Beyond GenAI Adoption: New Horizons for the Ethos of Teaching in Higher Education

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Abstract

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into higher education has generated extensive research on technological adoption, academic integrity, and pedagogical innovation. Less attention has been given to how GenAI challenges the professional commitments through which faculty interpret responsible teaching. This conceptual literature review examined recurring professional tensions in faculty engagement with GenAI and developed a typology of faculty professional ethos. Following the screening of 357 records, 52 publications available online by December 31, 2025, were retained for conceptual synthesis; 41 provided direct evidence for four tensions: efficiency and scalability versus professional judgment and accountability; innovation and experimentation versus integrity, reliability, and governance; instructional continuity versus pedagogical redesign; and technological augmentation versus the human and relational meaning of teaching. The tensions were organized along two dimensions: generative possibility versus protective responsibility and operational practice versus pedagogical meaning and relationships. Their intersection produced four orientations: the Instrumental Optimizer, Ethical Gatekeeper, Pedagogical Re-Designer, and Critical Humanist. These orientations are overlapping, context-sensitive constructs rather than fixed faculty types or developmental stages. By shifting attention from whether faculty adopt GenAI to how they negotiate responsibility, the typology offers a framework for faculty development, institutional policy, and empirical research on GenAI-mediated teaching.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence, higher education, faculty professional ethos, pedagogy, academic integrity

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Introduction

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) supports instructional preparation, feedback, assessment, and administrative work while enabling students to generate text, code, explanations, and alternative solutions. These capabilities invite experimentation but also raise concerns about accuracy, authorship, privacy, academic integrity, assessment validity, and dependence on generated content (Ghimire et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2024).

Research on faculty engagement with educational technology has often used adoption models that emphasize usefulness, ease of use, social influence, and facilitating conditions (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). These factors remain relevant to GenAI (Mah & Groß, 2024; Miranda & Chamorro-Mera, 2026), but adoption does not fully explain professional judgment. Faculty may welcome GenAI for lesson planning yet reject automated grading, or restrict AI-generated writing while designing activities in which students critique generated responses. Such decisions vary by task, consequence, and educators' interpretations of responsibility (Ellis et al., 2025; Farazouli et al., 2025; Kahn et al., 2025).

This paper examines GenAI as a site where faculty professional ethos becomes visible. Professional ethos refers here to the normative commitments, epistemic assumptions, and pedagogical responsibilities through which faculty interpret responsible teaching. It includes judgments about what may be delegated, what requires human oversight, what students need to learn, and which relationships and forms of judgment should remain central.

This shift in emphasis matters because apparently similar practices can express different professional commitments. A restriction on GenAI may protect assessment validity, student privacy, foundational learning, or the relational meaning of feedback. Likewise, encouraging GenAI may pursue efficiency, disciplinary preparation, critical experimentation, or additional time for student interaction. Treating these decisions simply as adoption or resistance obscures the reasons educators give for them and the responsibilities they are trying to preserve.

The study asks: What recurring professional tensions characterize faculty engagement with GenAI in higher education, and what orientations of professional ethos emerge from these tensions? It contributes a four-part typology—the Instrumental Optimizer, Ethical Gatekeeper, Pedagogical Re-Designer, and Critical Humanist. The typology does not rank or permanently classify educators; it provides a vocabulary for examining how faculty emphasize different responsibilities across tasks and contexts.

Methodological Approach

This study used a conceptual literature review to identify recurring concepts and relationships across methodologically diverse scholarship (Kennedy, 2007). Integrative review principles supported the synthesis of empirical, conceptual, and policy-oriented publications for conceptual clarification and theory development (Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2005).

Search and Selection

Iterative searches were conducted through DiscoverUR, Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar. Search combinations joined terms for GenAI (e.g., "generative AI," "ChatGPT," and "large language models") with terms for higher education faculty, teaching, assessment, professional

roles, agency, ethics, integrity, AI literacy, and professional development. Citation tracking of recent reviews and faculty-focused studies supplemented database searches.

