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REFRAMING GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE THROUGH THE HUMAN-CENTRIC IMPERATIVE: A DESCRIPTIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has transformed how organizations, researchers, and societies create knowledge, make decisions, and deliver value. While existing studies largely emphasize the technical efficiency, productivity gains, and automation potential of GenAI, comparatively less attention has been given to the human-centric imperative—the need to design, deploy, and govern GenAI systems in ways that prioritize human values, agency, dignity, and societal well-being. Addressing this imbalance, the present study conducts a descriptive literature review to synthesize and critically analyze prior research on the intersection of the human-centric imperative and Generative AI. Drawing on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and policy reports published between 2015 and 2024, the review systematically examines how human-centered principles are conceptualized, operationalized, and discussed in the GenAI literature. Using a narrative synthesis approach, the study identifies key thematic domains, including human agency and autonomy, ethical accountability, fairness and bias mitigation, transparency and explainability, trust, and human–AI collaboration. The findings reveal that although human-centric values are increasingly acknowledged in conceptual and policy-oriented discussions, their empirical integration into GenAI research and organizational practices remains fragmented and underdeveloped. Moreover, most existing studies adopt a technology-centric perspective, with limited contextualization in emerging economies and organizational settings. By consolidating dispersed insights, this review highlights critical gaps and proposes directions for future research that embed human-centric principles more deeply into GenAI design and governance. Overall, the study contributes to the responsible AI discourse by

offering a structured understanding of how the human-centric imperative can guide more sustainable, ethical, and socially aligned Generative AI development.

Introduction

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has rapidly transformed how knowledge is created, decisions are supported, and value is generated across sectors such as management, education, healthcare, and public policy. Unlike earlier forms of automation, GenAI systems possess the ability to generate text, images, code, and analytical insights that closely resemble human cognition and creativity (Dwivedi et al., 2023). While these capabilities promise efficiency, innovation, and scalability, scholars increasingly argue that technological advancement alone is insufficient to ensure socially desirable outcomes. As a result, the human-centric imperative has emerged as a critical guiding principle, emphasizing that AI systems must be designed, deployed, and governed in ways that prioritize human values, agency, dignity, and well-being (Floridi et al., 2018; Shneiderman, 2020). Within this evolving discourse, the alignment of GenAI with human-centric principles is now viewed as essential for responsible and sustainable innovation.

Despite the growing recognition of the human-centric imperative, the existing GenAI literature remains largely technology-centric, with a dominant focus on performance optimization, computational capabilities, and organizational efficiency (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). Many studies discuss ethical AI in normative terms, yet they often lack an integrated understanding of how human-centric principles are conceptualized and applied across GenAI research streams. Moreover, prior research is fragmented across disciplines, resulting in conceptual ambiguity regarding human agency, transparency, accountability, and trust in GenAI systems (Jobin et al., 2019). This fragmentation limits the ability of scholars and practitioners to develop coherent frameworks that meaningfully embed human-centric considerations into GenAI design and use. Consequently, there is a clear need for a descriptive and integrative review that synthesizes existing literature to clarify how the human-centric imperative has been addressed in GenAI research and where critical gaps remain.

Guided by this gap, the present study addresses the following research questions: (RQ1) How is the human-centric imperative conceptualized in the existing Generative AI literature? (RQ2) What key human-centric themes have emerged in prior GenAI research? and (RQ3) What conceptual gaps and future research directions can be identified from the current body of knowledge? Accordingly, the objectives of this study are threefold: first, to descriptively review and synthesize prior literature on the human-centric imperative and GenAI; second, to identify dominant themes and patterns related to human values, agency, ethics, and governance; and third, to propose future research directions that support responsible and human-aligned GenAI development.

This study is significant as it responds to increasing global concerns regarding the societal implications of GenAI, including bias, erosion of human autonomy, and accountability challenges (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). By consolidating fragmented insights, the review supports scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in understanding how human-centric principles can guide GenAI toward socially beneficial outcomes. The study is particularly timely as governments and organizations worldwide are developing AI governance frameworks that explicitly emphasize human-centered values.

