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Research Article

Plagiarism Ethics in Higher Education and Scholarly Publishing: A Systematic Literature Review of Behaviors, Policies and AI-Driven Challenge

Maskur[1,2*], Didik Dwi Prasetya[1], Hakkun Elmunsyah[1], Siti Sendari[1]
[1]Departement of Electrical Engineering and Informatics, Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia
[2]Departement of Business Administration, Politeknik Negeri Malang, Indonesia
Email: [1)] maskur.2505349@students.um.ac.id, [2)] didikdwi@um.ac.id, [3)] hakkun@um.ac.id, [4)] siti.sendari.ft@um.ac.id

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Abstract
The ecosystem of higher education and scholarly publications is fundamentally based on academic integrity and ethics. However, as technology advances, this picture continues to shift significantly, especially with the advent of large language models (LLMs). The objectives of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) are to summarize the existing research on plagiarism behavior, evaluate the efficacy of institutional rules, and consider the unique ethical issues raised by the incorporation of generative AI. The study examined 26 papers from the Scopus database that were published between 2020 and 2025 in accordance with PRISMA recommendations. The results imply that student plagiarism is mostly caused by ignorance and academic pressure. In the scientific domain, however, it appears as a complicated issue including handwriting and duplicate publications. Policies have been successful in combating classic types of plagiarism, but they have not been able to adjust to new ethical dangers. A "digital erosion of intellectual integrity" is the biggest threat posed by generative AI. Authorship and copyright concerns, as well as the failure of conventional detection technologies due to the fact that AI texts are frequently syntactically original but not conceptually original, are major obstacles. The implication is that in order to handle this technology ethically, institutions must move from a concentration on detection to a pedagogy of AI ethics, creating roadmaps and integrated decision-making frameworks.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Ethical Challenges, Higher Education, Plagiarism, Scholarly Publications.

1. Introduction

Academic integrity and ethics are important pillars of the higher education and scholarly publishing environment. However, as information technology advances, this environment continues to change significantly, altering the creation and distribution of knowledge. Academic integrity must be a fundamental value in tackling new issues in academic writing and research, especially with the advent of large language models (LLMs), according to recent literature (Singh & Kaur, 2025). Although technology is convenient, unrestricted internet use is frequently linked to negative consequences for students' moral behavior, and moral and instructional constraints are essential for reducing misconduct (Abbas et al., 2021). Plagiarism among students is frequently motivated by the belief that internet materials are easily accessible. A case study showed that the accessibility of "copying and pasting" from electronic sources has made plagiarism a big problem in higher education, as exemplified by an incident in which a student plagiarised two of his final-term papers (Malik et al., 2021). However, this behaviour is not always motivated by deceptive intent. A study of medical students in southern India indicated that plagiarism is often common due to a lack of awareness about how to avoid it, rather than purely due to deliberate intent (Raj et al., 2022). This is consistent with research from the Czech Republic that

highlights the significance of comprehending students' beliefs and attitudes in order to identify the crucial elements causing plagiarism prior to creating remedies (Filipec, 2021).

Higher education institutions have put in place a number of defensive and instructional measures in response to these behavioral issues. Turnitin and other plagiarism detection technologies have seen a sharp rise in usage. However, faculty views vary on whether this "policing" approach is viable or whether the focus should be more on educational factors (McIntire et al., 2024). In Nigeria, for example, institutions have imposed originality checks for every dissertation and thesis to maintain a tight code of ethics (Olukanm, 2022). On the other hand, educational initiatives have been proved to have major positive impacts. Training sessions on research ethics and plagiarism decreased students' tolerance for plagiarism and improved their comprehension of academic standards, according to a recent experimental study (Farooq et al., 2025). The professional world and academic publishing are not exempt from ethical dilemmas. The pressures of the "Publish or Perish" motto have raised the need for a greater knowledge of authorial accountability and the risks of ethical transgressions. From the standpoint of journal editors, plagiarism entails copying facts or rhetorical methods without sufficient acknowledgment, a crime sometimes challenging to detect without collective vigilance (Araujo Inastrilla et al., 2024; Soehartono et al., 2022). This intricacy is made worse by disparities in international ethical norms, which have spurred discussion over what constitutes plagiarism and the duplication of articles between nations (Chekhovich & Khazov, 2022).