The search produced 357 records for title-and-abstract screening. Publications were eligible when they addressed faculty uses or perceptions of GenAI; pedagogical or assessment redesign; professional agency or roles; academic integrity and ethics; AI literacy and development; institutional governance; or relational dimensions of teaching. Empirical studies, conceptual scholarship, reviews, and selected competency or policy frameworks were included when they contributed directly to faculty professional responsibility. The cutoff was December 31, 2025; articles assigned to later issues were included only if formally published online by that date. Full-text assessment retained 52 publications, of which 41 provided the most direct evidence for the tensions in Table 1. The remaining publications supplied theoretical, methodological, contextual, or policy support.

Publications focused exclusively on student adoption, technical system performance, or settings outside higher education were excluded unless they offered a framework necessary for interpreting faculty practice. Because the review sought conceptual development rather than effect estimation, methodological diversity was retained deliberately. The distinction between the 52-publication conceptual corpus and the 41 directly informing publications prevents background frameworks from being presented as equivalent to evidence about faculty practice.

Conceptual Analysis

Analytic notes recorded how each publication described faculty uses of GenAI, emphasized opportunities or concerns, assigned professional responsibility, and framed the purposes of teaching. Comparison focused on efficiency, assessment, integrity, pedagogical judgment, agency, institutional responsibility, relationships, and faculty roles.

Analysis moved recursively among publications, provisional categories, and the developing framework. Convergent and contradictory claims were compared, and related concerns were grouped rather than treated as predetermined codes (Marshall et al., 2022). Four tensions emerged and were examined along two dimensions: generative possibility versus protective responsibility, and operational practice versus pedagogical meaning and relationships. A typology-oriented design then differentiated recurring configurations within these dimensions (Jaakkola, 2020). The resulting orientations are interpretive, overlapping constructs rather than predictive profiles.

The analysis did not count the number of favorable or unfavorable statements as evidence of prevalence. Instead, it examined how claims about GenAI were connected to conceptions of faculty responsibility. Each directly informing publication was assigned to the tension to which it made its clearest contribution, while analytic notes retained its secondary connections. Provisional orientations were repeatedly compared against studies that combined enthusiasm and caution, thereby testing whether the framework could accommodate overlap rather than reproduce a binary adoption model.

Conceptual Findings: From Professional Tensions to Ethos Orientations

Faculty engagement in the reviewed literature did not divide neatly into adoption and resistance. Educators often recognized practical or pedagogical possibilities while questioning

reliability, integrity, student learning, or human judgment. The synthesis first identifies four tensions and then shows how their intersection produces four orientations of professional ethos.

Recurring Professional Tensions

Table 1 places each of the 41 directly informing publications under its primary tension. The tensions are not binary choices; they name commitments that faculty may balance or prioritize differently across contexts.

Table 1

Recurring Professional Tensions Informing the Conceptual Typology of Faculty Engagement With GenAI

Professional tension	Connection to faculty professional ethos	Publications primarily informing the tension
Efficiency and scalability versus professional judgment and accountability	Whether automation extends faculty capacity or transfers consequential instructional judgment to GenAI.	Agostini and Picasso (2024); Al-Dosari (2023); Alammari (2024); Cordero et al. (2025); Gaber et al. (2023); Gong and Xiao (2024); Hennekeuser et al. (2024); Miranda and Chamorro-Mera (2026); de Obesso et al. (2025); Pang et al. (2024); Soodan et al. (2024); Wainaina and Sun (2025)
Innovation and experimentation versus integrity, reliability, and governance	How experimentation is conditioned by authorship, validity, privacy, transparency, bias, accuracy, and policy.	Al-Mughairi and Bhaskar (2023); Alrayes et al. (2024); Deroncele-Acosta et al. (2025); Ghimire et al. (2024); Kiryakova and Angelova (2023); Kumar (2023); Maistry and Singh (2025); Simelane and Kittur (2025); Verano-Tacoronte et al. (2025); Yusuf et al. (2024)
Instructional continuity versus pedagogical redesign	Whether GenAI supports existing practice or prompts changes in assessment, curriculum, AI literacy, and epistemic agency.	Ali (2024); Barrett and Pack (2023); Cha et al. (2024); Ellis et al. (2025); Kahn et al. (2025); Lau and Guo (2023); Lee et al. (2024); Nikoçeviq-Kurti and Bërdynaj-Syla (2024); Ouyang and Jiao (2021); Rajabi et al. (2023); Salhab (2024); Sjöberg and Bergdahl (2025)
Technological augmentation versus the human and relational meaning of teaching	Whether GenAI strengthens teaching or weakens agency, dialogue, mentorship, trust, judgment, and disciplinary expertise.	Farazouli et al. (2025); Hasan et al. (2024); Jose and Jose (2024); Mah and Groß (2024); McGrath et al. (2023); Ofosu-Ampong (2024); Pisica et al. (2023)

Note. Publications are placed under their primary contribution, although many inform multiple tensions. Miranda and Chamorro-Mera appears in a 2026 issue but was published online on October 2, 2025.

