



## GenAI in Mass Communication Education: Interviews with Instructors

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### Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has permeated nearly every facet of contemporary life, including the education sector. Based on semi-structured interviews with 20 professors in journalism and mass communication, this study investigates how college instructors perceive opportunities and challenges of incorporating ChatGPT into their teaching practices. The study found that mass communication educators largely view the integration of ChatGPT as a promising development, recognizing its potential to enrich both instructional practices and student learning, as well as to support the cultivation of key educational competencies. At the same time, participants voiced significant concerns about the risk of misuse, particularly regarding violations of academic integrity and the erosion of critical thinking skills. These tensions highlight the need for thoughtful pedagogical strategies and institutional guidelines. This study contributes to the evolving discourse on GenAI by offering critical insights into the ethical and pedagogical complexities of employing ChatGPT in journalism and mass communication education.

### Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has become deeply integrated into various aspects of modern life, particularly in education, where platforms such as ChatGPT are seeing growing adoption (Michel-Villarreal *et al.*, 2023; Singh, 2025). For example, ChatGPT gained over one million users within a week of its official launch in November 2022 and has approximately 800 million weekly active users worldwide as of May 2025 (Singh, 2025). With the emergence of GenAI tools such as ChatGPT, instructors at higher education institutions worldwide have been grappling with the challenge of establishing clear standards and best practices for their use in teaching

and learning (Seo *et al.*, 2025). The rapid adoption of these tools has outpaced the development of institutional policies, prompting educators to navigate complex questions related to academic integrity, pedagogical effectiveness, and equitable access.

While a growing body of recent research has focused on students' perspectives on GenAI (e.g., Kim *et al.*, 2025; Seo *et al.*, 2025), there remains a significant gap in understanding how instructors are responding to the rapid evolution of GenAI technologies and challenges and opportunities these tools present in educational contexts. Specifically, there is limited research exploring how educators are adapting their teaching practices, addressing concerns

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about academic integrity, and rethinking their pedagogical strategies in response to GenAI's increasing presence in the classroom. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into instructors' experiences, perceptions, and strategies as they navigate this transformative technological shift.

This study explores how instructors of journalism and mass communication at higher education institutions in the U.S. Midwest perceive the roles of GenAI and how they navigate both challenges and opportunities involved in integrating GenAI into instructional settings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with instructors to obtain in-depth insights into their perspectives and experiences concerning relevant issues (Berger, 2019). This study provides both scholarly insights and practical guidance for teaching journalism and mass communication in the era of GenAI. It highlights the evolving role of educators in adapting curricula, integrating AI tools responsibly, and preparing students to navigate ethical, professional, and technical challenges posed by emerging AI technologies.

### Literature Review

#### *Technology Advancements in Education*

Over the past decade, universities have moved from occasional and supplementary use of technology toward its full integration into pedagogical design and delivery in the shape of Learning Management Systems (LMS), massive open online courses (MOOCs), and virtual reality environments (Collins & Halverson, 2018). A growing body of research suggests that the strategic use of digital technologies can boost student achievement and benefit both students and instructors, enabling timely interventions, personalized feedback, and adaptive learning pathways tailored to each student's strengths and needs (Bygstad *et al.*, 2022). By granting on-demand access to vast repositories of multimedia content – ranging from peer-reviewed journals and e-textbooks to interactive simulations – technology empowers learners to explore concepts at their own pace and revisit challenging material as needed (Ghory & Ghafory, 2021).

Beyond content delivery, technology has enabled new ways for students and instructors to interact (Bygstad *et al.*, 2022; Ghory & Ghafory, 2021). Digital platforms such as cloud-based document sharing, online discussion boards, and video conferencing have made it easy for students to collaborate and for institutions to partner across distances, effectively remov-

ing the barriers of traditional classroom walls. For instructors, integrated digital platforms streamline tasks such as lesson planning, ongoing assessment, virtual office hours, and attendance tracking. This efficiency frees up more time for personalized guidance and innovative teaching approaches.