The integration of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents a huge disruption, propelling academia into what has been called a "post-plagiarism" era (Eaton & Keyhani, 2025). The advent of modern technology is compelling scholars and editors to make challenging choices on the limits of originality. Some literature suggests that the usage of generative AI is fundamentally distinct from classic plagiarism and may be consistent with research norms if handled honestly. In contrast, some warn of potential hazards to research quality from reckless usage (Koplin, 2023). Thus, the purpose of this Systematic knowledge Review (SLR) is to map new ethical issues resulting from the integration of AI in higher education and academic publishing, assess the efficacy of institutional rules, and synthesize the current knowledge on plagiarism behavior.

This research seeks to answer three main questions. The first question explores how plagiarism is perceived within the context of higher education and scholarly literature. The second question investigates the extent to which existing policies are capable of addressing plagiarism issues in these two domains. The third question examines the specific ethical and policy challenges posed by generative artificial intelligence tools to academic plagiarism.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design will be used for this investigation. This design was selected in order to perform a thorough synthesis and analysis of the empirical data currently available on the ethics of plagiarism in two particular domains: scientific publication and higher education, especially as it relates to AI issues. To guarantee rigor and transparency at every level, from identification to synthesis of findings, the SLR process will adhere to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) criteria (Handayani et al., 2025).

2.2. Database

To guarantee thorough and pertinent coverage of the literature, highly reliable academic resources will be utilized. Access to peer-reviewed publications in the domains of technology, ethics, and education is taken into account while choosing databases. Scopus will be the database utilized.

This selection accords with conventional SLR methods for finding studies in the realms of education and scientific literature.

2.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were rigidly implemented to filter the articles most relevant to the Research Question (RQ).

Table 1. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for article selection

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Topic Focus	Articles in Higher Education (HE) or Scholarly Publishing that address plagiarism ethics, behavior, or policies.	Articles that address plagiarism in primary and secondary education.
Method	Relevant literature reviews, research articles, and case studies (such those covered by Allied Academies).	Opinions, editorials, or book chapters that lack a clear research approach.
Publication Year	Publications from 2020 to 2025 (to document changes since significant policy discussions and discuss the development of AI)	Publications before 2020.
Document Type	Journal articles and conference proceedings with full-text available.	Theses, dissertations, working papers, and book reviews.
Language	English and Indonesian.	All other languages.

2.4. Search string

In order to find papers that specifically reference the main research issue in their titles, the literature search employed a search chain. This search chain was developed to achieve high precision by confining the key phrases ethics and plagiarism to the article title field. In order to ensure that every article retrieved was pertinent to plagiarism ethics at the title level, this constraint sought to eliminate publications whose main topic explicitly linked these two concepts. This criterion was further tightened by introducing a temporal restriction, requiring publications to be published between 2020 and 2025, to guarantee the review covered just the most recent developments during the last decade. Furthermore, a language limitation was enforced to ensure the data for this review were consistent and accessible. Although the title search produced very accurate results, the researchers realized that this limitation would leave out significant literature in the abstract or keyword fields that addressed behaviors, policies, and AI-driven concerns. Therefore, the resulting article screening was followed by a search of essential references to ensure full coverage of the literature.

Table 2. Search strings used in the study

Code used	Formula used in this study for search strings
SS-1	“ethic” and “plagiarism ”
SS-2	2020 and 2025 and Doctype = ”ar” and Language =“English”
SS	SS-1 and SS-2

2.5. Screening and selection process

To ensure openness, the article selection process was carried out methodically in three consecutive stages (Identification, Screening, and Eligibility) and thoroughly documented using the PRISMA flowchart. Every search result satisfied the stringent requirements of English, publishing years 2020–2025, and ethics and plagiarism. The research selection procedure for this review began at the Identification stage, where 214 records were identified by an initial search across several databases. Subsequently, before entering the formal screening stage, several records were instantly eliminated (Records removed before screening). Even though there were no duplicates at this point (n=0), the

automatic program flagged 68 records as ineligible, and an additional 52 records were eliminated for unclear reasons. Thus, 94 studies were left with records that could be screened. Entering the Screening stage, the 94 records were examined based on their titles and abstracts. As a result, 36 studies were removed as irrelevant following this initial review. This left 58 reports deemed potentially eligible, and a full-text search was conducted (Reports not obtained). Regretfully, only 41 reports were fully evaluated for eligibility after 17 reports were not fully retrieved (Reports not obtained). These 41 reports were carefully examined in relation to the review's inclusion criteria throughout the eligibility evaluation phase. At this point, a total of 15 reports were eliminated: 6 were eliminated for various reasons (various) and 9 were eliminated for being inappropriate for the topic (Not Topic). After all screening and eligibility evaluation stages were completed, the process reached the Inclusion stage, resulting in a final total of 26 papers successfully included in this systematic review for analysis and synthesis (Figure 1).

