International Journal of Science and Research Archive
eISSN: 2582-8185
Cross Ref DOI: 10.30574/ijsra
Journal homepage: https://ijsra.net/

(Review Article)

Integrating Generative AI into the Software Development Lifecycle: Impacts on Code Quality and Maintenance

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2024, 13(01), 1952–1960

Publication history: Received on 19 August 2024; revised on 28 September 2024; accepted on 30 September 2024

Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.30574/ijsra.2024.13.1.1837

Abstract

Recent advances in generative AI have depicted it as a revolutionary approach in the software development technologies pioneered to improve the codes' reliability and sustain their quality and performance. Generative AI tools can help develop code independently, suggest intelligent solutions and ideas, and enhance several development procedures thanks to superior algorithms and machine learning features. This paper discusses how generative AI can/has been applied within software development to achieve the following three goals: First, to increase the code quality using automated code generation/review. Second, the code maintainability should be improved through standards and documentation. Third, to increase the up-to-speed development productivity due to AI-based automation, namely the automation of repetitive tasks and fast prototyping. The paper also considers issues and difficulties that can be tied to AI in this context: problems of dependence on AI, ethical and security issues, and technical imperfections. Finally, the implications of generative AI in software development in the future are presented, which can open a new direction in the development of software products while primarily pointing to the processes of managing the introduction of generative AI. Using the evaluation of the current possibilities and future perspectives of generative AI presented in this paper, one can conclude its impact on the future of software engineering.

Keywords: Generative AI; Software Development; Code Quality; Code Maintainability; Development Efficiency; Automated Code Generation; AI Tools

1. Introduction

Generative AI has become mainstream in many sectors, and the same applies to software engineering. The rapid development of technologies makes artificial intelligence increasingly relevant in software engineering, thus changing the overall development paradigm for coders, debuggers, and software maintainers. Generative AI, whereby algorithms are utilized to generate new content, including text, images, or, in this case, code, is quite outstanding as a tool for improving the SW development process. In code generation, utilizing generative AI that uses vast datasets from which machine learning models are developed, the writing and even the correction of code can be fully automated, saving the coders crucial time and effort.

It is going to be a breakdown of how generative AI is central to the current software development landscape. Due to the rising intricacy of software applications and the pressure to deliver shorter development cycles, tools are increasingly necessary to assist developers in being much more productive and producing better code. These needs are met through the unique properties and features that generative AI affords above and beyond conventional development tools, including means to write, optimize, govern, and maintain code. Hence, AI solutions are now widely integrated into software development tools to help teams develop more effective, sustainable, and highly scalable software in less time with less effort and fewer errors.

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Such an introduction will further help present and discuss the subjective nature of generative AI in improving software development. It will go into detail about how AI optimizes the production of code by automating code generation and review, how it optimizes the maintainability of the codes by coding and predictive maintenance, and how it optimizes efficiency by reducing the amount of manual work done and by allowing for the creation of several prototypes in a short space of time. Furthermore, it will discuss the problems and limitations of using AI in software development and look to potential scenarios for developing this rapidly growing industry. That way, during this examination, we will better understand how generative AI is creating the future of software development and what this means for developers and organizations around the globe.

2. Generative AI and code quality

Another benefit of generative AI is that it tends to increase the standards of the written code since most of the code production process is automated, reducing the chances of the code being generated with errors. Automated code generation is one of the areas that can be influenced by AI and can lead to code quality augmentation. Since it translates natural language descriptions to functional code, tools like OpenAI Codex and GitHub Copilot can help developers write syntactically correct and efficient code snippets as soon as possible. These tools are most helpful when developers are required to generate some form of template code or visual primitives or when implementing well-known algorithms, as the AI can produce this with fewer errors than a human in a pinch.

