AI Covers: Listener Perspectives on a Controversial Production Model Between Technology, Copyright, and Ethical Violations

Recep Ünal
Mersin University Faculty of Communication
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6181-6255
https://ror.org/04nqdwb39
recepunal@mersin.edu.tr
Mersin, Türkiye

Ahmet Taylan
Mersin University Faculty of Communication
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3258-2108
https://ror.org/04nqdwb39
ataylan@mersin.edu.tr
Mersin, Türkiye

Abstract

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has introduced various innovations and debates within the creative industries, as it has in many other fields. In the music sector, generative AI (GAI) technologies have opened new avenues for both producers and listeners, providing novel experiences. One of the most notable developments in this regard is AI covers, which rely on voice cloning technology. GAI models can replicate an artist's vocal style and musical characteristics. However, this emerging practice has sparked significant discussions, not only regarding copyright infringement but also concerning the violation of moral rights. This study aims to analyze the controversies surrounding AI covers, focusing not only on the production of such content but also on its consumption. The study employs thematic analysis to evaluate listener comments on the most popular Turkish AI covers available on

http://ilefdergisi.ankara.edu.tr
ilef dergisi ▪ 12 (2) ▪ güz/*autumn*: 216-254
Araştırma Makalesi ▪ DOI: 10.24955/ilef.1687789

YouTube. The findings reveal that, in addition to supportive reactions, listeners assess these works through the lens of ethical ambiguities, respect for the artist's legacy, and copyright concerns. In this context, the study emphasizes that the future of GAI in the music industry should not be determined solely by technological advancements but must also take ethical and legal considerations into account. Using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach, the study codes the listener discussions under five highly engaged Turkish AI-cover videos and organizes them into seven themes, including copyright, ethical concerns, AI perception, artistic value, and supportive or critical reactions. The results indicate that audiences simultaneously celebrate AI covers as creative, nostalgic remix practices and problematize them as threats to artistic authenticity, consent, and fair remuneration. By foregrounding listener perspectives in a non-Anglophone context, the article offers empirical input to debates on participatory culture, musical deepfakes, and AI ethics in the music industry.

Keywords: GAI, music industry, AI covers, ethical violations, copyright

▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪

Received: 2.5.2025 ▪ Accepted: 28.10.2025

AI Cover Şarkılar: Teknoloji, Telif Hakkı ve Etik İhlaller Arasında Tartışmalı Bir Üretim Modeline Dair Dinleyici Görüşleri

Recep Ünal
Mersin Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6181-6255
https://ror.org/04nqdwb39
recepunal@mersin.edu.tr
Mersin, Türkiye
Ahmet Taylan
Mersin Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3258-2108
https://ror.org/04nqdwb39
ataylan@mersin.edu.tr
Mersin, Türkiye

Öz

Yapay zekâ (YZ) teknolojisinin hızlı gelişimi, diğer pek çok alanda olduğu gibi yaratıcı endüstri alanında da çeşitli yenilikleri ve tartışmaları beraberinde getirmiştir. Örneğin müzik sektöründe üretken yapay zekâ (ÜYZ) teknolojileri hem üreticiler hem de müzik dinleyicileri açısından yeni deneyimlerin kapılarını aralamaktadır. ÜYZ modelleri ile ses klonlamaya dayalı AI cover şarkılar bu bağlamda dikkat çekmektedir. ÜYZ ile bir sanatçının vokal stili veya müzikal karakteri taklit edilebilir hale gelmiştir. Ancak bu yeni müzik üretim pratiği, telif hakkının yanı sıra manevi hakların ihlali açısından da tartışmalara neden olmuştur. Bu çalışmada AI cover şarkılarla ortaya çıkan sorunların sadece bu içeriklerin üretimi değil, tüketimi bağlamında da tartışılması amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda YouTube'da en çok dinlenilen Türkçe AI cover şarkılara yapılan dinleyici yorumları tematik analiz tekniği ile incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda dinleyicilerin eserleri, destekleyici

http://ilefdergisi.ankara.edu.tr
ilef dergisi ▪ 12 (2) ▪ güz/*autumn*: 216-254
Araştırma Makalesi ▪ DOI: 10.24955/ilef.1687789

