

Beyond Traditional Search Engines: Graduate Students' Adoption of Generative AI for Academic Inquiry

P-ISSN: 3048-9334 | E-ISSN: 3048-9342
SJCC International Journal of
Communication Research
Vol: 3 | Issue: 1 | Sept. 2026
pp. 85-102 | © The Author (s) 2026
Permissions: sijcr@sjcc.co.in



Jishnu D¹, Shamala R² and Malini Srinivasan³

Abstract

The rapid development of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is transforming learning and information-seeking practices in higher education. This study explores whether GenAI is replacing traditional search engines and examines how students use GenAI for academic learning. It focuses on students' reasons for using GenAI, their trust in AI-generated content, and its influence on critical thinking and depth of learning. Using a qualitative exploratory design, the study conducted in-depth interviews with 30 undergraduate students. The findings indicate that GenAI is increasingly becoming a primary academic search tool. Three key dimensions of GenAI use emerged: conceptual clarification, exemplar-based and contextualised learning, and evaluation-driven instrumentalisation. Students demonstrated strong trust in GenAI-generated information, with limited verification. Findings regarding critical thinking were mixed, with students reporting both benefits and limitations. The study highlights the need for AI literacy, fact-checking skills, critical evaluation, and ethical use of AI in higher education.

¹ SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, Chennai, India

² Central University of Karnataka, Kadaganchi, Kalaburagi District, Karnataka, India

³ Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Pondicherry, India

Corresponding Author:

Dr Jishnu D, Department of Visual Communication, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Business studies, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, Chennai, India.

Email: jishnud@srmist.edu.in

Keywords

Generative AI, Higher Education, Students, Learning, Search Engines.

Introduction

The use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has increased exponentially over the past few years. It is widely used across nearly all sectors of society; higher education is among the most affected (K. Wang & Guo, 2025). The advent of GenAI started with the public release of ChatGPT by OpenAI in November 2022 (Lo, 2023). It provides a platform for users to generate text, answer questions, and assist with a range of cognitive tasks. Within a few days of its release, ChatGPT has attracted millions of users and had a substantial impact on society (Skjuve et al., 2024). Soon, many other GenAI applications emerged, including Google Gemini, Co-Pilot, Midjourney, Perplexity, and others. Additionally, GenAI platforms have evolved to meet users' specific needs, including content creation, research, coding, image and video generation, and more. Additionally, digital media platforms began integrating AI features. Within a few years of its inception, AI is now omnipresent in digital media interfaces (Mohandoss, 2023). AI has evolved rapidly within digital learning environments, necessitating that students and educators integrate its features into their academic endeavours. The rapid adoption of AI can be seen from the school level to the university level, indicating a shift towards AI-driven knowledge creation (D et al., 2023). Students, especially those in higher education, are the ones who experiment with the affordances and drawbacks of GenAI. It can enhance their learning, creativity, and academic productivity. It provides students with concise explanations and summaries, simplifying complex tasks. Another key advantage is personalisation; individuals can ask personalised questions and express doubts (N. Wang et al., 2024). Additionally, it assists them with writing, brainstorming, and other research activities, thereby improving efficiency and reducing cognitive load. It will also be helpful for their presentations, assignments, and learning materials. GenAI also encourages creative exploration by generating ideas, visuals, and alternative perspectives that can stimulate students' critical thinking (J. Wang & Watson, 2025).

Although generative AI offers many affordances, it also presents key challenges. First, the quality and credibility of the information provided by the GenAI can be

compromised. Incorrect and fabricated responses are often generated by GenAI platforms, undermining their integrity. Academics are critical of the threats to data privacy and automated profiling posed by GenAI (Uslu & Bozkurt, 2026). Another concern is regarding academic integrity; the free availability of information may lead to plagiarism. Moreover, there is a high chance that GenAI will affect students' cognitive skills and critical thinking (N. Wang et al., 2024). There are concerns that unequal access to advanced AI tools is widening disparities among students. In light of these challenges, there should be clear institutional policies to strengthen digital literacy, promote the ethical use of GenAI, and ensure equitable integration of GenAI in higher education.

