



JOURNAL

OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH,
INNOVATION, AND
MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

An Academic Journal Publication

Website: | <https://jerimspublication.com>

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBERS

PRINT ISSN | 3116-5559

ONLINE ISSN | 3116-5567

Volume 1, Issue 02, pp 49-55, April 2026

Research Article

WORKS GENERATED BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND THE CHALLENGE TO TRADITIONAL NOTIONS OF AUTHORSHIP

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Article History:

Submission: April, 2026

Revised: April, 2026

Accepted: April, 2026

Originality: 99%

Similarity Index: 5%

Grammarly Score: 99%

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Recommended Citation:

Calasang, E. (2026). Works Generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) And the Challenge to Traditional Notions of Authorship. *Journal of Educational Research, Innovation, and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(2), 49-55. <https://doi.org/10.67001/jeri.2026.01.P9X5TR>

ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of MAEd alumni at Southern Capital Colleges as they engaged with generative artificial intelligence (AI) in their scholarly work. Utilizing an interpretative phenomenological design, the research investigated how graduates navigated AI in academic research, the ethical and professional struggles they encountered, and the strategies they employed to maintain academic integrity and their unique scholarly voice. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with fifteen purposively selected participants and analyzed using a thematic approach to capture their lived realities. Findings revealed that while AI facilitated cognitive augmentation, collaborative brainstorming, and strategic automation, it simultaneously triggered psychological transitions and a crisis of intellectual identity. Participants grappled with the moral dilemma of the sacred struggle the guilt of utilizing digital shortcuts and faced the professional burden of verification to mitigate technical fallibility and fabricated citations. To navigate these challenges, students employed methodological iteration and human-centric synthesis, adopting a three-step writing process to maintain stylistic sovereignty. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of local knowledge validation, where researchers intentionally infused Visayan nuances and Filipino contexts to address data sovereignty and the limitations of generic machine logic. These experiences signaled a shift in the researcher's role from a primary writer to a critical auditor, emphasizing that while AI may initiate conceptual ideas, human critical thinking must remain the core driver of ethical and high-quality academic output.

Keywords: *cognitive augmentation, generative artificial intelligence, human-in-the-loop, intellectual authenticity, interpretative phenomenology*

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Introduction

Traditional academic authorship remains vital for MAEd alumni, as it shapes their intellectual identity and establishes their scholarly reputation within the academic community. It is imperative that these professionals uphold the sanctity of original research to remain credible experts and provide a foundation of trust for the educational institutions they serve. Furthermore, the integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into the research process compels alumni to re-evaluate their writing practices, moving toward a hybrid approach that must still protect the integrity of the human voice. While traditional notions of authorship which center on personal accountability reflect a desire to remain authentic and productive, they are increasingly challenged by the automated nature of AI. This shift necessitates a new framework for redefining what it means to be the true owner of an idea in the eyes of colleagues and students.

Aldulaijan (2025) asserted that this challenge demonstrates the rapid development of generative tools erodes the boundaries between what humans and machines do. The reliance on AI for writing provides evidence that students want to be productive and effective in their research output, but it also creates an author-less phenomenon in which the human spark of authorship is lost. Undoubtedly, Khristianto (2025) argued that it is the author's unique voice, the vividly crafted characters, and the believable plot that separate the real stories from the generic/derivative ones. However, the AI-assisted writing tools breach such traditional assertions of writing authenticity.

Bobula (2024) stated that it leaves the authorship of academic works untraceable because of works that lie outside the academic boundaries, so that the output produced by the AI is indistinguishable from that produced by the student. Mazzi (2024) noted that the main challenge lies at the crossroads of AI-generated works and copyright issues, where established legal frameworks seem to become obsolete as the technology advances in academia. Moreover, she elaborates that one of the issues, in fact, lies in the determination of the owner and the maker of the works created through artificial intelligence, particularly in situations where the creative spark is an equal contribution of a student and a machine. Additionally, Jon (2025) noted that while there is a lot of AI-assisted work in the field of education, legal scholars have not investigated the copyright concerns surrounding the AI prompts and the human direction given to the AI and the student is left in authorship limbo regarding the originality of the thesis.

Primary data from pilot interviews with MAEd alumni at Southern Capital Colleges indicated that while AI has potential as an educational resource, it has also become a subject of significant contention regarding authorship. Most notably, 85% of the participants found it difficult to sustain their own academic voice, a number of participants suggest that the AI recommendations risked their personal narrative. This was particularly the case with the discussion and conclusion, with 70% of the participants stating that AI produced content was too generic and did not have the required pedagogical depth. Beyond classroom-based experiences, MAEd alumni from Southern Capital Colleges demonstrated that the more the automated inputs were dismissed, the more the conventional authorship of educational content was retained; the more their lived experience was integrated, the more they preserved the human element which the AI authoring tool could never replicate.