yorumlarının dışında etik sınırların belirsizliği, sanatçının mirasına saygı, telif hakkı konusunda endişeler ekseninde de değerlendirdiği görülmüştür. Bu bağlamda çalışmada, üretken yapay zekânın müzik endüstrisindeki geleceğinin yalnızca teknolojik gelişmelerle değil, aynı zamanda bu tür eleştirilerin dikkate alınmasıyla şekillenmesi gerektiği vurgulanmıştır. Elde edilen temalar, dinleyicilerin AI cover şarkıları bir yandan olumlayıcı bir nostalji ve remix pratiği olarak gördüğünü, diğer yandan sanatçı rızası, adil kazanç ve yapay/otantik ses ayrımı üzerinden sorguladığını göstermektedir. Çalışmada Braun ve Clarke'ın tematik analiz yaklaşımı izlenmiş, 4.029 yorum yedi ana tema altında sınıflandırılmış ve dinleyici söylemleri katılımcı kültür ve YZ etiği literatürüyle ilişkilendirilmiştir. Böylece çalışma, üretken yapay zekâ uygulamalarının müzik endüstrisinde dinleyici boyutunu görünür kılarak, ses klonlama teknolojilerine yönelik hukuki ve etik düzenleme tartışmaları için ampirik bir zemin sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Üretken yapay zekâ, müzik endüstrisi, AI cover şarkı, etik ihlal, telif hakkı

▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪

Makale geliş tarihi: 2.5.2025 ▪ Makale kabul tarihi: 28.10.2025

Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction contends that mechanical copying diminishes a work's "aura" yet simultaneously democratizes art by deepening its social reach (Benjamin 2008). If he were writing today, Benjamin might ask how generative AI (GAI) -capable of re-producing text, image and sound at scale- reframes this tension. GAI's mainstream adoption compels a fresh interrogation of originality, authorship and cultural value, echoing Benjamin's concern that technological mediation both expands access and unsettles authenticity. Consequently, as Ignas Kalpokas (2023) notes, the nature and function of art require renewed scrutiny in the age of AI reproduction. To widen this debate beyond music, recent information-systems scholarship maps GAI's cross-sector disruptions. Drawing on a cross-disciplinary review, Keng Boon Ooi et al. (2025, 97) argue that GAI may "democratise higher-order skills" while simultaneously raising the spectre of algorithmic creative control the risk that "AI-generated outcomes may render human creativity irrelevant in the workplace". This tension between empowerment and displacement mirrors the ambivalence listeners express toward AI covers.

The question of whether the outputs generated by AI models -built upon machine learning techniques trained on large datasets- can be considered

"works of art" remains a subject of debate. Misha Rabinovich and Caitlin Foley (2024), who define art as a means of problematizing culture and creating space for both critique and celebration, note that the words *artifice* and *artificial* derive from *art*. However, they emphasize that artistic works remain distinct from GAI outputs. As they argue, "AI can create beautiful images, text, videos, and entertaining songs. AI cannot contextualize or produce work that has grown out of reckoning with culture". According to Rabinovich and Foley (2024, 1566), the consumption of AI-generated "art" may become widespread. However, in such a scenario, audiences might fall into what Benjamin referred to as a lack of "apperception", meaning they could gradually lose their capacity for critical thinking.

Content generated by GAI is also regarded as a groundbreaking innovation in the field of art. Some art enthusiasts have even described this development as "inspiring" (Elgammal 2018, 20). The intersection of AI and artistic production has sparked curiosity and interest across all creative industries, from painting and literature to music and cinema, leading to the question: "Is AI preparing to become the next artistic medium?" (Notaro 2020).

However, there is another side to the coin: ethical violations and copyright concerns. Questions such as "If the resulting 'product' is a creative work, how should the labour involved be categorized and evaluated?" (Hugenholtz and Quintais 2021), "Should copyright royalties be paid to the owners of the works used in the machine learning/modelling process on which AI production is based?" and, "Who holds the copyright for the final AI-generated work?" (Fitzpatrick 2025) remain unanswered. In this context, there appears to be a legal gap at the global level regarding the production of AI-generated artistic works (Zhuk 2023; Lim 2023).