Gen AI have significantly altered students' cognition by transforming the way they access, process and produce knowledge. For example, students predominantly used search engines to access syllabus-related information. They will conduct basic searches using the search engine tabs for their desired topics and select information they perceive as trustworthy. They are provided with options from different websites. They can identify credible websites and select relevant content. However, with the advent of GenAI, their choices are constrained: they receive instant, ready-made answers from GenAI or GenAI-equipped search engines. One major question is whether they replace search engines with GenAI or use it as a supplement to them. Another critical factor is trust. Do students believe in the responses provided by GenAI? Are they checking the facts provided? Do they verify the information with credible sources? Next, the use of GenAI makes students' work easier but significantly affects their cognitive skills. The question arises as to whether the new practice is influencing students' critical thinking and whether they are achieving a deeper level of learning or the intended learning outcomes. Based on these intriguing questions, the researchers propose the following research questions:

RQ 1: Does generative AI replace traditional search engines in the students' learning process, and why?

RQ 2: How do students use generative AI for academic learning?

RQ 3: To what extent do students trust the content provided by GenAI?

RQ 4: How does using generative AI influence students' critical thinking and the depth of learning?

These questions can contribute to a broader picture of AI's increasing influence in students' digital learning environments, focusing on what they actually do with AI and how that affects their cognitive processes.

Theoretical Framework

GenAI and the transformation of information-seeking behaviour

Several frameworks have theorised information-seeking behaviour; the most profound ones include Wilson's model of information needs and Kuhlthau's Information Search Process (Kuhlthau, 1991; Wilson, 1981). The key premises in these theories include the role of uncertainty, iterative searching and active evaluation of the sources. With the inception of GenAI, a structural disruption arises in this process. GenAI offers us personalised and authoritative responses to our queries, transforming iterative information-gathering into a ready-made interaction. In their study, Karunaratne & Adesina (2023) found that ChatGPT is becoming the primary search tool for students. The study also suggests a diminishing impact of Google search on college students' information-search habits.

Cognitive Load Theory and GenAI-Mediated Learning

Cognitive load theory provides a framework for understanding students' use of GenAI. The theory discusses and distinguishes among the various cognitive loads: intrinsic, extraneous, and germane (Sweller, 1988). GenAI responses significantly reduce the extraneous load by providing well-crafted, individualised responses. Also, it reduces germane load, limiting the effortful processing and deep learning (Badali et al., 2026a).

Epistemic Trust in Human–AI Interaction

Epistemic Trust refers to the willingness to accept information without independent verification (McCraw, 2015). The concept has been widely studied in the disciplines of information science and social cognition. With the widespread adoption of GenAI, epistemic trust became a central point of enquiry. Y. Liu et al.

(2026) found that the use of GenAI promotes cognitive offloading and, in turn, increases epistemic trust among users. On the contrary, Sahebi & Formosa (2025) found that GenAI-mediated communication produced uncertainty about the information and its source, and decreased epistemic trust in the content provided.

GenAI and Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the objective analysis and evaluation of information from different perspectives to form a judgment (Beyer, 1985). With the advent of GenAI, a debate has arisen about its role in critical thinking, especially among students in higher education. Badali et al. (2026a) found that the use of chatbots negatively affects students' critical thinking; the study also identified AI literacy as a mediating factor in this effect.

Research Methodology

The present study employs an exploratory qualitative research design to examine undergraduate students' use of and engagement with GenAI in information-seeking and learning. The qualitative approach is appropriate for obtaining rich, descriptive data (Patton, 2006). This approach will help identify students' in-depth personal experiences with GenAI. This approach will help investigate concepts such as GenAI Use, trust, critical thinking, and depth of learning.