Recently, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in educational settings (Sabzalieva & Valentini, 2023). AI-driven tools are already being used to automate routine tasks – such as grading short-answer responses and multiple-choice exams – with accuracy that rivals human evaluators (Jeon & Lee, 2023). Early studies indicate that AI-powered evaluators can not only expedite the feedback cycle but also reduce grading bias, promoting greater fairness and consistency in assessment (Conjin *et al.*, 2023). Despite its promise, the deployment of AI in education raises important ethical and practical questions (Conjin *et al.*, 2023).

#### *AI in Higher Education*

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming a fundamental part of everyday life and a major force in transforming education (Nguyen *et al.*, 2023; Seo *et al.*, 2025). Across studies, scholars highlight both the promise and the urgency of properly integrating AI into teaching (Chen *et al.*, 2022; Kamalov *et al.*, 2023; Seo *et al.*, 2025). For example, while AI is recognized for its potential to improve the efficiency of educational systems and support new instructional approaches, researchers also note that such efficiency gains do not replace the need for instructors to guide meaningful learning (Kamalov *et al.*, 2023). At the same time, interest in AI's educational applications continues to grow, particularly regarding its potential to enhance teaching methodologies and learning outcomes (Chen *et al.*, 2022; Seo *et al.*, 2025). As educators increasingly experiment with tools like ChatGPT in their classrooms, these broader findings underscore the relevance of this study's focus on how instructors are adopting and using AI.

With the growing presence of GenAI, educators hold widely differing views on how and whether it should be integrated into teaching. Some view AI as a powerful means to enhance instructional methods and support research, while others worry that it could undermine traditional pedagogy and foster dependency among both teachers and learners (Zhang & Aslan, 2021). Recent studies have explored several AI-driven tools – ranging from autonomous grading

systems and AI-powered evaluators to online chatbots and humanoid tutors – highlighting their potential benefits alongside critical ethical concerns (Alam, 2021). For example, automated scoring can speed up feedback loops and reduce bias, yet it also raises questions about transparency, fairness, and data privacy.

While debate continues over the benefits and potential harms of AI, its use in education is one of the fastest-growing areas within instructional technology (Kengam, 2020). Educators are increasingly embedding AI literacy into the curriculum through hands-on, project-based approaches – coding exercises, problem-solving challenges, robotic activities, and gamified learning – to demystify AI concepts and foster multidisciplinary problem-solving skills (Ng *et al.*, 2023). Globally, policymakers are beginning to weave AI competencies into educational standards and strategic goals, recognizing that digital fluency is essential for the modern workforce.

At the same time, questions of oversight loom large. As AI systems handle sensitive student data and influence learning outcomes, many ask which bodies should set ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks. Some scholars argue for international governance – perhaps under the auspices of the United Nations – to ensure consistent protection of privacy, equity, and fundamental rights in AI-mediated education (Berendt *et al.*, 2020).

### *ChatGPT in Mass Communication Education*

The emergence of generative AI (GenAI) platforms such as ChatGPT represents a dramatic shift in educational technology (Seo *et al.*, 2025). Trained on vast language datasets, ChatGPT can tackle complex tasks – drafting essays, answering questions, even simulating conversations – that promise to streamline lesson planning and deliver customized support for diverse learners. However, its rapid uptake has ignited debate: proponents argue it can boost teaching efficiency and personalize learning, while skeptics warn of its potential to erode academic integrity and diminish the role of human educators (Yu, 2023).

In the context of mass communication education, recent studies (Seo *et al.*, 2024; Seo *et al.*, 2025) have highlighted that journalism and media communication students display a strong interest in GenAI. They generally maintain a positive attitude toward the integration of GenAI into their field, acknowledging its potential to enhance productivity and efficiency. However, they also had concerns regarding the eth-

ical implications and risks associated with GenAI misuse. For example, as the widespread availability of AI-generated text makes it easier to produce assignments that are not based on their own ideas, some students expressed concerns about unintentional plagiarism, blurred authorship, and the erosion of essential academic skills (Seo *et al.*, 2025). Others also voiced worries about data security when using GenAI tools, including how their personal information, prompts, or uploaded coursework might be stored, shared, or used to train AI systems without their explicit consent.

