Gao et al., 2025; Qadhi et al., 2024).

2.5. *Institutional Policy Lags, Governance Gaps, and Disciplinary Variances:*

A recurrent theme is the significant lag between rapid technological advancement and the development of adequate institutional policies and governance frameworks. Existing policies are frequently criticized as reactive, fragmented, vague, and insufficiently inclusive of diverse stakeholder voices (especially students and adjunct faculty). They often lack specificity regarding acceptable AI use, transparency requirements, data privacy, equitable implementation, and standards for explainable AI (Alharbi, 2024; Wu et al., 2024; Yoo, 2025). This governance gap erodes trust and creates ambiguity. Adding complexity are significant disciplinary variances in AI acceptance and usage. STEM fields often demonstrate greater receptivity, viewing AI as an efficiency tool for technical drafting and data processing, while humanities fields express stronger reservations, emphasizing the preservation of authentic voice, critical interpretation, and creative expression (Amirjalili et al., 2024; Hao et al., 2024; Rabbianty et al., 2023; Trần, 2024). This heterogeneity underscores the need for context-sensitive, discipline-specific policies rather than one-size-fits-all approaches.

2.6. *Toward Solutions: Governance, Pedagogy, Literacy, and Ethics:*

In response to these challenges, the literature increasingly advocates for multi-faceted solutions:

- *Collaborative Governance*: Emphasizing participatory, multi-stakeholder approaches (faculty, students, administrators, librarians, technologists) for policy design, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and ethics committees (Gao et al., 2025; Perkins & Roe, 2023).
- *Pedagogical Redesign*: Integrating AI literacy and critical evaluation of AI outputs into the curriculum, rethinking assignments and assessments to emphasize process, reflection, and human-AI collaboration, and developing strategies that leverage AI's benefits while safeguarding critical thinking (Karadağ, 2023; Kong et al., 2024; Miller, 2024; Parviz, 2025).
- *Professional Development & Digital Literacy*: Prioritizing training for both faculty and students to build technical proficiency, critical pedagogical strategies for AI integration, ethical awareness, and the ability to evaluate and use AI responsibly (Alharbi, 2024; Bozkurt, 2024; Nadhifah et al., 2024; Simms, 2024).
- *Ethical Guidelines & Explainable AI (XAI)*: Developing clear, sector-specific ethical guidelines mandating transparency (e.g., contribution statements), explainability (traceability of AI suggestions), fairness audits, data stewardship, and user consent (Gao et al., 2025; Subaveerapandiyan et al., 2025).

2.7. *A Double-Edged Sword Requiring Balanced Integration:*

The literature presents AI in academic writing as a potent double-edged sword (Bozkurt, 2024; Kouam, 2024; Mapletoft et al., 2024). While offering unprecedented opportunities for efficiency, personalization, accessibility, and even transformative pedagogical models, its unchecked application poses substantial risks to academic integrity, critical thinking, authentic voice, equity (through bias), student agency, and privacy. Stakeholder perspectives, particularly the divergent concerns of faculty and the pragmatic yet ethically aware embrace by students, highlight the complex tensions inherent in this integration. The consensus points to a critical need for proactive, collaborative, and ethically grounded approaches

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encompassing robust governance, innovative pedagogy, comprehensive literacy initiatives, and clear ethical frameworks. Successfully navigating this landscape requires continuous dialogue, adaptive policies sensitive to disciplinary contexts, and a fundamental commitment to balancing technological innovation with the preservation of core educational values (Doskaliuk et al., 2025; Katsamakas et al., 2024; Miao et al., 2023; Suna & Özer, 2025; Wang, 2025). Despite extensive discussion of AI's impacts, a significant gap persists in rich qualitative research capturing the nuanced, lived experiences and divergent rationales of both key stakeholder groups—faculty and students—particularly across diverse disciplines. This study directly addresses this gap by employing a phenomenological approach to explore the complex interplay of attitudes, ethical tensions, and policy needs surrounding AI in academic writing, foregrounding interdisciplinary stakeholder perspectives often underrepresented in prior surveys.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

This study adopted a qualitative, phenomenological research design to explore the nuanced perspectives and lived experiences of university faculty and students regarding the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic writing. A qualitative approach was selected to capture the depth and complexity of stakeholders' attitudes, ethical considerations, and practical interactions with AI tools, which are often underexplored in quantitative surveys (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenology was specifically chosen as the theoretical framework to foreground the essence of participants' experiences and contextual rationales, providing a holistic understanding of AI's role in academia (Moustakas, 1994). This study aligns with an interpretive phenomenological stance, emphasizing the co-construction of meaning between researchers and participants to interpret subjective experiences within their socio-cultural contexts, rather than purely descriptive accounts.