The research was conducted among thirty undergraduate students. The study employed purposive sampling, selecting participants based on their use of GenAI for academic purposes. The sample includes undergraduate students who used GenAI for learning and academic purposes. The participants' ages range from 19 to 24, as undergraduate students are usually in that age range. The participants include an equal number of males and females from various socio-economic conditions. The participants include students from multiple streams, such as BA, BSC, BCOM, and BCA.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Interviews are one of the most convenient and effective ways to collect qualitative data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The questions were based on the four main research questions. Each interview lasted 20-30 minutes, either face-to-face or via Google Meet. The study uses Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic

analysis to analyse the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the first phase, researchers carefully go through the interview transcripts to familiarise themselves with the data. Next, the researchers generate initial codes in response to the research questions. In the third stage, researchers identified key themes for each research question. During the fourth phase, the researchers refined and reviewed the themes for conceptual clarity. In the next phase, the researchers aligned the themes with the research questions. In the final phase, themes are finalised and arranged as the answers to the research questions.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Participants (N = 30)

Participant Code	Gender	Age	Stream
P01F	Female	21	BA
P02F	Female	20	BSC
P03F	Female	22	BSC
P04F	Female	21	BA
P05F	Female	20	BCOM
P06F	Female	19	BCOM
P07F	Female	20	BA
P08F	Female	21	BSC
P09F	Female	22	BSC
P10F	Female	24	BSC
P11F	Female	20	BSC
P12F	Female	20	BSC
P13F	Female	23	BA

P14F	Female	21	BSC
P15F	Female	21	BSC
P16M	Male	20	BA
P17M	Male	21	BCA
P18M	Male	20	BCA
P19M	Male	20	BA
P20M	Male	19	BCOM
P21M	Male	19	BCOM
P22M	Male	22	BCOM
P23M	Male	20	BA
P24M	Male	22	BSC
P25M	Male	21	BCOM
P26M	Male	21	BA
P27M	Male	20	BCA
P28M	Male	19	BSC
P29M	Male	23	BSC
P30M	Male	20	BSC

Analysis

RQ 1: GenAI as the Primary Academic Search Tool

Displacement of Multi-Source Web Search

The findings indicate a key shift in students' information-seeking behaviour. GenAI platforms are becoming a replacement for the alternative search engines. The study also identified GenAI as the primary academic search tool for graduate students. They either rely on ChatGPT, Google Gemini, or Co-Pilot, or use AI-enabled browsers. Here, the key point is that traditional search engines and websites are being largely replaced by instant GenAI-generated content.

One respondent (P02F) stated, "I use mainly ChatGPT for my study purposes. It gives me clear and simple answers. I don't need to search websites to extract the content now." As the response suggests, the students prefer direct, simple answers to their queries rather than having to navigate multiple websites. They consider GenAI a time-saving technology.

Another respondent (P28M) opined, "I usually use Google Gemini to clarify my doubts in my studies. It saves me a lot of effort because I get instant replies." This response identifies a transition in information-seeking behaviour from traditional search engines to GenAI-mediated responses. While Google still remains the platform, students prefer AI-generated content. This marks a crucial shift in students' information-seeking practices. GenAI is reducing students' cognitive load more than traditional websites do.

One student (P19M) explained, "I am not using Google search now. ChatGPT and Google Gemini are doing a much better job for me now." Students perceive GenAI platforms as superior to traditional search engines because they offer greater utility.

One participant (P08F) observed: "If I am learning a concept, I just ask GenAI platforms directly by giving the prompts in order to make it simple". From this observation, it is clear that GenAI platforms are becoming the first point of academic inquiry, replacing search engines. Also, it is perceived as a more

interactive learning experience because participants use prompts to access personalised content.

Another participant (P20M) said that: “Google searches consume lots of time for getting the work done. GenAI is quick, and the work is easily done”. Another participant (P01F) observed: “Previously, I needed to go through multiple websites to get an overall view of the subject. I need to note down the key points and prepare the notes. Now everything is taken care of by the GenAI. These statements reflect that the students perceive GenAI as more competent and time-saving than traditional search engines, at least for their academic purposes. Students are laying off their cognitive workload with the help of GenAI.

