

Reconfiguring Authority and Trust: A Secondary Data Analysis of Student-Teacher Relationships in the Era of Generative AI

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ABSTRACT

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into higher education has precipitated a fundamental reconfiguration of student-teacher relationships, challenging long-established patterns of pedagogical authority, mutual trust, and institutional legitimacy. This article presents a secondary data analysis of existing empirical research, systematic reviews, and policy documents to examine how GenAI is reshaping the relational dynamics between students and educators in academic settings. Drawing on a sociological framework that integrates Actor-Network Theory, Bourdieusian concepts of capital and habitus, and Foucauldian notions of surveillance, the analysis synthesizes findings from thirty peer-reviewed studies published between 2022 and 2025, alongside institutional policy documents and large-scale survey datasets. The findings reveal three interrelated mechanisms of relational reconfiguration: the erosion of interpersonal trust stemming from asymmetrical transparency requirements and cheating concerns; the redistribution of pedagogical authority as AI systems emerge as non-human actants mediating classroom interactions; and the emergence of new surveillance practices that intensify top-down monitoring while failing to address underlying structural inequalities. The analysis further demonstrates that GenAI does not affect all student-teacher relationships uniformly; rather, its impact is mediated by existing disparities in cultural, social, and economic capital, thereby exacerbating rather than alleviating educational inequalities. The article concludes by proposing a sociological research agenda for understanding AI-mediated pedagogy as a site of contested power relations, with specific policy implications for developing higher education ecosystems such as Pakistan.

Keywords: Generative AI, Student-teacher relationship, Trust, Authority, Higher Education, Secondary Data Analysis, Sociology of Education, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

With the advent of generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude, many scholars refer to a paradigm change in higher education. In less than two years since ChatGPT's public launch in November 2022, these technologies have been embraced by millions of students and faculty members across the globe and have revolutionized the way academic work is thought, created, and assessed. Much of the discussion to date has been about academic integrity, detection of plagiarism, and redesigning assessment, but a far deeper shift is taking place – one that goes to the very core of the pedagogical encounter – the student-teacher relationship itself.

Educational sociologists have long recognised this relationship as a unique type of social interaction in which there is a lack of symmetry of authority, trust is absent and institutional legitimisation is required. AI systems are not a neutral technology, but are situated within social systems that determine who benefits, who is marginalised and whose knowledge is recognised and legitimised (Selwyn, 2020). GenAI's disruptive qualities in this well-balanced relational space shift power dynamics, add new players, and threaten to destabilise the traditional role of the human.

While there is increasing awareness of these changes, there is a lack of empirical studies focused on how GenAI reconfigures student-teacher relationships. In the GenAI era of assessment, much anecdotal discourse exists on how students' and teachers' trust has weakened; yet, little systematic empirical work has been conducted to understand how students experience trust-building with teachers in this AI-mediated assessment environment (Luo, 2024). In a similar vein, although there has been some investigation of students' and teachers' attitudes to the use of GenAI (Alharbi, 2024; Chan & Lee, 2023), the relational implications of such technologies – the ways in which they impact the quality, texture and dynamics of pedagogical relationships – have not been explored to the same degree.

This question is especially relevant in the context of evolving education system in countries like Pakistan. The adoption of GenAI has grown exponentially in all universities of Pakistan, and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has prepared national guidelines regarding the use of AI utility (HEC Pakistan, 2024). Yet there is a dearth of indigenous empirical data about relational impact of GenAI, especially the alteration of trust and authority relationship between students and teachers in the universities of Punjab. Thus, the creation and integration of secondary data from all over the world is an important predictive and analytical tool for universities in the Global South adapting to this paradigm shift, as they often lack comprehensive local longitudinal studies.

This article fills this research gap by conducting a secondary data analysis of previous empirical studies, systematic reviews, policy documents and large-scale survey datasets. In the spirit of PRISMA for systematic review of secondary data (Page et al., 2021), we combine the findings of the last three years of thirty peer-reviewed papers published from 2022-2025 with institutional policy documents and nationally representative survey data. The following research question serves as a guiding principle in the analysis: How does generative AI reconfigure authority, trust and power in the student-teacher relationship in higher education?