As in many other fields, the opportunities and limitations of content production using GAI in the music industry are being examined from various perspectives. One example of this phenomenon is AI-generated cover songs, commonly referred to in the literature as AI covers[1], which allow a song to

•••

1 In Turkish, the dictionary meaning of the word "cover" is expressed as "cover, cap" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025). The meaning of the word in the music literature is "the re-singing of old songs that were once popular". There is no Turkish equivalent for the word in its musical meaning, and usages such as "making a cover" and "cover album" have become widespread. It has been observed that the term is also used as "cover" in academic studies (Çakır, 2012).

be performed in different voices using GAI applications. The debate over whether these AI-generated songs, produced through voice cloning, should be considered works of art has expanded to include ethical concerns and potential violations.

Today, generative models based on deep neural networks can synthesize a person's voice using only a short audio sample. Neural network-based voice cloning systems have now become easily implementable (Neekhara et al. 2021; Arik et al. 2018). In fact, the "commodification" of the human voice -through its separation from the body via recording technologies- is generally accepted. These technologies have enabled the recording, storage, and distribution of voice. However, voice cloning has been described as a "traumatic phenomenon". This is because voice cloning technology disrupts the deep-seated cultural connection between voice and identity. Until now, the voice has been regarded as "the cornerstone of individuality and unique existence," but with cloning, its "testimonial value" has been undermined, and "the idea of a voice that is not immediately connected to the innermost part of someone's identity is still conflicting with our most basic assumptions of reality" (Napolitano 2020, 60-61).

Such emotional resonance aligns with classic Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) findings on users' social responses to machines. Clifford Nass and Youngme Moon (2000) famously demonstrate that people 'mindlessly' apply social rules such as politeness and even sexist identification to computers. These social responses to computers help explain why voice-cloned covers can evoke authentic affect despite their synthetic origin.

AI technologies based on deep learning architectures can now replicate an individual's unique vocal characteristics instantaneously using only a short audio sample. OpenAI, one of the leading companies in the AI field, has developed a voice engine capable of accurately reproducing a person's tone, accent, and intonation with just a 15-second audio sample. While this represents a significant advancement in synthetic voice generation for applications such as virtual assistants, podcasts, videos, and audiobooks, voice cloning also raises serious concerns regarding potential misuse. In response to these risks, OpenAI has announced restrictions on the public

Uslu (2012) included the term "cover" together with the equivalent of "performed music" in his study. In this study, the type of work that means any song produced with AI models is performed by another person is used as "AI cover".

release of its voice engine to prevent the exploitation of synthetic voices for political purposes. Nevertheless, the adoption of voice cloning technology across various applications has been steadily increasing (McCoy 2024).

From the perspective of the music industry, voice cloning is primarily discussed in the context of copyright issues. In productions utilizing techniques such as voice cloning, artists' voices are often used without their consent (Marongiu 2024). Moreover, copyright concerns extend beyond the unauthorized use of an artist's voice; the original rights holder of the song being performed may also experience a loss of rights (Capelouto 2023). Voice cloning technology has even enabled duets between artists who would otherwise be unlikely to collaborate in person. In some cases, the voices of individuals whose profession is not singing—such as well-known politicians or state officials—are synthesized to perform any desired song, resulting in what is referred to as a "synthetic performance" (Alpyıldız 2024) .

Moreover, in such productions, factors such as the artist's career, moral legacy, personality, and ideological identity often receive little to no consideration. Using voice cloning technology, an individual's voice can be inserted into any chosen song (Ji 2023). On platforms such as TikTok, Spotify, and YouTube, there is a growing trend of generating performances in which a deceased artist is made to sing a contemporary popular song. Furthermore, even when the artist has no connection to the shared content, listener comments can sometimes undermine their moral legacy (Jones 2023). These examples demonstrate that the debate surrounding voice cloning is not limited to copyright and economic rights but also extends to the potential violation of moral rights in certain cases.

In this context, the study aims to comparatively examine the positioning of this new production and consumption practice, emerging through GAI, within the music industry, alongside the potential violations of individuals' economic and moral rights. Additionally, the study seeks to assess how AI covers are perceived from the listener's perspective. Through a thematic analysis of listener comments, various perspectives on AI-generated music production have been explored from multiple dimensions. Accordingly, the study addresses two interrelated research questions:

Research Question 1. What dominant perceptions of copyright, ethical acceptability, and respect for an artist's legacy emerge in listener comments on Turkish AI-cover videos?