Among GenAI tools, ChatGPT has gained significant traction in both teaching and learning contexts (Memarian & Doleck, 2023). Its growing use highlights the need for mass communication educators to understand its impact in the classroom. ChatGPT is known to support personalized learning, content generation, and the development of linguistic skills (Li *et al.*, 2024). Because these abilities align with core mass communication competencies, the tool is particularly relevant for educators in the field. Researchers also agree that ChatGPT can enhance the educational experience and serve as a motivational tool for students (Banić *et al.*, 2023). Overall, these benefits suggest that ChatGPT can strengthen learning outcomes and improve student engagement. For example, according to Halaweh (2023), the use of ChatGPT can foster creativity and innovation in students. Both teachers and students, however, must receive adequate training to use ChatGPT effectively and ethically. Trust (2023) echoes this sentiment, emphasizing the need for educators to adapt to ChatGPT and prepare for the broader impacts of GenAI on teaching and learning.

As discussed above, the growing body of literature supports the responsible integration of ChatGPT into education and discusses both its opportunities and challenges (Ahmad *et al.*, 2023; Halaweh, 2023; Trust *et al.*, 2023). However, a significant gap remains in current research: the specific perspectives of *mass communication educators* regarding ChatGPT's impact on their teaching and students' learning experiences. Addressing this gap is crucial. A deeper understanding of mass communication educators' perspectives can offer meaningful insights into the opportunities, challenges, and best practices for integrating ChatGPT into communication education. Such insights will be vital in guiding effective and responsible AI implementation within the field. This study poses the following

research questions.

*RQ1:* How do mass communication educators perceive the integration of ChatGPT into the teaching and learning of mass communication subjects?

*RQ2:* How do mass communication educators perceive the potential impacts of ChatGPT on students' learning outcomes and engagement?

### Method

This study employs a qualitative interview approach to explore mass communication educators' perceptions of incorporating ChatGPT into their teaching practices, as well as its broader impact on mass communication education. Qualitative methods are well-suited for understanding complex dynamics, contexts, and perspectives (Pomerantsev & Rodionova, 2021), especially when examining educators' responses to emerging technologies like ChatGPT in academic settings.

Participants in this study are instructors from journalism and mass communication programs located across five neighboring Midwestern states in the United States. The U.S. Midwest represents a diverse educational landscape, encompassing both public and private universities and a mix of rural and urban settings. These variations create a wide range of institutional contexts and resource availability, which can significantly influence how emerging technologies like AI are adopted and utilized in teaching. Moreover, focusing on the Midwest helps address a critical geographical gap in existing research and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the factors shaping the integration of AI, such as ChatGPT, into mass communication education. In total, 20 instructors of mass communication were interviewed, comprising 14 males and 6 females. The median age group represented was the 40s, and the median range of teaching experience was 11-15 years, indicating that the sample largely consisted of mid-career educators with

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Participant ID	Gender	Position	Age Group	Years of Teaching
P1	Male	Assistant Professor	30s	1-5 years
P2	Male	Assistant Professor	30s	6-10 years
P3	Male	Assistant Professor	40s	6-10 years
P4	Male	Professor	50s	20-25 years
P5	Male	Assistant Professor	40s	11-15 years
P6	Female	Lecturer	50s	16-20 years
P7	Male	Assistant Professor	40s	11-15 years
P8	Male	Assistant Professor	40s	11-15 years
P9	Female	Assistant Professor	20s	1-5 years
P10	Male	Assistant Professor	30s	1-5 years
P11	Male	Associate Professor	50s	11-15 years
P12	Female	Assistant Professor	40s	11-15 years
P13	Male	Professor	50s	21-25 years
P14	Male	Assistant Professor	30s	11-15 years
P15	Female	Assistant Professor	40s	11-15 years
P16	Male	Assistant Professor	40s	11-15 years
P17	Female	Assistant Professor	40s	11-15 years
P18	Female	Associate Professor	60s	25-30 years
P19	Male	Assistant Professor	30s	1-5 years
P20	Male	Assistant Professor	30s	6-10 years

**Figure 1:  
MAXQDA Assisted  
Word Cloud**



substantial professional and instructional experience.