3.2. Participants

A purposive, criterion-based sampling strategy was employed to recruit a diverse sample of 40 participants, comprising 20 university faculty members and 20 students, to ensure a broad spectrum of perspectives on AI writing tool usage. Participants were drawn from four higher education institutions in Iran, representing a mix of public university, Azad (Private) university, Payame Noor university, and Farhangian university, to capture varied institutional perspectives. Faculty participants (n=20) included tenured and non-tenured professors with at least two years of teaching experience, representing diverse academic disciplines: humanities and social sciences (n=7), STEM fields (n=7), and medical sciences (n=6). Inclusion criteria required faculty to have prior exposure to AI writing tools (e.g., Grammarly, ChatGPT) in coursework or assessment, ensuring a range of familiarity from regular users to those with limited experience. Student participants (n=20) consisted of undergraduate (n=12) and graduate (n=8) students. They were similarly distributed across disciplines: humanities and social sciences (n=7), STEM fields (n=7), and medical sciences (n=6). Eligibility criteria mandated self-reported use of AI writing tools at least once in academic work, capturing a spectrum of experience levels from novice to frequent users. The equal distribution between faculty and students was intentional to ensure balanced representation of the two primary stakeholder groups, facilitating comparative analysis without implying proportional representation in the broader population.

3.3. Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted between January and May 2025, with each interview lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. This approach allowed for flexibility in exploring participants' perspectives while ensuring consistency across interviews. An interview guide was developed based on the study's objectives, comprising open-ended questions and probes tailored to different stakeholder groups (e.g., faculty and students). The guide covered four key areas: (1) participants' experiences with AI writing tools, (2) perceptions of AI's benefits (e.g., efficiency and personalized feedback) and risks in academic writing, (3) ethical considerations, and (4) perspectives on institutional policies and pedagogical implications. For instance, faculty were asked about AI detection tools and academic integrity, while students were probed on AI's role in addressing writing challenges. The interview guide was pilot-tested with two faculty members and two students to refine questions and ensure clarity. Interviews were conducted individually, either in person or via a secure video conferencing platform (e.g., Google Meet), depending on

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participant preference and logistical constraints, to accommodate schedules and ensure accessibility. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim.

3.4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to systematically analyze the interview transcripts, following their six-phase framework: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. To ensure a rigorous and systematic process, transcripts were imported into NVivo 13 software, which facilitated coding, and cross-case comparisons between stakeholder groups, including students and faculty. The analysis began with two researchers independently reading all transcripts to achieve immersion and generate initial codes inductively. These codes captured recurring concepts such as "academic integrity," "efficiency," "ethical ambiguity," "disciplinary differences," and "productivity enhancement." To enhance reliability, the researchers independently coded a subset of transcripts, achieving an intercoder agreement of 0.87. Discrepancies in coding were discussed and resolved through consensus during regular team meetings, ensuring consistency in the application of the coding framework. Initial codes were iteratively refined and aggregated into candidate themes, such as "AI as a productivity tool," "concerns about critical thinking," "policy gaps," and "disciplinary nuance." These themes were reviewed against the data corpus to ensure coherence, distinct boundaries, and alignment with the research objectives. The research team engaged in reflexive discussions to mitigate potential biases and ensure that the analysis accurately reflected participants' perspectives. To further enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, member checking was conducted by sharing summaries of preliminary themes with a subset of participants (n=8), whose feedback was incorporated to validate interpretations. The iterative process of coding, theme development, and member checking ensured a robust and nuanced analysis, capturing the complexity of participants' perspectives while maintaining fidelity to the study's objectives.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Adhering to ethical guidelines for human research, this study prioritized participant welfare and data integrity. Voluntary informed consent was secured from all participants after full disclosure of the purpose, methods, potential benefits, and their unconditional right to withdraw. Participant anonymity was ensured by replacing identifiers with unique codes, and confidentiality was rigorously maintained throughout the research process. Findings were aggregated in reporting to prevent individual identification.

4. Results

This section presents the findings from a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with 40 participants—20 university faculty members and 20 students—regarding their perspectives on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic writing. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, with coding facilitated by NVivo 13 software, achieving an intercoder agreement of 0.87. Member checking with a subset of participants (n=8) validated the identified themes. Four key themes emerged: (1) AI as a Productivity Tool, (2) Concerns about Critical Thinking and Academic Integrity, (3) Ethical Considerations (sub-themes: Plagiarism and Authorship Ambiguities; Surveillance and Privacy Concerns), and (4) Disciplinary Differences in AI Acceptance. These themes illuminate both shared and divergent views among stakeholders, reflecting the multifaceted role of AI in academia.