Research Question 2. How do these perceptions differ across supportive, critical, and neutral attitudes, and which themes become salient in audience discussions?

Guided by these questions, the study aims to illuminate how AI-generated cover songs are positioned within the music industry and how potential economic and moral rights infringements are articulated from the listener's perspective through thematic analysis.

To interpret the forthcoming findings, the analysis draws on two complementary theoretical lenses. First, building on Henry Jenkins' notion of participatory culture -a low-barrier, peer-based environment in which audiences become producers (Jenkins 2006; Jenkins, Ford and Green 2013)- AI covers can be understood as a remix practice that extends long-standing fan interventions such as mash-ups and sampling. By cloning iconic voices, users re-enact what Jenkins (2013) terms "textual poaching", asserting creative agency while negotiating industrial gatekeeping. Second, this study adopts Lusiano Floridi and Josh Cowls' (2021) five-principle framework for socially sustainable AI -beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, justice, and explicability-to evaluate the moral legitimacy of such agency. This lens operationalises UNESCO's high-level recommendations by linking concrete stakeholder rights (e.g., informed consent, fair remuneration) to normative principles. Together, participatory-culture theory explains why audiences engage in AI covers, whereas the five-principle framework clarifies how these practices are morally appraised and thus provides a structured vantage point for interpreting the patterns identified in RQ1 and RQ2.

The Music Industry in the Age of GAI

AI refers to systems that incorporate algorithms and models inspired by the structure and functioning of the human brain, enabling them to perform learning and cognitive tasks. Artificial neural networks, which are based on neuroscientific research, exemplify how AI draws inspiration from human neural processes (Stahl et al. 2021). These systems also utilize machine learning techniques such as deep learning and reinforcement learning to execute tasks including planning, scheduling, knowledge representation, and reasoning. Additionally, through machine reasoning methods such as search and optimization, AI generates outcomes related to prediction and decision-making (UNESCO 2021).

GAI, which is trained on large datasets to learn existing patterns and structures, possesses a highly versatile capability, allowing it to be applied across a wide range of fields. Although the foundations of AI were established in the 1950s (McCarthy et al. 2006), advancements in deep learning since 2010 have led to a significant breakthrough in the development of GAI models, making them increasingly popular (Ünal 2023).

As of 2020, GAI programs have significantly improved in language proficiency, as well as in the quality of visual and auditory content production. These programs are generally built upon four primary models: Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), Variational Autoencoders (VAEs), Transformer-based models, and Diffusion models (Sharma et al. 2024). Today, GAI is recognized as a set of algorithms capable of producing images, videos, texts, audio recordings, and other forms of media, with the potential to fundamentally transform content creation approaches. Reports on the subject predict that GAI applications could contribute up to US $4.4 trillion annually to the global economy. Furthermore, it is anticipated that within the next three years, anything in the technology, media, and telecommunications sectors that is not AI-integrated may be perceived as obsolete or ineffective (McKinsey 2024). Beyond macro-economic projections, organisational studies now document how GAI changes day-to-day creative labour. In a survey of 307 employees, Hassan Hessari, Ali Bai and Fatemeh Daneshmandi (2024) show that routine automation with GAI tools not only reduces perceived work overload but also boosts employee adaptability, suggesting that AI-mediated creativity can yield positive psychological outcomes when responsibly integrated.

The music industry continuously evolves with each new technological advancement, rapidly adapting both its production and consumption practices to emerging innovations. In this context, the swift and widespread adoption of AI technology within the music market can be evaluated as part of this transformation. Music producers and amateur creators have increasingly embraced the opportunities provided by GAI, while listeners have also shown significant interest in this new mode of production and its outputs (Fox, Vaidyanathan and Breese 2024).

Today, GAI applications are widely utilized in the music industry for tasks such as automatic music composition, chord and melody generation, rhythm creation, sound synthesis, and effect processing. Additionally, this technology is employed in music streaming platforms for recommendation

and personalization processes, where it analyses and evaluates musical works to inform marketing strategies within the music industry (Gündoğdu and Okçu 2024). It has also been emphasized that GAI applications can stimulate artistic creativity, enhancing the final output by making it more powerful and innovative (Micchi et al. 2021).