AI helps generate the code needed and is critical in optimizing the flow. AI models can also parse through code to diagnose areas for optimization and make recommendations that could help optimize code running and use of resources. This capability is critical in the current software development processes since performance is a crucial determinant of the user interface and the overall business expenses. Further, generative AI can also help in eradicating bugs in the early stages of development of software. Specifically, AI-assisted tools analyze code using machine learning algorithms and, based on large datasets of code, can indicate regularities associated with mistakes or possible problem logs, thus helping developers fix them before the code goes online.

AI also plays its part in checking the quality of the code written through code checking, automated code reviewing, and quality assurance. Services such as DeepCode and Amazon CodeGuru employ artificial intelligence in a way that helps identify vulnerabilities that include syntax errors but do not exclude security breaches. These reviews performed by the AI can supplement the human review and pick up items that might not have been found in a manual review, thus providing an added layer to the continuous check for high code quality. In addition, it allows the maintenance of best practices and coding language standards and guarantees that all teams have the same level of code quality.

It is easy to see that generative AI can be applied in many organizations to improve code quality. Companies adopting AI-based code development and review tools have noted fewer bugs in the product once released, faster review cycles, and, most importantly, compliance with coding standards, enhancing the final product's quality. Since generative AI helps avoid routine work and mistakes of manually entering data, developers can concentrate on developing many intricate products at once, contributing to creating high-quality software in the shortest possible time. This powerful effect of altering low-level code quality underlines the ever-growing role of generative AI in software development.

3. Enhancing code maintainability with generative AI

Generative AI is rather instrumental in improving the maintainability of software code, which is vital to a project's sustainability and prevention of the build-up of technical liabilities. Modifiable: If the code must be modified frequently in large-scale software development projects involving distinct developers, then maintainable code is easily changed. While so generative, AI plays a role in auditing the standardization of the coding style, documenting progress, and performing predictive maintenance and refactoring efforts whenever necessary. One of the most crucial ways AI can help improve maintainability is by ensuring that coding standards are always followed strictly. Code written in a similar style is also easier for other developers to comprehend, thus requiring less time to stabilize the code. AI tools can, therefore, format any code to fit specific standards set within a project so that everyone is coding similarly. It is beneficial in large teams or massive projects where there may be several developers at varying phases in their learning curve, and each individual may have their preferred coding style. When learning is performed regularly, AI can prevent misunderstanding and minimize the … Such occurrences may be improper use of code that leads to unexpected results. Besides compliance with coding standards, generative AI can generate documentation and comments within the code. Documentation is, therefore, essential and should be emphasized during software development since it offers context and the reason behind certain functionality of codes to current and future developers working on the projects. Using AI tools, documentation can be generated by identifying the code structure and briefly explaining the program's function, class, and method. It also adds value as it relieves developers of the task of writing documentation and, at the same time, guarantees that developers do not write documents that are outdated about the most current code. It is easier to maintain code that has good documentation because it helps the developers to know what different segments of the code do, and hence, fixing bugs and modifying the code becomes much more accessible.

Maintainability, another facet of generative AI that boosts code maintainability, is learned through predictive functionality and code refactoring. AI can then analyze several code patterns in which one is most likely to make errors or is likely to cause errors in the future. For example, AI algorithms can identify code smells, which means some patterns in the code point to other more profound issues, such as if there are some complex methods or code replication. This way, AI helps the developers detect these problems at the initial stage and repurchase the code effectively. AI refactoring advice can be to eliminate complicated code, split the procedure into more minor forms, and clean up the code containing redundant features. Increasing code clarity and code compartmentalization benefit from these changes in the later maintenance and expansion phase.

The benefits of creating an environment of maintainability using artificial intelligence in the long run must be considered. In general, generative AI also plays a part in preventing technical debt where a pool of code that becomes challenging to maintain or extend would be built up, thereby making software projects rigid. Ideally, this decision saves resources that would otherwise be adhered to for future development and maintenance of such applications, thus enabling organizations to allocate comparable resources optimally. Furthermore, organizing a code base and having clean code also improves the software's capability to grow in functionality areas as and when required without having to rewrite the entire software.