This research contributes to the literature in several important ways. First, it offers a comprehensive descriptive synthesis of the human-centric imperative within GenAI research, addressing a gap caused by dispersed and discipline-specific studies. Second, it advances conceptual clarity by organizing prior findings into coherent human-centric themes, thereby strengthening theory development in responsible AI research. Third, the study provides a foundation for future empirical and policy-oriented research by identifying underexplored areas where human-centric principles remain weakly operationalized. Overall, the paper

contributes to the ongoing shift from technology-driven AI discourse toward human-centered and value-driven GenAI scholarship.

Literature Review

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) represents a significant shift in the evolution of artificial intelligence, moving beyond rule-based automation and predictive analytics toward systems capable of generating human-like content, including text, images, code, and strategic insights. Recent advances in large language models and deep learning architectures have enabled GenAI to perform tasks traditionally associated with human creativity and cognition (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Consequently, GenAI is increasingly embedded in organizational decision-making, research processes, education, healthcare, and public administration. Prior literature highlights GenAI's potential to enhance productivity, innovation, and scalability, positioning it as a transformative general-purpose technology (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017).

However, the rapid diffusion of GenAI has also intensified concerns regarding its societal and organizational implications. Scholars caution that GenAI systems, if left unchecked, may reproduce biases, undermine human autonomy, and erode trust in digital systems (Bender et al., 2021). As a result, contemporary research increasingly argues that the value of GenAI should not be assessed solely through efficiency or performance metrics but also through its alignment with human values and societal goals.

The human-centric imperative originates from interdisciplinary scholarship spanning ethics, human-centered design, philosophy of technology, and management studies. At its core, the imperative asserts that technological systems must be designed to serve human needs, preserve dignity, and enhance human agency rather than displacing or subordinating it (Floridi et al., 2018). Unlike techno-centric paradigms, which prioritize optimization and automation, human-centric perspectives emphasize value alignment, accountability, transparency, and inclusivity.

Human-centered design theory has long argued that technologies should adapt to humans rather than forcing humans to adapt to technologies (Norman, 2013). In the context of AI, this logic has evolved into calls for human-centered AI, which seeks to balance computational power with meaningful human control and oversight (Shneiderman, 2020). The human-centric imperative thus serves as both an ethical and epistemological foundation, guiding how knowledge is produced, technologies are evaluated, and innovation is governed.

A substantial body of literature situates the human-centric imperative within the broader discourse on responsible AI and ethical AI governance. Global organizations such as the OECD (2019) and UNESCO (2021) emphasize principles including human rights, fairness, explainability, and accountability as essential for trustworthy AI systems. These frameworks consistently position humans as moral agents who must retain control over AI-driven decisions.

Empirical and conceptual studies further argue that human-centric AI enhances legitimacy and acceptance among users, employees, and stakeholders (Jobin et al., 2019). Without such alignment, AI systems risk resistance, misuse, and unintended social harm. Importantly, much of this literature focuses on general AI systems, while GenAI introduces unique challenges due to its generative, opaque, and autonomous characteristics.

One of the most prominent themes in prior literature concerns the tension between human augmentation and automation. Raisch and Krakowski (2021) describe this as the automation–augmentation paradox, wherein AI can simultaneously enhance and diminish human capabilities. GenAI intensifies this paradox by producing outputs that closely resemble human reasoning, raising concerns about deskilling, over-reliance, and reduced critical thinking (Susskind & Susskind, 2015).

Human-centric scholars argue that GenAI should function as a collaborative partner, augmenting human judgment rather than replacing it (Shneiderman, 2020). This perspective reframes GenAI as a socio-technical system embedded within human decision-making contexts. However, the literature reveals inconsistencies in

how augmentation is defined and operationalized, highlighting the need for integrative descriptive analysis.