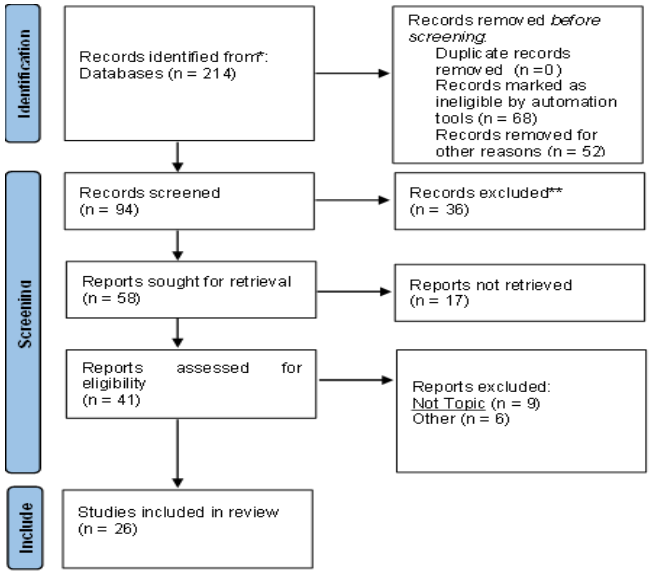

Figure 1. PRISMA diagram

2.6. Data analysis

Following the selection procedure, a standardized data extraction form was used to obtain information from each chosen article, including the author, year, title, purpose, and study methodology. Data analysis was then conducted using a qualitative theme synthesis aiming at identifying, categorising, and interpreting key results from the literature. The three primary categories that make up the core of this SLR were the focus of this synthesis process. The first category, Behaviors, covers material examining reasons for plagiarism, student opinions and attitudes, and case study analysis (e.g., the instances mentioned in the Allied Academies research).

The creation and execution of anti-plagiarism regulations, the efficacy of ethical education (such as Farooq, Kiran, and Malik's research on the impact of workshops), and arguments over worldwide publication standards (such as Qu and Wiwanitkit's response to inequalities in plagiarism among countries). Lastly, the AI-Driven Challenges category focuses on institutional policy solutions to the new ethical issues raised by generative AI tools (Almassaad et al., 2024). Narrative synthesis was then utilized to portray the findings in each theme coherently, with the ultimate purpose of identifying major patterns, contradictions, gaps in the research, and practical implications for academic practice (G. Wang & Sun, 2025).

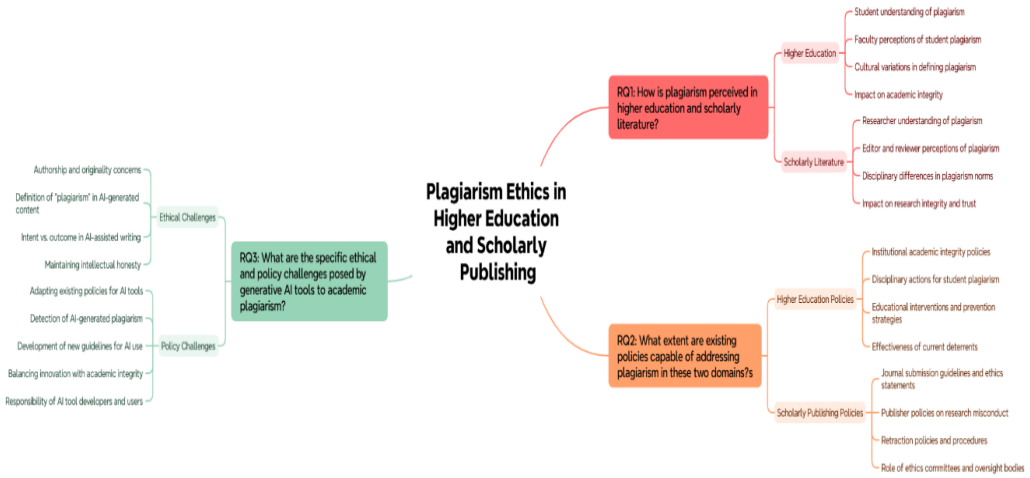

Figure 2. Mind Map Plagiarism Ethics in Higher Education and Scholarly Publishing