Purposive sampling was adopted to identify and recruit instructors with direct experience using ChatGPT in teaching and learning environments. This approach is appropriate to gain in-depth insight into a specific phenomenon or subgroup by focusing on relevant participants (Babbie, 2021). It minimizes errors of relevance and enhances the depth of analysis (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020).

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, each lasting between 30 minutes and one hour. To accommodate time and travel constraints, all interviews were conducted online via Zoom. A total of 20 interviews were completed, with data collection continuing until theoretical saturation was achieved. All research procedures for this study were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the lead author's university. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, participant privacy, and voluntary participation, were ensured throughout. Participants were fully briefed on the study's purpose, their rights, and how their data would be used.

To answer the research questions, this study utilized thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Data analysis was conducted using MAXQDA 2020, which allowed for the visualization of thematic relationships and enhanced the clarity of findings through visual mapping. This method increased analytical precision and facilitated deeper insights into underlying patterns within the data.

## Results

Our results are based on interviews with 20 instructors from journalism and mass communication pro-

grams in the U.S. Midwest. Participants' demographic information is shown in Table 1.

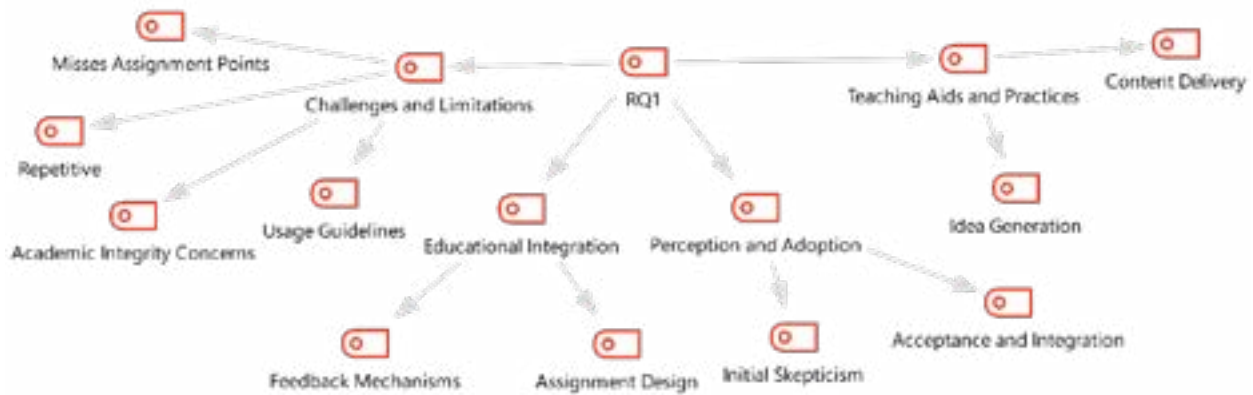
Before the thematic analysis, a word cloud was generated to provide an overview of the interview data. The word cloud (Figure 1), generated using MAXQDA, highlights the most frequently used words and phrases mentioned by study participants. Notably, the terms *ChatGPT* and *student* appear most prominently, emerging as central keywords in the interview data. This suggests that ChatGPT is actively integrated into educational settings and is influencing pedagogical practices. The word cloud reflects the study's focus on the use of ChatGPT in education.

Other significant terms – such as *teach*, *class*, and *learn* – further underscore the educational context in which ChatGPT is being discussed. These terms indicate that the data collected extend beyond the technical aspects of the tool, addressing broader educational concerns related to teaching strategies and student learning outcomes. The word cloud illustrates the nuanced role ChatGPT plays in the educational process, encompassing both benefits and challenges. The following section presents a thematic analysis addressing each of the two research questions.

