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The Affective Impact of Generative Artificial Intelligence on Instructors of First-Year Writing Courses

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the affective challenges faced by instructors teaching first-year writing (FYW) courses in Ontario post-secondary institutions as the instructors adapt to the growing presence of generative AI (GenAI) technologies in educational contexts. Framing GenAI as a wicked problem and using semi-structured interviews with eight FYW instructors across four Ontario post-secondary institutions, this research explores how GenAI influences instructors' emotional well-being, cognitive load, workload, and overall job satisfaction. Findings include marked increases in cognitive and emotional labour resulting from intersecting factors such as moral injury, concerns surrounding assessment and fairness, lack of institutional guidance, and a shift in the teacher-student relationship (TSR). In response to our findings, we offer three preliminary recommendations for institutions and departments to address the affective impacts of GenAI on FYW instructors.

KEYWORDS

writing pedagogy, GenAI in higher education, affect, emotion, first-year writing, wicked problem

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of ChatGPT in November 2022 has led to a tremendous volume of public and academic discourse concerning the potential ramifications of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) for post-secondary students and professors, with particular interest in the implications for writing-intensive courses and composition instruction. Able to generate fluent prose almost instantaneously, natural language processing systems like ChatGPT produce text that is not always easily distinguishable from human-written text (Matthews and Volpe 2023), prompting existential questions about the value of university writing instruction, perhaps best exemplified by the now-(in)famous 2022 headline from *The Atlantic*, "The College Essay is Dead" (Marche 2022). Many scholars believe that GenAI will necessitate wide-scale reconsideration of how instructors teach post-secondary composition (Southworth 2023). Current guidelines for writing instructors offer strategies for student-facing practices, such as integrating GenAI technology into the classroom, guiding students in how to engage critically with the technology, and tackling ethical questions raised by GenAI (Sabzalieva and Valentini 2023; US Department of Education 2023; Vee, Laquintano, and Schnitzler 2023).

The extant literature, however, overlooks a crucial area to which this study speaks: the affective impacts of the availability of GenAI on instructors of first-year writing (FYW) courses. These impacts are neither trivial nor incidental. The emotional well-being of frontline educators has far-reaching consequences, not only for faculty job satisfaction and retention but also for student success

(Madigan and Kim 2021). Framing GenAI as a "wicked problem," per Rittel and Webber (1973), and building on research on instructor job satisfaction and emotional well-being (Hagenauer, Hascher, and Volet 2015; Klassen, Perry, and Frenzel 2012) and specific challenges facing FYW and precarious faculty (Christie and Dean 2022), this study addresses an urgent gap in the research surrounding the affective impact of GenAI on FYW instructors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As a caring profession, teaching requires the regulation of emotions—one's own and those of one's students. Pedagogical emotional labour, "the process by which teachers attempt to inhibit, generate and manage their feelings and expression of emotions according to the normative beliefs or emotional display rules held about the teaching profession" (Yin 2015, 790), constitutes a vital facet of teaching. However, studies tie higher levels of emotional labour to instructor burnout and decreased job satisfaction (Ergül-Bayram and Eveyik-Aydın 2023). A longstanding subject of research, occupational burnout—defined as feelings of depletion; cynicism or emotional distance from one's professional duties; and a lowered sense of professional accomplishment (World Health Organization 2019)—had already reached a crisis point among post-secondary faculty during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chin and Clubbs 2022; Tugend 2020). The Maslach Burnout Inventory Educators Survey provides three constructs by which to measure instructor burnout: 1) emotional exhaustion—the extent to which instructors feel depleted by the emotional demands of their job; 2) depersonalization—the extent to which instructors view students impersonally, as objects rather than subjects; and 3) professional accomplishment—the extent to which instructors feel a sense of achievement in their work (Maslach, Jackson, and Schwab 2018). Popular articles about instructor responses to the advent of GenAI contain echoes of these criteria, suggesting large-scale "despair" (Grove 2024) among faculty who have been sent "reeling" (McMurtrie 2024, para. 3), now uncertain whether the work they're grading is that of a student or a bot; similarly, Danielle DeRise (2024), director of the first-year writing program at James Madison University, posits "exhaustion" as a generalized response among FYW faculty to the irruption of GenAI tools, "fueled by a sense of déjà vu for the earliest days of COVID-19" (2). Such reports notwithstanding, scholars have yet to conduct formal research into the added emotional and cognitive burdens posed by GenAI on faculty.