All in all, the requirements set by generative AI for coding, documentation, maintenance, and refactoring make it a great tool to improve code maintainability. This is understandable as software projects are becoming more sophisticated and the pressure for a shorter time to market increases; AI will be required more and more to ensure consistent quality and manageability of the code. Implementing AI in the software development process helps organizations maintain the software solution's sturdiness, flexibility, and ease of maintenance, which, in the long run, makes for better software solutions.

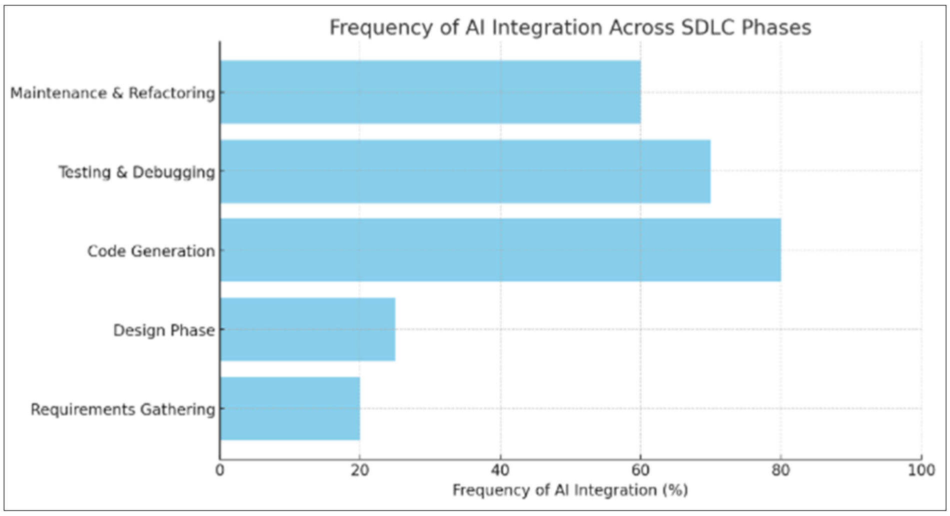

Figure 1 Frequency of AI Integration Across SDLC Phases

4. Improving overall development efficiency

In enhancing the overall development efficiency, generative AI cuts across this by minimizing repetitive tasks while upping the rate of prototyping and development. It also means that efficiency is paramount in today's software development, significantly when tight time constraints and market requirements constantly change. This is made possible by generative AI tools that work under instructions, eliminating tedious work, making intelligent suggestions, and adapting to the developers' engagements as they recommend the most appropriate assistance in future tasks.

The most significant way generative AI enhances effectiveness is by using concept and design iteration. These AI solutions can provide results, even when the developer offers a natural language description or a set of high-level specifications, saving the developer considerable time to work on the functional prototypes. This capability is precious at the earliest stages of development, where teams have to make multiple changes to the same concepts. Removing time as the primary constraint of design iteration, AI compresses the prototyping feedback process, guiding the teams to noise out the solutions in the shortest time possible.

Another of the ways that AI improves productivity concerns the automation of simple and time-wasting activities, which otherwise take considerable energy and effort from developers. This includes writing standard code, creating project directories, OR setting up bland environments that may consume a lot of time in what is supposed to be creative and fun work. It can be used for repetitive jobs, allowing developers to concentrate on appealing and complicated features that demand creativity and problem-solving skills. It also helps speed up development work, and at the same time, it is safer from human interference, thereby ensuring a better-built code base.

The generative AI also improves efficiency in discharging the stated functions through training. There are also highly specialized AI tools that can learn about a particular developer and their decisions, preferences, and tendencies in coding and become even more helpful by offering more practical advice and accurate predictions. This personalization ensures that the application of the AI tool becomes more effective and efficient the longer it is used, and the level of resistance in formulating a system is reduced, making the development process more accessible for the developers. Such intelligence involves knowing what developers might require next, be it a code snippet or a suggestion on how to refactor a part or information. This would make development much smoother for all those concerned.