### *RQ1: Instructors' Perceptions of ChatGPT*

Our first research question asked how mass communication educators perceive the integration of ChatGPT in teaching and learning mass communication subjects. The MAXQDA visual map (Max-Map) (Figure 2) illustrates the organizational structure and relationships among the codes derived from the investigation of Research Question 1 (RQ1). The map intuitively represents the alignment between

Figure 2



themes and subthemes, demonstrating how multiple codes contribute to the overall research framework. RQ1 serves as the central node, from which main themes and subthemes branch out. Each primary branch further divides into narrower categories or specific codes, representing the qualitative data identified during analysis. All but one participant agreed that ChatGPT was useful in their teaching practice.

**Perception and Adoption.** Initially, many educators expressed concerns about ChatGPT's impact on academic integrity, fearing it might facilitate plagiarism or reduce students' motivation to learn. More than half of the participants admitted to being skeptical at first. For instance, P15 stated, "I was not ready to accept ChatGPT and was reluctant to talk about it." However, five participants said they were enthusiastic from the beginning. One participant shared, "I was eagerly waiting to use and introduce ChatGPT."

Over time, acceptance grew as educators began to recognize the tool's usefulness for both instructional content and methodology. Except for one, all participants eventually embraced it. As P2 explained, "I was not ready to use it. But now I use it for my teaching."

**Teaching Aids and Practices.** Educators use ChatGPT to enhance teaching materials by updating content, incorporating real-world examples, and aligning lectures with current industry practices. This approach helps maintain student interest and relevance. P4 noted, "I use it to help me write a rubric, lecture notes." ChatGPT is also employed to stimulate creativity. Teachers use it during brainstorming sessions to help students generate ideas efficiently. As P7 stated, "... useful for quick idea generation for my classes during and after lectures."

**Educational Integration.** ChatGPT is incorporated into classroom assignments to increase engagement

and foster a sense of responsibility among students, which often leads to improved learning outcomes. P1 shared, "I teach diversity and media. Assignments I make from ChatGPT and give to students." Additionally, the tool provides instant, formative feedback on student submissions, allowing them to make timely improvements. P11 remarked, "I also use ChatGPT to get feedback on me and my students' writing and to get some idea about how it can be improved."

**Challenges and Limitations.** Despite its benefits, several concerns remain. Educators worry that students may become overly reliant on ChatGPT, potentially undermining genuine learning and increasing the risk of plagiarism. P19 commented, "Yeah, the ethics need to be defined when it comes to using ChatGPT... there's no real law on this, right?"

The absence of clear guidelines for ChatGPT's use in academic settings has led to confusion. Participants emphasized the need for formal policies to ensure the tool supports – rather than replaces – students' learning. P16 explained, "They will rely on it too much... for those of us who teach journalism and mass com, of course, we're very concerned with the quality of the writing."

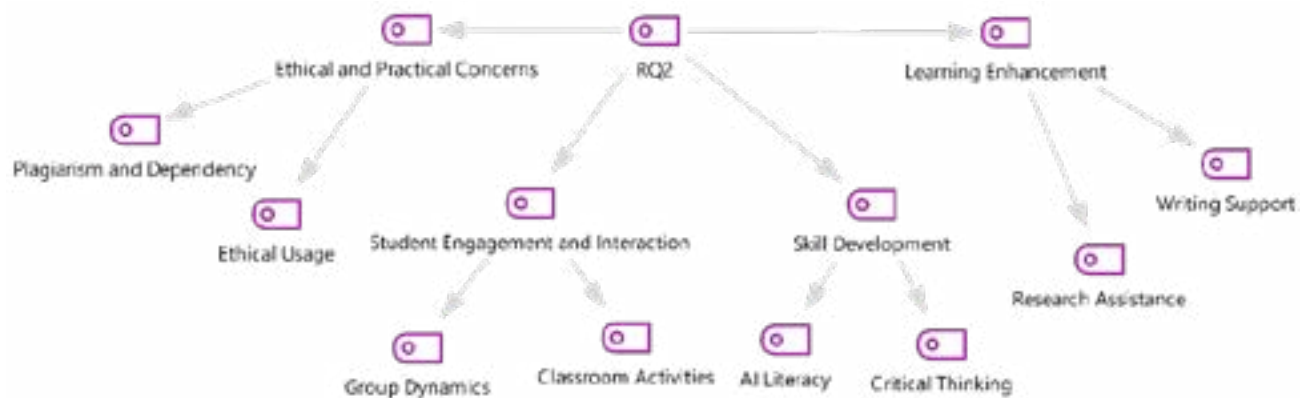
Another common issue is that ChatGPT-generated responses sometimes miss the core intent of assignments. P16 noted, "...where students have used AI and it either completely misses the point of the assignment." Furthermore, educators observed that ChatGPT-produced work often lacks variety. As P13 put it, "It is a very stilted type of writing. It's redundant. It's repetitive."