RQ 2: Typologies of GenAI Use in Academic Learning

The research identified three key dimensions of GenAI use among the students for learning purposes. 1. Clarifying the concepts, 2. Model/Example-based learning and 3. Evaluation focused usage.

Conceptual Clarification

One of the key findings of the study is that graduate students use GenAI to simplify content and clarify concepts. Most participants search their questions directly on ChatGPT or Google Gemini about topics they perceive as difficult. Some upload the notes provided by teachers to make them easier to understand. Some just gave the topic and asked for conceptual clarity.

For example, one participant (P15F) remarked: “ I just search the topic I am studying in ChatGPT if I find it difficult. I ask ChatGPT to simplify it.” The above participant response demonstrates students’ active participation in the GenAI platforms rather than passively consuming search topics. The participants interact with GenAI via prompts to simplify the content.

Another participant (P23M) observed that: “ If there is too much to read on the topic, I ask AI to give me the most important idea of the content.” The statement reflects the use of AI to reduce students’ cognitive load. Students prefer short, concise explanations to reduce excessive reading and save time.

Exemplar-Based and Contextualised Learning

The study findings show that students use GenAI to enhance their understanding by asking the models for visual images and examples. Students are not relying solely on textual information; they also ask for frameworks, images, and real-life examples. This participant's behaviour shows the students' interest in actively learning an idea, rather than just passively.

One participant (P30M) described, "I always ask GenAI to provide the information that is particular to our cultural context. For example, while studying the media's Agenda-Setting Theory, I ask GenAI to provide examples of contemporary issues. I feel that this will enhance my understanding". The participant response identifies the vital role of GenAI in providing example-based learning and connective learning strategies.

Another participant (P14F) observed: "I usually use ChatGPT to learn about the topics. If I feel the topic is too complex, then I will give the prompts to make it easy, and I also ask for graphical representations for easy understanding." The above statements indicate that GenAI is helping graduate students by providing accurate examples and visual representations. This can significantly enhance learning quality.

Evaluation-Driven Instrumentalisation

Another key dimension of graduate students' GenAI use concerns their exams and other evaluation measures, such as assignments and presentations. Students are preparing for the exams using the GenAI. Assignments and presentations are done using the AI platforms. Students perceive AI as very convenient and easy to use for these evaluations.

One participant (P26M) explained: "GenAI provides me with the important questions from the syllabus or the notes provided. I will go through them only for the exams". GenAI is providing the students with important questions and simple notes. Also, students are uploading syllabi or notes in GenAI, which makes the results more credible.

Another participant (P10F) observed: "I usually use ChatGPT for writing assignments and Gamma for presentations. It saves me a lot of time. I will do

some small edits to change the language, as my teachers will look for the AI content.” From the above response, it is evident that students are using GenAI for their assignments and presentations. They know that their teacher can detect AI. They are using a technique to evade detection. So students here also perceive that using GenAI for their assignments is unethical.

RQ 3: Epistemic Trust in GenAI-Generated Content

Uncritical Reliance and Positive Reinforcement

Based on the study’s findings, we identified strong student trust in GenAI platforms. Students reported minimal or no verification of the information they received from GenAI platforms.

One respondent (P25M) stated, “ I usually use AI for the purpose of exams, it gives me clear answers to the queries. It provides me with important questions, and those questions will be there for the exam too.” For important academic assessments, such as exams, students are relying on AI. It shows their trust towards the platform. Also, they are getting positive outcomes as the important questions suggested by AI are in their question paper.

Another respondent (P07F) explained, “ I usually did not recheck AI-generated content. I feel it’s safe and credible.” Students generally do not reverify the content provided by AI platforms. They identify AI as credible and safe. It implies that respondents trust AI more.

Another participant (P20M) mentioned: “I am not going through multiple websites now for information. GenAI save me a lot of effort”. The response highlights the decline in website usage among the students. It saves them a lot of time. But it will also lead to the destruction of multiple perspectives.