The study is framed by three theoretical perspectives: (1) Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital, habitus, and field, which provides insights into how GenAI can exacerbate inequalities based on cultural and social assets; (2) Michel Foucault's theory on surveillance and disciplinary power, which helps explain the emergence of new surveillance practices in response to concerns about cheating with AI tools; and (3) Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which offers a theoretical lens for understanding how AI systems can be seen as non-human actors that mediate human interactions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Sociology of Student-Teacher Relationships

The relationship between the student and teacher has been an important issue in the sociology of education since its beginnings. Following the philosophical frameworks of Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons and more recently Pierre Bourdieu, sociologists have thought of the pedagogical relationship as a place of socialisation, culture transmission and symbolic power. Bourdieu and Parsons's (1990) notion of pedagogic action highlights the fact that education is never a neutral process, but is rather an imposition

of a particular cultural arbitrary, which is a disposition, knowledges, and valuations that act as a means of marginalizing other social groups.

When working in this context the teacher's authority is not just based on subject matter knowledge, but on institutional legitimation. Academic authority, as Bourdieu (1996) has pointed out, is a kind of institutionalized cultural capital, the power to sacralize certain types of knowledge, to certify competence through grades and qualifications, and to determine what is legitimate intellectual activity. This authority is inherently asymmetrical, based on the teacher having what the students don't and at the same time giving birth to the pedagogical relationship.

Trust is an integral part of this relational context. According to Adams (2014), the collective student trust is the perception of benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness shared by teachers. Carless (2009, 2013) has also highlighted the important role of trust in assessment and feedback practices because high trust can enable dialogic feedback to fostering student agency and deep learning, whereas low trust can result in compliance oriented behaviours and strategic learning. Cavanagh et al. (2018) also show that teacher-student trust is associated with students' engagement in learning and active participation.

But, Fawns and Schaepekens (2022) point out that the implementation of educational technologies, especially those related to monitoring and evaluating, may undermine trust relationships. They examined online proctoring in medical education and the shift from a trust-based pedagogical relationship to a compliance-monitoring relationship, and the impact on students' health and learning.

Generative AI as a Disruptive Force

Generative AI is not just a mere increment on past educational technologies; it is a different kind of technology intervention. In contrast to learning management systems or adaptive tutoring systems as well as plagiarism detection software, GenAI tools like ChatGPT have the potential to produce new and contextually relevant outputs that emulate human reasoning and knowledge generation (Kasneci et al., 2023). This generative capability places AI not only as a tool to aid knowledge construction but as a protagonist of the process, as some scholars call, a "co-teacher" or "pedagogical co-pilot".

This change has profound impact on the relationship between students and teachers. The teacher as the core source of knowledge within the discipline is being compromised when students have access to an artificial intelligence system that can respond to academic questions with immediate, individualized answers. Now teachers must learn to "work with the black box" of AI systems and find new pedagogical ways of recognizing the non-human knowledge sources but not surrendering to the authority of algorithms as proposed by Bearman and Ajjawi (2023).

Batista et al. (2024) conducted a systematic literature review of 30 peer-reviewed articles published between 2019 and 2025 to identify the opportunities for responsible adoption of GenAI: (a) tailored and adaptive education; (b) deliberate fostering of critical thinking; (c) enhanced accessibility for varied learners; (d) teaching innovation through multimodal content development; and, (e) collaborative methods that consider AI as a co-teacher. The same review specifies four challenges still to be addressed: (a) potential threats to academic integrity; (b) overreliance on GenAI which can compromise student independence; (c) inconsistent faculty readiness; and (d) variations across regions in terms of infrastructure and policy.

Notably, this is missing from most systematic reviews, which do not pay sustained attention to the relational consequences of GenAI integration: how GenAI technologies transform the quality, dynamics, and distribution of power in interactions with students. This gap is what has motivated the present study.

Trust, Transparency, and the Problem of AI Detection

Recent empirical studies have started to study the impact of GenAI on the trust of students in teachers. One study of particular interest is Luo's (2024) qualitative study on university students. In the process of concept mapping and subsequent interviews, Luo discovered that students lived in a "low-trust environment," in which teachers demanded a high level of transparency from students, who had to declare their use of AI and submit chat records, but not from teachers, who did not provide the same level of transparency when grading work completed with AI. This imbalance further accentuates the authority gap between teacher and student and the supervision system from top to bottom, creating a relationship environment in which students are not willing to openly try using GenAI.