### *RQ2: Potential Impacts of ChatGPT*

Our second research question asked how mass communication educators perceive the potential impacts



Figure 3



of ChatGPT on students' learning outcomes and engagement. The MAXQDA visual map (MaxMap) (Figure 3) illustrates the organizational structure and interrelationships among the codes derived from the investigation of Research Question 2 (RQ2). The map intuitively displays the alignment between key themes and subthemes, revealing how multiple codes contribute to the foundational matrix of the research framework.

**Learning Enhancement.** ChatGPT supports students in gathering and processing information more efficiently, enhancing their ability to access diverse sources for projects and academic papers. This improved information access contributes to a stronger research phase in their studies. As P14 shared, "My students do use it and I have allowed them to take the assistance of ChatGPT for the research and enhance their knowledge." Furthermore, the tool aids in developing students' writing abilities by assisting with draft creation, offering structural and linguistic suggestions, and functioning as an interactive writing aid. P13 explained, "Students do use ChatGPT to improve their writing skills and make their assignments."

**Skill Development.** ChatGPT encourages students to engage in deeper levels of critical thinking. By evaluating the accuracy and applicability of AI-generated content, students are prompted to question, reflect, and refine their understanding. P20 aptly stated, "Well, I think using ChatGPT is critical thinking. Using ChatGPT to accomplish a goal requires students to think about the question that they're asking, and critically evaluate the information that they're submitting." Exposure to AI tools like ChatGPT within academic contexts also familiarizes students with emerging technologies, preparing them for a workforce increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence. P15 noted, "ChatGPT or some other gener-

ative AI can give them a pretty good explanation of something that is heavily fact-based."

**Student Engagement and Interaction.** Integrating ChatGPT into classroom activities has been found to enhance student engagement by creating a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. The tool promotes meaningful discourse and can be used in simulations or role-playing exercises rooted in real-world scenarios. P5 shared, "I've used it in classroom exercises. This has been helpful for students to learn about fact-checking. And to learn about how they can use ChatGPT for background information."

**Ethical and Practical Concerns.** Despite its benefits, educators expressed significant concerns about the ethical and practical implications of ChatGPT use in academic settings. Chief among these are the risks of plagiarism and overdependence on AI. One participant noted, "...students are utilizing ChatGPT but also getting dependent on it." Educators emphasized the importance of developing clear guidelines and instructional strategies that mitigate these risks while preserving the educational advantages of AI. Students are being encouraged to use ChatGPT ethically – acknowledging its contributions, being transparent about its use, and understanding broader societal and disciplinary implications. P11 highlighted, "But another challenge again is not for me, particularly, but the ethical use of ChatGPT. So, you know, making sure that the students are aware of what the ethical uses of such tools are."

## Discussion

Interviews reveal that many journalism and mass communication instructors were initially hesitant to adopt ChatGPT due to concerns about academic integrity. This skepticism was rooted in fears that students might misuse the tool to complete assign-

ments with minimal engagement, a concern echoed by Kaledio *et al.* (2024). However, as educators gained experience with the tool, their attitudes began to shift. Our findings align with previous research suggesting that educators increasingly recognize the value of ChatGPT in enhancing educational content and its ability to offer diverse perspectives and provide up-to-date information (Sok & Heng, 2023). Similarly, the present study found that mass communication educators acknowledge the benefits of ChatGPT in supporting their teaching. It enhances the delivery of lecture content, making lessons more engaging and aligned with current industry practices (AlAfnan *et al.*, 2023; Ghory & Ghafory, 2021). Additionally, professors reported using ChatGPT during group work sessions to facilitate brainstorming and foster creativity – an approach also supported by Montenegro-Rueda *et al.* (2023).