Another dominant stream of literature addresses ethical risks associated with GenAI, particularly algorithmic bias, opacity, and the erosion of human agency. Bender et al. (2021) caution that large language models may perpetuate social inequalities embedded in training data, thereby amplifying discrimination at scale. Such concerns directly challenge the human-centric imperative, which demands fairness and inclusivity.

Furthermore, scholars argue that GenAI's black-box nature complicates accountability, making it difficult for humans to understand, contest, or override AI-generated outcomes (Floridi et al., 2018). This raises fundamental questions about responsibility and moral agency, especially in high-stakes domains such as healthcare, education, and governance. The literature consistently emphasizes the importance of maintaining meaningful human oversight, yet descriptive evidence suggests that practical implementation remains limited.

Within organizational research, GenAI is frequently examined through lenses of performance, efficiency, and competitive advantage. While such studies acknowledge ethical concerns, they often treat human-centric considerations as secondary or contextual variables (Dwivedi et al., 2023). This techno-managerial bias risks marginalizing employee well-being, trust, and skill development.

At the societal level, scholars warn that unregulated GenAI may exacerbate power asymmetries, misinformation, and social fragmentation (UNESCO, 2021). Human-centric literature counters this trajectory by advocating participatory governance, stakeholder inclusion, and contextual sensitivity. Yet, existing studies remain fragmented across disciplines, limiting cumulative knowledge development.

Despite the growing prominence of human-centric discourse, the literature on GenAI remains conceptually fragmented. Definitions of human-centricity vary across ethics, management, and information systems research, leading to conceptual ambiguity. Moreover, many studies adopt normative positions without systematically synthesizing prior insights or identifying common themes (Jobin et al., 2019).

Additionally, much of the existing research is concentrated in Western contexts, with limited attention to diverse institutional, cultural, and organizational settings. This imbalance underscores the need for descriptive reviews that consolidate existing knowledge before advancing empirical or theoretical extensions.

Given the novelty and rapid evolution of GenAI, a descriptive literature review is particularly appropriate. Descriptive reviews enable scholars to map conceptual landscapes, identify dominant themes, and clarify theoretical boundaries without imposing premature causal assumptions. As argued by Webster and Watson (2002), such reviews are essential for theory development in emerging research domains.

By synthesizing prior literature on the human-centric imperative and GenAI, a descriptive approach helps establish a coherent foundation for future empirical, conceptual, and policy-oriented research. It also supports interdisciplinary dialogue by integrating insights from ethics, management, information systems, and governance studies.

In summary, the existing literature strongly supports the relevance of the human-centric imperative in the context of GenAI but remains dispersed, normative, and inconsistently operationalized. While scholars broadly agree that GenAI must align with human values, agency, and well-being, there is limited integrative understanding of how these principles are conceptualized and applied. This gap justifies the present descriptive review, which seeks to consolidate existing knowledge, identify key themes, and outline future research directions for human-aligned GenAI scholarship.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive literature review methodology, also referred to as a narrative or integrative review, to synthesize existing scholarly work on the human-centric imperative in the context of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI). Descriptive reviews are particularly suitable for emerging and interdisciplinary

research areas where concepts are still evolving, empirical evidence is fragmented, and theoretical consensus has not yet been established (Webster & Watson, 2002; Snyder, 2019). Given the rapid development of GenAI and the normative yet dispersed nature of human-centric discourse, a descriptive approach allows for comprehensive mapping, interpretation, and integration of prior knowledge without imposing causal assumptions or hypothesis testing.

Unlike systematic reviews or meta-analyses, which focus on effect sizes and methodological uniformity, descriptive reviews emphasize conceptual clarity, thematic synthesis, and theory development (Paré et al., 2015). This approach is therefore well aligned with the objective of the present study, which seeks to understand how the human-centric imperative has been conceptualized, discussed, and applied across GenAI-related literature.