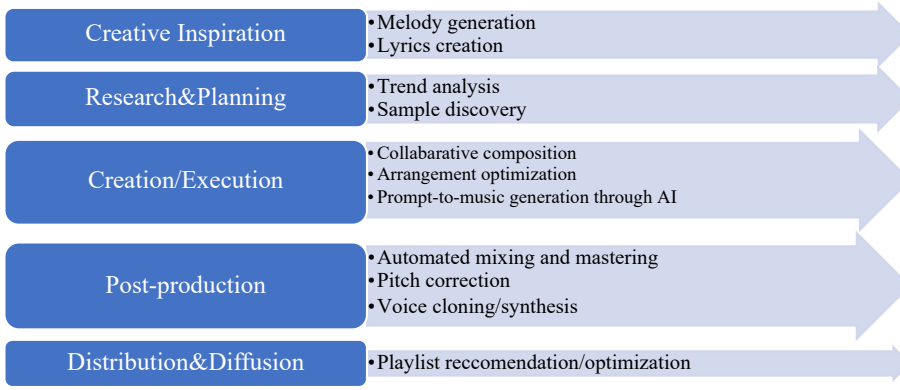

Figure 1: GAI Use Cases Examples In Music. (Study on the Economic Impact of Generative AI in the Music and Audiovisual Industries 2024).

While GAI models reduce production costs and enable new designs in the music industry, they are also driving the global music sector into a significant crisis. A global economic study conducted by the France-based creative rights advocacy organization *Confédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Auteurs et Compositeurs* (CISAC) predicts that by 2028, musicians' earnings will decline by one-fourth (approximately 10 billion euros) due to AI. The report argues that while the use of GAI enriches technology companies, it also significantly jeopardizes the income of human creators. Additionally, the report estimates that revenues generated by GAI providers within the music industry will double annually between 2023 and 2028, reaching approximately 4 billion euros by 2028 (Study on the Economic Impact of Generative AI in the Music and Audiovisual Industries 2024, 44).

Key Debates on Music Production with GAI and the Protection of Copyrights

Although copyright issues are inherently complex across all artistic fields, the situation in the music industry presents even greater challenges. Musicologist Brian McBrearty, emphasizing that music is not solely composed of lyrics, states: "It has pitch, and it has rhythm, and it has harmonic context. It's a

richer mix of different elements that make it a little bit less straightforward" (Brittain 2024, para. 16). The emergence of musical works produced through GAI models and applications further complicates this already contentious issue.

The first major debate regarding the use of GAI in the creative industries and the protection of copyright concerns the datasets utilized during the machine learning process. At this stage, it is emphasized that prior permission must be obtained for the use of original works and that copyright royalties should be paid to the original creators (Sturm et al. 2018). Key concerns include the lack of consent from creators for the use of their works in AI training datasets, artists' lack of knowledge regarding how their works are being used, and the absence of attribution to original creators in newly generated outputs (Magowan 2023).

The issue of copyright in GAI-based music production has also led to various legal disputes. In the United States, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) filed a lawsuit on behalf of major record label clients, including Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and Warner Music Group, against AI music services Suno and Udio. The lawsuit is based on claims that GAI models were trained using copyrighted sound recordings without proper licensing, thereby violating the fair use doctrine for commercial gain. RIAA has argued that "the unauthorized use of copyrighted works in AI models not only harms the economic interests of artists and rightsholders but also undermines the value of human creativity and ingenuity." (Resnikoff 2024, para. 17). Additionally, musicians who signed a collective statement against AI companies contend that "ingesting massive amounts of creative labor to imitate it is not creative; that's stealing in order to be competition and replace them" (Brittain 2024, para. 7).

The issues surrounding the use of GAI in the music industry extend beyond the lack of copyright payments for works used during machine learning. A key point of debate is whether the "new" works generated by AI should themselves be subject to copyright protection (Bulayenko et al. 2022). Since copyright and intellectual property laws in many countries are fundamentally based on "human authorship/creativity", works produced by GAI are typically not recognized as eligible for copyright protection. Moreover, even in cases where such works are granted copyright status, legal disputes persist. Policymakers and legal experts have yet to reach a consensus on whether AI-generated works should belong to the AI's user or

its developer, and some have even argued that AI-generated content should be classified as public domain due to the absence of human creativity (Gaffar and Albarashdi 2024).

