ISRG Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (ISRGJMS)

ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: isrg j. multidiscip. Stud.

ISSN: 2584-0452 (Online)

Journal homepage: https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjms/

Volume – IV, Issue – IX (September) 2026

Frequency: Monthly

Trusting the Algorithm: Exploring Higher Educators' Confidence in Generative AI Tools for Academic Assistance

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| **Received:** 22.06.2026 | **Accepted:** 20.08.2026 | **Published:** 06.09.2026

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Abstract

The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in higher education is transforming academic teaching, research, and administrative practices while simultaneously challenging institutional structures for governance, professional development, and academic integrity. Despite the growing use of GenAI tools, empirical evidence concerning higher education faculty members' use and engagement—particularly within contexts characterized by infrastructural and institutional constraints remains limited (Ouyang et al., 2022). This study examines patterns of GenAI use perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and ethical concerns among faculty members in Palestinian higher education (Bacalso et al., 2026). Drawing on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1989) and extending it through an ethical dimension, the study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design with data collected from 300 higher education faculty members. The study used descriptive statistics, internal consistency analysis, and one-way ANOVAs to examine faculty responses and differences across age cohorts and academic ranks. The findings indicate higher reported use of GenAI for teaching materials and research tasks, relatively favorable perceptions of its usefulness and ease of use, and substantial ethical concerns, particularly regarding the need for institutional guidance. Significant differences emerged across age cohorts and academic ranks, with younger and more junior faculty generally reporting higher use, perceived usefulness, and ease of use, while older and more senior faculty reported stronger ethical concerns. These findings support a governance approach that moves beyond both outright prohibition and unconditional endorsement toward transparent ethical guidance, context-sensitive pedagogical frameworks, and structured opportunities for responsible experimentation and professional learning.

Keywords: *generative artificial intelligence; higher education; Technology Acceptance Model; academic integrity; ethical concerns; faculty engagement.*

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22491730

1. Introduction

Gan et al. (2023) mentioned that higher education is undergoing a profound technological transformation driven by the rapid development, diffusion, and increasing accessibility of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). Unlike earlier generations of educational technologies, which were often introduced through institutionally mediated processes and primarily supported administrative or routine instructional functions, contemporary generative AI systems including large language models (LLMs) can produce sophisticated text, summarize and synthesize information, support research and writing processes, generate computer code, and assist with a growing range of academic tasks (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Fuller & Barnes, 2024). These capabilities have altered the relationship between academic professionals and educational technologies. Rather than encountering technologies only after institutional procurement, evaluation, and implementation processes, individual faculty members can now independently access and experiment with powerful AI systems, frequently before universities have established comprehensive policies, professional development structures, or ethical guidelines governing their use (Miao & Holmes, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

GenAI does not occur uniformly across higher education systems. Its implementation is shaped by institutional resources, technological infrastructure, regulatory environments, professional norms, and broader socioeconomic and political conditions (Yusuf et al., 2024). These contextual factors are particularly relevant in the Palestinian higher education system, where universities operate within conditions characterized by structural fragmentation, constrained mobility, infrastructural limitations, and restricted access to resources and international academic networks (AlShaer et al., 2025). Within such an environment, digital technologies may represent not merely instruments of pedagogical innovation but also important mechanisms for maintaining academic continuity, strengthening institutional capacity, and sustaining participation in increasingly digital global academic communities. At the same time, the introduction of generative AI creates new challenges for academic practice. Faculty members must negotiate the potential benefits of increased efficiency, accessibility, and task support alongside concerns regarding academic integrity, authorship, reliability, bias, privacy, and the preservation of students' critical and independent thinking (Perkins, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). The resulting tension places faculty members at the center of institutional decisions concerning whether, how, and under what conditions GenAI should be incorporated into higher education.

The growing body of research on artificial intelligence in higher education has begun to document both the opportunities and risks associated with GenAI. Systematic reviews indicate that literature has expanded rapidly across areas including pedagogical applications, academic practices, ethical implications, and institutional responses (Yusuf et al., 2024). Nevertheless, important limitations remain in the empirical literature concerning faculty use and engagement. A substantial proportion of existing research has focused on students' use of AI, academic misconduct, assessment challenges, or the broader pedagogical possibilities and risks associated with emerging technologies (Chan, 2024). Comparatively less quantitative research has examined how higher education faculty members themselves perceive and use GenAI in their academic work, particularly in contexts outside Western and highly resourced higher education systems. Recent evidence nevertheless suggests that faculty engagement with GenAI is an increasingly important research area, with studies identifying perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social influences, self-efficacy, trust, and other factors as relevant to educators' adoption of generative AI (Nikolic et al., 2024; Qin & Li, 2020). This emerging literature underscores the importance of investigating faculty use and engagement directly rather than if findings concerning students or general technology users can be transferred to academic staff.

Moreover, studies that examine technology acceptance frequently emphasize instrumental perceptions—such as usefulness and ease of use without sufficiently integrating the ethical and academic integrity concerns that may shape faculty members' willingness to engage with generative AI. This is an important limitation because faculty engagement with GenAI is not simply a technological decision. It is also a professional and ethical decision involving judgments about appropriate academic practice, institutional responsibility, authorship, transparency, privacy, and the boundaries of legitimate AI assistance (Perkins, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). Recent systematic evidence indicates that academic integrity remains one of the central concerns associated with GenAI in higher education, alongside issues of transparency, privacy, equity, accountability, and AI literacy (Yusuf et al., 2024). Accordingly, understanding faculty engagement requires attention to both the perceived benefits of GenAI and the ethical concerns that may constrain or qualify its use.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides an established theoretical foundation for examining technology adoption. Originally developed by Davis (1989), TAM proposes that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are central determinants of individuals' acceptance of information technology. The model has subsequently been applied extensively across educational and digital technology contexts and remains influential in research examining acceptance of emerging technologies. Recent studies have also begun to apply extended versions of TAM to generative AI adoption in educational settings. For example, Zhang et al. (2025) examined teachers' behavioral intentions to use GenAI through an extended TAM framework, demonstrating the continued relevance of TAM constructs while incorporating additional individual and social factors. Similarly, research involving higher education educators has applied technology acceptance frameworks to examine the factors associated with ChatGPT adoption and use (Nikolic et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2024).