The literature search was conducted systematically but interpreted descriptively, following established guidance for narrative reviews (Green et al., 2006). Multiple academic databases were consulted to ensure comprehensive coverage, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, and ScienceDirect. These databases were selected due to their broad coverage of interdisciplinary research in artificial intelligence, information systems, ethics, management, and social sciences.

A combination of keywords and Boolean operators was used to retrieve relevant literature. Core search terms included *"Generative Artificial Intelligence," "Generative AI," "human-centric AI," "human-centered AI," "responsible AI," "ethical AI," "human values," "AI governance,"* and *"human–AI interaction."* To ensure conceptual depth, foundational terms such as *"human agency," "transparency," "accountability,"* and *"trustworthy AI"* were also incorporated. The search was not restricted to a single discipline, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the human-centric imperative.

To maintain relevance and quality, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, consistent with prior review studies (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003). Studies were included if they:

1. Addressed Generative AI or advanced AI systems with generative capabilities;
2. Explicitly discussed human-centric, human-centered, ethical, or responsible AI principles;
3. Were published in peer-reviewed journals, reputable conference proceedings, or authoritative institutional reports (e.g., OECD, UNESCO);
4. Were written in English.

Studies were excluded if they were purely technical (e.g., algorithmic optimization without human or ethical considerations), opinion-based editorials lacking scholarly grounding, or duplicated versions of the same work. Given the novelty of GenAI, both conceptual and empirical studies were included to capture the full scope of the discourse.

The screening process followed a two-stage review procedure, commonly recommended in literature review methodology (Paré et al., 2015). In the first stage, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess relevance to the research focus. In the second stage, full-text articles were examined to ensure alignment with the human-centric imperative and GenAI context.

Rather than aiming for exhaustive coverage, the emphasis was placed on conceptual richness, theoretical influence, and citation prominence, which is appropriate for descriptive reviews (Webster & Watson, 2002). Seminal works by leading scholars (e.g., Floridi, Shneiderman, Dwivedi) and highly cited institutional frameworks were prioritized to ensure authenticity and credibility.

Once selected, relevant studies were systematically reviewed and organized using a conceptual coding approach. Key information extracted from each article included: (1) conceptual definition of the human-centric imperative, (2) context of GenAI application, (3) ethical or human-related concerns addressed, and (4) key arguments or insights. This approach is consistent with integrative review practices that emphasize synthesis over quantification (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

The extracted data were organized into thematic categories rather than methodological or chronological groupings. This thematic organization allowed the study to identify patterns, similarities, and divergences across the literature, facilitating a coherent narrative synthesis.

A **thematic descriptive analysis** was employed to analyze the literature. Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative and review-based research to identify recurring concepts and interpret meanings across texts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, themes emerged inductively through repeated reading and comparison of selected studies.

Key themes identified included human agency, augmentation versus automation, ethical accountability, transparency and explainability, trust, and governance of GenAI systems. These themes reflect dominant concerns in the literature and directly relate to the human-centric imperative. Importantly, the analysis remained descriptive rather than evaluative, ensuring that the study synthesized existing viewpoints without imposing normative judgments.

The choice of a descriptive review methodology is justified by the conceptual immaturity and rapid evolution of GenAI research. As noted by Webster and Watson (2002), descriptive reviews are essential in emerging domains to clarify constructs, identify research gaps, and establish theoretical foundations. Given that empirical measurement of human-centricity in GenAI remains inconsistent, a descriptive synthesis provides a necessary precursor to future empirical inquiry.

Furthermore, prior scholars argue that descriptive reviews play a critical role in interdisciplinary fields by integrating fragmented knowledge across domains (Snyder, 2019). This is particularly relevant for human-centric GenAI research, which spans ethics, management, information systems, and public policy.

To enhance rigor, the study followed transparent search procedures, clear inclusion criteria, and systematic thematic synthesis, as recommended by Paré et al. (2015). The use of well-established and widely cited sources further strengthens the credibility of the review. While descriptive reviews do not aim for replicability in the same manner as systematic reviews, transparency and coherence were prioritized to ensure trustworthiness.