Theme 1: AI as a Productivity Tool

Participants widely acknowledged AI's capacity to enhance writing efficiency, provide personalized feedback, and improve accessibility. Students emphasized AI as a vital resource for managing academic demands. They highlighted its value in overcoming writer's block ("*ChatGPT helps me get started when I'm staring at a blank page, paralyzed*"), refining and structuring ideas ("*It helps me take my messy thoughts and organize them coherently*"), and managing heavy workloads ("*When I have three papers due, using AI for drafting or summarizing sources is the only way to keep up*"). Students acknowledged using AI tools extensively for brainstorming, drafting, and language polishing. An undergraduate student in humanities shared, "*AI tools like Grammarly and ChatGPT have been lifesavers for me. They help me catch mistakes and suggest better ways to*

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phrase things, which saves me a lot of time." A STEM graduate student added, "*For lab reports, AI is really helpful in organizing data and ensuring clarity.*" Faculty recognized these benefits but expressed reservations about overreliance. A social sciences professor noted, "*AI can be a useful aid, but it shouldn't replace the hard work of thinking through an argument.*" A medical sciences faculty member similarly remarked, "*In technical writing, AI can streamline drafting, but students must still grasp the underlying concepts.*"

Theme 2: Concerns about Critical Thinking and Academic Integrity

Apprehensions about AI's impact on critical thinking and academic integrity were prominent. Faculty frequently highlighted risks to students' intellectual development. Their primary concerns centered on academic integrity, fearing AI tools facilitate plagiarism and undermine the authenticity of student work. As one humanities professor stated, "*When the words aren't theirs, the learning isn't theirs. It erodes the fundamental purpose of writing assignments.*" A social science professor stated, "*The danger is that students might accept AI-generated content without questioning it, which could stifle their critical thinking abilities."* A STEM faculty member echoed, "*I worry that AI might make students lazy, relying on it to do the thinking for them.*" Students recognized these concerns but often positioned AI as a supportive tool. An engineering graduate student explained, "*I know there's a risk of relying too much on AI, but I try to use it as a starting point and then build on it with my own ideas.*" However, some admitted to ethical lapses under pressure, with one student confessing, "*Sometimes, when I'm overwhelmed, I let AI do more of the work than I should.*"

Theme 3: Ethical Considerations

Ethical uncertainties emerged as a critical theme, encompassing distinct yet interrelated sub-themes: plagiarism and authorship ambiguities, and surveillance and privacy concerns.

Sub-theme 3.1: Plagiarism and Authorship Ambiguities

Both groups grappled with ambiguities surrounding plagiarism, authorship attribution, and ethical boundaries for AI use. Faculty questioned AI detection tools' reliability, with one noting, "*Current AI detection tools are unreliable; they often misidentify human-written text as AI-generated, which creates unnecessary suspicion*." Students expressed confusion over what constitutes plagiarism in AI-assisted work, with a medical sciences undergraduate stating, "*I'm not sure what's allowed and what's not when it comes to using AI in assignments.*"

Sub-theme 3.2: Surveillance and Privacy Concerns

Participants also raised concerns about surveillance culture and data privacy. Students remarked on feeling monitored, with one saying, "*I feel like AI tools are watching my every move, and I'm not sure how my data is being used.*" Faculty echoed these worries, advocating for policies that address data handling: "*We need robust policies to address issues like plagiarism, data privacy, and the ethical use of AI in academic work.*"

Both sub-themes underscored policy gaps, with stakeholders criticizing the lack of clear institutional guidance.

Theme 4: Disciplinary Differences in AI Acceptance

Attitudes toward AI varied by discipline. Faculty in STEM and Medical fields demonstrated greater comfort with using AI for technical drafting, data summarization, and initial report structuring. The focus was often on efficiency and accuracy in conveying technical information. "*For drafting methods sections or summarizing complex findings, AI can be a useful assistant, freeing up time for deeper analysis*," commented a medical sciences professor. An engineering professor commented, "*In engineering, AI can help with drafting technical reports, which is great as long as students understand the content.*" In contrast, faculty in Humanities and Social Sciences expressed the strongest reservations, emphasizing the threat to authentic voice, nuanced argumentation, and the development of critical interpretive skills. They perceived writing as an intrinsically human process central to their disciplines. "*The struggle with language is where meaning is forged. AI smooths that out, but at the cost of depth and originality, In the humanities, the authenticity of voice is crucial. AI might help with grammar, but it can't capture the nuance of human expression*." argued a literature professor. Students mirrored these differences. A STEM student noted, "*AI helps me structure technical content efficiently*," while a humanities student said, "*I use AI for initial drafts, but I always rewrite extensively to make sure it reflects my own voice*." Students in these disciplines, while still using AI for support, were more likely to echo concerns about authenticity impacting their learning.