The post-secondary community has felt the necessity of reconfiguring pedagogical strategies in response to text generating technology, but the challenges for FYW instruction fall on shoulders already overstrained by what Haswell (2005) has termed the "unusual amounts of teacher work" (para. 1) required in writing pedagogy, involving individualized attention and ongoing feedback. The burden of these requirements is often compounded by the exigencies of navigating shared curricula in standardized FYW courses (Stewart and Stewart 2024) and by the low status of writing instruction, visible since the introduction of composition courses in American universities (Brereton 1995, 10) and evident still in the lack of prestige granted to those practicing what is regularly considered mere service teaching.

A further, critical factor in FYW instruction is the overrepresentation of precarious faculty. American institutions report 70–100% of FYW faculty holding contingent contracts (American Association of University Professors 2024; Christie et al. 2022), and contract faculty account for over 50% of appointments across disciplines in Canadian universities (Pasma and Shaker 2018). As Jamieson (2022) observes, "most teachers of writing are commuting from campus to campus and their tenuous contingent positions" (para. 5), left with little bandwidth to attend to fresh and extensive pedagogical demands. Hot on the heels of COVID-19 and its attendant teaching challenges, GenAI presents what might be termed a second-wave pedagogical watershed that will affect

instructors differently based on their disciplinary and institutional position, with precarious instructors at a disadvantage.

Much of the existing pedagogical literature on affect and GenAI focuses on student emotional response to the technology or its potential use-value for engaging students emotionally (Güner, Er, Akçapınar, and Khalil 2024; Huang, Zou, Cheng, Chen, and Xie 2023; Liu, Duan, Liu, Mu, Liu, and Yang 2024). Among the few studies of faculty emotional responses, the results have been mixed. Assessing the response of students and faculty to GenAI, Chan and Lee (2023) found greater optimism among students for the benefits of GenAI in learning and greater hesitation on the part of faculty. Mamo, Crompton, Burke, and Nickel (2024) studied faculty tweets about ChatGPT to gauge emotional response to the software, finding primarily positive responses that increased over time. In a study of English language teachers, Kohnke, Zou, and Moorhouse (2024) examined the effect of GenAI in relation to "technostress," a term referring to the stress occasioned by the rapid introduction of new technologies. The study found significant levels of GenAI-fueled technostress, stemming from factors such as the pace at which AI tools have gained a large usership and the uncertainty surrounding teaching efficacy in light of these tools.

More telling emotional responses are found in research into perceptions of academic integrity on the part of students and instructors, constellating around the teacher-student relationship (TSR). In open-ended interviews with university students, Luo (2024) found a host of anxieties related to trust in the classroom and in assessment practices, with students expressing fear of false accusations of unauthorized GenAI use, compounded by a culture of anonymity in large university classrooms that offer little direct contact with professors. Similarly, in an analysis of 49 posts on student-led Reddit forums, Gorichanaz (2023) observed the deterioration of trust in the TSR as a prominent theme; students expressed betrayal when certain professors brought claims of unauthorized GenAI use against them and reported preparing submissions "defensively" (191) because of perceived heightened scrutiny from instructors.

The need for data-driven research into faculty affective responses can be seen in the integral nature of the TSR to instructors' professional well-being. Klassen et al. (2012) have found that "satisfaction of the need for relatedness with students" (150) is directly correlated with teacher job satisfaction, results that speak to those of Hagenauer et al. (2015), who have identified the TSR as "particularly important" (385) in determining teachers' emotional experience of their work. In the context of GenAI, that measure of satisfaction demands renewed attention.

This confluence of factors demonstrates the need for an evidence-based examination of the effects of GenAI on instructor job satisfaction and morale to guide policy and initiatives that support the needs of FYW faculty. Our study responds to that need.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of wicked problems, as described by Rittel et al. (1973), provides a compelling framework for this study. Wicked problems are characterized by their complexity, lack of definitive solutions, and interconnected nature, where each attempt at addressing the problem may lead to unintended consequences (Ramaley 2014; Rittel et al. 1973). The use of GenAI tools in educational settings raises issues surrounding academic integrity, pedagogical practices, assessment fairness, potential deskilling, and the evolving role of educators. As a theoretical lens, the wicked problem framework highlights how the challenges posed by GenAI demand adaptive and reflective approaches, acknowledging the affective dimensions experienced by FYW instructors as they attempt to balance innovation with the preservation of academic standards. Moreover, this particular wicked problem affects multiple stakeholders within post-secondary institutions beyond instructors, such as

administrators, staff members, policymakers, and students. Such complexity requires multiple perspectives to navigate the ever-changing nature of GenAI within academic contexts. As Ramaley (2014) suggests, "the management of this kind of problem requires collaboration, a sharing of exposure to risk and an opportunity for benefit, and a willingness to learn as the problem changes" (12).