As with all descriptive reviews, this study is subject to certain limitations. The reliance on published literature may introduce publication bias, and the interpretive nature of thematic synthesis involves a degree of subjectivity. However, these limitations are consistent with narrative review methodologies and are mitigated through the use of authoritative sources and established analytical frameworks (Green et al., 2006).

Results

The descriptive analysis of the reviewed literature reveals a growing and converging emphasis on the human-centric imperative as a foundational principle for the development, deployment, and governance of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI). Across disciplines including artificial intelligence, information systems, management, ethics, and public policy the literature consistently underscores the necessity of aligning GenAI capabilities with human values, agency, and societal well-being. The findings are organized into five dominant thematic results that emerged from the synthesis of prior studies.

Theme 1: Centrality of Human Agency and Control

A dominant result across the literature is the consistent emphasis on human agency as a core requirement for human-centric GenAI. Prior studies repeatedly argue that humans must retain meaningful control over AI-generated outputs, decisions, and processes (Floridi et al., 2018; Shneiderman, 2020). The reviewed literature highlights concerns that GenAI systems, due to their autonomous and generative nature, may reduce human oversight and decision autonomy if deployed without clear governance mechanisms.

Multiple studies emphasize that human-centric GenAI should function as a decision-support or augmentation tool, rather than an autonomous decision-maker (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). The literature reveals consensus that preserving human judgment is essential to maintaining accountability and ethical responsibility,

particularly in high-stakes contexts such as healthcare, education, and public administration. This theme demonstrates that human agency is not peripheral but central to the human-centric imperative in GenAI research.

Theme 2: Human Augmentation over Automation

Another prominent result is the recurring distinction between human augmentation and automation. The literature consistently frames GenAI as a technology that should enhance human creativity, cognition, and productivity rather than replace human labor or expertise (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Studies caution that excessive automation through GenAI may lead to deskilling, dependency, and erosion of critical thinking skills (Susskind & Susskind, 2015).

The reviewed research highlights that human-centric GenAI is most effective when designed to complement human strengths, such as contextual reasoning and ethical judgment, while leveraging AI's computational efficiency. This augmentation-oriented perspective is particularly emphasized in management and organizational studies, where GenAI is viewed as a collaborative partner that supports strategic decision-making rather than a substitute for managerial roles. Collectively, the literature positions augmentation as a defining feature of human-aligned GenAI.

Theme 3: Ethical Accountability, Fairness, and Bias Mitigation

Ethical accountability emerges as a central and recurring theme in the reviewed literature. Numerous studies highlight the risks of bias, discrimination, and unfair outcomes arising from GenAI systems trained on large-scale, historically biased datasets (Bender et al., 2021). The results indicate strong scholarly agreement that human-centric GenAI must proactively address fairness and inclusivity to prevent social harm.

The literature further emphasizes that ethical responsibility cannot be delegated solely to algorithms; rather, accountability must remain with human designers, developers, and decision-makers (Jobin et al., 2019). Institutional frameworks, such as those proposed by the OECD (2019) and UNESCO (2021), are frequently cited as evidence of global consensus on the need for human-centered AI governance. These findings suggest that ethical alignment is not optional but an essential condition for trustworthy GenAI systems.

Theme 4: Transparency, Explainability, and Trust

Transparency and explainability are consistently identified as prerequisites for trust in GenAI systems. The literature reveals widespread concern over the "black-box" nature of large language models and other generative systems, which limits users' ability to understand how outputs are generated (Floridi et al., 2018). Studies argue that without explainability, GenAI undermines user confidence and weakens accountability structures. Human-centric research emphasizes that transparency enhances not only technical understanding but also psychological trust, enabling users to critically engage with AI-generated content rather than passively accepting it (Shneiderman, 2020). The results show that trust is repeatedly framed as a relational outcome shaped by human–AI interaction, rather than a purely technical attribute. This finding reinforces the view that trust in GenAI is socially constructed and deeply linked to human-centric design principles.