However, the conventional TAM focus on instrumental perceptions may be insufficient for examining technologies whose adoption raises substantial questions about academic integrity, professional responsibility, and ethical governance. Generative AI is particularly relevant in this regard because its perceived usefulness and ease of use may encourage adoption while simultaneously intensifying concerns about inappropriate reliance, authorship, assessment validity, misinformation, bias, privacy, and the preservation of human agency (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Incorporating an ethical dimension alongside conventional technology acceptance constructs therefore provides a more contextually appropriate approach to understanding faculty engagement with GenAI. Such an approach is consistent with recent calls for human-centered and ethically governed approaches to the integration of generative AI in education and research (Miao & Holmes, 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

Furthermore, faculty engagement with GenAI is unlikely to be homogeneous across professional groups. Differences in age and academic rank may be associated with exposure to digital

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22491730

technologies, professional responsibilities, perceived risks, technological confidence, and opportunities to experiment with GenAI. Existing research on educators' adoption of AI suggests that individual characteristics and professional contexts can shape attitudes, behavioral intentions, and actual use (Panagopoulos et al., 2026). Nevertheless, comparatively limited empirical evidence has examined such variation systematically among faculty members in resource-constrained higher education contexts. Understanding these differences is particularly important for institutional decision-making because a uniform policy response may fail to address the different pedagogical practices, ethical concerns, and professional needs of faculty members at different career stages (Baggia et al., 2026).

Against this background, the present study examines generative AI use among faculty members in Palestinian higher education through an ethics-augmented application of the Technology Acceptance Model. Specifically, the study examines AI usage patterns, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and ethical concerns, while investigating whether these dimensions differ across selected demographic and academic characteristics, including age cohort and academic rank. By bringing technological perceptions and ethical considerations into a single empirical framework, the study seeks to contribute evidence from an underrepresented higher education context and to extend understanding of faculty engagement with GenAI (Yan et al., 2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Technology Acceptance Model and Its Extension to Generative AI

The adoption of information and instructional technologies has traditionally been examined through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), originally proposed by Davis (1989). TAM explains technology acceptance primarily through perceived usefulness (PU)—the extent to which an individual believes that using a particular technology will enhance job performance—and perceived ease of use (PEOU)—the extent to which an individual expects the technology to be free of effort. These perceptions shape users' attitudes and behavioral intentions and, ultimately, their technology use (Davis, 1989). The model has subsequently become one of the most influential frameworks for explaining technology acceptance across organizational and educational contexts. Its theoretical foundations have also informed subsequent models, including the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which integrates several prominent technology-acceptance perspectives and introduces constructs such as performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), however, presents a distinctive context for technology-acceptance research. Unlike many conventional information systems, GenAI systems do not merely store, retrieve, or transmit information supplied by users. They generate new textual, visual, auditory, or computational outputs in response to natural-language prompts, often producing results that may be useful but are not fully predictable or consistently reliable (Dwivedi et al., 2023). This combination of accessibility, generative capability, and probabilistic output creates a technology-acceptance environment in which perceptions of usefulness and ease of use coexist with concerns about reliability, accountability, authorship, privacy, and academic integrity (Lyu et al., 2025).

Recent empirical research indicates that technology-acceptance frameworks remain relevant to understanding faculty adoption of GenAI. For example, Alotaibi and Alayed (2025), using a revised UTAUT framework with 244 faculty members from eight Saudi universities, found that performance expectancy and effort expectancy were among the strongest predictors of behavioral intention to use GenAI, while social influence and facilitating conditions also demonstrated significant effects (Chen & Cheung, 2025). The findings suggest that instrumental perceptions of GenAI remain important even when technology introduces novel professional and ethical challenges. Similarly, research examining teaching academics has demonstrated the growing relevance of technology-acceptance constructs for understanding educators' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors toward AI and GenAI in higher education (Nikolic et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the continued explanatory value of conventional technology-acceptance models does not imply that they are sufficient on their own. GenAI introduces questions that extend beyond whether a technology is useful or easy to operate. In higher education, faculty members must also determine whether particular forms of AI use are academically legitimate, pedagogically appropriate, ethically defensible, and consistent with institutional expectations. Consequently, models focused primarily on instrumental acceptance may overlook important professional considerations surrounding authorship, transparency, assessment validity, intellectual responsibility, privacy, and academic integrity (Miao & Holmes, 2023).

The present study therefore adopts an ethics-augmented TAM perspective. Rather than treating ethical concerns as an incidental outcome of technology use, the study conceptualizes Ethical Concerns as a distinct dimension of faculty members' engagement with GenAI. This extension is particularly relevant to GenAI because the same characteristics that increase its perceived usefulness—its ability to generate, transform, summarize, and refine academic content—may also intensify concerns regarding inappropriate dependence, undisclosed AI assistance, authorship, and the validity of academic assessment. The theoretical premise is therefore that understanding faculty engagement with GenAI requires consideration of both its instrumental value and the ethical boundaries within which such use is perceived as acceptable

2.2 Faculty Perceptions of Generative AI in Higher Education

Mamo et al. (2024) show that research on GenAI in higher education has expanded rapidly since the public emergence of ChatGPT, documenting substantial opportunities alongside significant pedagogical and professional concerns. GenAI can support a range of academic activities, including brainstorming, drafting, summarization, feedback, lesson planning, coding, and research-related tasks (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024). For faculty members, these capabilities may reduce the time required for routine academic tasks and create new opportunities for instructional support and personalized learning. However, the perceived usefulness of GenAI exists alongside concerns regarding reliability, overreliance, academic integrity, and the changing nature of teaching and assessment. This tension is particularly important because the adoption of GenAI occurs within a profession whose core responsibilities include evaluating student learning, maintaining academic standards, and supporting the development of independent and critical thinking (Lee et al., 2024). Selwyn (2019) argues more broadly that AI and automation in

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22491730

education should be examined critically rather than understood solely through narratives of technological progress. Although his work predates the emergence of contemporary generative AI, its emphasis on the social, political, and professional implications of educational automation remains relevant to interpreting faculty responses to GenAI.