Apart from raising individual efficacy, generative AI better organizes collaboration and organizational effectiveness. AI can further enhance teamwork since it has signals and feedback, inspects the code, and knows other ways of improving the code. Keeping the entire group informed of what is being developed is handy. It also helps to minimize the mistakes made in the code. For instance, in collaborative programming, intelligent code review systems can assist in informing the areas of concern or adherence to coding structures so that the problem will not develop into a significant issue that needs to be resolved by other team members. With the help of these checks & balances in place in the development process, the AI ensures that quality/efficiency benchmarks are maintained within the talent.

Thus, the efficiency benefit is wider than the development phase alone but extended throughout the SDLC. A shorter time to market is achieved with less time taken in prototyping and other automation involved in organizational processes; hence, an organization's competitive advantage is enhanced. Effective management of resources and better time and coordination lead to timely project delivery within cost estimates, which is essential in today's technical world. This means that through application, improvement, and refinement of the AI tools that developers use, developers' needs are always anticipated to get the most optimal possibility of development.

In a general sense, when it comes to development functions, generative AI offers automation of monotonous tasks, intelligent help, and a boost to team coordination, which makes the asset very crucial in enhancing development effectiveness. The use of AI in software development is becoming more frequent and is woven into the development process. It will become an increasingly powerful tool to transform software creation and evolution into faster, more efficient, and more innovative methods.

Table 1 Overview of Impacts on Code Quality and Maintenance

Aspect	**Positive Impact**	**Challenges**	**Mitigation Strategies**
Code Generation	Consistent and standardized code suggestions	Over-reliance and lack of deep understanding	Code reviews and human supervision
Code Optimization	AI-generated code can be more efficient	AI may introduce complexity	Focus on architecture alignment
Debugging	AI assists in finding and fixing issues faster	AI can miss context-specific bugs	Manual debugging oversight

Documentation	Automated documentation generation	May lack detailed or project-specific nuances	Ensure human-curated, accurate documentation
Testing	AI can automate the generation of test cases	Tests might miss project-specific requirements	Custom test creation and review by developers
Refactoring and Maintenance	Predictive refactoring suggestions	Hidden dependencies and technical debt	Manual refactoring reviews
Versioning	Faster updates with AI assistance	AI models may drift, generating different outputs	Align AI models with the project and SDLC stages

5. Challenges and limitations of generative AI in software development

Although generative AI brings many benefits to a software development process, including code quality, maintainability, and coding speed, the generation of AI code also has unique drawbacks, which must be considered. Some issues faced include reliance on AI technology, ethical issues and security, technological lapses, and the proliferation of errors.

We started today's discussion with an idea of how generative AI can be useful in development of software, and one of the issues we identified includes the problem of overreliance on AI tools in software development. The dilemma would arise as we see more coding done by AI and real-time code-completion suggestions provided by AI if developers adopt these tools more and more to the extent that their coding skills and problem-solving abilities will begin to degenerate. This dependency can hamper a developer's potential for grasping principles of coding at a fundamental level; they then prove to be less apt at determining issues and making constructive architectural decisions. Furthermore, overuse of AI can also lead to the absence of critical thinking among developers since they may unquestioningly believe in AI solutions that they need to scrutinize; they can end up with errors or even second-rate solutions.

The use of generative AI, on the other hand, poses serious ethical and security issues that indicate that its implementation in software development is a challenge. Deep learning models are trained in an extensive dataset containing biased, incorrect, or insecure code snippets, meaning that AI can predetermine such code. For instance, code generated by artificial intelligence will contain biased algorithms or bring security threats that the programmer cannot easily detect. Privacy issues are also involved with using AI, primarily if the AI tool relies on possessing the code for such vital applications or systems as health care. The significant challenges developers and companies have to solve are the originality of the content, the fairness and security of the code designed by the AI algorithms, and compliance with the non-interference in the rights of individuals and copyright laws.