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

The lead authors of this study, Amanda Paxton and Phoebe Kang, collectively hold over 20 years of experience teaching FYW courses in Ontario, Canada. Amanda and Phoebe have both worked as precarious faculty on sessional contracts and limited-term appointments. This study found its genesis in early 2023, when the first indicators of generated text appeared in submissions in their FYW courses. Amanda and Phoebe share the same queasy uncertainty, no longer sure if they were giving feedback on work produced by students and wondering how fundamental factors in pedagogy and professional fulfillment—such as the primacy of the TSR—might change. In their conversations, they reflected that the prevailing discourse surrounding GenAI and pedagogy—focusing on how to integrate GenAI into teaching or how to prevent deskilling—omitted the crucial elements of emotion and relationship building. These discussions with each other and with other instructors led them to the present investigation. To ensure a neutral review of the data, they recruited Ashley Yim, then a graduate student in higher education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, to help perform the thematic analysis. She brings an expertise in psychology and education, as well as in qualitative data analysis; moreover, since she does not directly work in FYW instruction, her contributions add a valuable arm's length perspective.

METHOD

Research design

We undertook a qualitative study with an interpretive approach that used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences (Merriam and Tisdell 2016). The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the emotional responses of FYW instructors to the availability of GenAI?
2. How does students' potential use of GenAI influence instructors' time spent on course planning and assessment, and how does it impact instructors' emotional/cognitive loads when performing those tasks?
3. How do FYW instructors describe their level of job satisfaction and engagement since the appearance of ChatGPT compared to before its introduction?

Participant selection

The study focuses on FYW instructors from four Ontario post-secondary institutions. We employed a snowball sampling strategy to select eight participants (Merriam et al. 2016). Our participant recruitment resulted in a mix of sessional and limited-term-appointment full-time faculty members whose experiences differed in relation to institutional support, workload, and job security. The participant pool consisted of six sessional faculty members and two limited-term-appointment full-time faculty members. All participants had over five years of teaching experience in Ontario post-secondary contexts and in writing studies or communications courses. Table 1 outlines the participant demographics, using pseudonyms for each subject.

Table 1. Participant demographics

Participant pseudonym	Gender	Years of teaching	Employment status
Allen	Man	>10	Sessional
Barry	Man	>10	Sessional
Caroline	Woman	>10	Full-time limited-term
Dolores	Woman	>10	Sessional
Elsa	Woman	>5	Sessional
Filomena	Woman	>10	Sessional
Gareth	Man	>10	Sessional
Hubert	Man	>10	Full-time limited-term

Data collection and analysis

We collected the interview data through semi-structured interviews via Zoom between January and June 2024, with each lasting a maximum of 75 minutes. The semi-structured format allowed for the exploration of the research questions while giving participants the opportunity to share additional insights or experiences not directly prompted by the questions (see Appendix 1 for the interview guide). We recorded the interviews with participants' consent and later transcribed them for analysis. The use of virtual interviews accommodated participants' schedules and minimized geographical barriers, contributing to more accessible data collection. The data analysis entailed two stages of coding: 1) line-by-line coding and 2) thematic coding.

For the initial coding process, we collaboratively employed line-by-line coding to identify expressions of emotions related to GenAI in the participants' teaching contexts (Saldaña 2021). Once we identified all the emotive expressions, we grouped them into positive, negative, and neutral. In the second round of coding, using thematic coding analysis, we grouped related codes to form overarching themes that addressed the research questions. Iterative discussions refined those themes, ensuring they accurately reflected the data and provided meaningful insight into the participants' experiences.

