

A Framework for Evaluating Researcher Ethical Perceptions and Practices Toward Generative Artificial Intelligence

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ABSTRACT: Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has rapidly become an influential research-support technology, enabling researchers to generate text, summarize information, refine language, assist with ideation, and support other stages of scholarly work. Its increasing integration into research processes, however, introduces ethical concerns involving authorship, transparency, accountability, originality, privacy, bias, misinformation, and responsible use. This article develops a conceptual framework for evaluating researchers' ethical perceptions and practices toward GenAI. The study adopts a research-and-review approach based exclusively on the supplied literature concerning artificial intelligence ethics, ChatGPT, academic research, publication ethics, higher education, and responsible scholarly use. The proposed framework integrates five principal dimensions: ethical awareness, perceived risks and benefits, responsible-use practices, transparency and accountability, and institutional governance. The analysis indicates that ethical awareness should not be understood merely as knowledge of ethical principles; rather, it should be evaluated through the relationship between researchers' perceptions and their actual practices when using GenAI. The framework further distinguishes between awareness and responsible behavior, emphasizing that researchers may recognize ethical risks while still lacking consistent mechanisms for disclosure, verification, or accountability. The article concludes that systematic ethical evaluation can strengthen responsible GenAI adoption in research environments by connecting individual researcher judgment with institutional policies and professional standards.

KEYWORDS: Generative Artificial Intelligence, Research Ethics, Ethical Awareness, ChatGPT, Research Practices, Academic Integrity, Responsible AI, Ethical Perception, Researcher Behavior.

1. Introduction

Generative Artificial Intelligence has moved from being a specialized computational technology to an increasingly visible component of academic and research workflows. Systems capable of generating and transforming natural-language content can support researchers in activities such as drafting, editing, summarization, ideation, information organization, and communication. The growing acceptance of ChatGPT and related systems in educational environments demonstrates that researchers and learners increasingly perceive conversational AI as a practical support technology rather than merely an experimental innovation (Habibi et al., 2023). Haleem et al. (2022) similarly characterize ChatGPT as a significant technological development with substantial capabilities as well as important challenges.

The expansion of GenAI in research creates an

ethical problem that is more complex than the simple question of whether researchers should use AI. The central issue concerns how researchers understand, evaluate, disclose, control, and justify their use of AI. Kingsley (2023) emphasizes the complexity of using generative AI within research processes, indicating that the technology can facilitate scholarly work while simultaneously creating difficult questions concerning appropriate use. Consequently, ethical awareness must encompass both recognition of risks and the capacity to translate that recognition into responsible research practices.

The ethical dimensions of artificial intelligence have been examined from broader theoretical perspectives. Siau and Wang (2020) distinguish between the ethics of AI and the development of ethical AI, thereby establishing a conceptual foundation for examining both ethical consequences and responsible technological design. Kirova et al. (2023) extend these concerns into the

era of GenAI, highlighting the need to consider ethical issues associated with increasingly capable artificial intelligence. Stahl and Eke (2024) specifically examine ethical issues surrounding ChatGPT, reinforcing the argument that generative systems require critical examination rather than unconditional adoption.

Within academic research, ethical concerns become particularly significant because scholarly communication depends on principles of originality, attribution, transparency, credibility, and accountability. Leung et al. (2023) discuss responsible practices for using AI tools in roles involving authorship, peer review, and editorial work. Rahimi and Talebi Bezmin Abadi (2023) likewise connect ChatGPT with publication ethics, while Schlagwein and Willcocks (2023) examine the broader ethical implications of generative AI in research and science.

Against this background, the present article develops a framework for evaluating researchers' ethical perceptions and practices toward GenAI. The objectives are to identify the major dimensions of researcher ethical awareness, distinguish perceptions from actual practices, establish a structured evaluation model, and identify implications for responsible research governance. The scope is limited to GenAI use within scholarly and research contexts and is theoretically grounded exclusively in the supplied literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Generative AI and the Research Environment

The emergence of ChatGPT has substantially expanded the practical accessibility of generative AI. Habibi et al. (2023) examine acceptance and use in higher education, illustrating that adoption is influenced by users' perceptions of the usefulness and applicability of the technology. Haleem et al. (2022) similarly emphasize the broad capabilities of ChatGPT while recognizing challenges associated with its use.

From a research perspective, the significance of GenAI lies in its ability to intervene in multiple stages of scholarly work. Researchers may use such systems to generate preliminary text, restructure arguments, summarize materials, or assist with communication. Kingsley (2023), however, characterizes the relationship between generative AI and research as complicated. This position is important because technological usefulness does not automatically establish ethical acceptability. A system can be highly useful while still requiring human verification and responsible oversight.