UNESCO (2021) emphasized the need to establish adequate data protection frameworks and governance mechanisms for AI systems and to safeguard these processes through a multistakeholder approach at both national and international levels. According to the report, these mechanisms should be upheld by judicial systems and remain enforceable throughout the entire AI lifecycle. Additionally, the report highlights the importance of establishing a legal basis to protect the rights of data owners and stresses that clear and informed consent must be obtained during the training of AI models. Recent AI-ethics syntheses provide a concise lens for evaluating these concerns. Floridi and Cowls (2019) condense over eighty guidelines into five principles—beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, justice and explicability. Positioning AI covers within this 'five-principle framework' clarifies why listeners' worries cluster around autonomy (consent) and justice (royalty distribution).

Furthermore, the European Union's 2019 Directive on Copyright and Related Rights in the Digital Single Market has made platforms such as YouTube and Facebook directly liable for copyright-infringing content uploaded by users (Directive (EU) 2019/790 2019).

In Türkiye, a joint statement issued by the Musical Work Owners' Society of Turkey (MESAM), the Musical Work Owners' Society of Turkey (MSG), and the Association of Phonogram Producers (MÜYAP) emphasized that "AI applications that threaten the rights of genuine creators" constitute a major area of concern (MESAM 2024). Additionally, a strategic report jointly prepared by the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye's Digital Transformation Office and the Ministry of Industry and Technology highlighted the necessity of establishing an effective AI ecosystem and formulating an ethical and legal framework that takes into account the technological nature of AI (Ulusal Yapay Zekâ Stratejisi 2021-2025 2025).

In this context, recommendations have been put forward to establish a sustainable structure within the creative industry—one that does not exclude AI but also ensures the protection of artists' rights through the creation of an inclusive ecosystem. One such proposal is the establishment of an "AI-royalty fund," based on a sustainability approach aligned with the principles of the

European Social Charter, as suggested by the Council of Europe (Jacques and Flynn 2024).

Daryl Lim (2023, 842) emphasizes that in the age of AI, copyright law and policy must prioritize openness, collaboration, and adaptability. Furthermore, the importance of promoting broad collaborations—not only between artists and technology developers but also involving legal experts, ethicists, and the public—is highlighted as essential for navigating the evolving challenges of AI in the creative industries (Oğul 2024).

Discussing AI Covers Production in the Context of Economic and Moral Rights Violations

Deepfake technology can be broadly defined as the synthesis and manipulation of visual and auditory[2] content using GAI-based methods (Masood et al. 2023). Musical deepfake, on the other hand, refers to the training of GAI models on copyrighted compositions and recordings, the creation of models that mimic an artist's voice, and the subsequent release of highly realistic performances of songs that the original artist never actually recorded (Gendron 2024). In this context, AI covers should, in certain cases, be examined in conjunction with musical deepfake practices.

At the beginning of 2023, the song "Heart on My Sleeve" which was created using AI-generated imitations of the voices of world-renowned musicians Drake and The Weekend, garnered millions of streams on platforms such as YouTube, Spotify and TikTok. The song was even nominated in the categories of Best Rap Song and Song of the Year (Baris 2024). However, the viral success of a song that neither artist had actually recorded reignited debates surrounding GAI and copyright law.

The artists' record label, Universal Music Group (UMG), argued that the use of AI-generated voices constituted a violation of copyright law. In an

•••

2 Momina Masood et al. 2023 state that deepfake technology, which is closely associated with disinformation, has predominantly been discussed in the context of video content; however, audio manipulation has also become increasingly significant in recent years. Synthetic voices may carry critical importance for voice-controlled systems within the context of the Internet of Things (IoT). On the other hand, voice cloning may lead to situations threatening public security. A past incident where a criminal organization defrauded a company by cloning a manager's voice has been cited as an example indicating that audio-based deception could potentially cause even greater issues in the future (Masood et al. 2023).

official statement, UMG posed a critical question to all stakeholders in the music ecosystem: "On which side of history do they want to stand? The side of artists, fans and human creative expression, or the side of deep fakes, fraud and denying artists their due compensation?" (Rutherfold 2023, para. 13).