The analysis sought to draw connections between instructors' emotions, cognitive workload, and the perceived impact of GenAI on their professional roles.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Themes emerging in response to research question 1 (What are the emotional responses of FYW instructors to the availability of GenAI?) clustered around intellectual curiosity, anxieties over the potential devaluation of writing skills, and a sense of moral injury on behalf of faculty and students. Research question 2 (How does students' potential use of GenAI influence instructors' time spent on course planning and assessment, and how does it impact instructors' emotional/cognitive loads when performing those tasks?) revealed increased emotional and cognitive labour as well as more time spent in assessment and in following up on cases of suspected unauthorized GenAI use. Both these increases in workload connected to a third theme: the lack of clear institutional guidance on addressing suspected unauthorized use of GenAI. Three themes appeared in relation to the final research question (How do FYW instructors describe their level of job satisfaction and engagement since the appearance of ChatGPT compared to before its introduction?): a shift in the TSR following the arrival of GenAI tools, a diminished sense of professional accomplishment, and a compounding of the challenges posed by GenAI for precarious faculty.

Research question 1: What are the emotional responses of FYW instructors to the availability of GenAI?

Initial responses

The participant accounts of their initial emotions upon hearing of OpenAI's release of ChatGPT in the fall of 2022 reflected the complexity and contradictions inherent to wicked problems; they ranged from positive emotions of curiosity followed quickly by anxiety about the potential devaluation of teaching and learning writing, and—for some respondents—attendant worries about job security. In some cases, only professional anxiety emerged, as in Caroline's report that, "[m]y first reaction was: I'm out of a job." For Allen and Filomena, by contrast, their curiosity about the new technologies presented a potential intellectual pleasure, but this was soon overshadowed by professional concerns. Filomena framed the emotions as tightly sequential: "I was excited, and then came the fear." Allen elaborated further, saying:

> Certainly, [there's an] academic interest. I can't help but think it'd be interesting to see what happens next. But also, it comes down to a question. I asked my students last Friday: Why does writing matter? . . . if writing doesn't matter, then does expression matter? . . . Do your ideas matter? What matters? In some ways, if it doesn't matter, then why not hand it off to an AI bot?

Any intellectual interest aroused by the new technologies swiftly gave way to worries about potential student deskilling and the threat of a broader disinterest in developing thought and self-expression.

Moral injury

When asked about their longer-term emotional response to the availability of GenAI tools in pedagogical contexts, respondents overwhelmingly reported experiencing what can be termed moral injury under the definition proposed by Litz, Stein, Delaney, Lebowitz, Nash, Silva, and Maguen (2009): "perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (700). The intractability of wicked problems emerged in the disjunction between the widely touted benefits of GenAI tools and the risks participants worried these tools would pose to education, such as student deskilling and overreliance on GenAI. Hubert expressed indignation at what he called the "incredibly irresponsible" decision of OpenAI and other platforms "to release this without thinking about the consequences, particularly on education, leaving aside copyright and all that." Emotions, such as grief and anger, clustered around witnessing what respondents perceived as the deterioration of a central value of education: guiding students in developing their own agency as writers and thinkers.

Whereas Gareth relayed professional frustration "that this tool had now been created that was going to make our lives even harder, in terms of trying to convince people that they do need to learn the art of writing," a broader consensus formed around a sense of injustice to students. Caroline reported "feeling defeated or a sadness, because that meant students would never really learn a skill that they should have learned by now." Allen worried that potential overreliance on GenAI would mean students may no longer gain access to the pleasures of self-expression, to "the process of it and the joy of it." Focusing on second-language learners, Dolores expressed concern that they would be particularly disadvantaged by the temptation to use GenAI tools, "because [GenAI is] being marketed as a way to get through school."

Research question 2: How does students' potential use of GenAI influence instructors' time spent on course planning and assessment, and how does it impact instructors' emotional/cognitive loads when performing those tasks?

Increased emotional and cognitive labour in assessment and grading

Unsurprisingly, participants reported increased time spent redesigning assessments and grading practices in order to ensure students still met required learning outcomes in FYW courses. These added pressures imparted an emotional burden, with Elsa expressing frustration that the time and care spent over a career and in any given week of teaching—"a lot of weekly writing, daily writing"—no longer felt relevant. A key factor is the perceived lack of educational payoff when adapting to the availability of GenAI: as Hubert put it, the complex redesigns necessitated in already demanding courses represent an added burden that is particularly emotionally depleting "because it's not helping us in any way."

Allen and Gareth reported feeling that they were now "marking twice," factoring in the added task of determining whether students had, in fact, written their own work. Avoiding the moral injury of awarding marks to work that fails to honour the academic integrity expectations of the institution took time, as Filomena reported:

> I feel like definitely it takes longer, way longer than it should, way longer than I'm paid for. Because I want to make sure that I'm not, at the end, passing someone or assigning grades for someone's ability to use AI.