In software development, some technical barriers are associated with generative AI, as follows. The technical barriers involve: While significant progress has been made in recent years with AI tools to analyze and generate code, the current state of affairs could be better due to many subtle context and requirement-related factors that are always present in actual software projects. The code written by AI would be suitable for straight-line tasks or regular algorithms; however, it would only be able to handle more complex logic or nested conditions or would need to gain knowledge of specific industries. In the same way, AI-based models suffer because the models they provide are trained on the state of development tools and environments as they were when training the model and may need to be updated in terms of the latest language, frameworks, or practices. This limitation may result in the generation of old or relatively slow code, which will cause developers to go through the AI outputs and change them.

Another massive problem is that liability error propagation can have terrible consequences. As much as coder errors can be mitigated by using AI, and as much as they were reduced in using AI in coding, AI is not error-proof and can also bring its own set of errors in the coding process. These errors could be even more challenging to notice, primarily if the developers rely on the AI-produced codes without analyzing them. When an AI tool compiles wrong or buggy code, and developers rely on it most of the time, those errors can soon accumulate in the code base, and the problems will then be massive and complicated compared to developing an imple hypothesis. There are also drawbacks to using AI for code reviews, which include: While using the AI for the code reviews, one may get the wrong impression that the system has detected all the problems with the code, hence allowing some of the errors to be noticed.

To address these risks and challenges, adjusting AI tools to the work of software development must be proper and sensible. The management concerning its implementation in Property Developers should cause AI to be used as a support tool instead of bereft of skill and ingenuity. This translates to using the advanced capabilities offered by Artificial Intelligence and, at the same time, ensuring that first-rate core programming, coding, debugging, and problem-solving fundamentals are not lost because of dependence on AI tools. Organizations should also follow best practices in dealing with the issue, including routine code reviews by humans, AI code checks on ethical principles, and AI-produced code subjected to rigorous tests for security risks.

Moreover, continuous training should be facilitated so developers can grasp and remember what more generative AI can do and its capacities and foundations. This learning mechanism also helps the team overcome the challenges that can come with AI in software development through Self-Education and critical self-assessment. Following this approach will guarantee that the adoption of AI in software development is done correctly and appropriately to improve instead of downgrade the standard and quality of software developments.

In conclusion, generative AI has many advantages for software development, but it also poses a specific issue that needs to be addressed. Therefore, by researching these limitations and taking a moderated approach to integrate AI, developers and organizations can benefit from adopting AI inclusion in software development, utilizing all the positive aspects of including AI and minimizing the negative implications.

6. Future prospects of generative AI in software development

It is possible to note that in the future, the use of generative AI in software development will be even more significant as technology escalates and becomes one of the crucial aspects of the process. AI improvement in generative models, AI integration with other developing fields, and a shift in developers' tasks are the areas where generative AI is likely to be influential.

As AI development shifts forward, more generative AI tools will appear. Subsequent models will prove to be more effective for determining specific contexts and subtleties of complex programming challenges so that they can provide more pertinent code recommendations. This evolution will allow the development of AI as a complete programming tool capable of handling more complex programming tasks, such as writing code in scientific computing, finance, or even artificial intelligence. As natural language processing enhances, the fit between requirements and AI will be closer, ultimately shifting AI to understand top-level requirements and convert them to code directly. This evolution will dramatically enhance the value of various AI tools to minimize the investment of time and effort to translate the requirements of businesses into functional pieces of software.

The ability to integrate generative AI with other technologies is another area that could benefit software development. Shortly, AI tools will be applied to DevOps practices more smoothly and in synergy with CI/CD cycles and cloud computing platforms. This integration will enable AI to span more steps, including code generation, testing, deployment, and monitoring. For instance, it may be applied to self-optimizing software with identifiable patterns for use in production environments requiring software development to become more adaptive. Furthermore, even the combination of AI with analytics and big data tools could be helpful for developers to better understand user behavior or even the system's performance, thus allowing them to make the right decisions about the software's features and optimization.