Recent empirical studies provide more direct evidence concerning faculty and educator perceptions. Nikolic et al. (2024), in a systematic literature review of teaching academics' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors toward AI and GenAI in higher education, identified technology-acceptance constructs as an important component of the emerging evidence base while also highlighting the multidimensional nature of academic adoption. Alotaibi and Alayed (2025) similarly found significant relationships between performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and faculty intentions to adopt GenAI. Taken together, these studies suggest that faculty adoption cannot be reduced to simple enthusiasm or resistance; rather, it reflects an interaction between perceived utility, usability, professional context, and the conditions under which AI is introduced.

An additional concern is the changing boundary between legitimate AI assistance and inappropriate substitution of human academic work. The distinction is particularly consequential in assessment contexts, where GenAI can produce coherent and academically plausible responses with limited human input. Kofinas et al. (2025), examining assessments across two UK higher education institutions, found that markers were generally unable to reliably distinguish assessments involving GenAI from those produced without GenAI assistance. Their findings suggest that conventional assessment and marking processes face significant challenges when AI-generated or AI-modified work can appear comparable to human-produced work

The empirical literature also suggests that perceptions of GenAI are not necessarily uniform across academic communities. Faculty members' responses may vary according to professional roles, previous technological experience, and perceived consequences for teaching and assessment. Such variation is important because faculty members at different career stages may encounter different professional responsibilities, expectations, and opportunities to engage with emerging technologies. Accordingly, examining differences across relevant demographic and professional groups can provide a more nuanced account of faculty engagement than treating higher education faculty as a homogeneous population (Arowosegbe et al., 2024).

2.3 Academic Integrity and the Ethics of Adoption

Academic integrity has become one of the central ethical concerns associated with the rapid diffusion of generative AI in higher education. The concern is not limited to conventional plagiarism. GenAI introduces more complex forms of human–AI interaction in which the boundary between acceptable assistance and inappropriate substitution may depend on the extent, purpose, transparency, and verification of AI involvement.

Chan (2024) introduced the concept of "AI-giarism" to describe forms of academic dishonesty involving AI-generated content and plagiarism. In a survey of 393 undergraduate and postgraduate students across disciplines, Chan found that participants expressed relatively clear disapproval of direct AI-generated content while demonstrating greater ambiguity toward less visible forms of AI assistance. These findings are important because they suggest that perceptions of academic misconduct may operate along a continuum rather than through a simple distinction between permitted and prohibited AI use. This distinction is particularly relevant to faculty members, who are required to interpret and enforce academic-integrity expectations while simultaneously deciding how AI can legitimately be incorporated into their own teaching, research, and administrative practices. The ethical challenge therefore extends beyond detecting misconduct to establishing transparent boundaries around appropriate AI assistance. UNESCO's guidance emphasizes the importance of human agency, transparency, data privacy, ethical reflection, and institutional capacity-building in educational applications of GenAI (Miao & Holmes, 2023).

The difficulty of reliably identifying AI-generated content further complicates this challenge. Hostetter et al. (2024) examined perceptions of AI-generated and student-generated writing among 82 faculty members and 83 students and found that participants were unable to reliably distinguish the AI-generated reflection from the student-written reflections. Both groups nevertheless recognized that using GenAI to produce final written work could compromise learning more substantially than using it for idea generation. These findings demonstrate why reliance on detection alone may be insufficient as an institutional response to GenAI. Similarly, Kofinas et al. (2025) found that academic markers were generally unable to distinguish assessments involving GenAI from assessments produced without it, while the presence or suspicion of GenAI use influenced marking and moderation processes. Their findings indicate that GenAI creates not only a plagiarism problem but also a broader challenge for the validity and reliability of assessment practices.

Consequently, ethical concern should not be conceptualized merely as a generalized fear of technological change. Rather, it can be understood as a substantive component of faculty decision-making concerning whether and how GenAI should be used. Faculty members may simultaneously recognize the efficiency and usefulness of GenAI while expressing reservations about authorship, transparency, academic standards, student learning, and institutional accountability. This coexistence of perceived utility and ethical reservation provides an important theoretical rationale for incorporating ethical concerns into technology-acceptance research (Yan et al., 2024).

2.4 Institutional Governance and the Policy Environment

The rapid development of GenAI has created a substantial challenge for institutional governance because technological adoption has proceeded faster than the development of comprehensive regulatory and pedagogical frameworks. International organizations have therefore increasingly emphasized proactive governance rather than purely reactive responses. UNESCO's Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research advocates a human-centred approach that addresses data privacy, ethical considerations, appropriate use, institutional capacity, and educator training (Miao & Holmes, 2023).