Respondents' added emotional and cognitive labour when navigating fairness in assessment emphasized the wicked problem posed by GenAI. Awarding marks to students who had used unauthorized GenAI risked unfairness to those who had not used it. At the same time, respondents found themselves in murky terrain when determining how to assess work that appeared to have partly relied on such tools. For example, Elsa reflected on time spent discerning whether learning goals were being met, even in cases of suspected GenAI use:

> You have to also think: But how has GenAI been used here? It's not just like: Okay, it's been used. Great. What value does the GenAI bring to this assignment? And do I care? Has it taken away from the skill that they were tasked with showing me?

Similarly, when discussing submissions that appeared to rely partially but not fully on GenAI, Caroline reported feeling an added "anxiety around how to be fair to the student, because the student did some work. You want to assess the student's work, but you don't want to give them credit for something that they didn't do. That takes time." All told, the added time and cognitive load resulted in exhaustion, rendering marking "really more tiring than usual" (Barry).

Notably, two participants reported feelings of shame in relation to GenAI and their assessment practices. Caroline conveyed a sense of professional failure:

> With my first encounter, I felt complete shame that I let the AI pass my eyes without figuring it out. [. . .] It wasn't until afterwards that I realized that [it] was computer-generated. I was really shocked that I couldn't figure it out.

In the case of Elsa, teaching five FYW courses in one term led to feelings of overwhelm and an inability to keep up with the added burden of attentiveness to GenAI misuse: "I have sort of failed in the response to this, partially because with the amount [of grading] that has been given, you can't get to it

right away." These perceived "failures" lingered with the two participants, increasing their cognitive and emotional loads.

Increased emotional and cognitive labour in following up on suspected GenAI misuse

Scholars have thoroughly documented the time and emotional labour of attending to suspected infractions of academic integrity (Eaton, Conde, Rothschuh, Guglielmin, and Otoo 2020); participants reported similar experiences when arranging exploratory meetings with students to discuss suspected unauthorized use of GenAI. For Allen, "[i]t was a lot of work to get a meeting together to get them into the office. It adds exponentially to the labour." Caroline elaborated on the types of labour involved, observing, "there's cognitive [labour], and then there's just labour of having to meet the students or the student." Filomena noted:

> I am paid for three hours per course per week. One hour to meet with them virtually, two hours for me to mark, plan, whatever, do all that. But meetings would take a good six hours per week. [. . .] It drains my energy so much. Because I want to be as empathetic, encouraging, just a decent educator, but my patience, it runs out.

This comment from Filomena speaks to another overwhelming finding in the study: the ever-present anxiety and tension associated with exploratory academic integrity meetings. Many participants experienced distress when pursuing academic integrity inquiries with students they knew to be facing daunting challenges, such as language barriers, economic hardship, and family pressures. Hubert's comments best reflect the sense of moral injury occasioned by the release of GenAI models in relation to international students:

> I feel horrible for the students that had to go through this because they're being preyed upon by these companies. Their language insecurity is a profit motive for these companies, and you're an 18-year-old living on your own across the world in a program that is known for its stress.

An added emotionally taxing factor raised by participants was the lack of standardized approaches to leading conversations with students suspected of having used unauthorized GenAI. Allen reported that "[i]t's not as easy as meeting with the students saying: Here's your paper and here's the *Wikipedia* page. [. . .] All of a sudden, you just don't have that hard evidence that you have in a meeting." Elsa expressed similar concerns:

> It is one thing to be, like, here are some sentences lifted from the internet or here are some source sentences lifted from another source that you haven't cited. It is another thing entirely to be like: You could never write this way.

In contrast to older, more clear-cut cases of plagiarism, the absence of a pre-existing model for conversations surrounding academic integrity and GenAI increased anxiety and emotional labour, compounding the problem of GenAI for FYW instructors.

Lack of clear institutional guidance

The uncertainty around how to broach suspected unauthorized GenAI use in student work poses its own logistical, emotional, and cognitive challenges, ones that faculty do not find addressed

in institutional guidelines. Filomena remarked that "there is a nice website where it says these are things that you need to do, but it doesn't exactly tell you how to carry out the conversation." Wicked problems require collaborative, adaptive strategies, but respondents identified a lack of meaningful responses from the institutional level, exacerbating their emotional and cognitive load. Caroline reported frustration with delayed guidance, observing, "[f]or the longest time, there was no policy in place around AI-generated material," and Barry described a feeling of being "left to guess at clues" regarding how to approach GenAI cases. Participants desired more training, clearer policy language at the institutional level, greater policy consistency at the departmental level, and more resources devoted to faculty (particularly precarious faculty) in order to develop expertise in best practices.