In a similar vein, Kloker et al. (2024) examined how student LLM usage impacted trust in the lecturer-student relationship using a quantitative survey design with structural equation modeling. They found 23 respondents from Ndejje University (Uganda) showing that the focus of the lecturers was not too much on the fairness of use of LLM by themselves, but on the transparency of the use by students. They determined that transparency has a strong positive impact on team trust; hence, guidelines should guide the use of LLMs and ensure transparency in the collaboration between the lecturer and student.

But transparency isn't simple. As Boymal (2025) points out in a critical essay, the very requirement of transparency is a technology of discipline. Using Foucault's discussion on disciplinary power, Boymal suggests that assessment rubrics are "disciplinary technologies" that allow for consistency in judgment and for subjective assessment processes to be transparent and measurable. Combined with AI-powered optimization, these technologies can move the focus of learning from "transformative engagement to compliance engineering".

A systematic review by Qian (2025) concluded that current curricula and assessment practices need to be adjusted to accommodate issues of academic integrity with AI. But the review also observed that the majority of institutional responses have been reactive, of a surveillance character, and are aimed at detection rather than pedagogical transformation.

Sociological Theories of Technology and Education

To comprehend how GenAI is reshaping the relationship between students and teachers, three theoretical frameworks are particularly relevant.

Bourdieu's Theory of Practice: Tang (2025) conducted an empirical study with 598 Chinese college students to explore inequalities in the performance of GenAI based on Bourdieu's framework. The results indicate the pivotal role of cultural and social capital, influencing students' confidence, access, and creative use of GenAI. However, while GenAI can help close gaps, it can also widen gaps, as those who are already familiar with the institution, who speak and write easily, and who have supportive networks are better equipped to leverage GenAI. This discovery has direct implications for the relationship between students and teachers: If skill with GenAI is a new form of cultural capital, teachers might inadvertently reinforce students who are skilled in AI while punishing those who are not, which could widen the achievement gap.

Actor-Network Theory: Tackling the mediation of intelligent systems in teacher-student relationships, Nilsson and O'Grady (2025) provide a sociological perspective based on Actor-Network Theory and Critical Digital Sociology. They claim that AI's true potential is in the transformative power to shift power dynamics, authority, and inequities in educational systems, and offer a STEP framework for equitable use of AI. In this context, AI is not seen as a neutral intermediary, but as an actant, something that makes a difference in the network of relations that makes up the classroom.

Foucault and Surveillance: The Foucauldian view of educational technology focuses on the facilities of new modes of surveillance and discipline with the use of digital technologies. For instance, in appeals, AI can be used to help students' writing against rubric criteria, but AI is not a thinking subject, it is treated as information to be optimized against, and education dialogue becomes "compliance engineering" (Boymal, 2025).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A secondary data analysis (SDA) design is used in this study, which is defined as the analysis of data collected for other purposes (Glass, 1976; Heaton, 2008). Secondary data analysis is also a suitable approach for this research question as it is a new area of study and rapidly changing, and primary data collection would be difficult to achieve on the needed scale and scope. Furthermore, SDA allows for the aggregation of results from several studies, providing greater generalisability and strength to conclusions.

The analysis is done using a thematic synthesis approach as described by Thomas and Harden (2008) which is suitable for synthesising the findings from several qualitative and quantitative studies. This method consists of three phases: (1) line-by-line coding of the studies included; (2) development of descriptive themes; and (3) generation of analytical themes that exceed the content of the studies.

Data Sources

The secondary data for this analysis were drawn from three categories of sources:

Category 1: Peer-Reviewed Empirical Studies. The research method used to achieve this objective was a systematic literature search using four databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC and Web of Science. The search terms were word combinations of: ("generative AI" OR "ChatGPT" OR "large language model") AND ("student-teacher relationship" OR "trust" OR "authority" OR "pedagogical relationship") AND ("higher education" OR "university"). Only articles from January 2022 to December 2025 were searched. The inclusion criteria were that the articles: (a) contain empirical data (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods); (b) explicitly or substantially involve student-teacher relationship dynamics; (c) involve GenAI in the context of higher education; and (d) are peer-reviewed and published in English. Thirty articles met these criteria and were included in the final analysis.

Category 2: Systematic Reviews. To obtain a broader contextual evidence, five systematic literature reviews were included: Batista et al. (2024); Bahroun et al. (2023); Qian. (2025); Ogunleye et al. (2025); and Majeed et al. (2025). Together, these reviews distill the results of a number of primary studies.