Evidence concerning institutional preparedness nevertheless suggests that policy development remains uneven. A UNESCO survey reported that only 19% of respondents indicated that their higher education institutions had a formal AI policy, while an additional 42% reported that institutional guidance was under development (Bhat et al., 2024). The findings also indicated substantial regional differences in the maturity of institutional

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22491730

guidance. These figures illustrate the continuing gap between the rapid diffusion of GenAI, and the institutional mechanisms required to govern its use responsibly. The absence of clear institutional guidance may have important consequences for faculty members. When policies are incomplete or ambiguous, individual academics may be required to determine independently which forms of AI use are acceptable, how AI-assisted work should be disclosed, whether assessment tasks permit AI assistance, and how suspected misuse should be addressed. Such decentralization may generate inconsistencies across courses, departments, and disciplines and may place considerable responsibility on individual faculty members.

For this reason, institutional governance should not necessarily be understood as synonymous with restriction. A more sustainable approach may combine clear ethical boundaries with faculty development, AI literacy, context-sensitive guidance, and opportunities for controlled experimentation. UNESCO (2023) similarly emphasizes the importance of human-centred governance and institutional capacity rather than relying solely on prohibition. From this perspective, clear institutional governance provides an important context for understanding faculty engagement with GenAI because institutional clarity may reduce uncertainty while simultaneously establishing expectations concerning responsible use.

2.5 The Palestinian Higher Education Context

The Palestinian higher education system provides an important context for examining GenAI adoption because digital transformation occurs alongside political, infrastructural, economic, and institutional constraints. Recent research on digital transformation at An-Najah National University demonstrates that digital technologies have supported educational access, continuity, communication, and administrative efficiency, while their implementation has remained constrained by fragmented governance, limited infrastructure, financial pressures, and insufficiently developed legal and regulatory frameworks (Al-Shaer et al., 2025). In this context, digital technologies may function not only as instruments of institutional modernization but also as mechanisms for maintaining educational continuity and resilience during periods of disruption. Al-Shaer et al. (2025) particularly demonstrate that digital transformation can enhance educational access and institutional resilience in conflict-affected settings, while its effectiveness remains dependent on institutional capacity, policy development, and infrastructure. This dual character is particularly relevant to GenAI adoption because faculty members may perceive these technologies both as opportunities to improve efficiency and as emerging technologies that require appropriate institutional governance, ethical guidance, and policy oversight.

The Palestinian context also challenges assumptions derived predominantly from relatively stable and well-resourced higher education systems. Research on digital transformation in Palestinian higher education has documented infrastructural limitations, limited financial resources, restricted access to physical learning environments, and challenges associated with the broader sociopolitical context (Aljanazrah et al., 2022; Smith & Scott, 2023). More recent research further indicates that digital precarity, resource scarcity, governance instability, and disruption to university operations can affect the capacity of Palestinian universities to sustain educational provision during crises (Mattour & Kamoun-Chouk, 2026). These conditions suggest that models of technology adoption developed primarily in stable institutional environments may not fully capture the contextual conditions under which faculty members in conflict-affected or resource-constrained settings evaluate emerging technologies.

Accordingly, infrastructure, institutional capacity, access to professional development, policy availability, and the broader conditions of academic work may shape both the perceived usefulness of GenAI and the perceived risks and constraints associated with its adoption. This contextual perspective is particularly relevant because recent GenAI adoption research demonstrates that technology-acceptance constructs remain useful for explaining adoption while also highlighting the importance of contextual factors such as self-efficacy, trust, facilitating conditions, and institutional support (Enang & Christopoulou, 2025; Yang, 2026). Examining Palestinian faculty members therefore provides an opportunity to extend the empirical literature beyond the institutional and geographical contexts in which much technology-acceptance research has been conducted. It also enables the study to examine how conventional instrumental dimensions of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)—particularly perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use relate to faculty members' engagement with GenAI within a higher education system where institutional resources, infrastructure, and governance capacity may themselves be constrained (Davis, 1989).

2.6 Research Gap and Study Aims

The literature reviewed above identifies several interconnected gaps. First, although research on GenAI in higher education is expanding rapidly, faculty members remain comparatively less studied than students, despite their central role in teaching, assessment, academic governance, and the institutional implementation of AI. Systematic evidence specifically concerning faculty engagement with GenAI remains a developing area requiring further empirical investigation (Nikolic et al., 2024).

Second, existing technology-acceptance research demonstrates the continuing relevance of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, but these constructs do not necessarily capture the full range of professional and ethical considerations associated with GenAI. The distinctive characteristics of generative systems—including their capacity to produce academic content, uncertainty concerning authorship, and implications for assessment—justify examining ethical concerns alongside conventional technology-perception constructs.

Third, academic-integrity concerns have become increasingly complex because the boundary between legitimate assistance and inappropriate substitution is not always binary. Research on AI-giarism, AI-generated writing, and assessment validity demonstrates the need to move beyond detection-oriented approaches toward clearer conceptualizations of responsible AI use and institutional governance (Chan, 2024; Hostetter et al., 2024; Kofinas et al., 2025). Fourth, empirical evidence from Palestine and comparable conflict-affected or resource-constrained higher education systems remains limited. Recent research on Palestinian digital transformation demonstrates that technological adoption occurs within conditions of infrastructural constraint, fragmented governance, and political instability (AlShaer et al., 2025). However, considerably less is known about how faculty members in this context perceive and use GenAI specifically.

The present study addresses these gaps by drawing conceptually on an ethics-augmented Technology Acceptance Model to examine

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22491730

generative AI use among 300 faculty members in Palestinian higher education. Specifically, the study examines AI usage patterns, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and ethical concerns, while examining differences across selected demographic and academic characteristics, including age cohort and academic rank. The study therefore seeks to contribute empirical evidence from an underrepresented higher education context while providing a theoretically grounded basis for understanding faculty engagement with GenAI from both instrumental and ethical perspectives..

3. Methodology

3.1 Instrument Description

A structured self-administered questionnaire was developed to examine multiple dimensions of faculty members' engagement with generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in higher education. The instrument comprised two sections: (1) a sociodemographic and professional information section and (2) a 20-item psychometric battery designed to assess four dimensions of faculty engagement with GenAI.