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Research Results

There has been a major paradigm shift in the discussion of research ethics and academic integrity, according to a thorough literature review of 26 scientific articles published between 2020 and 2025. The research mostly concentrated on the effects of the pandemic and online learning during the first phase (2020–2022), which comprised about 8 of the total reviewed publications. The key difficulties were the lack of ethical awareness among online students, copyright infringement, and, in particular, data integrity issues, shown in the large number of article retractions and duplicate publishing in biomedical and scientific journals across various countries. When generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI), like ChatGPT, emerged between 2023 and 2025 (a span of around 18 articles), the issue underwent a significant transformation.

The primary problem deepened: the "digital erosion of intellectual integrity," which is thought to be more complicated than traditional copying due to the blurring of the boundaries between fraud and technological innovation (e.g., in AI-generated art). Furthermore, the literature addressed the psychological and mental health implications on educators, as well as the necessity for a full examination of AI function in the editorial administration of scientific journals. In response, the tendency toward more pragmatic and integrative methods is shifting toward solutions. These include defining strategic roadmaps, developing ethical frameworks for the responsible adoption of AI, and employing AI as a tool in ethics teaching. The research suggests that the future of academic integrity hinges on institutions' capacity to balance preventing technology exploitation with capitalising on AI's innovative prospects.

Table 3. Characteristics of the reviewed studies

No	Title	Year	Problem	Solution
1	The digital erosion of intellectual integrity: why misuse of generative AI is worse than plagiarism	2025	Degradation of intellectual integrity due to the misuse of generative AI, considered worse than plagiarism.	(Abstract Required. Provisional: Ethical analysis of generative AI use vs. plagiarism).
2	Understanding Students' Perceptions of Ethics in AI Use through the Lens of Floridi's Unified Framework of Ethical Principles for AI	2025	Need to understand students' perceptions of ethics in AI use.	Using Floridi's Unified Framework of Ethical Principles for AI to analyze these perceptions.

3	Analyzing the Drivers Behind Retractions in Tuberculosis Research	2025	A significant rate of retractions in TB research.	In-depth analysis of the driving factors behind publication retractions.
4	AI in the Classroom: Insights from Educators on Usage, Challenges, and Mental Health	2025	Challenges, usage, and mental health impacts of AI in the classroom.	Gathering insights from educators regarding AI practices and challenges.
5	The benefits of Artificial Intelligence in the process of educating Students on ethics and abilities in higher education; Los beneficios de la Inteligencia Artificial en el proceso de formación de estudiantes en ética y habilidades en la educación superior	2025	The need to utilize AI in educating students about ethics and skills.	Analyzing the benefits of Artificial Intelligence in ethics and skills education.
6	A review of generative AI in digital education: transforming learning, teaching, and assessment	2025	The need for a comprehensive review of generative AI in digital education.	Presenting a review to transform learning, teaching, and assessment.
7	AI in Dissertation Examination: Opportunities for Undergraduates and Postgraduates in Zambia, Rwanda, and Kenya; La IA en la evaluación de disertaciones: Oportunidades para pregrado y posgrado en Zambia, Ruanda y Kenia	2025	Opportunities and challenges of AI in dissertation examination in developing countries (Zambia, Rwanda, Kenya).	Analysis of the opportunities for AI adoption in dissertation evaluation.
8	Student Perceptions of Generative Artificial Intelligence: Investigating Utilization, Benefits, and Challenges in Higher Education	2024	The need to understand students' perceptions of generative AI (benefits and challenges).	Investigating the utilization of generative AI in higher education.
9	Considering ethics of care in online learning spaces	2024	The need to consider the ethics of care in online learning environments.	Analyzing and applying the ethics of care in online learning spaces.
10	Quo Vadis, University? A Roadmap for AI and Ethics in Higher Education	2024	The need for a strategic guide on AI and Ethics in Higher Education.	Providing a Roadmap for the integration of AI and ethics.
11	Pressure to Plagiarize and the Choice to Cheat: Toward a Pragmatic Reframing of the Ethics of Academic Integrity	2024	The issue of pressure to plagiarize and cheat in the context of academic integrity.	Pragmatically reframing the ethics of academic integrity.
12	Systematic review on Artificial Intelligence in the editorial management of scientific journals	2024	The need for a review of the role of AI in the editorial management of scientific journals.	Conducting a Systematic Review on AI in editorial management.
13	CHATGPT IN COMMUNICATION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW	2024	The need for a comprehensive review of the use of ChatGPT in communication.	Conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on the topic.
14	Art Innovation or Plagiarism? Chinese Students' Attitudes Toward AI Painting Technology and Influencing Factors	2024	The controversy of whether AI painting technology is innovation or plagiarism (ethics).	Analyzing the attitudes of Chinese students and the factors influencing them.
15	An integrative decision-making framework to guide policies on regulating ChatGPT usage	2024	The need for a framework to guide policies on regulating ChatGPT usage.	Proposing an integrative decision-making framework.