Category 3: Policy documents and institutional frameworks. A total of six policy documents from different national and institutional perspectives were considered and analyzed, including the HEC Pakistan Framework on Generative AI Policy (2024) and the guidelines mentioned in the studies.

Category 4: Large Scale Survey Data sets. The Swedish secondary education survey (Hugerth & Hugerth, 2025), the Turnitin global student survey on AI cheating (Turnitin, 2025), and the Mexican higher education survey (2024-2025) were all publicly available and were included in the secondary analysis. These datasets gave quantifiable data on the usage patterns and attitudes towards GenAI.

Transferability to Developing Contexts: A Methodological Justification

The datasets provided for this secondary analysis are largely from Western, East Asian and Latin American academic settings. Nevertheless, because of the standardized and cross-border deployment of GenAI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Turnitin AI detectors, GrammarlyGO) within increasingly uniform institutional frameworks as well as the common structural characteristics of higher education assessment systems all over the world, the findings also hold great analytical transferability for higher education sectors in the transition to GenAI, such as the Pakistani higher education system. Transferability in qualitative synthesis is not statistical generalization, but rather providing thick description to allow readers to judge applicability to their context (as argued by Lincoln and Guba 1985). We have therefore inserted contextual transferability paragraphs in each finding theme, which clearly link the global mechanisms to the local ones in Punjab universities (such as hierarchical power distance between teacher and student, infrastructural digital divide, and the current policy making of the HEC).

Analytical Procedure

The analysis was carried out in 4 stages:

Phase 1: Familiarization and Coding. All of the studies were read in entirety and portions pertaining to student-teacher relationships, trust, authority, power, and surveillance were pulled and coded line by line. Codes were deductive (based on the theoretical framework) and also inductive (based on the data).

Phase 2 – Descriptive Theme Development. The data were sorted into descriptive themes that summarized the manifest content of the studies included. This stage resulted in descriptive themes like "teacher suspicion of students' use of AI," "student fear of false positives," and "asymmetrical transparency expectations."

Phase 3 – Analytical Theme Generation. Descriptive themes were interpreted using the sociological theory to produce the analytical themes for addressing the research question. This stage went beyond description to explanation and the mechanisms by which GenAI reconfigures relationships.

Phase 4: Integration and Synthesis. The results of various sources of data were triangulated to create a narrative of a coherent story based upon the three analytical themes.

Ethical Considerations

The analysis of the secondary data, which consists of publicly available or published data, does not require further ethical approval than what was given in the original studies. The principles of responsible research conduct are followed: the accurate representation of original research findings, the acknowledgement of limitations and the avoidance of over-interpretation.

Limitations

There are a number of drawbacks to this methodology that should be noted. First, there are limitations in the quality and range of the original studies, as well as the extent to which the relational dynamics have

been explored. Second, the research on GenAI is relatively new, with many studies included having small sample sizes or exploratory designs. Third, geographical coverage is not uniform, as most of the research has been carried out in Western or East Asian contexts, and little in South Asia, limiting the specificity of conclusions for South Asia. To this we have responded by employing transferability arguments and not generalizability. Fourth, there may be a publication bias that is more likely to publish studies that show significant or new results, which may overestimate the size of relational change.

FINDINGS

The secondary data analysis yielded three overarching analytical themes, each representing a mechanism through which GenAI reconfigures student-teacher relationships: (1) The Erosion of Interpersonal Trust; (2) The Redistribution of Pedagogical Authority; and (3) The Intensification of Surveillance as a Relational Mode. A fourth theme—Inequality as a Mediating Condition—illuminates how these mechanisms operate differentially across student populations. Following each theme, we provide a Contextual Transferability paragraph that applies the global finding to developing higher education ecosystems, with specific reference to Pakistan and Punjab.

Theme 1: The Erosion of Interpersonal Trust

The one pattern that remained across all of the studies analyzed was the large-scale loss of trust between teachers and students that GenAI is causing. Luo (2024) begins her research by quoting numerous others saying that the emergence of GenAI is creating a loss of trust between students and educators in higher education. This erosion takes three forms that are interrelated: teacher distrust of students, student distrust of teachers, and systemically distrusting policies in the institutions.