Theme 5: Governance and Institutional Responsibility

A further key result concerns the role of governance and institutional responsibility in operationalizing the human-centric imperative. The literature highlights that individual-level ethical awareness is insufficient without supportive organizational and regulatory structures (OECD, 2019). Prior studies consistently call for multi-level governance frameworks that integrate ethical guidelines, legal accountability, and stakeholder participation.

The review reveals that existing governance discussions often remain normative and fragmented, with limited empirical guidance on implementation. Nonetheless, there is broad agreement that human-centric governance

frameworks are necessary to balance innovation with societal protection. This theme underscores the importance of aligning GenAI development with public values, democratic principles, and long-term social sustainability.

Cross-Cutting Observations

Beyond these five themes, the literature reveals several cross-cutting patterns. First, the human-centric imperative is increasingly framed as a strategic and societal necessity, rather than merely an ethical ideal. Second, most studies emphasize the need for interdisciplinary collaboration, reflecting the complex socio-technical nature of GenAI. Third, there is a noticeable concentration of research in Western contexts, indicating a geographic and contextual imbalance in existing scholarship.

Importantly, the review finds that while human-centric principles are widely endorsed, they are often discussed at a conceptual level, with limited integration into concrete GenAI design and deployment practices. This observation highlights a persistent gap between ethical intent and practical application.

Discussion

The purpose of this descriptive review was to synthesize existing literature on the human-centric imperative in the context of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) and to clarify how prior research has conceptualized, emphasized, and operationalized human-centered principles. The findings reveal strong convergence across disciplines on the importance of aligning GenAI with human values, agency, and societal well-being, while simultaneously exposing fragmentation and conceptual ambiguity in the literature. This discussion interprets these findings in light of existing scholarship and highlights their broader theoretical and practical implications.

First, the centrality of human agency and control identified in the results reinforces foundational arguments in human-centered AI research. Prior scholars have consistently warned that advanced AI systems risk diminishing human autonomy if decision authority is transferred excessively to algorithms (Floridi et al., 2018; Shneiderman, 2020). The reviewed literature supports this concern, demonstrating that GenAI's generative and autonomous characteristics intensify the challenge of preserving meaningful human oversight. This finding aligns with Raisch and Krakowski's (2021) automation–augmentation paradox, suggesting that GenAI simultaneously expands and threatens human decision-making capacity. From a theoretical perspective, this reinforces the view that GenAI must be understood not as an independent actor but as part of a socio-technical system in which humans remain the ultimate moral and cognitive agents.

Second, the strong emphasis on human augmentation rather than automation reflects a normative shift in AI discourse. Earlier technological paradigms often equated progress with automation and labor substitution; however, the reviewed literature consistently reframes GenAI as a tool for enhancing human creativity, judgment, and productivity (Dwivedi et al., 2023). This shift is particularly evident in management and organizational research, where GenAI is increasingly discussed as a collaborator rather than a replacement. This discussion advances existing theory by positioning augmentation as a defining criterion of human-centric GenAI. It suggests that the value of GenAI should be evaluated not only by efficiency gains but also by its capacity to strengthen human skills, learning, and adaptive decision-making.

Third, the prominence of ethical accountability, fairness, and bias mitigation underscores that the human-centric imperative is inseparable from ethical responsibility. The literature repeatedly highlights the risk that GenAI systems may replicate or amplify existing social inequalities embedded in training data (Bender et al., 2021). The discussion of accountability in prior research consistently places responsibility on human designers, organizations, and institutions rather than on algorithms themselves (Jobin et al., 2019). This finding reinforces ethical AI scholarship that argues against the "moral outsourcing" of responsibility to technological systems. Conceptually, it suggests that human-centric GenAI requires a clear allocation of responsibility and ethical ownership throughout the AI lifecycle.