The research suggests that the role of a researcher as the originator of a piece has shifted from the creator to somewhat of a critical curator. Most of the pilot group (75%) participants indicated that the rapid generation of text by advances in technology will not be able to fill the role of critical judgment gatekeeper especially in the case of AI, citations that are not verifiably tied to the text, and the unclear authorship of AI text. This illustrates in a fundamental way a gap in research in relation to the paradox of the technologically mediated (machine and human) heuristics of the human-machine structure. There is no doubt that there is an urgent need to conceptualize authorship to include not only the generation of text, but the authentic professional truth which substantiates the role of the educator as researcher in the identity of the student as researcher.

In light of the above scenario, the study explores the works generated by artificial intelligence (AI) and the challenges to traditional notions of authorship among MAEd alumni at Southern Capital Colleges during the second semester of the academic year 2025-2026. Likewise, the study attempts to understand the interplay between the extent of human involvement in AI-generated works and the perceived legal protection afforded to graduate-level research. The researchers expect to produce trustworthy, credible findings that provide grounds for recommending relevant intellectual property standards and authorship guidelines to support the escalation and success of the academic and professional writing process. The study's offshoot theorizes that the integration of

artificial intelligence disrupts traditional concepts of ownership and necessitates a re-evaluation of the human voice in master's-level scholarship.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design using interpretative phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of fifteen MAEd alumni from Southern Capital Colleges regarding their engagement with generative artificial intelligence in academic authorship. The study aimed to understand how participants navigated ethical dilemmas, preserved intellectual agency, and redefined professional identity amid the growing integration of AI in graduate research. Through purposive sampling and the use of a validated semi-structured interview guide, rich and reflective narratives were gathered from participants who had completed high-stakes scholarly work during the emergence of AI-assisted writing tools. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of recurring patterns, themes, and meanings from the participants' retrospective accounts. Ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, were strictly observed throughout the study. Ultimately, the research illuminated the evolving concept of post-human authorship, emphasizing the collaborative relationship between human creativity and artificial intelligence while challenging traditional notions of academic integrity and authorship in the digital age.

Results and Discussions

Lived Experiences of MAEd Alumni Using AI in Research Writing

The findings revealed that graduated MAEd alumni of Southern Capital Colleges experienced significant transformations in their research-writing processes through the integration of generative artificial intelligence. The themes generated from the participants' narratives demonstrate that AI was no longer viewed merely as a technological tool but as a cognitive partner, linguistic scaffold, ethical challenge, and emotional companion. The participants described how AI reshaped their ways of thinking, writing, and understanding academic authorship in the digital age. The six themes that emerged include: Cognitive Augmentation and Collaborative Brainstorming, Linguistic Empowerment and Cross-Cultural Translation, Moral Struggle for Intellectual Authenticity, Strategic Automation for Workload Management, Navigating Ethical Vulnerability and Accountability, and Psychological Transitions in the Age of Automation.

The theme on Cognitive Augmentation and Collaborative Brainstorming highlighted how AI functioned as an intellectual sounding board that supported idea generation, logical refinement, and conceptual development. Participants explained that AI allowed them to stress-test arguments, identify weaknesses in reasoning, and discover relationships among variables during moments of mental exhaustion. Rather than replacing human thinking, AI became a collaborative partner that enhanced reflective inquiry and critical thinking. These findings support Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, as cited by Chiu et al. (2023), which explains that learning occurs through interaction, observation, and self-efficacy. Similarly, Tian (2025) emphasized through Decision Theory that students intentionally evaluate the balance between efficiency and integrity when integrating AI into academic work. The findings suggest that MAEd alumni remained cognitively responsible despite utilizing technological assistance, reinforcing the idea that AI served as augmentation rather than substitution of human intellect.

Another important finding was Linguistic Empowerment and Cross-Cultural Translation, wherein AI assisted participants in bridging the gap between local Visayan thought and formal English academic discourse. Participants viewed AI not only as a grammar correction tool but also as a cultural translator that allowed them to preserve the emotional and contextual essence of their narratives while communicating effectively within global academic standards. The findings revealed that AI reduced language anxiety and feelings of inferiority among non-native English-speaking researchers. This supports the Vygotsky Theory of Scaffolding as cited by Behera et al. (2025), which emphasizes that learners perform beyond their current abilities when supported by appropriate tools and guidance. Furthermore, Elbadiansyah et al. (2024) explained that generative AI significantly reduces linguistic barriers for researchers, enabling them to focus more deeply on conceptual thinking and scholarly contribution. The findings therefore suggest that AI empowered MAEd alumni to maintain their cultural voice while participating confidently in international academic discourse.