16	The Role of ChatGPT in Data Science: How AI-Assisted Conversational Interfaces Are Revolutionizing the Field	2023	The impact and role of ChatGPT in revolutionizing the field of Data Science.	Reviewing the role of AI-assisted conversational interfaces in Data Science.
17	An Exploratory Analysis of using Chatbots in Academia	2023	The need to understand the use of Chatbots in the academic world.	Conducting an exploratory analysis of chatbot utilization in academia.
18	Guiding principles and proposed classification system for the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence in scientific writing in medicine	2023	The need for guidance for the responsible adoption of AI in scientific writing (medicine).	Proposing guiding principles and a responsible classification system.
19	Essential signals in publication trends and collaboration patterns in global Research Integrity and Research Ethics (RIRE)	2022	The need to map trends and collaboration patterns in global Research Integrity and Research Ethics (RIRE).	Analysis of essential signals in RIRE publication trends and collaboration patterns.
20	Characteristics of retracted editorial articles in the biomedical literature	2022	The need to understand the characteristics of retracted editorial articles in the biomedical literature.	Investigation of the characteristics of retracted editorial articles.
21	Analysis of duplicated publications in Russian journals	2022	The issue of duplicated publications in Russian journals.	Analysis of cases and patterns of duplicated publications.
22	Online university students' perceptions on the awareness of, reasons for, and solutions to plagiarism in higher education: The development of the model to combat plagiarism	2021	Lack of awareness, reasons, and solutions for plagiarism among online students.	Developing the as&p model to combat plagiarism.
23	Retracted articles in the biomedical literature from Indian authors	2021	Cases of article retraction in biomedical literature from Indian authors.	Investigating the characteristics and patterns of these article retractions.
24	Copyright in the scientific community. The limitations and exceptions in the European union and spanish legal frameworks	2020	Limitations and exceptions of copyright in the EU and Spanish legal frameworks in the scientific community.	Analyzing the copyright legal framework in the European and Spanish scientific community.
25	Aspects of academic performance and ethics in the transition to eLearning caused by the actual pandemic-A case study	2020	The impact of the transition to eLearning due to the pandemic on academic performance and ethics.	Conducting a Case Study related to aspects of performance and ethics in the eLearning transition.
26	Evaluation of pharmacy students' knowledge and perception of scientific integrity	2020	The need to evaluate pharmacy students' knowledge and perception of scientific integrity.	Conducting an evaluation using questionnaires or other methods.

1) RQ1: How is plagiarism practiced in higher education and the scientific literature?

Plagiarism in higher education and the scientific literature varies in nuance and severity. Plagiarism in the academic setting frequently takes the form of copying and pasting from electronic sources, especially among students who are under pressure or have a weak grasp of scientific integrity (Malik et al., 2021; McIntire et al., 2024). This phenomena includes self-plagiarism, incorrect citation, and blatant plagiarism (Fahmi, 2025). This tendency grows more complicated and serious in the scientific literature, where it is frequently linked to fabrication, falsification, and duplicate publication.

Cases of article retractions, both owing to dishonesty (including plagiarism and data manipulation) and errors, are major symptoms of this problem (Elango, 2022; Garcia-Solorzano et al., 2025). This practice is motivated by academic pressure, a lack of ethics training, and simple access to digital materials, generating a "digital degradation of intellectual integrity" (Shaw, 2025).

2) RQ2: To what extent are existing policies able to address plagiarism in both domains?

