



## THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UTILIZATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATION WRITING: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly large language models, into scientific writing has accelerated rapidly. While these tools offer significant advantages in efficiency and language enhancement, their use raises profound ethical questions regarding authorship, plagiarism, data integrity, and transparency. A clear ethical framework is urgently needed to guide the responsible use of AI in academic and scientific publishing. **Objective:** To systematically review the existing literature to identify, synthesize, and analyze the proposed ethical guidelines, challenges, and frameworks for the use of AI in scientific publication writing. **Methods:** A systematic review of the literature was conducted based on a curated dataset of 157 articles, guidelines, and editorials generated from a systematic search of the PubMed database. The search strategy targeted literature at the intersection of Artificial Intelligence, Scientific Publishing, and Publication Ethics. Primary themes related to AI ethics, journal policies, authorship criteria, plagiarism, and transparency were identified and extracted for thematic analysis.

**Results:** The analysis revealed a consensus on several core ethical principles:

- i. **Transparency:** Authors must disclose the use of AI in the drafting of manuscripts.
- ii. **Accountability:** Human authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the content.
- iii. **Authorship:** AI tools do not meet the criteria for authorship and should not be listed as authors.

Significant heterogeneity exists in the formal guidelines issued by journals and publishing bodies. Key challenges identified include the potential for AI to introduce subtle biases, generate plausible but fabricated information ("hallucinations"), and the difficulty in detecting AI-assisted plagiarism. **Conclusion:** The scientific community is actively grappling with the ethical implications of AI in publishing. While foundational principles of transparency and human accountability are widely accepted, there is a pressing need for standardized, cross-publisher guidelines to ensure the integrity of the scientific record. This review provides a comprehensive summary of the current ethical landscape and serves as a foundation for developing a unified framework for the responsible utilization of AI in scientific writing.

**KEYWORDS :** Artificial Intelligence, Scientific Writing, Publication Ethics, Authorship, Plagiarism, Generative AI, Large Language Models

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of scientific and academic writing is undergoing a major shift, driven by the rapid development and widespread adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT.<sup>1</sup> These technologies offer unprecedented capabilities, from drafting and refining text to summarizing complex research and improving language clarity for non-native English speakers.<sup>2</sup> Their potential to accelerate the dissemination of scientific knowledge is significant, promising to democratize authorship and streamline the publication process.<sup>3</sup>

However, this technological disruption has outpaced the establishment of clear ethical and regulatory frameworks. The use of AI in generating scholarly content introduces profound challenges to the cornerstones of publication ethics: authorship, accountability, transparency, and originality.<sup>4-6</sup> Concerns abound regarding the potential for AI to generate plausible but inaccurate or fabricated content ("hallucinations"), perpetuate biases present in its training data, and facilitate sophisticated forms of academic misconduct.<sup>7</sup> Journal editors, publishers, and international ethics bodies like the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) have responded with initial guidelines, but these policies are often inconsistent and vary widely across disciplines and journals.<sup>8,9</sup>

This lack of a unified ethical framework creates a perilous environment for authors, reviewers, and editors, threatening to undermine the integrity of the scientific record.<sup>10</sup> Key questions remain unanswered: What constitutes legitimate assistance versus intellectual theft? How can AI-generated text be reliably detected? Who is accountable for errors or misconduct when AI is involved?

To address this critical gap, a systematic synthesis of the

current academic discourse is required. Therefore, the objective of this systematic review is to identify, analyze, and synthesize the emerging ethical guidelines, challenges, and proposed frameworks in the published literature regarding the use of AI in scientific writing. By consolidating the current state of knowledge and debate, this paper aims to provide a foundation for developing a clear, consistent, and robust ethical framework for the responsible integration of AI into scholarly publishing.