The production process of AI covers, which can be defined as the replication of an artist's voice and singing style through voice cloning technology to generate performances of different songs in that artist's cloned voice, typically consists of four stages.

The first stage is known as voice modelling or voice cloning. At this stage, GAI models analyse vocal samples from an artist's various songs to learn their voice using the provided datasets. Deep learning algorithms are trained to replicate the artist's tone, pronunciation, and nuances. Some applications also provide access to pre-existing voice clones stored in their libraries. In the second stage, the song that will be performed with the cloned voice is separated from its original vocal track. During the production stage, the GAI model overlays the trained artist's voice onto the cleaned track, and the resulting audio undergoes mixing and processing to enhance realism. The final stage involves the distribution of the generated recording through an appropriate platform. Applications such as FineShare or Voicify are among the most widely used GAI models for producing AI covers (Tucker 2024).

From the perspective of music producers and musicians, the production of AI covers offers several advantages. The primary benefit is time and effort efficiency, as musicians can create works without the need for extensive vocal or instrumental recording sessions. Additionally, AI cover song generators are recognized for their potential to enhance creativity, allowing for the application of various effects and filters that would otherwise require significant time and technical expertise. Moreover, these applications are considered valuable tools for reducing production costs and improving performance. They provide independent artists with the ability to generate high-quality content without requiring substantial financial investment, thereby increasing accessibility and efficiency in professional music production.

While AI covers contribute to the accessibility and enjoyment of music production by fostering creativity, reintroducing voices from the past, and facilitating the emergence of new genres and experimental projects, they also raise several concerns. A primary issue is that generating realistic outputs

requires training AI models on an artist's existing repertoire. However, the lack of copyright compensation for artists and producers during this process is considered a significant challenge for the music industry (Baris 2024).

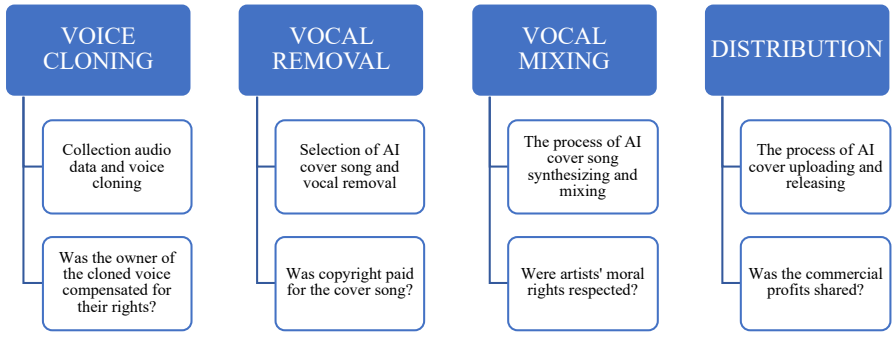

Figure 2: AI Covers Production Process and Issues Arising from Copyright and Ethical Violations in This Process

In the copyright laws of many countries, artists' works—including compositions and recordings—are protected under copyright regulations; however, there is often no explicit provision for the protection of an artist's voice. This legal gap makes it challenging for artists to assert their rights, particularly during the voice cloning process, which constitutes the initial stage of AI cover production. There is no explicit legal protection in the European Union (EU) against the cloning of artists' voices. However, in some EU member states, legal protection may be granted under personality rights, preventing the unauthorized commercial use of an individual's voice. In some U.S. states, legal protection can be sought under personality rights, as these jurisdictions prohibit the unauthorized commercial use of not only an individual's name and likeness but also their voice (Gendron 2024).

In Türkiye, the unauthorized use of the voice of a performer who has gained fame and professional recognition for their vocal identity is considered a violation of personality rights, as protected under Article 23 of the Turkish Civil Code. Beyond this, such use also infringes the commercial or proprietary dimension of personality rights, which Turkish legal doctrine broadly treats as the functional equivalent of the "right of publicity" in American law.

The unauthorized cloning of an artist's voice for use in AI covers also raises concerns of unfair competition. Consequently, such cases may lead to a violation of unfair competition regulations under Article 84 of the Law

on Intellectual and Artistic Works (Law No. 5846, FSEK) (Yıldırım Köse and Altınok 2025).