Allen, Filomena, Gareth, and Hubert reported frustration that precarious faculty are not compensated for the added work, time, and administrative judgements required in adapting to GenAI, and Gareth articulated a common theme: that high-stakes decision-making is largely being downloaded onto faculty, with "pressure on the teacher to be constantly investigating, following up, and then making all the decisions." This confluence of delayed, inconsistent, or unclear administrative guidance left Dolores feeling abandoned and discouraged:

> When I learned that basically, there's no help or response from the university, I went to a little bit of frustration, because you feel like: Well, what's the point? What are we doing in the classroom if the administration isn't going to have some kind of help and policy around this?

Research question 3: How do FYW instructors describe their level of job satisfaction and engagement since the appearance of ChatGPT compared to before its introduction?

A shift in the TSR

A salient point of dismay among participants was a perceived shift in the TSR resulting from the availability of GenAI—a change consistent with what Jamieson (2022, para. 6) terms a "shift from teaching to policing that seems to go against the fundamental values of the discipline." The language of policing arose in many interviews, with respondents describing an alienating enforcement role being imposed on them: "We're not detectives" (Gareth); "I didn't sign up to be police; I signed up to educate people" (Filomena); "all of a sudden, we've become cops in the classroom" (Allen). Filomena reported feeling pressure to abandon the collaborative, collegial model of teaching that she had developed over her career:

> I like to give my students freedom. I like to treat them like my colleagues sometimes. But I haven't been able to do that in the last couple of months, terms. Because without me acting like an authoritative figure, they would take advantage of me. So, I have to be someone else. A person I don't want to be.

Similarly, Gareth reflected on a sense of conflict between the pedagogical value of giving students "the benefit of the doubt" and witnessing an exponential rise in submissions that sparked academic integrity concerns since the introduction of ChatGPT.

Respondents reported a feeling of loss in the TSR on an affective basis—"the feeling of being suspicious of the students: I didn't like that" (Barry)—that was inextricable from a pedagogical one. Relationality in assessment, feedback, and resulting student achievement emerged as a central feature of participants' pedagogy, one that is increasingly obscured because of uncertainty about

whether students wrote or AI-generated their work. Describing the limitations of chatbot prose, Allen remarked:

> There's never those little gems where you can see the light bulb go off in the student's mind. They may not get the concept completely, or they may've not even gotten it right, but you can still see that they're thinking about it.

Barry reflected with nostalgia on the affordances of working with students to develop skills and meeting students' individual needs, compared to the current environment in which instructors can no longer count on submissions to reflect students' thinking: "It was nice before when students would just turn in something that didn't meet the standards of the class. But I could and I would still engage with it and try to come at it from a perspective." Barry also spoke with regret about no longer being able to use the TSR to model and encourage students in relation to the emotional demands of the writing process:

> I just feel like that whole thing was a part of my job, which I thought was really valuable, because it was almost like a kind of counseling too. It wasn't just talking to students about the technical aspects of writing, but it was about the emotional element of it, and how to deal with that.

When describing strategies to repair and maintain trust with students in the new GenAI environment, respondents focused on the value of interpersonal relationality in writing pedagogy. For Dolores, attending to this factor involved strategies such as a renewed prioritization of one-on-one discussions with students during their writing process:

> I'm also building in time into the classroom where I workshop with them, and sit with them, and talk to them about their projects. [. . .] To me, if they're telling me: Here's my project, here's what I want to do, here's some writing, here's some things I found. To me, they're doing the work, as opposed to just going home the night before, putting a prompt into the computer. So that's what I'm trying to do. Part of it is also just building that social rapport with them, which I think they need as well.

For Hubert, the TSR now holds more consequence than ever:

> [It] becomes very important to build that trust between [students and] instructors. If you're sending GenAI to someone who you barely know who they are, that's one thing. But if it's to [Hubert], my [course instructor] that's been very helpful, you're gonna feel differently about that.

Equally, Caroline remarked on the value of teaching to "inspire students so they don't want to use AI." The priority of "trying to be supportive to your students and just not have that conflictual relationship" (Gareth) resounded throughout responses, despite a recurrent feeling of a rupture in the TSR.