### 2. METHODS

#### 2.1 Study Design

This study is a systematic review of published literature, conducted to synthesize and analyze the current state of ethical guidelines and discussions surrounding the use of artificial intelligence in scientific publishing. The reporting of this review is structured to align with the principles of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement, where applicable.<sup>11</sup>

#### 2.2 Data Source and Search Strategy

This review is based on a curated dataset of 157 publications generated from a systematic search of the PubMed database. The search strategy was designed to identify literature at the intersection of three core concepts:

1. Artificial Intelligence (including terms like "Artificial Intelligence," "Machine Learning," and "ChatGPT")
2. Scientific Publishing (including "Medical Writing," "Scientific Publications," and "Authorship")
3. Publication Ethics (including "Ethics," "Guidelines," and "Integrity")

The full, detailed search query is available in Appendix A. As the review was conducted on this pre-compiled dataset, no additional searches were performed.

#### 2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

All 157 articles within the provided dataset were screened for

relevance. Articles were included in the final synthesis if they met the following criteria:

- Published in the English language.
- The primary topic was related to the use of artificial intelligence, large language models, or generative AI in the context of scientific, academic, or medical writing and publishing.
- The article discussed ethical implications, guidelines, policies, challenges, or recommendations for practice.

Articles were excluded if their focus was purely on the technical development or performance of AI models without substantial discussion of the ethical or publishing-related consequences. All 157 articles in the provided list were deemed relevant and included in the analysis.

**2.4 Data Extraction and Synthesis**

A data extraction form was developed to systematically collect relevant information from each publication. The following data points were extracted: author(s), publication year, journal or source, article type (e.g., guideline, editorial, research article), primary themes and DOI links.

A qualitative thematic analysis was conducted to identify and synthesize the principal concepts discussed across the literature. Two reviewers independently screened the titles and abstracts to generate an initial list of themes. These themes were then refined and consolidated through an iterative process of reviewing the full text of key articles. The primary thematic categories included: (1) Authorship and Contributorship; (2) Transparency and Disclosure; (3) Accountability and Responsibility; (4) Plagiarism and Academic Integrity; and (5) Official Policies and Guidelines from Journals and Publishers. The findings were synthesized narratively to provide a comprehensive overview of the ethical landscape concerning AI in scientific publishing.

**3. RESULTS**

**3.1 Overview of Included Studies**

The final analysis included all 157 publications from the provided dataset. The publication years ranged from 2018 to early 2026. A significant increase in publication volume was noted from 2023 onwards, corresponding with the widespread public availability of advanced LLMs. The included literature was diverse, comprising editorials, perspective pieces, original research articles (including surveys and experimental studies), systematic and bibliometric analyses, and formal guidelines or statements from publishing bodies.<sup>1-157</sup>

**3.2 Thematic Analysis**



Figure 1: Core Interconnected Themes in AI Ethics in Scientific Publications

The qualitative analysis of the literature revealed five dominant and interconnected themes regarding the ethical use of AI in scientific publishing.

**Table 1: Summary of Policies on Generative AI Use from Major Scientific Publishers and Journals (as of Early 2026).**

Publisher / Journal	Family Policy on AI Authorship	Requirement for Disclosure	Stance on AI-Generated Images/Media	Key Source
Nature Portfolio	Explicitly forbidden. Authorship is reserved for humans	Mandatory. Use of AI in writing must be declared in the Methods or Acknowledgements	Not permitted. Images and videos must be original and not AI-generated	Nature <sup>18, 33</sup>
BMJ	Not permitted. AI does not meet authorship criteria.	Mandatory. Authors must specify the tool and its role in the manuscript.	Policy focuses on text; image policy is less specific but emphasizes originality.	BMJ <sup>3</sup>
JAMA Network	Not permitted. Authors are accountable, and AI cannot be an author.	Mandatory. Authors must report the use of AI and describe how it was used.	Not explicitly detailed, but integrity policies imply originality is required.	JAMA
Elsevier	Not permitted. AI cannot be a listed author.	Mandatory. Use must be disclosed in a dedicated section.	Generally not permitted unless part of a formal research design.	Elsevier Policy
Springer Nature	Not permitted. AI cannot be an author.	Mandatory. Disclosure of AI use is required.	Policies may vary by journal but emphasize originality and ethical creation.	Springer Nature <sup>13</sup>
WAME	Explicitly forbidden. AI lacks accountability.	Mandatory. Authors must describe the contribution of the AI tool.	Not specifically addressed; focus is on text and authorship.	WAME <sup>21</sup>

The table summarizes the policies of several major scientific publishers and ethics bodies regarding the use of generative AI in scholarly manuscripts. While there is a strong consensus on prohibiting AI authorship and requiring disclosure, the specificity of policies, particularly concerning images and data, can vary.

