



# Artificial Intelligence in Academic Writing: Authorship, Copyright, and Compliance

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The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT into academic research and writing has raised important legal and ethical questions. While, these tools offer assistance in drafting, editing, summarizing, and language refinement, their use in scholarly publications demands careful consideration. Key concerns include authorship attribution, copyright ownership, proper disclosure, and the risk of plagiarism. International journal policies and institutional guidelines increasingly emphasize transparency and accountability in the use of AI-generated content. This article explores the evolving legal landscape and academic standards surrounding AI use in scholarly work, aiming to guide researchers in maintaining integrity and compliance with current norms.

## AUTHORSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The use of artificial intelligence in academic writing raises a fundamental question about authorship and legal responsibility. Current legal and ethical standards, including those by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), require that authors be able to take public accountability for their contributions, ensure the integrity of the work, and respond to critiques.<sup>1</sup> Since AI models like ChatGPT are not legal persons and cannot be held accountable, they do not meet the criteria for authorship. Prestigious journals such as Nature and Science explicitly prohibit naming AI tools as authors. AI lacks intention, interpretation, and scholarly judgment—key components of scientific authorship. Although AI can assist in drafting or editing, final responsibility always rests with the human author. Any attempt to list an AI tool as an author could be considered a breach of ethical publication practices, potentially resulting in article rejection or retraction depending on the publisher's policy.<sup>2</sup>

## DISCLOSURE OF AI USE

Legally and ethically, transparency in using AI tools in scholarly publishing is paramount. Most academic publishers

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### KEYWORDS:

Academic writing, Artificial Intelligence, Compliance

### HOW TO CITE:

Garg RK. Artificial Intelligence in Academic Writing: Authorship, Copyright, and Compliance. Journal of Academy of Biomedical Sciences. 2025;2(1):1-2

doi: 10.61081/jabs/2v1i101

now mandate that authors clearly disclose the use of generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini) when it contributes to text generation, summarization, language editing, or data analysis. Journals under Elsevier, Springer Nature, and Taylor & Francis require that such tools be acknowledged in the Methods or Acknowledgment section. This policy helps maintain trust and scholarly integrity, ensuring that readers understand which portions were generated or edited with AI assistance.<sup>3</sup> The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) recommends clear disclosure so that peer reviewers and editors can judge the scholarly rigor and reliability of the content. Concealing AI use may constitute academic misconduct or misrepresentation. Institutions and universities are also beginning to introduce their own AI usage policies, further reinforcing the need for disclosure. Disclosure is not merely ethical; it protects against future disputes over data ownership, accuracy, and intent.

## COPYRIGHT AND OWNERSHIP

A central legal issue regarding AI-generated content in scholarly articles is copyright. According to the United States Copyright Office (March 2023 guidelines), content created entirely by generative AI without human involvement is not eligible for copyright protection. This is because copyright laws typically require a minimum level of human creativity. In contrast, if a human author significantly edits, curates, or

transforms AI-generated content, the final product may qualify for copyright protection due to the human input. Therefore, scholars must not assume ownership of raw AI-generated content unless they meaningfully revise it. Additionally, journal publishers may reject submissions that rely heavily on AI without clear human authorship due to these copyright uncertainties. Institutions may also scrutinize AI-assisted theses or dissertations. While no international consensus yet exists, the safest legal practice is to treat AI as a tool, not a creator, and to explicitly acknowledge its use while ensuring the human author retains creative control and responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

## PLAGIARISM AND ORIGINALITY

AI-generated content presents new challenges for maintaining originality and avoiding plagiarism in scholarly writing. While AI tools generate unique text based on training data, they may unintentionally reproduce fragments from existing sources without attribution. This creates a legal and ethical risk, especially, if the author uses AI-generated content verbatim, and fails to verify its originality. Plagiarism detection tools may or may not flag such material, depending on how it was generated. Ethical bodies like the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) emphasize that using AI does not absolve an author from the duty of originality, proper citation, and critical interpretation. Misuse of AI to inflate content, paraphrase existing works, or write entire sections without proper input from the researcher can be construed as academic dishonesty. Therefore, scholars should treat AI outputs as first drafts or assistive text, which must be reviewed, edited, and cited appropriately to maintain scholarly standards and avoid ethical violations.

## JURISDICTION-SPECIFIC RULES (INDIA EXAMPLE)

In India, the legality of using AI-generated content in scholarly work is framed more by institutional and academic

ethics policies than by specific laws. The University Grants Commission (UGC) mandates strict academic integrity, requiring that all sources be cited and original work be maintained. The UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity, and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2018, treats unauthorized copying or misrepresentation, including the unacknowledged use of AI-generated content, as plagiarism. While Indian copyright law does not explicitly address AI-generated works, it requires human authorship for protection. Indian journals and universities are increasingly cautious about AI misuse, with many requiring declarations of any AI use during manuscript submission or thesis evaluation. Some institutions are also drafting guidelines on acceptable AI use.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Indian scholars must disclose AI involvement, take full responsibility for content accuracy, and ensure compliance with institutional norms to prevent allegations of academic misconduct or plagiarism.

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