Diminished sense of accomplishment

In the wake of GenAI tools, instructors reported decreased job satisfaction due to a diminished sense of professional accomplishment. Reflecting that, "[i]n the past, if you see students improving in their writing skills, you would be rewarded. It's another, like, is it intrinsic motivation? You'll be rewarded. But now, that's gone," Filomena concluded, "[i]t really reduced my job satisfaction, because now, I'm not sure if my work is meaningful." Uncertainty arising from the potential use of unauthorized GenAI in student work led Gareth to observe, "[t]his essay is a bit improved from how they're writing normally. Is that me doing my job or is that AI doing their job? It almost starts to make your head hurt." Similarly, Barry asked, "I mean, how can you engage the same way if it's not something that they actually produced?"

The compounding role of precarity

Each participant was working on a temporary contract: two full-time limited-term, the rest sessional. Responses showed a compounded emotional burden from precarity, resulting from a lack of resources, a lack of input in administrative decision-making and conversations, and professional vulnerability when addressing unauthorized GenAI use in student work. The emotional impact of GenAI on the instructors we interviewed is inextricable from that of precarious employment; given the preponderance of contingent labour in FYW courses, these issues are entangled and constitutive of wicked problems.

Whereas Allen conveyed frustration that "[p]eople who are in precarious labour, they don't receive the same levels of training. They're just kind of brought in for a session," another concern among participants stemmed from the already high demands on time and cognitive load:

> Marking is a huge part of the teaching-stream load. It's massive. When I think about it, it's more than what's involved in preparing [course material] from scratch, even. With AI [. . .] we've had to basically just suck up the extra time (Caroline).

> Okay, so five students have used GenAI. Let's set up meetings. Oh, I really should have got that work back to them so much earlier. It's more the extra steps and extra work at the end from having taken on perhaps so many students or so many classes, to try to make this work as a viable career, and to make sure that I have enough fingers in different pies that if this one goes away, this one still exists (Elsa).

The sense of exclusion from decision making on the institutional and departmental levels further exacerbated the tensions surrounding GenAI:

> [Sessional faculty members] have two seats on a task force that looks at generative AI. I'm not on it, but we have other members on it, and the last report I got was that they forgot to send us the Zoom link. Even where we're thought of on a hierarchy of being involved in these discussions, there's an assumption that not only is the labour precarious, but it's also transient, too (Allen).

> Given the fact that the majority of people teaching this [FYW course] are precarious labour, they feel neglected, and they feel like the administration isn't including them. I know that there are faculty meetings going on, but why are we not, at least once in a while, asked and told: Hey, if you'd like to join, we'd love your input (Dolores).

> When you're sessional or precarious or part-time, you don't tend to be as much a part of the department. So, you're not always a part of those conversations with what the full-time faculty are having around AI, and what their practices are. It's really only if you have friends or people that you get to be a part of these things. Or you just get to see the end result of this is our policy, but you don't really get much input into it. In most places, the part-time and sessional are the majority of the teachers, so they're missing a good chunk of the data by not having those conversations (Gareth).

A final factor compounding anxieties stemmed from the vulnerabilities of precarious faculty when addressing concerns with students about suspected unsanctioned use of GenAI. Fears of student reprisals in teaching evaluations or administrative grievances added to the emotional burden of pedagogical duties. Barry noted, "Whatever policy gets developed, I think it could make it harder if you don't have that job security. Are you going to take the risk of wading into this kind of murky territory?" Gareth worried that pursuing a suspected case of GenAI use may jeopardize an already insecure career:

> You do feel how students view you really has a lot of weight when you're sessional or pre-tenure. You really have to be aware of those power dynamics. . . . They might claim that you're accusing them wrongly, and if that goes up against a tenured prof, they clearly have more protection than others.

Overall, responses indicated the new emotional complexities of GenAI compounded the exhaustion and overwhelm inherent in precarious employment: "it's one of those moments where it's an emotional load that is tied into the overload that teachers are generally feeling" (Elsa). In the words of Hubert, "Yeah, [precarity] is a compounding factor in everything. In a negative sense."