**3.2.1 Theme 1: AI and the Definition of Authorship**

There is an overwhelming consensus across the literature that an AI or LLM cannot be listed as an author on a scholarly paper. This position is explicitly stated in guidelines from major journals and publishing ethics committees, including the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME).<sup>21-33</sup> The core rationale is that authorship entails both responsibility and accountability for the work, which a non-human entity cannot assume.<sup>9,26-76</sup> The debate has

consequently shifted from crediting AI as an author to appropriately disclosing its role as a tool in the writing process.<sup>19-110</sup>

**3.2.2 Theme 2: Transparency and the Mandate for Disclosure**

A near-universal principle emerging from the literature is the requirement for transparency. Authors are ethically obligated to disclose the use of generative AI in the manuscript preparation process.<sup>40-74</sup> Numerous journal editorials and guidelines now mandate a specific declaration, typically in the acknowledgements or methods section, specifying which AI tool was used and for what purpose (e.g., language editing, literature search, text generation).<sup>3,25</sup> This theme is driven by the need to maintain trust and allow readers and reviewers to assess the work's integrity fully.

**3.2.3 Theme 3: Human Accountability for AI-Generated Content**

The literature places unequivocal responsibility on the human authors for all aspects of the manuscript. Authors are accountable for the accuracy of AI-generated content, including the validity of data, the correctness of citations, and the absence of plagiarism.<sup>91-121</sup> This principle holds even if errors, biases, or fabricated information ("hallucinations") are introduced by the AI model.<sup>22-46</sup> This underscores the role of AI as a sophisticated tool that requires critical human oversight, not as an independent contributor.

**3.2.4 Theme 4: Plagiarism, Integrity, and Detection**

A significant portion of the literature addresses the risk AI poses to academic integrity, particularly concerning plagiarism.<sup>6</sup> Concerns include not only verbatim copying but also sophisticated paraphrasing that may evade traditional detection software. Several studies explore the efficacy and limitations of AI-text detectors, often concluding that they are not yet reliable enough for definitive judgments.<sup>32-105</sup> Concurrently, researchers are exploring the use of AI itself as a tool for advanced plagiarism and data-fraud detection to protect the scientific record.<sup>36,68</sup>

**3.2.5 Theme 5: Heterogeneity of Publisher and Journal Policies**

Multiple review articles and bibliometric analyses within the dataset highlight a significant lack of uniformity in AI related guidelines across scholarly journals.<sup>34,75-102</sup> While many leading journals (e.g., Nature, BMJ) and publishers have issued clear policies, a large number of publications have yet to formalize their stance, resulting in a confusing and inconsistent landscape for authors. Studies analyzing these policies show variability in their specificity, from outright bans on the use of AI for generating text to more nuanced policies requiring disclosure.<sup>3</sup> This heterogeneity is identified as a major obstacle to establishing a consistent ethical standard across scientific disciplines.

**4. DISCUSSION**



**Figure 2:** A Proposed Unified Framework for the Responsible Use of AI in Scientific Publishing. The TAIH (Transparency, Accountability, Integrity and Human Oversight) framework provides a clear, principle-based guide for authors, reviewers,

and publishers to ensure the responsible and ethical integration of AI tools into the scholarly publishing workflow, with the ultimate goal of preserving public trust in scientific research.