The psychometric component was conceptually informed by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1989) and extended to incorporate ethical and academic-integrity considerations that have become increasingly relevant to the use of GenAI in higher education (Chan, 2024; Miao & Holmes, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). The 20 items were distributed equally across four five-item constructs:

- AI Usage Patterns (UP; 5 items): assessed the extent of faculty members' reported engagement with GenAI across academic, teaching, research, and administrative activities
- Perceived Usefulness (PU; 5 items): assessed the extent to which faculty members perceived GenAI as useful for improving personal efficiency, supporting research-related activities, and facilitating teaching and other academic tasks.
- Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU; 5 items): assessed perceptions of the ease of learning, interacting with, becoming skillful in, and integrating GenAI into routine academic tasks
- Ethical Concern (EC; 5 items): assessed faculty members' concerns regarding academic dishonesty, critical thinking, plagiarism, institutional guidance, overreliance on AI, and broader academic standards

All psychometric items were measured using a five-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Higher scores indicated stronger endorsement of the respective construct. For the AI Usage Patterns items, higher scores represented greater reported engagement with GenAI across the specified academic activities. For the Ethical Concerns construct, higher scores indicated stronger ethical reservations concerning GenAI use. The instrument was administered in English. Prior to full data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed for clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility. The final instrument contained 20 psychometric items in addition to the sociodemographic and professional questions.

3.2 Population and Sampling Procedure

The target population comprised full-time and part-time teaching faculty members employed at higher education institutions in the Palestinian territories. The study focused on faculty members because they occupy a central position in the institutional use of GenAI: they simultaneously engage with AI as users of academic technologies, make pedagogical and assessment decisions, and contribute to the development and enforcement of academic-integrity practices. Data were collected between March and May 2026 using an online questionnaire distributed through institutional and professional networks. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and the anonymous nature of their responses before completing the questionnaire.

Following data screening, 24 responses were excluded because they were considered incomplete or invalid for analysis. The final analytical sample therefore consisted of 300 faculty members (N = 300). Where applicable, institutional and procedural safeguards were used to minimize duplicate submissions. Respondents' identifying information was not retained with their survey responses, thereby preserving respondent anonymity. The final sample was subsequently examined according to relevant sociodemographic and professional characteristics, including gender, age cohort, academic rank, and years of professional experience. These characteristics were used to describe the sample, while age cohort and academic rank were included in the subsequent group-comparison analyses.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures. First, descriptive statistics were calculated for the individual questionnaire items and the four composite constructs. These analyses included means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, as appropriate.

Second, the internal consistency of each five-item construct was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α). Reliability coefficients were calculated separately for AI Usage Patterns, Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and Ethical Concern.

Third, one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine whether AI-related perceptions and usage patterns differed significantly across age cohorts and academic ranks. The statistical significance threshold was set at $\alpha = .05$..

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The final analytical sample consisted of 300 full-time and part-time faculty members employed at Palestinian higher education institutions. Table 1 presents the demographic and professional characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age cohort, academic rank, and years of professional experience.

The distribution of respondents across these characteristics provides the basis for the subsequent group-comparison analyses. In particular, the demographic variables were used to examine whether reported GenAI usage patterns and perceptions differed significantly across age cohorts and academic ranks.

Table 1: *Demographic Distribution of Faculty Respondents (N = 300)*

Demographic Metric	**Stratification Category**	**n**	**%**

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22491730

Age	< 30 years	54	18.00
	30–39 years	60	20.00
	40–49 years	84	28.00
	50–59 years	60	20.00
	60+ years	42	14.00
Gender	Male	156	52.00
	Female	144	48.00
Academic rank	Assistant Lecturer	48	16.00
	Lecturer	78	26.00
	Senior Lecturer	60	20.00
	Associate Professor	54	18.00
	Professor	60	20.00
Pedagogical experience	0–5 years	60	20.00
	6–10 years	66	22.00
	11–15 years	54	18.00
	16–20 years	30	10.00
	20+ years	90	30.00

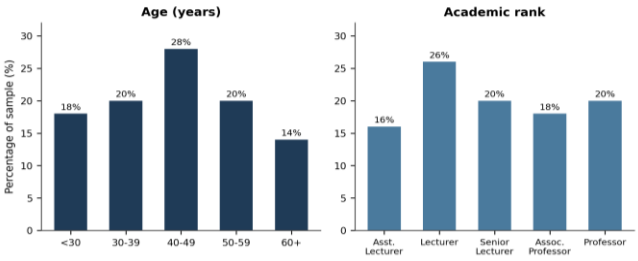

Figure 1. *Sociodemographic distribution of faculty respondents (N = 300).*

4.2 Reliability Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed for each of the four subscales to evaluate internal consistency. All four subscales exceeded the conventional acceptability threshold of .70 by a considerable margin, with coefficients ranging from .916 to .957 (Table 2), indicating strong internal reliability across the instrument.

Table 2: *Subscale Psychometric Properties and Aggregate Metrics*

Psychometric Construct	Items	M	SD	Cronbach's α
AI Usage Patterns (UP)	5	3.348	0.824	.932
Perceived Usefulness (PU)	5	3.516	0.674	.939
Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)	5	3.628	0.731	.957
Ethical Concerns (EC)	5	3.796	0.617	.916

Item-level analysis revealed several substantively meaningful patterns across the four study constructs (Table 3). Within AI Usage Patterns, faculty members reported higher levels of use of generative AI for preparing teaching materials (UP1: M = 3.56) and supporting research-related tasks (UP2: M = 3.52). In contrast, reported use was considerably lower for direct integration of GenAI into student-facing learning activities (UP4: M = 2.72), indicating a more cautious approach to using GenAI in activities involving direct student engagement.