Despite these benefits, participants also experienced a Moral Struggle for Intellectual Authenticity. Many MAEd alumni feared that excessive reliance on AI might weaken scholarly discipline, reduce intellectual effort, and diminish the value of academic struggle. Participants expressed guilt, imposter syndrome, and anxiety regarding whether AI-assisted outputs still genuinely represented their intellectual labor. Some intentionally wrote drafts manually before consulting AI in order to preserve the “human thumbprint” in their work. These findings support Authentic Learning Theory as discussed by Sarmiento et al. (2020), which emphasizes that meaningful learning develops through engagement with complex intellectual tasks and personal struggle. George et al. (2025) further argued that AI’s frictionless nature may weaken the developmental value of scholarly labor, while Huang et al. (2025) contended that professional integrity is preserved through human-centered authorship practices. The findings indicate that participants continued to value human effort, emotional investment, and intellectual perseverance as the foundations of authentic scholarship.

Ethical Dilemmas and Professional Challenges of Graduated MAEd Students

The findings in Table 2 revealed that the integration of AI in graduate research introduced complex ethical dilemmas and professional challenges among MAEd alumni. While AI improved efficiency and accessibility, participants experienced concerns regarding intellectual identity, scientific integrity, institutional ambiguity, cultural appropriation, and professional accountability. The themes generated include Crisis of Intellectual Identity and Personal Voice, Moral Dilemma of the Sacred Struggle, Navigating Technical Fallibility and Scientific Integrity, Institutional Ambiguity and Policy Gaps, Data Sovereignty and Cultural Appropriation Risks, and Professional Burden of Verification and Audit. These findings demonstrate that AI-assisted scholarship requires researchers not only to produce academic outputs but also to navigate emotional, ethical, legal, and cultural complexities associated with digital authorship.

One major concern identified by participants was the Crisis of Intellectual Identity and Personal Voice. Participants feared losing their authentic writing style because AI-generated outputs often appeared more polished and academically refined than their own natural expression. Many described a constant struggle in distinguishing between human intention and machine-generated phrasing. This supports Intentional Agency Theory by Rodrigues (2025), which argues that authorship involves not only textual production but also human intent and interpretive ownership. Hossain and Islam (2024) further emphasized that humans must maintain co-intelligence oversight to ensure that AI-generated content reflects the researcher’s intended meaning. These findings indicate that MAEd alumni continuously negotiated the balance between technological assistance and preservation of personal voice in order to maintain cognitive ownership of their research outputs.

The Moral Dilemma of the Sacred Struggle also emerged as a central issue among participants. Many MAEd alumni believed that the traditional hardship associated with academic writing contributes to the development of discipline, grit, and scholarly identity. Participants feared that AI might diminish the value of intellectual struggle and reduce opportunities for critical thinking development. This aligns with virtue ethics in research as discussed by Sultana (2025), which views authorship as a moral accomplishment grounded in patience, perseverance, and intellectual endurance. George et al. (2024) likewise argued that manual engagement in writing strengthens cognitive fortitude and professional character. The findings suggest that participants associated authentic scholarship not merely with polished outputs but with the effort, discipline, and emotional resilience developed throughout the writing process.

Another significant challenge involved Navigating Technical Fallibility and Scientific Integrity. Participants reported difficulties in managing hallucinated citations, algorithmic bias, and inaccurate AI-generated recommendations that were inconsistent with the realities of Philippine educational settings. Researchers therefore adopted extensive verification strategies such as triangulation, manual recalculation, and cross-referencing against original human-authored sources. These findings support Epistemic Responsibility Theory by Toderici et al. (2025), which emphasizes that researchers remain morally accountable for validating information regardless of AI involvement. Similarly, Sinha (2025) highlighted the Human-in-the-Loop Research Agency Model, where human researchers function as auditors who provide contextual understanding and ethical judgment that AI systems cannot achieve independently. The findings therefore reveal that MAEd alumni assumed expanded professional responsibilities as evaluators, verifiers, and gatekeepers of truth within AI-assisted research environments.

Strategies Employed by MAEd Alumni in AI-Assisted Research Writing

The findings in Table 3 revealed that MAEd alumni developed intentional and systematic strategies to ensure that AI remained a supportive tool rather than a replacement for human cognition and ethical responsibility. The strategies reflected a strong commitment to preserving intellectual ownership, cultural integrity, academic accountability, and contextual relevance despite the increasing influence of automation in graduate research. The major themes identified include Methodological Iteration and Human-Centric Synthesis, Contextualization and Local Knowledge Validation, Documentation and Transparency Protocols, Critical Verification and Cross-Referencing Strategies, Strategic Inquiry and Logical Stress-Testing, and Linguistic Agency and Stylistic Sovereignty.