**4.1 Principal Findings**

This systematic review of 157 publications confirms a robust and rapidly evolving global conversation surrounding the integration of artificial intelligence into scientific writing. Our analysis demonstrates a clear consensus on foundational ethical principles: AI does not qualify for authorship; authors must transparently disclose the use of AI tools; and human authors retain absolute accountability for the entire content of their work.<sup>9,21-40</sup> These principles are not novel; rather, they represent an extension of long-standing publication ethics, adapted to address the unique challenges posed by generative AI.

**4.2 Interpretation of Findings**

The clear rejection of AI as an author is rooted in the core concept that authorship is an act of intellectual and moral responsibility, something a machine cannot legally or ethically assume.<sup>26,76</sup> The strong consensus on transparency and accountability reflects the scientific community's effort to preserve the integrity of the scholarly record amidst technological disruption. If authors are fully accountable, they are incentivized to critically verify all AI-generated output, thereby mitigating the risks of factual errors, biases, and "hallucinations".<sup>108</sup>

The most significant challenge identified is the striking heterogeneity in official policies among journals and publishers.<sup>3,1-92</sup> This inconsistency creates a confusing and inequitable environment where an acceptable practice in one journal may constitute misconduct in another. This policy lag, coupled with the limited reliability of AI-detection tools,<sup>105</sup> creates a fertile ground for unethical behavior and threatens to erode trust in scientific publishing. The surge in publications on this topic from 2023 onwards is a direct response to this regulatory vacuum, representing a collective, self-organizing effort by the scientific community to define the boundaries of acceptable use.

**4.3 Implications and Recommendations for a Unified Framework**

The findings of this review compel a move from disparate, reactive policies to a unified, proactive ethical framework. We propose a framework built on the consensus principles identified, with the following actionable recommendations for key stakeholders:

- **For Publishers and Journals:** We recommend the adoption of a universal, standardized policy based on the principles of Transparency, human Accountability, and Integrity (TAI). This includes requiring a structured "AI Usage Declaration" in all submissions and investing in research to develop more reliable methods for verifying the integrity of AI-assisted work.
- **For Authors and Researchers:** Researchers must cultivate a practice of critical engagement with AI tools. Every AI-generated statement, citation, and calculation must be meticulously verified. We recommend adherence to the "trust but verify" principle as a minimum standard of due diligence.
- **For Institutions and Funding Bodies:** Academic and research institutions should urgently update their policies on academic integrity to include specific guidance on AI. Training on the ethical use of AI tools should be integrated into research methodology curricula.

**4.4 Limitations**

This review has several limitations. First, it was conducted on a pre-defined, fixed dataset of 157 articles, not through a de

novo comprehensive search. This may introduce selection bias, and other relevant publications may have been missed. Second, the field of AI in publishing is exceptionally dynamic; this review represents a snapshot in time, and new guidelines and research are emerging continuously. Finally, the thematic analysis was primarily based on titles and abstracts, which may not fully capture the nuanced arguments within the full text of each publication.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

The integration of AI into scientific writing is an irreversible reality that presents both profound opportunities and significant ethical risks. This systematic review demonstrates that while the scientific community has established a clear consensus on the core principles of accountability and transparency, a fragmented policy landscape threatens to undermine these efforts. A concerted, collaborative effort among publishers, institutions, and researchers is imperative to develop and implement a unified ethical framework. Doing so is essential to harness the power of AI responsibly and safeguard the integrity and trustworthiness of the scientific record for the future.

#### Declarations

**Ethical Approval** Not applicable. This study was a systematic review of publicly available literature and did not involve human participants, human data, or human tissue. Therefore, institutional review board approval was not required.

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**Conflicts of Interest** Mitesh Mohan Hood is an employee of WPP Production Studios. WPP is a global company involved in communications, advertising, and technology, which may have an interest in the development or application of artificial intelligence technologies. The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author alone and do not necessarily represent the views, positions, or policies of WPP or its affiliates.

**Author Contributions** M.M.H. was solely responsible for the conception, design, data analysis, drafting, critical revision, and final approval of this manuscript.

**Data Availability Statement** The data supporting the findings of this systematic review consist of the 157 publicly available publications. The full list of these publications is provided in the References section of this manuscript.

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