For Perceived Usefulness, respondents expressed relatively strong agreement that GenAI contributes to their personal academic productivity (PU1: M = 3.80). However, perceptions were substantially less favorable regarding the usefulness of GenAI for institutional decision-making (PU4: M = 2.90). This difference suggests that faculty members perceived greater value in GenAI for individual academic tasks than for broader institutional or administrative decision-making.

The Perceived Ease of Use items demonstrated a distinction between learning to use GenAI and integrating it into established academic tasks. Faculty members generally reported that learning to use GenAI tools was relatively straightforward (PEOU1: M = 3.82), whereas integrating these tools into established daily academic workflows received a lower rating (PEOU3: M = 3.24). The pattern indicates that perceived accessibility of GenAI did not necessarily translate into equally strong perceptions of ease when the technology was incorporated into existing professional routines.

The strongest item-level response was observed for EC4, "Institutional guidelines are necessary for AI use in academia," which received a mean score of M = 4.62 (SD = 0.49). This was the highest mean and one of the most tightly distributed responses across all 20 items, indicating a very high level of agreement among respondents concerning the need for formal institutional guidance on the use of GenAI in academic settings. The finding is particularly noteworthy given that it occurred alongside generally favorable perceptions of GenAI's usefulness and ease of use, suggesting that acceptance of the technology coexists with a strong expectation for institutional governance.

Table 3: *Descriptive Analysis of Individual Questionnaire Items*

Item	Questionnaire Prompt Statement	M	SD
UP1	I use generative AI tools for preparing teaching materials.	3.56	1.00
UP2	I use AI tools for research-related tasks.	3.52	0.88
UP3	I use AI tools for administrative academic work.	3.46	0.70
UP4	I integrate AI tools into student learning activities.	2.72	0.98
UP5	I actively explore new AI applications for academic purposes.	3.48	1.05
PU1	Using generative AI improves my academic productivity.	3.80	0.78

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PU2	Generative AI enhances the quality of my teaching materials.	3.44	0.75
PU3	Generative AI supports my research efficiency.	3.68	0.76
PU4	Generative AI is useful for academic decision-making.	2.90	0.70
PU5	Overall, generative AI is beneficial for my academic work.	3.76	0.76
PEOU1	Learning to use generative AI tools is easy for me.	3.82	0.79
PEOU2	Interacting with AI tools is clear and understandable.	3.66	0.71
PEOU3	I find AI tools easy to integrate into my academic tasks.	3.24	0.82
PEOU4	It is easy for me to become skillful in using AI tools.	3.74	0.85
PEOU5	AI tools are user-friendly for academic purposes.	3.68	0.79
EC1	The use of generative AI may encourage academic dishonesty.	3.54	0.88
EC2	AI-generated content may reduce critical thinking among academics.	3.58	0.72
EC3	I am concerned about plagiarism risks when using AI tools.	3.48	0.73
EC4	Institutional guidelines are necessary for AI use in academia.	4.62	0.49
EC5	Overreliance on AI may negatively affect academic standards.	3.76	0.71

4.3 Group Differences

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to examine whether AI-related usage patterns, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and ethical concerns differed across age cohorts and academic ranks. Statistically significant omnibus differences were observed across all four constructs for each of the demographic variables examined (Table 4; Figure 2), with all reported p-values below .001.

Age

Significant differences across age groups were observed for all four study constructs. For AI Usage Patterns, the analysis revealed a statistically significant difference across age cohorts, $F(4, 295) = 103.74$, $p < .001$. Mean usage declined progressively across the age groups, from $M = 4.20$ among faculty members younger than 30 years to $M = 2.11$ among those aged 60 years and above. A similar age-related pattern was observed for Perceived Usefulness, $F(4, 295) = 67.01$, $p < .001$, and Perceived Ease of Use, $F(4, 295) = 217.37$, $p < .001$. Faculty members under 30 reported the highest perceived usefulness ($M = 4.09$) and ease of use ($M = 4.49$), whereas faculty members aged 60 years and above reported substantially lower scores ($M = 2.57$ and $M = 2.40$, respectively).

The pattern was reversed for Ethical Concerns, for which a statistically significant difference across age cohorts was observed, $F(4, 295) = 160.30$, $p < .001$. Mean ethical-concern scores increased across the age cohorts, from $M = 3.04$ among faculty members under 30 to $M = 4.63$ among those aged 60 years and above. Taken together, the descriptive pattern indicates an age-related gradient in which younger faculty reported greater usage, usefulness, and ease of use, whereas older faculty reported stronger ethical concerns.

Academic Rank

Significant differences across academic-rank groups were observed for all four constructs. AI Usage Patterns differed significantly by rank, $F(4, 295) = 55.07$, $p < .001$. Assistant Lecturers reported the highest mean usage ($M = 4.15$), whereas Professors reported the lowest ($M = 2.52$).

The same pattern was observed for Perceived Usefulness, $F(4, 295) = 30.60$, $p < .001$, and Perceived Ease of Use, $F(4, 295) = 109.22$, $p < .001$. Assistant Lecturers reported the highest perceived usefulness ($M = 4.03$) and ease of use ($M = 4.45$), while Professors reported lower scores ($M = 2.98$ and $M = 2.76$, respectively).

In contrast, Ethical Concern increased with academic rank, $F(4, 295) = 89.81$, $p < .001$. Assistant Lecturers reported the lowest mean ethical-concern score ($M = 3.08$), whereas Professors reported the highest ($M = 4.46$). The descriptive results therefore indicate a systematic difference across academic ranks, with more junior faculty reporting greater engagement and more senior faculty reporting stronger ethical reservations..