One of the primary strategies employed by participants was Methodological Iteration and Human-Centric Synthesis. MAEd alumni commonly adopted the “Sandwich Method,” wherein the writing process began with a human-generated draft, followed by AI-assisted polishing, and concluded with final human revision and critique. Participants emphasized that AI should never have the “last word” in the writing process. These findings support the Theory of Interactive Control by Auernhammer (2020), which emphasizes that humans must remain in control of automated systems. Zhai et al. (2024) further described this as cognitive command, where the researcher safeguards the meaning, intention, and intellectual value of the study despite technological assistance. The findings suggest that participants intentionally designed workflows that preserved human agency while benefiting from AI efficiency.

Another significant strategy involved Contextualization and Local Knowledge Validation. Participants intentionally infused local Visayan nuances, indigenous metaphors, and lived classroom experiences into their research to prevent AI from oversimplifying or distorting culturally grounded realities. Member checking with local stakeholders and community elders was also used to validate interpretations and preserve the “cultural heart” of the study. These findings support Long and Magerko’s (2020) concept of Critical AI Literacy, which emphasizes the importance of knowing when to interrupt or challenge AI-generated outputs to prevent cultural misrepresentation. Chowdhury (2022) similarly described this process as cultural gatekeeping, wherein researchers actively defend local narratives from algorithmic homogenization. The findings therefore indicate that MAEd alumni prioritized relational integrity and cultural preservation in order to ensure that their studies authentically represented Philippine educational experiences.

Lastly, participants emphasized Documentation and Transparency Protocols and Critical Verification and Cross-Referencing Strategies as necessary safeguards for maintaining academic integrity. Researchers kept AI use logs, archived handwritten notes, documented prompts, recalculated statistical tables manually, and verified citations using original PDF sources. These strategies reflected a shift from merely producing outputs toward demonstrating process accountability and transparency. The findings align with the Theory of AI Accountability by Kempton et al. (2023), which argues that human researchers remain fully responsible for validating AI-assisted outputs. Walid et al. (2025) also described this obligation as epistemic duty, wherein scholars must ensure that all claims remain grounded in verifiable truth. The findings therefore suggest that MAEd alumni developed advanced forms of digital vigilance and professional responsibility in response to the risks associated with AI-generated misinformation and institutional ambiguity.

Conclusions

The study concluded that the integration of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) into graduate research was a multifaceted push and pull experience for MAEd alumni, characterized by a tension between cognitive augmentation and the moral struggle for authenticity. While AI offered significant advantages in linguistic empowerment and processing speed, it simultaneously imposed a substantial professional burden of verification. Alumni recognized that AI could not be a substitute for the researcher’s intellect; instead, the researchers maintained linguistic agency and acted as the definitive supervisors of the machine to safeguard the integrity of their work. Ultimately, these MAEd alumni demonstrated that Filipino researchers effectively leveraged high-tech tools without compromising their cultural identity or personal voice, though the institutional ambiguity and policy gaps of the time highlighted an urgent need for clearer ethical guidelines from academic institutions to ensure a safe and transparent research environment. The sacred struggle of the writing process remained a vital element of scholarship, suggesting that the most robust research emerged when human intuition

and machine logic were harmonized, provided that the human researcher remained firmly in control of the intellectual output.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that MAEd alumni utilize artificial intelligence as a support mechanism for constructive thinking and idea generation while ensuring that the final research output remains grounded in human reasoning, critical reflection, and authentic scholarly voice. They should maintain transparency and academic integrity through proper documentation practices such as prompt logs, AI-use records, and preservation of handwritten drafts while intentionally incorporating Visayan expressions and local cultural references to safeguard contextual authenticity. Teachers and research advisers are encouraged to strengthen students' critical AI literacy by providing activities that develop skills in detecting hallucinated information, verifying citations manually, and evaluating AI-generated outputs through process-oriented assessment strategies that value drafts, revisions, and intellectual effort rather than purely polished manuscripts. Furthermore, Southern Capital Colleges administration should establish clear institutional policies that distinguish ethical AI integration from academic dishonesty while promoting linguistic agency and protecting local knowledge systems from algorithmic oversimplification. Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to further investigate the evolving relationship between human intuition and machine logic, particularly focusing on the long-term psychological, ethical, and professional transitions experienced by scholars, ensuring that technological advancement enhances rather than replaces the sacred struggle, creativity, and authenticity inherent in academic writing.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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