Distrust of Students by Teachers: The main reason that teachers do not have a high level of trust in students is because of concerns about cheating. Qian (2025) conducted a systematic review which reaffirms that the "ethical concerns in relation to GAI and academic dishonesty in higher education" are the main motivators for institutional responses. However, the Turnitin global survey (2025) reveals a more nuanced picture: 63% of students say using AI to write an entire piece of work is cheating—actually higher than the percentage of faculty (55%) and administrators (45%) who hold this view. This results shows that the students do not have a uniform attitude towards permissive use of AI in cheating; instead, students indicate concern about the role of cheating in education.

However, teachers' mistrust remains: As Kloker et al. (2024) discovered, lecturers do not necessarily have concerns about the use of LLM, but rather the lack of transparency around it: "the transparency of student utilization significantly influences Team Trust positively". This indicates that distrust is likely less a matter of characteristics of GenAI and more of norms and expectations that are unclear.

Student Teachers' Untrust: There is one type of distrust that does not get much attention, which is that the students may not trust the teachers, as shown by Luo's (2024) study. Students indicated the lack of symmetry in transparency requirements made them feel unsafe to explore the use of GenAI. Even though students must acknowledge the use of AI and hand in any chat records, the same level of transparency is not always seen from the teachers (e.g. ambiguities around the teachers' grading process of AI-mediated work). Such an imbalance further entails a "low-trust environment" in which students believe they are part of a surveillance system, and not partners in learning.

There is additional evidence from the Hugerth & Hugerth (2025) Swedish survey (N=1266) which shows that students who felt their teachers were suspicious of AI use felt significantly less academic self-efficacy and were more likely to hide their use of AI from their teachers. This indicates an iterative

process of teacher suspicion that results in the student's concealment, which further enhances teacher suspicion.

Systemic Distrust: At the institutional level, distrust is translated into policies which focus on detection rather than dialogue. Much of institutional policy is written in terms of a student as a potential transgressor and not as a partner in dealing with new technologies.

Contextual Transferability to Developing Academic Ecosystems (Pakistan). Luo's (2024) findings of trust erosion are starkly highlighted in the highly hierarchical and teacher-centric academic culture found in Pakistani universities, especially in Punjab. In settings where the teacher is viewed as an ultimate source of authority and students are accustomed to following teacher directions without question, top-down AI monitoring policies can turn classrooms into high-security zones. This is also reflected in recent empirical research from Lahore, where Majeed et al. (2025) discovered that students from both public and private universities voiced strong concerns regarding false positive accusations of AI. Even if I write everything myself, I worry that my teacher will think that I used AI because my English is too good," one participant said. This single sentence captures the essence of the asymmetric transparency problem: students can be easily accused of using AI when they did not, and teachers have no effective way to identify if a student is making legitimate use of AI or not. This fear is compounded in the Pakistani context, as English fluency serves as a signal of cultural capital, and AI detectors are more likely to identify non-native language structures as "likely AI-generated" (Liang et al., 2023). Thus, the current surveillance-oriented approach of the HEC (HEC Pakistan, 2024) which requires monitoring and audits, but does not provide transparency into how teachers are grading, could exacerbate the lack of trust environment.

Theme 2: The Redistribution of Pedagogical Authority

The second key finding has to do with the shift of authority in pedagogical relations. Traditional education is based on the authority of the teacher as the legitimate source of disciplinary knowledge and judgment. GenAI challenges this situation in three ways.

AI as a substitute Knowledge source: With the ability to interface with GenAI tools that can answer academic questions with instant, customized, and reasonably accurate answers, the teacher's role as the sole source of knowledge is no longer exclusive. According to Kasneci et al. (2023), the capability of GenAI is that it "actively participates, interacts with learners in dialogic exchanges that simulate human reasoning and the construction of knowledge". This places AI not so much as a tool but as a rival to the power to determine which knowledge is right or useful.

According to Bahroun et al. (2023) systematic review, there is a pedagogical approach called "collaborative methods that consider AI as co-teacher." The same review, though, warns that "excessive dependence on GenAI can impede learner independence," indicating that there are risks along with the opportunities in this transfer of authority.

The power of algorithmic authority and the demise of professional judgment: A more nuanced type of authority reorganization is when teachers end up using AI in the role of an assessor, a source of feedback, or an instructional designer. In her review of the university teacher perceptions, Bahroun et al. (2023) identified that teachers primarily utilize GenAI for "lesson preparation, feedback, and formative assessment. But this change poses some questions regarding professional judgment: Who is exercising judgment when teachers are delegating evaluative tasks to AI systems?