Table 4: *Mean Scores Across Demographic Groups and One-Way ANOVA Results*

Stratification Variable	**Sub-category**	**UP M**	**PU M**	**PEOU M**	**EC M**
Age	< 30 years	4.20	4.09	4.49	3.04
	30–39 years	3.68	3.76	3.98	3.42
	40–49 years	3.44	3.64	3.70	3.84

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22491730

	50–59 years	2.98	3.24	3.26	4.20
	60+ years	2.11	2.57	2.40	4.63
	F (4, 295)	**103.74*** **	**67.01*** **	**217.37*** **	**160.30*** **
Academic rank	Assistant Lecturer	4.15	4.03	4.45	3.08
	Lecturer	3.62	3.74	3.97	3.52
	Senior Lecturer	3.52	3.64	3.74	3.78
	Associate Professor	2.98	3.20	3.24	4.11
	Professor	2.52	2.98	2.76	4.46
	F (4, 295)	**55.07*** **	**30.60*** **	**109.22*** **	**89.81*** **

*** $p < .001$ (two tailed).*

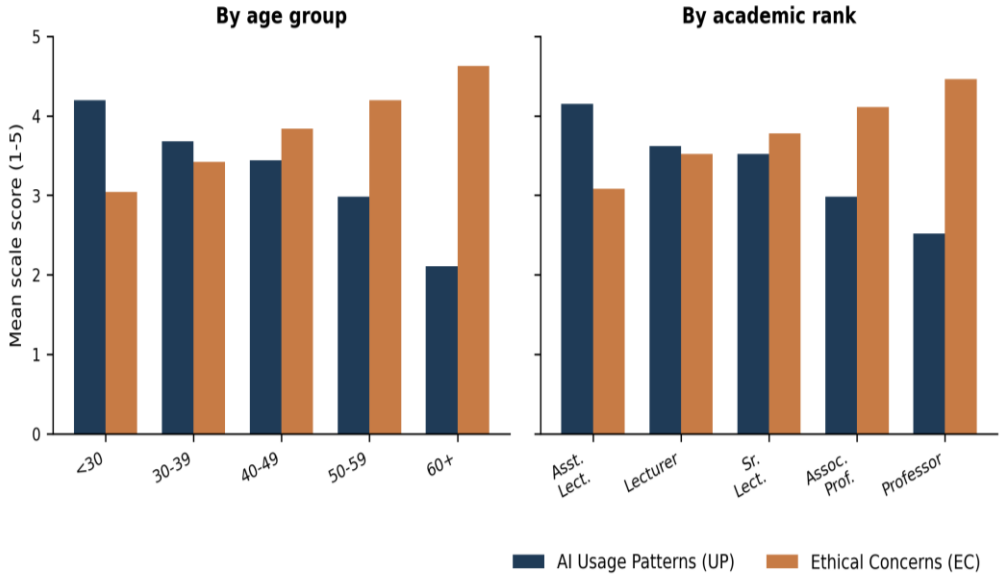

***Figure 2**. Mean AI Usage Patterns and Ethical Concerns scores across age cohorts and academic rank*

5. Discussion

The findings provide a descriptive overview of how higher education faculty members in Palestinian universities engage with and perceive generative artificial intelligence. Overall, respondents reported meaningful use of GenAI for several academic purposes and generally favorable perceptions of its usefulness and ease of use. At the same time, the findings indicate substantial concern regarding the ethical implications of GenAI and a particularly strong perceived need for institutional guidance. Taken together, these findings suggest that faculty engagement with GenAI is characterized neither by straightforward acceptance nor by simple resistance. Rather, practical use and perceived benefits coexist with concerns about responsible and appropriate academic use.

Faculty respondents reported relatively higher levels of GenAI use for preparing teaching materials (M = 3.56) and research-related tasks (M = 3.52), while direct integration of GenAI into student learning activities received a lower mean score (M = 2.72). This pattern suggests that faculty members may be more comfortable using GenAI as a tool to support their own academic work than incorporating it directly into student-facing learning activities. Distinction is important because direct pedagogical integration may require additional considerations related to assessment, student learning, academic integrity, and appropriate boundaries of AI-assisted work.

The findings also indicate generally favorable perceptions of the usefulness of GenAI. The highest usefulness rating concerned academic productivity (M = 3.80), followed by the perceived benefits of GenAI for academic work overall (M = 3.76) and research efficiency (M = 3.68). In contrast, the usefulness of GenAI for academic decision-making received a lower rating (M = 2.90). This pattern suggests that faculty members may perceive GenAI primarily as a support tool for individual academic tasks rather than as a substitute for professional judgment in institutional or academic decision-making.

A similar pattern was observed for perceived ease of use. Respondents generally indicated that learning to use GenAI was relatively easy (M = 3.82), while the integration of AI into their

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22491730

academic tasks received a comparatively lower score (M = 3.24). This distinction suggests that basic interaction with GenAI may be perceived as accessible, whereas incorporating these tools into established academic workflows may involve additional practical or professional considerations.

Ethical concerns were also prominent in the findings. Respondents reported concerns about academic dishonesty (M = 3.54), reduced critical thinking (M = 3.58), plagiarism risks (M = 3.48), and the potential negative effects of overreliance on AI on academic standards (M = 3.76). Most notably, the statement that institutional guidelines are necessary for AI use in academia received the highest mean score in the questionnaire (M = 4.62, SD = 0.49). This result indicates a particularly strong level of agreement regarding the need for institutional guidance and provides an important basis for considering the governance implications of GenAI in higher education.

5.1 Differences Across Age and Academic Rank

The ANOVA results indicate substantial heterogeneity across age cohorts. AI Usage Patterns differed significantly across age groups, $F(4, 295) = 103.74$, $p < .001$, with the youngest faculty group reporting the highest usage (M = 4.20) and the oldest group reporting the lowest (M = 2.11). Similar differences were observed for Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use, while Ethical Concerns followed the opposite descriptive pattern: respondents aged 60 years and above reported the highest ethical-concern score (M = 4.63), compared with M = 3.04 among respondents younger than 30.