Another participant (P09F) opined, “For exams, I will be using AI-provided simple notes only, and I passed with good marks.” Participants’ trust in AI is reinforced by positive academic outcomes.

RQ 4: GenAI, Critical Thinking, and Depth of Learning

Perceived Hindrance to Critical Engagement

There are mixed findings regarding critical thinking and the depth of learning. Some view GenAI as a platform that hinders critical thinking and depth of knowledge, while others view it as one that can enhance critical thinking and foster in-depth knowledge.

One respondent (P16M) revealed that: “Sometimes I feel that every answer the AI is providing follows the same structure, pattern. I feel it is monotonous.”

Another respondent (P27M) observed that “GenAI is providing the general explanations for my queries. Sometimes I feel frustrated about the responses after multiple prompts”.

Another respondent (P09F) explained, “Sometimes I feel GenAI is copying basic information from Wikipedia. It is providing surface information only. Even after repeated prompts, I feel the same.” These responses highlight the students’ awareness that GenAI is just a language model that relies on monotonous patterns and generic explanations. Also, we can see that respondents didn’t feel that GenAI enables in-depth learning and critical thinking.

Perceived Enhancement of Critical and Expansive Thinking

On the contrary, another respondent (P23M) opined that “For studying complex concepts, I ask AI to provide me examples and graphical representations.” This response highlights the use of GenAI for deeper learning by using visuals and examples.

Another respondent said, “Sometimes I will be discussing my topic with AI for hours. I will be getting new perspectives and dimensions which were not included in the syllabus or the textbook.” GenAI is not limiting students’ learning to textbooks; instead, it helps students explore broader areas, providing a comprehensive understanding and critical insights into particular topics.

Discussion

The present study explored how undergraduate students use GenAI for learning purposes. The research addresses intriguing questions about usage patterns, search behaviour, trust, critical thinking, and depth of knowledge. The research findings reveal a significant shift in students' learning practices and ecology with the emergence of GenAI. One key finding is that GenAI has become the primary academic search tool for graduate students, superseding traditional search engines. This finding is consistent with studies by Kaiser et al. (2025), Divekar et al. (2025), and Niloy et al. (2024), which also identify the changing pattern in the search behaviour. Participants viewed GenAI as time-saving, reducing students' cognitive workload, more productive and easier to work with. As GenAI gives personalised answers to queries, students perceive that they don't need to surf the web or research topics. One of the key problems here is that student learning will be limited to the GenAI-provided perspectives, unlike the diverse perspectives offered by different websites. Also, the student's research skills will be compromised by using GenAI, as they will receive personalised replies to queries, unlike when using websites.

Next, the findings situate GenAI usage mainly for three utilities: Conceptual Clarification, Exemplar-Based and Contextualised Learning, Evaluation-Driven Instrumentalisation, including exams and various other projects. One of the key usage patterns we identified is to conceptual clarification. The findings align with similar research indicating that GenAI can simplify text and concepts (Araújo & Aguiar, 2023; Liu et al., 2025). GenAI is providing students with simpler, easier-to-understand definitions, thereby enhancing learning outcomes. Also, the students perceive that GenAI is really helping them break down larger content to summarise it into smaller versions. The study also identified GenAI usage among students for exemplar-based and contextualised learning, aligning with research supporting these findings, which state that using models, images, and figures generated by GenAI will strengthen the learning process (Ecker & Ecker, 2025). We also find that graduate students use Gen AI for evaluation-based learning, and the findings reinforce the existing results of Alkhateeb et al. (2025) and Joung & Kim (2025). Most GenAI use among graduate students is associated with evaluation-driven instrumentalisation, most importantly exams, assignments, seminars, and projects. Students are using GenAI to prepare for the exams, asking for the most important questions and simple answers, which