The literature therefore suggests that researcher evaluation should not focus exclusively on frequency of GenAI use. Instead, assessment should consider the

purpose of use, degree of human control, verification practices, disclosure, and awareness of ethical consequences.

2.2 Ethical Foundations of Artificial Intelligence

Siau and Wang (2020) provide an important theoretical basis by examining both AI ethics and ethical AI. Their perspective implies that ethical assessment must address not only technological capabilities but also the values, responsibilities, and consequences associated with AI deployment.

Kirova et al. (2023) situate these questions specifically within the era of GenAI, while Stahl and Eke (2024) focus on the ethical issues associated with ChatGPT. Together, these works indicate that generative AI introduces a multidimensional ethical environment. Researchers must consider issues such as the reliability of generated information, responsible human oversight, ownership and attribution, and the consequences of delegating intellectual tasks to AI systems.

Jeon et al. (2024) further emphasize ethical considerations in social science research and community-based AI research. Their contribution is particularly relevant because research ethics can depend on context. An AI practice that appears harmless in one research activity may create substantial ethical implications when sensitive research populations, interpretations, or socially consequential decisions are involved.

2.3 GenAI, Publication Ethics, and Scholarly Responsibility

Publication ethics represents one of the most important contexts for evaluating researchers' practices. Rahimi and Talebi Bezmin Abadi (2023) directly connect ChatGPT with publication ethics, demonstrating the relevance of AI-generated content to scholarly communication. Leung et al. (2023) address appropriate AI use by authors, peer reviewers, and editors, thereby expanding the ethical discussion beyond manuscript preparation.

Schlagwein and Willcocks (2023) argue that the use of generative AI in research and science requires serious ethical consideration. This perspective reinforces the principle that researchers remain responsible for scholarly outputs even when AI systems contribute to their production.

The literature consequently reveals a distinction between technological assistance and intellectual accountability. AI can assist a researcher, but assistance does not necessarily transfer scholarly responsibility to the technology. Ethical awareness therefore requires researchers to recognize where human judgment must remain central.

2.4 Research Gap

Although the supplied literature discusses AI ethics, ChatGPT, academic use, and publication responsibility, a clear integrative requirement emerges: ethical awareness needs to be evaluated through a framework that simultaneously considers researchers' perceptions and practices.

Existing discussions frequently focus on individual ethical issues or general principles. A researcher may understand that AI-generated information should be verified but may not consistently verify outputs in practice. Similarly, a researcher may recognize the importance of disclosure but may not disclose every relevant use of AI. Therefore, measuring ethical awareness exclusively through attitudes or self-reported knowledge can provide an incomplete assessment.

The proposed framework addresses this gap by connecting ethical awareness → perception → decision-making → practice → accountability. It positions responsible GenAI use as a behavioral and institutional issue rather than solely an attitudinal one.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This article employs a conceptual research-and-review methodology. The framework was developed through analytical synthesis of the twelve references supplied for the study. No primary survey responses, interviews, experimental observations, or fabricated numerical findings are introduced. The methodological objective is to transform recurring ethical concepts in the supplied literature into measurable dimensions for evaluating researchers' perceptions and practices.

The conceptual approach is appropriate because the central research problem concerns the structure of ethical evaluation rather than estimation of a particular population parameter. Kingsley (2023) demonstrates the complexity surrounding GenAI-assisted research, while Siau and Wang (2020), Kirova et al. (2023), and Stahl and Eke (2024) establish broader ethical foundations.

3.2 Proposed Ethical Evaluation Framework

The proposed framework consists of five interconnected dimensions:

Ethical Awareness. This dimension measures whether researchers recognize the principal ethical implications of GenAI. Awareness includes understanding the limitations of generated information, possible bias, attribution concerns, privacy implications, academic integrity, and the necessity of human oversight.

Ethical Perception. Awareness alone does not establish how researchers evaluate specific uses of GenAI. Perception concerns whether researchers consider a particular AI-assisted activity acceptable, conditionally acceptable, or ethically problematic. For example, using AI for language refinement may be perceived differently from allowing AI to generate substantial intellectual content.

Responsible-Use Practices. This dimension evaluates actual researcher behavior. Relevant practices include verifying generated information, reviewing AI-produced text, protecting sensitive research information, maintaining human judgment, and using AI as an assistance mechanism rather than an uncontrolled substitute for scholarly reasoning.