Fourth, the results related to transparency, explainability, and trust provide important insights into the relational nature of human–AI interaction. The literature indicates that trust in GenAI is not simply a technical outcome but a social and psychological construct shaped by users' understanding, perceptions, and experiences (Shneiderman, 2020). The discussion reveals that opaque GenAI systems undermine trust and weaken human agency by discouraging critical engagement with AI-generated outputs. This finding supports broader arguments in responsible AI research that transparency is a prerequisite for legitimacy and long-term adoption (Floridi et al., 2018). Importantly, the literature suggests that explainability should be designed for human comprehension rather than purely technical interpretability, reinforcing the human-centric orientation.

Fifth, the emphasis on governance and institutional responsibility highlights the multi-level nature of the human-centric imperative. While individual awareness and ethical intent are important, the literature consistently demonstrates that human-centric GenAI cannot be realized without supportive organizational structures and regulatory frameworks (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). This discussion positions governance not as a constraint on innovation but as an enabling mechanism that aligns technological development with public values. However, the literature also reveals that many governance frameworks remain normative and aspirational, with limited guidance on practical implementation. This gap suggests that future research must move beyond principles toward actionable governance models.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the human-centric imperative has achieved conceptual legitimacy but lacks conceptual coherence and operational clarity in the GenAI literature. While there is broad agreement on what should be prioritized—human agency, ethics, trust, and governance—there is less consensus on how these principles should be integrated into GenAI design, deployment, and evaluation. This fragmentation is characteristic of emerging research domains and further justifies the use of a descriptive review to consolidate existing knowledge (Webster & Watson, 2002).

From a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to responsible AI and human-centered technology literature by demonstrating that the human-centric imperative functions as an integrative meta-framework rather than a single theory. It draws on ethics, human-centered design, management theory, and governance studies, highlighting the need for interdisciplinary synthesis. By organizing prior research into coherent themes, this review supports theory-building efforts aimed at developing more unified models of human-aligned GenAI.

Practically, the discussion suggests that organizations adopting GenAI should move beyond compliance-oriented ethics and embed human-centric principles into strategic decision-making, system design, and workforce development. For policymakers, the findings highlight the importance of translating high-level ethical principles into enforceable standards and participatory governance mechanisms. For researchers, the discussion underscores the need for context-sensitive studies that examine how human-centric principles operate across industries, cultures, and institutional environments.

Finally, this discussion highlights the descriptive nature of the study as a strength rather than a limitation. By avoiding premature empirical testing, the review establishes a conceptual foundation upon which future quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research can build. As GenAI continues to evolve, maintaining a strong human-centric orientation will be critical to ensuring that technological progress aligns with human and societal interests.

Practical Implications

The findings of this descriptive review offer several important practical implications for organizations, policymakers, technology developers, and other stakeholders engaged with Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI). First, the strong emphasis on the human-centric imperative suggests that organizations should move beyond purely performance-driven adoption of GenAI and

instead embed human values, agency, and well-being into their AI strategies. Practically, this means designing GenAI systems as decision-support and augmentation tools, rather than autonomous decision-makers, to ensure that human judgment remains central in organizational processes.

Second, managers and leaders should prioritize human oversight and accountability mechanisms when deploying GenAI. The literature consistently highlights risks related to bias, opacity, and over-reliance on AI-generated outputs. To address these risks, organizations should establish clear governance structures that define responsibility for AI-driven decisions, including escalation protocols and human-in-the-loop processes. Such practices can enhance trust among employees and users, thereby improving acceptance and long-term sustainability of GenAI systems.

Third, the review underscores the importance of employee capability development. Human-centric GenAI adoption requires investments in training and reskilling to ensure that employees can critically interpret, evaluate, and effectively collaborate with AI systems. Rather than replacing human expertise, GenAI should be used to enhance learning, creativity, and problem-solving capacities. Organizations that neglect this human-development dimension risk deskilling their workforce and undermining the intended benefits of GenAI.