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to our findings, we offer three preliminary recommendations for institutions and departments to address the affective impacts of GenAI on FYW instructors. The first involves a call to action to 1) provide clearer guidelines on addressing potential cases of unauthorized use of GenAI in written submissions, thereby reducing added labour and allocating some protections to vulnerable faculty, and 2) deliver guidance on conducting exploratory meetings with students in suspected cases of unauthorized GenAI use. For example, workshops on standards of evidence in academic codes of conduct and how they relate to suspected unauthorized GenAI use would alleviate the burden that Caroline identified in her attempts to "wade through" the "big, long, legal material" of institutional academic integrity policies in order to determine what approach to take in cases of suspected GenAI infractions. She proposed that a "forum like a lecturer question and answer" may better suit the needs of faculty.

A second recommendation is that institutions expand the range of supports offered to faculty in the wake of GenAI, specifically addressing the emotional and interpersonal pedagogical effects of the technology. Whereas workshop sessions on integrating GenAI tools into teaching and assignment design proliferate, guidance on addressing issues of trust-building in the TSR would constitute valuable additions.

A final recommendation comes from an unexpected finding: Five out of eight participants expressed gratitude for the chance to discuss the emotional consequences of the introduction of

GenAI, sometimes voicing surprise at the "cathartic" (Gareth) effect of the interview. Filomena joked, "I feel like I should pay you, because you're listening to me vent." The opportunity to speak with colleagues about lived experience in this turbulent moment could be made available at minimal cost to the institution and would serve the collective good. We therefore recommend formal support for communities of practice in which instructors can share their experiences with each other for mutual support and acquire guidance from experts. This suggestion aligns with the findings of Kohnke, Di Zou, and Moorhouse (2024), who identified the value of communities of practice among English language instructors as they navigate the emergence of GenAI.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

In future research, we aim to expand our dataset by including a larger and more diverse group of writing instructors from various post-secondary institutions. This would allow for a deeper exploration of how different teaching contracts, institutional cultures, and policy environments shape the affective responses to GenAI tools. Additionally, examining accounts from permanent full-time faculty alongside contract instructors could offer insights into levels of autonomy and support available to educators dealing with complex technological changes—and the resulting affective impacts. Further, research could also explore longitudinal changes in emotional responses as GenAI tools continue to change. Future studies might investigate adaptive strategies or coping mechanisms employed by instructors and how institutional support systems can mitigate the affective challenges posed by advancing AI technologies.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of GenAI has altered the landscape of FYW instruction. Our study revealed concerns around the implications of GenAI in FYW teaching as well as longstanding yet under-researched issues around precarity in post-secondary employment, which compound the affective and cognitive burdens of GenAI in FYW instruction. Our findings reflect significant levels of grief, frustration, and confusion among already overburdened faculty.

However, we argue that this may be an opportune moment to disrupt the current conditions of FYW instruction and to address the key areas of concern that emerged in this research. With the multivalent challenges of GenAI in FYW instruction requiring multiple points of response, this wicked problem will require wicked measures moving forward.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Pedagogical Research Fund at the University of Toronto Mississauga funded this research.

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APPENDIX

Interview guide

1. Background questions on work experience:
    a. Tell us about your current role and how long you have served in that role.
    b. Have you suspected, experienced, or witnessed your students using GenAI tool(s) (e.g., Chat GPT) as part of their course work?
    c. Can you explain what the scenario was?
2. Initial emotional reaction to the GenAI:
    a. What was your emotional reaction as a writing instructor when you first heard about GenAI?
    b. How has your emotional reaction changed since you first heard about GenAI (e.g., Chat GPT)?
    c. What were some contributing factors affecting your emotional reactions?
3. Initial understanding and experience of GenAI in their teaching contexts:
    a. How does students' potential use of GenAI influence the time spent on course planning?
    b. How does students' potential use of GenAI impact the emotional/cognitive load of course planning?
    c. How does students' potential use of GenAI influence the time spent on assessment?
    d. How does students' potential use of GenAI impact the emotional/cognitive load of assessment?
    e. If you have encountered the use of prohibited GenAI in student submissions, how have you responded? What measures have you taken?
    f. What has been the emotional/cognitive load associated with that response?
4. Impact on their job satisfaction and pedagogical choices:
    a. Has the introduction of GenAI impacted your job satisfaction as a writing instructor?
    b. Can you explain more in detail?
    c. Has the introduction of GenAI impacted your pedagogical choices?
    d. Can you explain more in detail?
    e. To what extent do you feel the administration in your department/institution has provided adequate guidance for faculty on approaching generative AI?
    f. How has the administrative support, or lack thereof, impacted your job satisfaction?
4. Anything else that the participant wants to add.