One such example is Boymal's (2025) analysis of AI mediated appeals. Students are now able to ask AI to create appeals against assessment marks, which can deliver arguments "perfectly formed to align with

criteria and maximise persuasive force". In this context, the teacher's judgment becomes exposed and transparent to algorithmic optimisation, which may be reduced to a series of rules to be exploited.

The formation of a Triadic Relational Structure. An Actor Network Theory lens sees the shift from a two-part relationship of student and teacher to a three-part relationship when using GenAI. AI systems, as argued by Nilsson and O'Grady (2025), operate as actants to "mediate teacher-student relationships, redistribute agency and lead to new forms of digital stratification". This new setup makes interactions that were once direct, mediated: a student can first ask AI, and then ask a teacher a question, or a teacher can use AI to assess student work that the student also used AI to produce. The outcome is a complex assemblage of human and non-human actors, and where traditional authority markers are becoming more ambiguous.

Contextual Transferability to Developing Academic Ecosystems (Pakistan). GenAI, when it functions as a non-human actant, therefore, brings a new kind of cultural capital, what we call algorithmic capital, and it reinforces existing digital inequalities in Pakistani universities. Access to premium GenAI tools, such as ChatGPT-4 and Claude Pro, and access to high-speed internet is also uneven in Punjab, with elite private universities in Lahore having access while under-resourced public universities in rural districts (e.g., Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan) do not. Students who do not have such support are at a double disadvantage: They are unable to match AI-enhanced students in terms of output efficiency and sophistication, and they still have to deal with the same surveillance and suspicion regimes as everyone else. Moreover, in the context of Pakistani classrooms, the hierarchical authority structure, which often discourages challenging teacher knowledge, may ironically be exacerbated by the presence of AI. The traditional foundations of teacher authority (disciplinary expertise) are undermined when a student's answer to a question is generated using GenAI and cannot be easily disputed by the teacher. This tension, however, is not a topic for discussion because open negotiation of authority is culturally taboo, and thus it is not productively renegotiated but erodes the pedagogical legitimacy in a quiet manner. This change in relationship is not addressed in the HEC policy which even restricts the use of AI for "fundamental research tasks" (HEC Pakistan, 2024) and further exacerbates the problem by pushing AI usage underground.

Theme 3: The Intensification of Surveillance as a Relational Mode

The third theme relates to increased surveillance in response to GenAI. This intensification has multiple levels, and is, paradoxically, often the thing that it is trying to protect.

Detection Technologies & the Surveillance Apparatus. In response to GenAI, institutions have introduced the use of AI-detection software, proctoring systems, and audit requirements. Qian (2025) in their systematic review on academic integrity, mention that 'existing curricula and assessment procedures show room for modification', but most of the modifications have only dealt with detection and not redesign. This results, as one reviewer points out, "in an endless cycle of new technologies, student workarounds and new detection devices against 'cheating' and surveillance.

The Chilling on Pedagogical Relationships: Luo's (2024) respondents said that the surveillance creates a "chilling effect" on authentic learning, as "students feel unsafe to freely explore GenAI use". This aligns with Fawns and Schaepkens's (2022) analysis of online proctoring that reveals that the use of surveillance technologies can "alter trust-based pedagogical relationships to compliance-monitoring relationships with adverse consequences for student wellbeing.

Student resistance and tactical adaptation: Some students do not readily submit to surveillance. Boymal (2025) refers to de Certeau's notion of tactics, which he describes as "users' creative appropriations and

resistances" within which students interact with AI-mediated environments. Students can easily use AI without knowing, learn to trick AI into passing, or if necessary, reveal the use of AI. This is an additional tactical adjustment, which further undermines trust, because teachers know that they can be circumvented with surveillance.