The role of software developers is also expected to change considerably as generative AI deepens. Instead of spending most of their time coding and identifying problems in the program, developers may be given tasks emphasizing design, system structure, and critical thinking. AI instruments will take responsibility for much of the repetitive coding work so that software developers can better focus on more innovative and tactical elements of the software development process. The change will occur in the sense that to be a very effective developer; one will need to possess a high level of understanding of the AI tools, AI algorithms, and data science and machine learning skills for one to be in a position to work with AI systems and harness the power of the systems. A software developer career will not limit itself to writing code. Still, it will demand sophisticated skills in managing and steering AI-assisted software development processes so that AI outputs would be compliant with the programming goals and code quality.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that generative AI in software development will involve more cooperation between developers and advanced AI systems. Over time, AI tools will respond to developer feedback and act as assistant tools tailored to the needs and tendencies of developers and their teams. This cooperative interaction will make AI a more human-friendly tool, increasing its efficiency and effectiveness in processing information with a failure rate. In this future situation, developers must remain vigilant and comprehend the CPA so the technology can be employed optimally and properly.

In the future, generative AI can revolutionize software creation in a way that is yet to be seen. Innovations in the capability of generative AI and its ability to interrelate with other technologies and continue to revolutionize the development position of developers will mark an era of efficiency and opportunities in the software industry. But, to realize the outlined benefit, further attention must be paid to the associated ethical, security, and technical considerations. Organizations and developers cannot afford to let the promises offered by the technique overshadow the threats inherent in the application of AI tools within software projects; in essence, the effective use of AI should not compromise the quality and security of projects while making them less maintainable. While we grapple with these questions, let alone the profound transformation of our working world and the surrounding economy through generative AI, incorporating generative intelligence into software production will continue to remap the landscape and define the work of the software industry going forward.

7. Conclusion

Generative AI will transform software development through improved benefits such as code quality, maintenance, etc. It is reducing the amount of code that needs to be written by repeating something, investing more in improvements known as development presented, and designing collaboration in the development part, which helps create better and more efficient apps. Applying generative AI in cases related to the fast generation of code, as well as integration of coding standards and the automatic creation of the required documentation, is highly effective in eliminating numerous issues typical to modern software developers and making the development process more efficient and less prone to errors.

As with every other measure, the use of generative AI in software development also has some issues or drawbacks, which are explained below. Some problems must be dealt with, such as overreliance on tools for autonomy, possible unethical uses, technical considerations, and the likelihood of the tool simply making the same mistakes repeatedly. Therefore, this evolution of the functions driven by AI and the organizations that deploy it must strike a balance between control and productivity. Thus, it will be possible to exclude biases and other potential and actual risks that the adverse use of AI might have in creating code.

Lastly, the future appears promising regarding what generative AI will become in the spectrum of software development. In the future, better and more sophisticated artificial intelligence techniques and solutions will be designed to do more difficult programming jobs and adapt to other technologies. It will shift the position of software developers, and both help focus on higher-level design and routine work to be done by artificial intelligence. The participation of humans and artificial intelligence will inter-depend on each other in a way that will ensure proper work on the tools being developed to support economic growth in the future.

In other words, generative AI is one of the emergent trends in today's software development industry that offers a prospect of a fundamental shift in software development, evolution, and management. After that, professionals and organizations would then be able to tackle the related issues and enhance the features provided by AI while further developing the methodologies for creating better applications and software that can sustain the competitive nature that comes with the technology in the present and future advancements. Therefore, the further study of some aspects of AI integration into the development process, as well as the continuous enhancement of this question, will undoubtedly contribute to the improvement of work in the sphere of software engineering in the future and open new opportunities as well as put the crucial questions.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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