Efficiency and Scalability Versus Professional Judgment and Accountability

GenAI can accelerate lesson planning, resource creation, feedback, grading, and administration (Agostini & Picasso, 2024; Cordero et al., 2025). It can also make individualized support more feasible in large classes. Yet speed does not establish accuracy, fairness, or pedagogical value. Generated materials still require evaluation against disciplinary standards, learning objectives, and knowledge of particular students. In assessment, the issue is not only whether a system can produce feedback or a score but who remains answerable for the judgment. Efficiency becomes professionally valuable when it extends faculty capacity without obscuring the labor of verification or transferring consequential accountability to a system.

Innovation and Experimentation Versus Integrity, Reliability, and Governance

Faculty experiment with GenAI while confronting authorship, privacy, hallucination, misconduct, and assessment-validity concerns (Ghimire et al., 2024; Simelane & Kittur, 2025). Their responsibilities include clarifying acceptable use, teaching verification, protecting

student information, and redesigning vulnerable assessments (Kumar, 2023; Maistry & Singh, 2025). These decisions are difficult when institutional rules lag behind changing tools or rely mainly on imperfect detection. Caution may therefore express stewardship rather than resistance. At the same time, governance focused only on prohibition can prevent faculty and students from developing the critical literacy needed to work responsibly with systems that are already entering academic and professional practice.

Instructional Continuity Versus Pedagogical Redesign

Some uses make established tasks faster; others treat GenAI as an object of critique or a partner in inquiry. Meaningful integration may require faculty to reconsider what students should learn, how learning is demonstrated, and which judgments remain disciplinary responsibilities (Ellis et al., 2025; Kahn et al., 2025; Salhab, 2024). Faculty may ask students to compare generated and disciplinary explanations, document prompting and verification, or defend decisions that an output cannot justify for them. Such changes alter the distribution of epistemic work rather than simply adding a tool. The tension is therefore between incorporating GenAI into existing routines and redesigning learning around explicit purposes that remain educationally and disciplinarily defensible.

Technological Augmentation Versus the Human and Relational Meaning of Teaching

Faculty also question how GenAI affects expertise, trust, dialogue, mentorship, and relationships with students (Farazouli et al., 2025; Mah & Groß, 2024). Teaching involves more than producing explanations or feedback; it also requires interpreting ambiguity, noticing development, and responding to students within ongoing relationships. Technology may support these responsibilities when saved time is redirected toward interaction or when generated alternatives deepen conversation. It may weaken them when automated outputs replace contextual judgment or make feedback appear personalized without reciprocal knowledge of the learner. This tension asks which human responsibilities should guide, rather than merely survive, technological use.

Two Conceptual Dimensions

The tensions were organized along two analytical dimensions. The vertical dimension, generative possibility versus protective responsibility, distinguishes an emphasis on what GenAI can enable from an emphasis on what educators must safeguard. The horizontal dimension, operational practice versus pedagogical meaning and relationships, distinguishes attention to tasks, workflows, and rules from attention to learning, agency, professional purpose, and human relationships. These dimensions are not empirical scales or mutually exclusive positions; they clarify recurring emphases in the literature.

At the generative-potential end of the vertical dimension, faculty begin with experimentation, creativity, personalization, or expanded capacity. At the protective-responsibility end, they begin with integrity, privacy, validity, reliability, and retained human judgment. Protection does not equal rejection, just as possibility does not equal uncritical adoption. The distinction concerns which question receives priority: what can GenAI make possible, or what must responsible educators safeguard as it is used?