Contextual Transferability to Developing Academic Ecosystems (Pakistan): This heightened oversight is problematic in contexts such as those of Pakistan's public universities, where AI detection software (like Turnitin's AI indicator) might not be available because of licensing fees or could be used without proper training for faculty. In these cases, surveillance is performative, not effective—teachers are told to “monitor AI use,” but they don't have the technology to do so, so they either don't enforce it or they make random accusations or they don't enforce it. The chilling effect as mentioned by Luo (2024) is heightened by the high power distance in Pakistan classrooms, and when students feel watched, they don't come forward to seek clarification or assistance, which further harms the relationship fabric. In parallel, more technically resourced and social capital students learn how to avoid detection, such as using paraphrasing tools, passing AI-generated content through multiple detectors, etc., while less privileged students are at a disproportionate risk. While the HEC's stipulation of “training, monitoring and audits of AI use” (HEC Pakistan, 2024) is a positive move in theory, it poses a significant obstacle if the required investment is not made in faculty training and access to detection tools, as it may be a compliance requirement rather than a genuine measure to enhance integrity and foster trust.

Theme 4: Inequality as a Mediating Condition

The fourth theme is related to the role of inequality, conditions and amplifies the first three: The impact of GenAI isn't homogeneous across all student-teacher relationships, but instead is shaped by the pre-existing inequalities in capital, access and institutional positioning.

GenAI Divide and Digital Stratification: One of the major impacts of AI integration is the "new forms of digital stratification" (Nilsson and O'Grady 2025). Tang's (2025) empirical research based on the theories of Bourdieu found that "in the use of the technology, cultural and social capital have a decisive influence, affecting students' confidence in using it, access to it, and their creative use of it". Prior institutional experience, robust social connections, and linguistic competence with GenAI yield more benefits for certain students and exacerbate achievement disparities.

Implications for relationships between teachers and students: There is a direct impact on relationships due to the differential distribution of GenAI-related capital. A student's AI fluency (cultural capital) may be rewarded by teachers unconsciously, while a student's lack of AI fluency may be punished by teachers unconsciously. The ability to access premium GenAI tools, to get internet connections, and to have supportive networks may not be available to every student, leading to potential inequities in AI-mediated assessment settings. Teachers might not have the expertise to fairly assess GenAI-generated work, further reinforcing disparities.

Contextual Transferability for Development of Academic Ecosystems (Pakistan): The inequality theme in Pakistan is evident on three fronts as institutional (public and private universities), geographic (urban Lahore and rural Punjab), and socioeconomic (affordability of better AI subscriptions and high-speed internet). A study by Majeed et al. (2025) in Lahore revealed that students from elite private universities were much more confident in using GenAI for complex tasks than students from public universities. This implies that GenAI isn't a “great equalizer,” but rather a way of transforming economic capital into an educational edge in new algorithmic forms. In terms of the student-teacher relationship, it may be an impossible situation for the teacher of a mixed ability class to ask one student to submit a piece of work which was produced with AI and another student to submit work that was produced without AI. Lack of

clear guidance and equitable access arrangements could mean that teachers reduce standards for everyone (counter to the curriculum) or disadvantage students who can't afford AI tools. Currently, HEC framework is all about prohibition and detection and does not include the equity dimension of GenAI access. If higher education in Pakistan is to prevent the creation of digital caste systems, this is a gap that urgently needs to be addressed.

DISCUSSION

Synthesis of Findings: A Relational Reconfiguration Model

From the results above, it can be concluded that GenAI is not just another variable in the educational equation, but that it is transforming the relational field of higher education overall. These three mechanisms coexist and amplify each other to create a new pedagogical landscape. Notably, these mechanisms do not affect everyone equally and can be worsened by the inequalities that GenAI can create.

We suggest a Relational Reconfiguration Model of GenAI in higher education. The model assumes that GenAI acts as a relational driver accelerating ongoing developments in EdTech and opening up to qualitatively new dynamics. Actors' responses to uncertainty are reflected in their trust-seeking, authority challenging and surveillance behaviours and each affects the nature of the student-teacher relationship in different ways, as the "black box" nature of GenAI systems is opaque and unpredictable.

Theoretical Contributions

This analysis contributes to the sociology of education and technology studies in three theoretical areas.

First, it builds on Bourdieu's theory and shows how GenAI serves as a novel cultural capital in the field of education. The incorporation of cultural and social capital in determining GenAI performance by Tang's (2025) indicates that a new notion of algorithmic capital might be needed to understand the particular capabilities to effectively use AI tools. This means its relevance for the educational inequality in the algorithmic era.

Second, the analysis shows by using the Actor-Network Theory proposed by Latour that AI systems are actants in pedagogical networks. The triadic nature of the relationship when AI is incorporated into the student-teacher dyad is not just additive, but transformative: These relationships are no longer directly negotiated, but mediated and shaped by algorithmic systems whose logics are not necessarily educationally values.