The following table summarizes and compares faculty and student perspectives across the identified themes, providing a concise overview of their views.

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Table 1

Comparison of Faculty and Student Perspectives on AI in Academic Writing

Theme	Faculty Perspective	Student Perspective
AI as a Productivity Tool	Cautiously optimistic; value efficiency but stress oversight to prevent overreliance.	Highly enthusiastic; see AI as essential for workload management and writing support.
Concerns about Critical Thinking	Deep concern about erosion of skills and dependency on AI.	Acknowledge risks but view AI as a complement to their own efforts.
Ethical Considerations	Call for clear policies on integrity, privacy, and transparency; distrust AI detection. Sub-themes: Emphasize plagiarism risks and surveillance as threats to trust.	Confused by policy gaps; worried about surveillance and data use. Sub-themes: Navigate authorship ambiguities and feel monitored in writing processes.
Disciplinary Differences	STEM more accepting for technical tasks; humanities skeptical of impact on authenticity.	STEM use AI for structure; humanities focus on preserving personal voice.

The findings reveal a nuanced interplay of enthusiasm and apprehension regarding AI in academic writing. Students embrace AI's practical benefits, while faculty temper their approval with concerns about skill development and integrity. Ethical and policy gaps exacerbate these tensions, and disciplinary differences highlight the need for tailored approaches. These insights provide a foundation for understanding AI's evolving role in academia, setting the stage for further interpretation in the discussion section.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this qualitative study illuminate the multifaceted perspectives of university faculty and students on the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic writing, revealing both its transformative potential and inherent challenges. Based on thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with 40 participants (20 students and 20 faculty members), four key themes emerged: (1) AI as a productivity tool, (2) concerns about critical thinking and academic integrity, (3) ethical considerations (with sub-themes on plagiarism/authorship ambiguities and surveillance/privacy concerns), and (4) disciplinary differences in AI acceptance. This discussion interprets these findings in relation to existing literature, critically engaging with prior work to highlight convergences, divergences, and theoretical extensions. It then explores implications for practice, limitations, and directions for future research, offering a nuanced understanding of AI's evolving role in academia.

5.1. AI as a Productivity Tool

The perception of AI as a productivity tool highlights its practical value, particularly for students who rely on it to overcome writer's block, refine ideas, and manage academic workloads. This aligns with prior research framing AI as a facilitator of efficiency and accessibility (Lai, 2025; Msambwa et al., 2025). Students' descriptions of AI as a "lifesaver" for drafting and organizing thoughts echo the literature's emphasis on its role in supporting diverse learners (Abduljawad, 2024; Thong et al., 2023). However, faculty's caution about overreliance challenges the optimistic narratives in some studies (Namjoo et al., 2023), extending the debate by suggesting that productivity gains may come at the expense of cognitive depth, as critiqued by Nwokocha et al. (2025) and Shalevska and Kostadinovska-Stojchevska (2024). This tension reflects a broader scholarly discourse on balancing AI's efficiency with intellectual labor, where our findings underscore the need for governance frameworks to mediate these benefits (Perkins & Roe, 2023).

5.2. Concerns about Critical Thinking and Academic Integrity

Faculty apprehension about AI's impact on critical thinking and academic integrity emerged as a dominant theme, resonating with the literature's focus on these risks (Amirjalili et al., 2024; Kotsis, 2024). Faculty fears that AI could erode analytical skills and facilitate plagiarism align with research highlighting the threat to traditional academic values (Schneider et al., 2025). Yet, students' positioning of AI as a complement rather than a substitute reveals a generational divide, critiquing overly pessimistic views in

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the literature (Sullivan et al., 2023) by demonstrating contextual agency in AI use. The study also corroborates concerns about the unreliability of AI detection tools, which faculty criticized for frequent false positives—a limitation well-documented (Bing & Leong, 2025; Rasheed et al., 2025)—but extends this by linking it to broader ethical frameworks like XAI, arguing that detection alone insufficiently addresses integrity without explainability (Gao et al., 2025).