Existing policies have shown variable success in addressing plagiarism. The main aim of higher education is education and awareness through workshops on ethics and plagiarism, which have been demonstrated to increase student knowledge (Ababneh et al., 2020; Farooq et al., 2025). Some solutions have also led to the development of models and frameworks to combat plagiarism, such as those concentrating on awareness, justification, and remedies. However, policies often lag behind evolving technologies, limiting their effectiveness. In the scholarly literature, policies include recommendations and classification systems for ethical technology adoption (Hryciw et al., 2023), as well as legal structures for copyright that offer restrictions and exceptions (Sobrino-García, 2020). However, issues continue in regularly following worldwide policy, and retraction instances are handled reactively rather than proactively. Policies are generally less able to adjust to the ethical hazards presented by new technology, but they are more successful at identifying and educating against classic types of plagiarism.

3) RQ3: What are the specific ethical and policy challenges that generative AI tools pose to academic plagiarism?

A problem of "digital erosion of intellectual integrity," generative AI systems (like ChatGPT) present unique ethical and policy issues that go beyond conventional plagiarism (Shaw, 2025). The primary obstacles are: Copyright and Authorship: Determining authorship and integrity of scholarly work when AI generates text is tough. Whether AI output be deemed plagiarism, fraud, or merely a tool (C. Wang, 2024), Complex copyright issues are raised by this. Detection and the Limits of Originality: Traditional plagiarism detection methods struggle to identify AI-generated material. AI writing frequently blurs the boundaries between plagiarism, cheating, and acceptable help because it is syntactically unique but not logically so. New Policy Needs: Regulation of generative AI requires an integrative framework for decision-making, particularly in higher education (Bukar et al., 2024; Castelló-Sirvent et al., 2024). Universities need a framework for combining AI with ethics, moving from sheer banning to teaching responsible and ethical usage (Colon-Aguirre & Bright, 2025).

3.2. Discussion

The goal of this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is to compile the most recent research on plagiarism behavior, the efficacy of institutional measures, and the novel ethical issues raised by generative artificial intelligence (AI) in academic publication and higher education. Our results demonstrate that academic integrity is still a key tenet in the face of changing obstacles. Students' plagiarism, which frequently takes the form of copying and pasting, is essentially encouraged by the accessibility of digital access. The literature, however, casts doubt on the idea that this activity is only motivated by dishonest intent, emphasizing the importance of academic pressure to plagiarize as well as ignorance of ethics and academic integrity. This distinction is significant; if the problem is a lack of information, the most successful responses are pedagogical (training) rather than defensive (detection/policing). Article retractions are a key sign of the "digital erosion of intellectual integrity" in academic publishing, where the issue is more serious and includes fabrication and duplicate publication.

The results show a large technology gap, even if current policies have proven tremendous efficacy in tackling conventional forms of plagiarism, such as through ethics and plagiarism training sessions that have been found to improve student knowledge. The ethical issues raised by generative

AI are not as well-suited to current regulations, which are mostly intended to prevent text-to-text plagiarism. The biggest upheaval is the incorporation of generative AI, which ushers academics into the so-called "post-plagiarism" future. The issue of authorship and the integrity of scholarly work, the difficulty of identifying and restricting intellectual originality because AI texts are frequently syntactically original but not intellectually original, and the necessity of new policies that should offer an integrative framework for decision-making and a roadmap for teaching the responsible use of AI rather than just outright prohibition are the three main challenges that have been identified. Overall, by illustrating the transition from convenience-driven behavior to an AI-driven ethical problem that calls for a paradigm shift in policy, this SLR closes a gap in the literature.

4. Conclusion

This comprehensive examination of the literature comes to the conclusion that academic ethics and integrity are dynamic issues that go beyond the conventional notion of plagiarism. In the scientific domain, plagiarism seems as a complicated problem requiring publication retractions, yet it is primarily motivated by ignorance and academic pressure rather than totally malevolent intent. Existing policies are most effective in the educational sphere through an intellectual approach, but they are not yet flexible to new technology and remain reactive. The biggest threat comes from generative AI tools, which have caused a "digital erosion of intellectual integrity" by casting doubt on ideas of authorship, copyright, and the efficacy of conventional plagiarism detection software. The consequences for the future are obvious: in order to control this technology, higher education institutions must adopt an integrative decision-making model, provide a clear roadmap for the responsible use of AI, and move from a primary focus on detection to a pedagogy of AI ethics. A paradigm shift is needed to recognize and responsibly handle AI as a tool, not a threat, ensuring that intellectual integrity remains a cornerstone of education and research. Recommendations for the use of generative AI in academia must comply with applicable regulations and be ethical to avoid violations.

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