A comparable pattern was observed across academic ranks. Assistant Lecturers reported the highest AI Usage Patterns score (M = 4.15), whereas Professors reported the lowest (M = 2.52). Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use followed a similar gradient, while Ethical Concerns increased across the academic-rank categories, reaching M = 4.46 among Professors.

These findings suggest that academic seniority may be related to different orientations toward GenAI. One possible explanation is that early-career academics may experience stronger incentives to adopt technologies that can support productivity, research activities, teaching preparation, and other time-intensive academic tasks. More senior academics may approach GenAI from a different professional position, potentially placing greater emphasis on questions of academic standards, authorship, professional judgment, and the implications of automation for established academic practices. These explanations, however, require direct investigation in future qualitative or longitudinal research and should not be interpreted as causal explanations of the observed group differences.

The age and rank findings should also be interpreted cautiously because age and academic rank are likely to be related. Consequently, the separate one-way ANOVAs cannot establish whether the observed differences are independently attributable to age, career stage, academic seniority, or other associated characteristics. Future research should therefore employ multivariable models capable of examining these variables simultaneously.

5.2 Institutional Governance as a Central Finding

Perhaps the most consequential finding for institutional practice is the exceptionally high level of agreement that formal institutional guidance is necessary. The EC4 item received a mean score of M = 4.62 (SD = 0.49), indicating a very high level of agreement among respondents.

This finding has an important implication for higher education governance. The results suggest that the central institutional challenge may not be whether faculty members should accept or reject GenAI, but rather how universities can establish conditions under which its use is transparent, pedagogically appropriate, and ethically responsible. A purely prohibitive approach may fail to reflect the extent to which faculty members already perceive GenAI as useful, while an unrestricted approach may fail to address concerns surrounding academic integrity and responsible use.

A more proportionate institutional response would therefore involve clearly articulated principles for acceptable and unacceptable uses of GenAI, context-sensitive guidance, faculty professional development, and opportunities for structured experimentation. Such measures could help shift responsibility for navigating the technology away from individual faculty members acting in isolation and toward a more coordinated institutional approach.

For Palestinian higher education institutions, these considerations may be particularly significant because digital transformation takes place within a context characterized by structural and infrastructural constraints. Institutional responses therefore need to account not only for the pedagogical and ethical dimensions of GenAI but also for questions of access, digital capacity, staff development, and institutional resilience..

5.3 Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the cross-sectional design prevents causal inference. The observed differences between groups reflect measurements collected at a single point in time and cannot establish temporal or causal relationships.

Second, the study relies on self-reported data collected through a single questionnaire. Self-reported technology use may differ from actual behavioral use because of recall error, social desirability, or differences in respondents' interpretation of GenAI-related activities. Future research would benefit from combining survey responses with behavioral indicators, usage logs, interviews, or other sources of evidence where ethically and practically feasible.

Third, the study was conducted within a single national higher education context. The Palestinian context provides an important setting for examining GenAI use and engagement under conditions of structural constraint; however, the findings should not automatically be generalized to other national systems. Comparative studies involving other resource-constrained, conflict-affected, and higher-resourced higher education systems would help establish the extent to which these patterns are context-specific.

Fourth, self-selection into the survey may have influenced the composition of the sample. Faculty members with particularly strong interest, experience, or concerns regarding GenAI may have been more likely to participate than faculty members who were less engaged with the topic. Consequently, the observed attitudes may not fully represent the views of the entire Palestinian higher education faculty population.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22491730

Finally, the separate one-way ANOVAs do not account for potential relationships among demographic variables. Age, academic rank, and years of experience may be interrelated. Multivariable analyses would therefore provide a more rigorous assessment of whether the observed differences remain after controlling for potentially confounding characteristics.

6. Conclusion

This study examined generative AI usage patterns, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and ethical concerns among faculty members in Palestinian higher education. The findings demonstrate that faculty engagement with GenAI is neither uniformly enthusiastic nor uniformly resistant. Rather, faculty members reported meaningful use of GenAI and generally favorable perceptions of its usefulness and ease of use while simultaneously expressing substantial concerns about academic integrity, critical thinking, plagiarism, and academic standards.

The substantial differences observed across age and academic rank further demonstrate that faculty engagement with GenAI is not homogeneous across the academic profession. Younger and more junior faculty reported higher levels of usage, usefulness, and ease of use, whereas older and more senior faculty reported stronger ethical concerns. The strongest point of convergence across the sample was the demand for institutional guidance. The exceptionally high score for the need for formal AI guidelines (M = 4.62, SD = 0.49) suggests that faculty members are seeking clearer institutional boundaries for responsible GenAI use. This finding has direct implications for higher education governance. Rather than relying exclusively on prohibition or unrestricted adoption, institutions may benefit from developing transparent, proportionate, and context-sensitive frameworks that distinguish acceptable from unacceptable uses of GenAI.

For Palestinian higher education institutions, such frameworks should be accompanied by faculty AI-literacy development, clear academic-integrity guidance, opportunities for responsible experimentation, and consideration of the infrastructural realities within which universities operate. More broadly, the findings suggest that favorable perceptions of GenAI can coexist with substantial ethical concerns. This highlights the importance of governance approaches that address both the practical value of GenAI and the risks associated with its use.

Future research should employ longitudinal and comparative designs to examine how faculty use, perceptions, and ethical concerns change as institutional policies develop, and GenAI technologies continue to evolve. Research incorporating qualitative interviews, validated measurement models, behavioral indicators, and comparative samples from other resource-constrained and conflict-affected higher education systems would be particularly valuable for determining whether the patterns identified in this study represent characteristics of the Palestinian context or a broader phenomenon in the institutional use and integration of generative AI.

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