Educators noted a significant shift in teaching practices following the integration of ChatGPT into the classroom. For example, several instructors mentioned that they encourage students to leverage generative AI tools such as ChatGPT for tasks like idea generation, drafting, and enhancing writing clarity. This aligns with findings by Nguyen *et al.* (2023) that AI tools can improve the quality and relevance of instructional content. ChatGPT connects educational material with real-world applications and maintains student interest, and provides practical insights.

The study also highlights ChatGPT's role in promoting creativity and idea generation. Its capacity to produce diverse suggestions fosters innovation in academic settings. As a conversational AI, ChatGPT supports students' learning by aiding research and enhancing writing skills. Similarly, Pratama and Hastuti (2024) underscore AI's value in improving writing, particularly by offering structural suggestions and facilitating content drafting, which contributes to clearer and more coherent work.

Contrary to concerns that AI might hinder critical thinking, several participants in this study reported that ChatGPT actually encourages students to critically assess its outputs. In the same line, Darwin *et al.* (2023) also argue that AI promotes analytical thinking by requiring users to evaluate and reflect on generated content. This process nurtures essential academic and professional skills. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of developing students' AI literacy to prepare them for an evolving technological landscape (Sarwar *et al.*, 2024).

In classroom settings, ChatGPT was found to enhance interactivity and student engagement, making the learning environment more dynamic (Tang, 2024). Educators also acknowledged ChatGPT's positive influence on students' learning experiences, while expressing concerns about overreliance and potential academic dishonesty. These concerns are in line with Harry (2023), who warns that excessive dependence on AI may lead students to misuse it, compromising the integrity of their work. Educators emphasized that, if applied responsibly with guidelines and ethical standards, tools like ChatGPT can support academic achievement by enhancing research, writing, and critical thinking, while also fostering meaningful classroom interactions.

### Conclusion

The integration of ChatGPT into educational contexts – particularly within mass communication – presents both significant opportunities and notable challenges. As demonstrated in this study, ChatGPT enhances teaching and learning by increasing access to information, supporting the development of writing skills, and encouraging critical analysis.

Despite its benefits, the use of GenAI tools such as ChatGPT raises important ethical and practical concerns, particularly around academic integrity and student overdependence (Balalle & Pannilage, 2025; Cheng *et al.*, 2025; Seo *et al.*, 2025). The widespread availability of AI-generated text makes it easier for students to submit assignments that are not based on their own ideas, which undermines fundamental expectations of academic integrity. Additionally, when students rely too heavily on tools such as ChatGPT, they make bypass the cognitive processes essential for developing critical thinking skills including generating original ideas, solving problems independently, and thoughtfully revising their work. For mass communication majors – whose careers require creativity, clear communication, and skillful interpretation of information – such dependence on AI can hinder their development and weaken the competencies essential to their field.

These challenges can be effectively addressed by implementing clear, discipline-specific ethical policies and guidelines for responsible AI use. For students in journalism and mass communication, this involves clearly outlining when the use of AI tools is acceptable (e.g., identifying background material or improving wording) and when it is inappropriate (e.g.,



generating original reporting, evaluating sources, or making editorial decisions). It is also essential to reinforce the importance of transparency, accuracy, and verification, which are foundational principles of the field and cannot be reliably maintained by AI alone. Ultimately, GenAI should not be seen as a substitute for essential human capacities such as critical thinking, content judgment, ethical decision-making, and self-reflection, but rather as a tool that can support these abilities when applied thoughtfully and within well-defined boundaries.

This study offers valuable insights into how educators might ethically and effectively incorporate ChatGPT into mass communication curricula. Ongoing assessment of GenAI's impact, alongside the evolution of teaching methods and curriculum design, is crucial. Educators must remain vigilant and adaptable, using tools like ChatGPT to enhance learning outcomes while also guiding students to understand and navigate the ethical implications of AI in both academic and professional contexts.

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