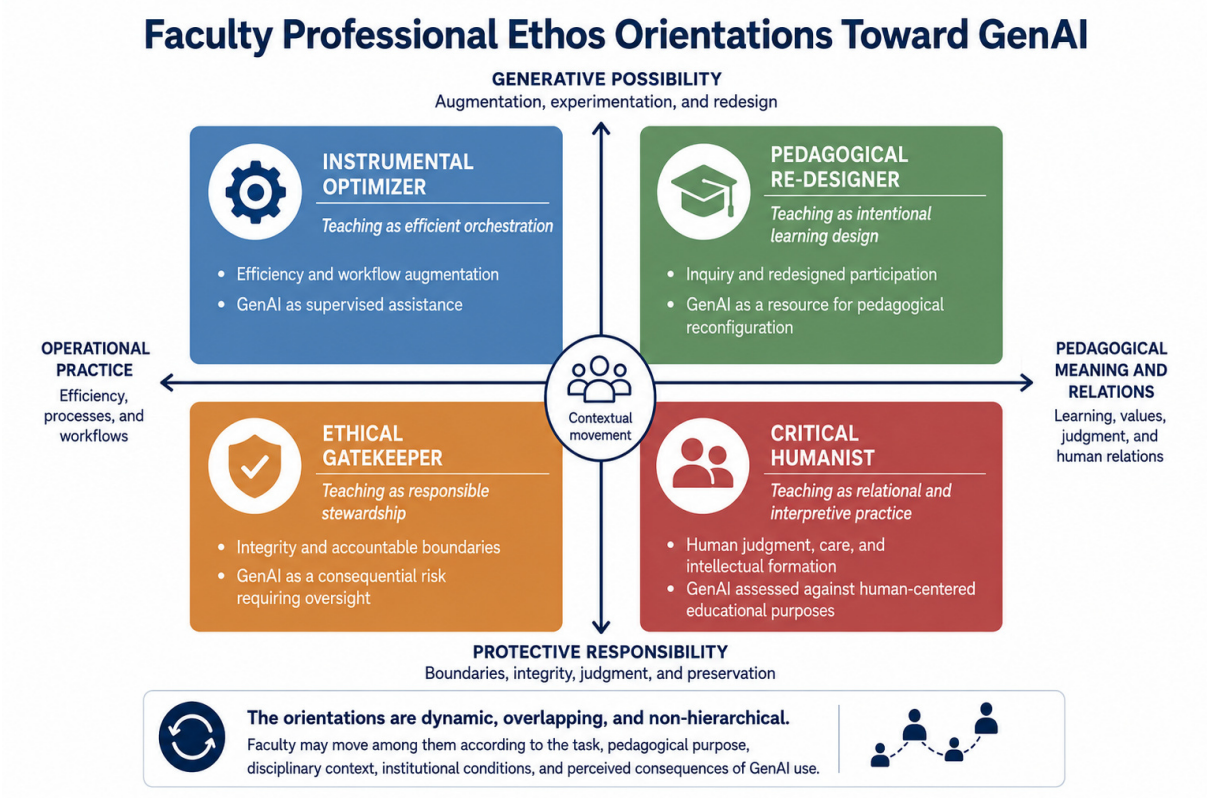
At the operational-practice end of the horizontal dimension, attention centers on tasks, procedures, workflows, policies, and immediate instructional performance. At the pedagogical-

meaning-and-relationships end, attention extends to the purposes of assessment, the distribution of agency, professional authority, mentorship, and the kinds of educational relationships a practice produces. Faculty can attend to both, but the distinction clarifies why an efficient or compliant practice may still prompt questions about learning and meaning.

Their intersection generates four orientations. Generative possibility combined with operational practice produces the Instrumental Optimizer. Protective responsibility combined with operational practice produces the Ethical Gatekeeper. Generative possibility combined with pedagogical meaning and relationships produces the Pedagogical Re-Designer. Protective responsibility combined with pedagogical meaning and relationships produces the Critical Humanist.

Figure 1

Conceptual Typology of Faculty Professional Ethos Toward Generative AI in Higher Education



The quadrants represent contextual emphases, not stable faculty types or a developmental sequence. One educator may optimize preparation, guard assessment boundaries, redesign an inquiry activity, and preserve human involvement in consequential feedback. The typology makes this movement analyzable without treating it as inconsistency.