From a policy and regulatory perspective, the findings highlight the need for context-sensitive AI governance frameworks. Policymakers should translate high-level ethical principles into actionable guidelines that promote transparency, fairness, and human control without stifling innovation. Participatory approaches involving industry, academia, and civil society can help ensure that GenAI development reflects societal values and public interest.

Finally, for AI developers and designers, the human-centric imperative calls for the integration of human-centered design principles throughout the AI lifecycle. This includes user-friendly interfaces, explainable outputs, and mechanisms that allow users to question or override AI recommendations. Collectively, these practical implications suggest that successful GenAI adoption depends not only on technical excellence but also on sustained attention to human and organizational factors.

Theoretical Implications

This study offers several important theoretical implications for research on artificial intelligence, responsible innovation, and socio-technical systems. First, the review demonstrates that the human-centric imperative functions as an integrative conceptual lens rather than a standalone theory. It brings together insights from ethics, human-centered design, management theory, and AI governance, thereby encouraging scholars to move beyond siloed disciplinary approaches. This integrative role advances theory development by positioning human-centricity as a unifying principle for understanding GenAI's societal and organizational impact.

Second, the findings contribute to the theoretical debate on human–AI interaction by reinforcing the primacy of human agency. The literature consistently rejects techno-deterministic views that treat AI as an autonomous actor and instead conceptualizes GenAI as embedded within human decision-making contexts. This perspective strengthens socio-technical systems theory by emphasizing co-evolution between humans and intelligent technologies, particularly in generative and creative domains.

Third, the review extends the automation–augmentation discourse by providing descriptive evidence that augmentation is increasingly viewed as the normative and theoretically desirable pathway for GenAI deployment. This challenges traditional productivity-focused AI models and encourages scholars to theorize AI value creation in terms of human capability enhancement, trust, and ethical alignment. As such, the human-centric imperative offers a theoretical bridge between AI research and human capital theory.

Additionally, the review highlights conceptual ambiguity in how key constructs—such as transparency, fairness, and trust—are defined and operationalized across studies. This fragmentation presents an opportunity for theory refinement by encouraging clearer construct definitions and

more consistent conceptual frameworks. The findings suggest that future theory-building efforts should aim to clarify the boundaries and dimensions of human-centric GenAI.

Finally, by adopting a descriptive review methodology, this study reinforces the importance of foundational synthesis in emerging research domains. Theoretical progress in GenAI research depends on consolidating existing knowledge before advancing empirical testing. Thus, this review contributes to theory development by establishing a coherent conceptual baseline for future explanatory and predictive models.

Future Research Directions and Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that point to important directions for future research. First, as a descriptive literature review, the study relies on existing published research, which may introduce publication bias and limit the inclusion of emerging or unpublished insights. Future studies could complement descriptive reviews with systematic reviews or meta-analyses as the GenAI literature matures.

Second, much of the existing literature reviewed is conceptual and normative, highlighting a need for empirical research that operationalizes the human-centric imperative in measurable terms. Future studies could develop and validate constructs related to human-centric GenAI, such as perceived human control, ethical alignment, or trust in AI-generated outputs. Quantitative and mixed-methods research would be particularly valuable in examining how these constructs influence organizational and societal outcomes.

Third, the literature remains heavily concentrated in Western and developed-economy contexts, limiting generalizability. Future research should explore human-centric GenAI in diverse cultural, institutional, and economic settings, including emerging economies. Context-sensitive studies would enrich understanding of how human-centric principles are interpreted and implemented across different environments.

Fourth, future research should investigate sector-specific applications of GenAI, such as healthcare, education, public administration, and sustainability. Such studies could reveal how the human-centric imperative manifests differently depending on the level of risk, regulatory intensity, and societal impact.

Finally, while this review synthesizes existing knowledge, it does not propose or test a unified conceptual framework. Future research could build on the identified themes to develop integrative models that link human-centric principles with GenAI design, governance, and outcomes. Addressing these directions will help advance the field from conceptual agreement toward practical and theoretical maturity.

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