Transparency and Accountability. Researchers should be able to explain the role played by GenAI in their scholarly workflow. Leung et al. (2023) and Rahimi and Talebi Bezmin Abadi (2023) make this dimension particularly significant in the context of authorship and publication ethics. Transparency concerns disclosure and traceability, whereas accountability concerns responsibility for the final scholarly product.

Institutional Governance. Individual ethical decision-making operates within institutional environments. Research organizations, universities, journals, and professional communities can influence responsible AI behavior through policies, guidance, training, and accountability mechanisms. The framework therefore treats ethical practice as an interaction between individual awareness and institutional expectations.

3.3 Functional Relationship among the Dimensions

The framework can be represented as:

GenAI Exposure → Ethical Awareness → Ethical Perception → Responsible Decision-Making → Responsible Practice → Transparency & Accountability

Institutional governance surrounds this sequence and influences every stage.

This structure recognizes that ethical behavior is not necessarily a linear consequence of knowledge. A researcher may possess high ethical awareness but demonstrate inconsistent practices because of time pressure, uncertainty regarding policy, inadequate training, or perceived productivity benefits. Conversely, a researcher may follow institutional rules even when personal ethical understanding remains limited.

3.4 Evaluation Indicators

The framework can be operationalized using a structured questionnaire based on Likert-scale statements and scenario-based questions. Awareness items could evaluate recognition of ethical risks.

Perception items could examine judgments concerning specific GenAI applications. Practice items could measure verification, disclosure, and human review. Accountability items could examine willingness to accept responsibility for AI-assisted outputs.

Scenario-based evaluation is especially valuable because abstract agreement with ethical principles may not predict behavior. For example, participants could be presented with a hypothetical case involving AI-generated paragraphs containing unsupported claims. Respondents would then indicate whether they would verify, revise, disclose, or reject the material. Such an approach measures practical ethical reasoning more directly than general attitudinal questions.

3.5 Analytical Model

A conceptual scoring model may assign each dimension a standardized score:

$$\text{Ethical Responsibility Index (ERI)} = (\text{EA} + \text{EP} + \text{RP} + \text{TA} + \text{IG}) / 5$$

where EA represents Ethical Awareness, EP represents Ethical Perception, RP represents Responsible Practices, TA represents Transparency and Accountability, and IG represents Institutional Governance.

The index should not be interpreted as a universal ethical score. Its principal purpose is comparative diagnosis. A researcher group could demonstrate high awareness but relatively weak transparency, indicating an implementation gap. Another group could demonstrate strong institutional compliance but weaker independent ethical reasoning. Such differences would be more informative than a single undifferentiated measure.

3.6 Hypothetical Application

Consider two researchers using GenAI to prepare a literature review. Researcher A uses the system to generate summaries and incorporates them without checking the underlying information. Researcher B uses GenAI only to organize preliminary ideas, verifies substantive claims against original literature, revises generated material, and transparently acknowledges relevant AI assistance where appropriate. Both researchers may report high familiarity with GenAI, but their practices reflect substantially different levels of ethical responsibility.

This example illustrates why ethical evaluation must move beyond technology acceptance. Habibi et al. (2023) demonstrate the importance of acceptance and use, but responsible research requires an additional layer of ethical evaluation.

4. Results / Findings

The conceptual synthesis produces several principal findings. First, ethical awareness is multidimensional. The supplied literature does not support reducing ethical awareness to a simple understanding that AI can create risks. Ethical awareness encompasses recognition of technological limitations, scholarly responsibility, publication ethics, transparency, and broader consequences of AI deployment. The perspectives of Siau and Wang (2020), Kirova et al. (2023), and Stahl and Eke (2024) collectively indicate that ethical evaluation must account for both the technology and the human context in which it is used.

Second, the analysis identifies a clear awareness–practice gap as a central evaluative concern. Researchers may understand that AI-generated content requires verification while failing to implement systematic verification procedures. Kingsley (2023) is particularly relevant because the research value of GenAI is accompanied by complexity rather than a straightforward benefit. Thus, awareness should be evaluated alongside observable or self-reported practices.

Third, purpose of use emerges as a critical ethical variable. The ethical implications of GenAI are unlikely to be identical across all research activities. Assistance with language refinement, brainstorming, summarization, data interpretation, and substantive content generation can involve different degrees of intellectual delegation. The framework therefore evaluates use according to the researcher's role, the degree of AI contribution, and the extent of human control.

Fourth, transparency and accountability represent distinct but related constructs. A researcher may disclose that AI was used but still fail to take responsibility for inaccuracies in the resulting work. Conversely, a researcher may carefully review an output but provide insufficient transparency regarding the extent of AI involvement. Leung et al. (2023), Rahimi and Talebi Bezmin Abadi (2023), and Schlagwein and Willcocks (2023) support the importance of examining AI use within scholarly communication and publication ethics.