Four Orientations of Faculty Professional Ethos

The Instrumental Optimizer

The Instrumental Optimizer treats GenAI primarily as a resource for extending faculty capacity. Its central commitment is effective practice: faster preparation, scalable feedback, resource generation, and reduced repetitive work (Agostini & Picasso, 2024; Hennekeuser et

al., 2024). Faculty authority becomes orchestrational: educators select tools, construct prompts, evaluate outputs, and decide how generated materials enter existing workflows. Ethical or pedagogical concerns may be acknowledged, but practical functionality remains the starting point. The orientation's limitation appears when efficiency is treated as sufficient evidence of educational value. Faster production may conceal new verification labor, normalize generic materials, or shift decisions whose consequences remain the faculty member's responsibility. Its central question is when assistance becomes delegation of professional judgment.

The Ethical Gatekeeper

The Ethical Gatekeeper begins with stewardship. GenAI use is conditioned by integrity, fairness, transparency, privacy, reliability, and assessment validity (Ghimire et al., 2024; Kumar, 2023). Faculty clarify boundaries, protect information, verify outputs, and determine when disclosure or assessment redesign is required. Technology is permitted conditionally when oversight is meaningful and its use remains consistent with academic obligations. This orientation does not necessarily reject GenAI; its caution can protect trust at a time when authorship and evidentiary standards are unsettled. It can, however, become restrictive if responsibility is reduced to prohibition, surveillance, or detection. Its challenge is to maintain academic legitimacy while enabling informed participation and critical AI literacy.

The Pedagogical Re-Designer

The Pedagogical Re-Designer treats GenAI as an occasion to reconsider learning design. GenAI becomes valuable when it supports inquiry, comparison, critique, iteration, collaboration, or AI literacy (Ellis et al., 2025; Lau & Guo, 2023; Salhab, 2024). Faculty act as architects of mediated learning: they specify purposes, design tasks, establish boundaries, and determine which judgments students must still make and defend. Authority is reconfigured through orchestration rather than ceded to a system. The orientation recognizes that students' access to GenAI changes what counts as a meaningful task or demonstration of learning. Its risk is mistaking technological novelty for pedagogical transformation. Redesign remains defensible only when it clarifies rather than displaces the knowledge, reasoning, and disciplinary participation students should develop.

The Critical Humanist

The Critical Humanist foregrounds judgment, dialogue, mentorship, care, and intellectual presence. It asks what may be diminished when educational practices are automated and how GenAI affects agency, trust, and relationships (Farazouli et al., 2025; Mah & Groß, 2024; Pisica et al., 2023). Faculty remain responsible for interpreting ambiguity, understanding context, and responding to students as particular people rather than as inputs to a generalized system. This orientation does not require technological refusal. GenAI may serve human purposes when it creates time for dialogue or provides material for critical interpretation. Its limitation is the risk of idealizing existing human practices as automatically equitable, responsive, or sustainable. Its strongest contribution is to make relational purpose a criterion for technological judgment.

No orientation resolves every tension. Responsible engagement may combine the Optimizer's attention to capacity, the Gatekeeper's safeguards, the Re-Designer's pedagogical intentionality, and the Humanist's relational commitments. The framework therefore shifts analysis from whether faculty adopt GenAI to how they negotiate responsibility in particular practices.

Discussion

Technology-adoption models explain important influences on faculty engagement, including usefulness, ease of use, social influence, and facilitating conditions (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003). The typology extends these accounts by explaining why acceptance and caution often coexist. Similar practices may express different commitments: restricting GenAI may protect assessment validity, privacy, foundational learning, or relational feedback, while encouraging it may pursue efficiency, disciplinary preparation, experimentation, or more time for human interaction.

Professional Ethos as Dynamic and Contextual

The orientations are dynamic rather than hierarchical. This interpretation aligns with studies documenting distinct faculty profiles, qualitatively different teaching experiences, and context-responsive agency (Ellis et al., 2025; Kahn et al., 2025; Mah & Groß, 2024). Movement among orientations can represent differentiated judgment: faculty assess the responsibility implicated by a task and respond accordingly. GenAI does not produce one transformation of the faculty role; it makes assumptions about expertise, assessment, authorship, authority, and human presence available for reconsideration.