is indeed very helpful for strengthening the learning process. On a negative note, some students just copy-paste whatever is provided by GenAI as part of their assignments or projects, which is considered unethical. Another key point is that students are unaware of the errors GenAI makes. They are not verifying the data provided by the AI platforms. Here comes next important finding. Students perceive GenAI as trustworthy. They are not checking or verifying the data provided by the GenAI. This finding confirms the observations of Rosas-Jiménez et al. (2026) and contradicts the ideas of Dahabiyeh et al. (2026). The trust identified in the study is critical, as it will lead to over-reliance on the platforms among students. Also, ethical questions are emerging, as this trust factor may make students oblivious without critical thinking. Regarding the critical thinking and depth of knowledge, the researchers have identified mixed findings. Some students perceive that GenAI can enhance critical thinking through creative prompts and model-based learning, as identified by Darwin et al. (2024), while others perceive that GenAI may hinder it by offering a single perspective, as supported by Badali et al. (2026). There are two views on the depth of knowledge: some students perceive GenAI as enhancing it, while others see it as providing only surface-level knowledge. Here, the society needs to understand that, like any other technology, AI has both merits and demerits; how we use it is important. The use of AI should enhance critical thinking and depth of knowledge. For that, AI literacy is very important. Institutions should provide AI literacy for students and faculty to develop the ethical and proper use of GenAI.

Conclusion

In conclusion, GenAI has become a key tool for undergraduate students' learning and educational practices. It became the primary academic tool rather than a supplementary tool. And it also became an alternative to traditional search engines. GenAI is supporting students' academic ventures in various ways. But there are multiple opinions regarding the depth of knowledge and critical thinking. Overall, the study concludes that GenAI has both positive and negative effects on the education sector. So, the effective use of AI in higher education necessitates AI literacy programs. Higher education institutions should adopt strategies to overcome these constraints by equipping students with critical AI literacy, fact-checking skills, and ethical use of AI. Integrating GenAI into the learning process can support students' critical thinking and academic learning.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and publication of this article.

References

- Araújo, S., & Aguiar, M. (2023). Simplifying Specialized Texts with AI: A ChatGPT-Based Learning Scenario. *Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies*, 366, 599–609. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-5414-8_55
- Badali, M., Shahalizadeh, M., Alimirzaie, M., Noroozi, O., & Kazem Banihashem, S. (2026a). Bridging AI chatbot use and critical thinking: the mediating role of AI literacy. *Interactive Learning Environments*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2025.2605487>
- Badali, M., Shahalizadeh, M., Alimirzaie, M., Noroozi, O., & Kazem Banihashem, S. (2026b). Bridging AI chatbot use and critical thinking: the mediating role of AI literacy. *Interactive Learning Environments*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2025.2605487>
- Beyer, B. K. (1985). Critical Thinking: What Is It?. *Social Education*, 49(4), 270–276.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- D, J., Srinivasan, M., Dhanunjay, G. S., & Shamala, R. (2023). UNVEILING STUDENT MOTIVATIONS: A STUDY OF CHATGPT USAGE IN EDUCATION. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.503>
- Dahabiyeh, L., Jdaitawi, A., & Dahabiyeh, L. A. (2026). Challenging AI Outputs: A Process Model of Distrust in Conversational AI. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2025.2609908>

- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education*, 40(4), 314–321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x>
- Ecker, D., & Ecker, D. (2025). Visual Learning and how AI-Generated Images can Engaging Students. *Teaching and Learning with AI Conference Presentations*. <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/teachwithai/2025/wednesday/75>
- Joung, E., & Kim, Y. R. (2025). Exploring the Impact of Discussion Responses Generated From ChatGPT on Student Performance and Experiences. *School Science and Mathematics*, 126(1), 89–105. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssm.18393>
- Karunaratne, T., & Adesina, A. (2023). Is it the new Google: Impact of ChatGPT on Students' Information Search Habits. *Proceedings of the European Conference on E-Learning, ECEL, 2023-October*, 147–155. <https://doi.org/10.34190/ECEL.22.1.1831>
- Kuhlthau, C. C. (1991). Inside the search process: Information seeking from the user's perspective. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 42(5), 361–371. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-4571\(199106\)42:53.0.CO;2-](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-4571(199106)42:53.0.CO;2-)
- Liu, F., Lu, X., Jin, T., Kang, M., & Zhang, H. (2025). Does ChatGPT simplify texts like expert teachers? Linguistic features of simplified texts. *Reading and Writing 2025*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-025-10676-2>
- Liu, Y., Jou, M., & Hao, Y. (2026). From cognitive offloading to learning accountability erosion: how generative AI reshapes students' epistemic trust and educational engagement. *Interactive Learning Environments*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2026.2680276>
- Lo, C. K. (2023). What Is the Impact of ChatGPT on Education? A Rapid Review of the Literature. In *Education Sciences* (Vol. 13, Number 4). MDPI. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13040410>
- McCraw, B. W. (2015). The Nature of Epistemic Trust. *Social Epistemology*, 29(4), 413–430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2014.971907>
- Mohandoss, K. (2023). The Omnipotent and Omnipresent Inevitability of Artificial Intelligence (AI) AI Is All about Creating a Win-Win Situation. *Artificial Intelligence in Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003343981-1>
- Patton, M. Q. (2006). Qualitative Research. *Encyclopedia of Statistics in Behavioral Science: Everitt Behavioral*, 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1002/0470013192.bsa514>

- Sahebi, S., & Formosa, P. (2025). The AI-mediated communication dilemma: epistemic trust, social media, and the challenge of generative artificial intelligence. *Synt hese* 2025 205:3, 205(3), 128-. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S11229-025-04963-2>
- Skjuve, M., Brandtzaeg, P. B., & Følstad, A. (2024). Why do people use ChatGPT? Exploring user motivations for generative conversational AI. *First Monday*, 29(1). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v29i1.13541>
- Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science*, 12(2), 257–285. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0364-0213\(88\)90023-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0364-0213(88)90023-7)
- Uslu, B., & Bozkurt, A. (2026). Regulations of AI Technologies and Their Impact on Higher Education: Global Perspectives, Institutional Cases and Emerging Challenges. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 80(2), e70108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.70108>
- Wang, J., & Watson, S. (2025). *Integrating Generative AI in Education: Affordances, Issues, and Directions* (pp. 353–377). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-03977-4_14
- Wang, K., & Guo, Z. (2025). Can Learners' Use of GenAI Enhance Learning Engagement? —A Meta-Analysis. In *Education Sciences* (Vol. 15, Number 12). Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15121578>
- Wang, N., Wang, X., & Su, Y. S. (2024). Critical analysis of the technological affordances, challenges and future directions of Generative AI in education: a systematic review. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 44(1), 139–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2024.2305156>
- Wilson, T. D. (1981). ON USER STUDIES AND INFORMATION NEEDS. *Journal of Documentation*, 37(1), 3–15. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EB026702>

About the Authors

Dr Jishnu D is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Visual Communication at SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur, Chennai. He holds a PhD in Mass Communication from the Central University of Tamil Nadu and has academic and research experience in media and communication. His research interests include social media, digital activism, media and cultural studies, film studies, and emerging media technologies. He has published research papers and book chapters and has presented his work at national and international academic forums.

Dr Shamala R. is an Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at the Central University of Karnataka. With over 18 years of experience in academia and media, she has extensive expertise in Community Media, Development Communication, Tribal Communication, Digital Media, and Social Media Activism. She has published widely, led externally funded research projects, and presented her work at several national and international academic forums. She also serves as Vice Chair of the Comic Art Working Group, IAMCR (2025–2029).

Dr Malini Srinivasan is a Guest Faculty member in the Department of Electronic Media and Mass Communication, Pondicherry University. She holds a PhD from the Department of Media and Communication, Central University of Tamil Nadu. Her academic interests include media and communication, digital media, and contemporary media studies, with a focus on teaching and research.