Fifth, institutional governance is necessary but insufficient. Policies can establish minimum standards, yet ethical research practice ultimately requires individual judgment. The framework consequently treats institutional governance as an enabling and constraining factor rather than a substitute for researcher responsibility.

Finally, the framework indicates that GenAI acceptance should not be treated as evidence of ethical maturity. Habibi et al. (2023) demonstrate the importance of acceptance and use, whereas the present framework adds an ethical dimension by examining whether use is

controlled, transparent, critically evaluated, and consistent with scholarly responsibility. This distinction provides a more comprehensive basis for evaluating researcher behavior toward GenAI.

5. Discussion

The proposed framework contributes to the theoretical understanding of GenAI ethics by connecting broad AI-ethics principles with the concrete behavior of researchers. Siau and Wang (2020) provide a foundational distinction between ethics concerning AI and the development of ethical AI. In the research environment, this distinction can be translated into two related questions: what ethical risks arise from researchers' use of GenAI, and what practices should researchers adopt to manage those risks?

The framework also challenges the assumption that ethical awareness is equivalent to ethical behavior. Awareness represents cognitive recognition, whereas practice represents the application of ethical judgment. This distinction is important because GenAI tools are designed to reduce effort and increase productivity. The very convenience that encourages adoption can also encourage researchers to delegate tasks without sufficiently examining the consequences. Kingsley (2023) captures this tension by emphasizing that the relationship between GenAI and research is complicated rather than inherently beneficial or harmful.

A second implication concerns human accountability. The use of GenAI can blur responsibility because generated content may appear authoritative even when it contains inaccuracies or inappropriate assumptions. Haleem et al. (2022) identify both capabilities and challenges associated with ChatGPT, suggesting that technological functionality should be evaluated alongside its limitations. The proposed framework therefore places human review at the center of responsible research practice.

The findings are also consistent with the publication-ethics perspective of Rahimi and Talebi Bezmin Abadi (2023). Academic research depends on trust in the relationship between authors, readers, editors, and institutions. If AI-generated material enters scholarly communication without appropriate scrutiny or disclosure, that trust may be weakened. Leung et al. (2023) similarly demonstrate that AI use must be considered across different scholarly roles, including authors, peer reviewers, and editors.

Another important issue is the tension between innovation and ethical control. Excessively restrictive policies may discourage productive experimentation with GenAI, while insufficient governance may normalize irresponsible use. The framework proposes a

middle position: institutions should establish clear minimum standards while allowing researchers to exercise informed judgment. Kirova et al. (2023) and Stahl and Eke (2024) reinforce the need to consider the wider ethical consequences of rapidly developing generative technologies.

The framework nevertheless has limitations. First, it is conceptual and requires empirical validation before being treated as a statistically validated measurement instrument. Second, ethical judgments may differ according to disciplinary context, institutional policy, research methodology, and type of AI application. Third, self-reported behavior can overestimate responsible practices because respondents may provide socially desirable answers. Scenario-based assessments and, where ethically appropriate, behavioral evidence could reduce this limitation.

Future research should therefore test the framework across different researcher populations and academic disciplines. Comparative studies could examine whether ethical awareness predicts responsible practice and whether institutional training reduces the gap between perception and behavior. Longitudinal research could additionally investigate whether ethical practices evolve as researchers gain greater experience with GenAI.

6. Conclusion

Generative Artificial Intelligence is becoming increasingly relevant to scholarly research, but technological adoption alone cannot establish responsible research practice. The central contribution of this article is a conceptual framework for evaluating researcher ethical perceptions and practices through five dimensions: ethical awareness, ethical perception, responsible-use practices, transparency and accountability, and institutional governance.

The analysis demonstrates that ethical awareness should be treated as more than general familiarity with AI risks. Researchers must be able to translate ethical knowledge into responsible decisions, critical verification, appropriate disclosure, and continued human accountability. The distinction between perception and practice is particularly important because researchers may acknowledge ethical principles without consistently implementing them.

The proposed framework provides a structured basis for universities, research institutions, professional organizations, and future researchers to evaluate responsible GenAI use. Its emphasis on both individual behavior and institutional governance also avoids treating AI ethics as exclusively a technological or personal issue.

Future empirical studies should validate the proposed

dimensions, develop reliable measurement instruments, compare researcher groups, and examine the relationship between ethical awareness and actual GenAI practices. Such work can support a research culture in which GenAI is used not merely for efficiency, but within a framework of transparency, accountability, critical judgment, and scholarly integrity.

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