This dynamic account also explains why the orientations should not be ranked. The Pedagogical Re-Designer is not inherently more advanced than the Ethical Gatekeeper, and the Critical Humanist is not automatically more responsible than the Instrumental Optimizer. Each foregrounds a necessary commitment while leaving other questions less visible. Professional judgment lies partly in recognizing when another orientation must interrupt or supplement the first response to a task.

Implications for Faculty Development and Policy

Faculty development focused only on technical proficiency may neglect when and why tools should be used, while risk-only training may suppress pedagogically valuable experimentation. Research instead supports combining technical competence with AI literacy, pedagogical judgment, ethical reflection, and collaborative learning (Cha et al., 2024; Cordero et al., 2025; Sjöberg & Bergdahl, 2025). The four orientations can structure reflection on: (a) tasks GenAI can support without transferring consequential judgment; (b) ethical and evidentiary boundaries; (c) needed redesign of learning and assessment; and (d) forms of human interpretation and relationship that should remain central.

Institutional policies should establish shared principles for transparency, privacy, fairness, accountability, and assessment validity while allowing disciplinary interpretation. Faculty require clear guidance but also professional discretion because authorship, evidence, acceptable assistance, and foundational knowledge differ across fields (Maistry & Singh, 2025; McGrath et al., 2023; Wainaina & Sun, 2025). Governance should support informed judgment through appropriate tools, sustained learning, and collective deliberation rather than shifting responsibility entirely to individual faculty or automated detection systems.

The framework can also support institutional dialogue without assigning faculty to types. A workshop might begin with a concrete teaching practice and ask how each orientation changes the questions posed about it. This makes disagreements more precise: participants can identify whether they are prioritizing capacity, stewardship, learning design, or relational purpose and

then examine what their preferred emphasis overlooks. Used in this way, the typology is a deliberative tool rather than an assessment of faculty readiness.

Limitations and Future Research

This conceptual review was designed to assemble a theoretically relevant, not exhaustive or statistically representative, body of scholarship. Searches were limited to four discovery systems, citation tracking, and publications available in English through December 31, 2025. The 52 publications also differ in design and evidentiary purpose; empirical findings and conceptual claims were interpreted but not statistically aggregated. Placing 41 publications under one primary tension simplifies contributions that often span several tensions.

The orientations have not been validated as faculty profiles or measures, and the analysis does not establish their frequency or predictors. Future interview, classroom, policy, and longitudinal studies should examine how orientations combine and change across disciplines, institutions, and national contexts. The framework should initially function as a sensitizing typology open to revision, including additional dimensions or orientations, as GenAI and faculty practice evolve (Jaakkola, 2020).

Because GenAI capabilities and institutional rules are changing quickly, the December 2025 cutoff gives the synthesis temporal coherence but also limits its reach. Later research may foreground forms of labor, inequality, environmental cost, or governance that are less developed in the present corpus. Empirical studies should therefore test the framework against disconfirming cases rather than treating its four orientations as exhaustive.

Conclusion

Faculty engagement with GenAI is not only a question of adoption. It involves judgments about capacity, integrity, learning, authority, and the human purposes of teaching. This synthesis organized four recurring tensions into four orientations: the Instrumental Optimizer, Ethical Gatekeeper, Pedagogical Re-Designer, and Critical Humanist.

The typology's contribution is not to classify educators but to articulate the commitments they negotiate. Responsible practice may require efficiency with accountability, safeguards with experimentation, redesign directed by learning, and technology guided by human relationships. For institutions, the framework supports professional learning and policies beyond technical training or generalized prohibition. For research, it provides a vocabulary for examining what responsible teaching becomes when generative systems participate in educational work.

The question facing higher education is thus not simply whether faculty will adopt GenAI. It is how educators and institutions will decide what may be delegated, what must be redesigned, and what forms of judgment and relationship should remain constitutive of teaching.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that Grammarly, an AI-assisted writing software, was used in proofreading and refining the language used in the manuscript. The usage was limited to correcting grammatical and spelling errors and rephrasing statements for accuracy and clarity. The author also declares that, apart from Grammarly, ChatGPT (OpenAI) have been used to assist with

formatting the literature-synthesis table and creating the visual design of the conceptual typology figure based on categories, dimensions, and interpretations developed and specified by the author. The author further declares that no other AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate content in writing the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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