Thirdly, the analysis contributes to the Foucauldian studies of educational technology in that it documents the ways in which GenAI further tightens the grip of the discipline and at the same time opens up new opportunities for the students' resistance. The "audit culture" evokes by Boymal (2025) is not one imposed from above, but rather coproduced by the relationships between students, teachers, and institutions in the midst of an uncertain technological context.

Implications for Policy and Practice: A Localized Agenda for Pakistan

Drawing on the three-part mechanism developed in this study (i.e., trust erosion, authority redistribution, and surveillance intensification), we suggest that the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and universities in Punjab need to shift from a restrictive and surveillance-driven approach to policy-making on AI to a co-constructive pedagogical model. Specifically:

1. Share information with each other instead of watching each other: Institutions should create bilateral disclosure norms instead of asking students to give chat logs without similar transparency about how teachers are grading. Teachers need to clearly communicate the use of AI in the design of assessment tasks, and students need to fully reveal their AI utilization in process, not just the product. It is recommended that the HEC change its structure to add teacher transparency requirements.

2. Fund training of equitable AI literacy for faculty: The majority of the faculty members in Pakistan are not trained in GenAI pedagogy at all. Workshops should be funded and required by HEC to focus on redesigning the assessments rather than on detection, such as process-oriented assignments, oral defenses, critical evaluation of AI outputs, etc.

3. Tackle the digital infrastructure divide: Punjab Universities need to understand that differential access to top-notch AI resources is an equity issue. The use of GenAI tools with limited or subsidized licenses and/or investment in campus internet infrastructure (rural campus) should be explored.

4. Develop safe space for dialogue. It is less likely that students will challenge the authority of teachers, which is a cultural taboo that is more likely to encourage covert use of AI. Institutions should have anonymous feedback systems and facilitated dialogues between students and teachers, particularly regarding AI norms, to mitigate the chilling effect observed by Luo (2024).

The recommendations are not speculations but are based on the evidence from the global synthesis as presented in this analysis and adjusted to the context of higher education in Pakistan.

Directions for Future Research

Based on this secondary data analysis, some gaps have been identified that future empirical research should fill. Studies that follow shifts in student-teacher relationships over time as GenAI is increasingly incorporated are in urgent need. Secondly, comparative studies in various national and institutional settings, such as systematic comparison of public and private universities in Pakistan would help shed light on how relational change works in local context. Thirdly, ethnographic studies of how students and teachers in the cities of Lahore and elsewhere in Punjab do actually negotiate AI mediated relationships in their everyday lives would generate more qualitative data than could surveys. Fourth, intervention studies should be conducted in Pakistani University settings to test whether transparency focused policy leads to better relations as opposed to surveillance focused policy.

CONCLUSION

This article has explored the reconfiguration of student-teacher relationships in higher education through the secondary data analysis of empirical studies, systematic reviews, and policy documents, which have been the subject of numerous studies. The results show a relational transformation with a complex nature, marked by the loss of trust, the power shift, the increase in the intensity of the surveillance and the intensification of the inequalities that already existed. GenAI in the pedagogical encounter is not just another tool in the educational toolbox, but a paradigm shift in the field in which learning and teaching takes place.

The main thesis of this article is that the relational aspects of the introduction of GenAI to the educational context should be the central question of sociological research on AI-supported education. Technologies have no neutral character—they are shaping the relationship between actors and have significant implications for power, trust and legitimacy. The Relational Reconfiguration Model presented here can be

used as a framework for understanding these dynamics and to develop testable hypotheses for further research.

The challenge for students and teachers in this new space is not just to learn how to use GenAI effectively, especially in a developing country such as Pakistan where infrastructure and training are still catching up with the adoption of GenAI, but to restore the trust and authority between them in this space of unprecedented uncertainty. This will take institutional policies based on transparency rather than suspicion, pedagogical approaches that value critical AI literacy, and a sociological imagination that understands that technology and society are coproduced and not predictable or easily controllable.

The issue is not if, but how and for what purpose, GenAI will impact student-teacher dynamics. The answer to this question and the direction of this transformation toward equitable and humane relationships in education remain a pressing demand for all stakeholders around the world — researchers, policymakers, educators and students — especially for the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, which is refining its national AI framework.

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