5.3. *Ethical Considerations*

The ethical ambiguities and sub-themes identified—plagiarism/authorship ambiguities and surveillance/privacy concerns—mirror the literature's critique of institutional unpreparedness (Alharbi, 2024; Wu et al., 2024). Faculty and students' frustration over unclear guidelines on plagiarism and data privacy challenges reactive policy approaches in prior work (Perkins & Roe, 2023), extending the discourse by differentiating sub-themes to reveal how plagiarism erodes trust in authorship (Bozkurt, 2024) while surveillance heightens anxiety and undermines agency (Kouam, 2024; Lin et al., 2024). Students' unease about data usage further critiques bias-related risks (Qadhi et al., 2024), advocating for XAI protocols to ensure transparency and fairness, thus integrating ethics frameworks more deeply than surface-level discussions in existing studies.

5.4. *Disciplinary Differences in AI Acceptance*

Disciplinary variances in AI acceptance reveal context-specific attitudes, with STEM faculty embracing AI for technical tasks and humanities faculty resisting its impact on authentic voice. This pattern aligns with prior studies noting greater receptivity in STEM fields and skepticism in the humanities (Rabbianty et al., 2023; Trần, 2024). Students reflected similar influences, but our findings critique one-size-fits-all assumptions (Chanpradit, 2025)by emphasizing how disciplinary nuances amplify ethical tensions, calling for governance models sensitive to these variances (Katsamakas et al., 2024).

5.5. *Implications for Practice*

The findings advocate for a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach to AI governance, integrating pedagogical redesign, ethical guidelines, and professional development. Institutions should address policy gaps by establishing clear, transparent guidelines on AI usage, covering plagiarism, privacy, and transparency. Specific actionable recommendations include: (1) implementing standardized AI use statements in assignments, requiring students to disclose and reflect on AI contributions to promote transparency; (2) organizing faculty-student AI workshops focused on ethical literacy and collaborative tool evaluation to bridge digital divides; and (3) adopting transparent data handling protocols, such as anonymized AI analytics with user consent, to mitigate surveillance concerns. Incorporating explainable AI (XAI) protocols could further mitigate bias and surveillance, ensuring accountability and fairness (Gao et al., 2025; Subaveerapandiyan et al., 2025). Pedagogically, faculty should redesign assignments to emphasize process over product—e.g., requiring reflections on AI use or critical evaluations of AI outputs—to foster critical thinking (Kong et al., 2024; Parviz, 2025). Professional development programs are also essential to enhance digital literacy among faculty and students, enabling responsible AI use (Alharbi, 2024; Simms, 2024). Given disciplinary differences, institutions should adopt flexible, context-sensitive policies, allowing STEM fields to leverage AI for efficiency while protecting the interpretive depth valued in the humanities.

5.6. *Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

While providing rich qualitative insights, this study has limitations. Its focus on Iranian universities limits direct generalizability, though the core tensions likely resonate globally. The purposive sampling, while ensuring diversity within the context, does not claim representativeness. The absence of administrative perspectives is a gap, as their role in policy implementation is crucial. Future research should pursue several critical avenues to advance understanding of AI's role in academic writing. First, large-scale, cross-cultural comparative studies are needed to explore contextual variations in stakeholder perceptions and policy effectiveness across diverse educational systems. Subsequently, rigorous investigation into the impact of specific pedagogical interventions integrating AI is essential to evaluate their effects on learning outcomes and core skill development. Additionally, researchers must explore the perspectives and roles of administrators and educational technologists to comprehensively understand their influence on institutional AI governance frameworks. There is also an urgent need to develop and evaluate specialized frameworks for explainable AI (XAI) and bias

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mitigation tailored to academic writing tools, addressing transparency and equity concerns. Finally, longitudinal research should examine the long-term cognitive effects of AI-assisted writing on critical thinking capacities and knowledge retention, providing crucial insights into sustainable pedagogical integration. These interconnected directions will collectively inform evidence-based policies and practices in the evolving AI-academia landscape.

5.7. Conclusion

This study underscores that AI in academic writing is a potent, double-edged sword (Bozkurt, 2024; Kouam, 2024). It offers tangible benefits in efficiency, accessibility, and support, particularly valued by students. However, it simultaneously poses significant risks to academic integrity, critical thinking, authentic voice, equity, student agency, and privacy, raising profound concerns among faculty. The identified disciplinary nuances and the glaring policy vacuum exacerbate these tensions. This research makes an original contribution by providing in-depth qualitative evidence from an underrepresented Iranian context, bridging gaps in stakeholder voices and interdisciplinary perspectives while advancing multi-stakeholder governance and XAI frameworks. Its implications extend to global higher education, urging institutions to foster collaborative governance, innovative pedagogy, digital literacy, and ethical frameworks. Successfully navigating this landscape requires moving beyond reactionary measures and surveillance. Instead, institutions must proactively harness AI's potential to reimagine academic writing in ways that enhance, rather than erode, the fundamental educational values of critical inquiry, authentic expression, and intellectual integrity.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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