The lack of universal and comprehensive legal regulations protecting artists from AI-generated voice imitation makes it challenging for them to defend their rights in this area. For instance, a study conducted in South Korea highlighted the absence of legal protection for singers' voices in the context of AI covers and copyright issues. The study also noted that the situation becomes even more complex when the artist is deceased (Chung 2023). In Australia, there is no legal provision granting artists the right to file lawsuits for loss of rights resulting from the imitation of their voice or likeness. This gap in legislation has been interpreted as leaving Australian artists vulnerable to exploitation through AI-generated content (Marongiu 2024).

In the second stage of AI covers, another copyright issue emerges. The unauthorized selection of songs to be performed by cloned voices can lead to economic rights violations (Widodo and Bakir 2024). However, since the original song is a more clearly identifiable work, artists may have the legal grounds to request the removal of AI-generated versions of their songs from streaming platforms (Adams 2023).

AI covers produced without the consent of artists or producers raise not only legal concerns but also ethical issues. The use of an artist's voice to perform songs that contradict their worldview, political stance, or artistic preferences further complicates the AI covers phenomenon, making it even more controversial. For example, on YouTube, it is possible to encounter unconventional AI-generated performances, such as Johnny Cash singing "Barbie Girl" or Frank Sinatra performing "Gangsta's Paradise" (IFPI 2024).

In this context, the creation of "synthetic performances" using the voices of deceased artists raises concerns beyond economic rights, as it also poses a risk of violating moral rights (Ji 2023, 21).

Furthermore, the unauthorized use of an artist's voice may result in the indiscriminate reproduction of the cloned voice by anyone with access to this technology. This issue raises significant concerns regarding authenticity and artistic value. In particular, the use of an artist's voice in low-quality productions could be regarded as a detriment to their artistic integrity and a devaluation of their years of creative labor and dedication.

Additionally, AI covers raise concerns about the potential deception of listeners (Ji 2023). According to the "UK Music" survey conducted in the United Kingdom, 62% of participants expressed concern over the use of deepfake technology to imitate their favorite musicians. Furthermore, 83% of respondents believed that the creative "persona" of a music artist should be legally protected from AI-based replication (APPG on Music Report 2024). These findings highlight the public perception and ethical concerns surrounding the use of GAI in music production and the cloning of artists' voices.

Methodology and Research Design

This study employs thematic analysis, a qualitative research technique developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, to examine YouTube users' comments on AI-generated song adaptations and to explore their perceptions of copyright and ethical violations. This method enables the systematic identification of different perspectives, facilitating the examination of ethical, legal, and emotional dimensions of user engagement with AI covers.

Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative data analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79). Due to its theoretical flexibility, this technique can be applied across various epistemological and ontological approaches. Beyond merely organizing data, themati analysis allows for in-depth interpretations, making it a valuable tool for qualitative research. As Braun and Clarke (2013, 173) emphasize, thematic analysis is a fundamental method in qualitative research, providing a flexible framework for working with diverse data sources.

Braun and Clarke (2006, 86) outline the six key stages of the thematic analysis process, ensuring a systematic approach to the researcher's interaction with the data.

- Familiarization with the Data – This initial phase involves repeated reading of the dataset to develop a deep understanding, while taking note of initial impressions.
- Generating Codes – In this stage, key features within the data are systematically identified and coded.
- Searching for Themes – The identified codes are analyzed for patterns, leading to the development of meaningful themes.

- Reviewing Themes – This stage entails evaluating the coherence of the generated themes with the overall dataset and making revisions if necessary.
- Defining and Naming Themes – Themes are clearly articulated and categorized to ensure conceptual clarity and coherence.
- Producing the Report – The final stage involves structuring the findings in a scientific report format, integrating thematic insights within the broader research context.

Thematic analysis is particularly effective in uncovering layered meanings within large datasets (Nowell et al. 2017, 2). Its primary advantage lies in its flexibility and adaptability to different data types. However, it also carries the risk of subjective bias, as researchers' interpretations may influence the analysis. To mitigate this risk, Braun and Clarke (2013, 279) stress the importance of reflexivity, urging researchers to critically assess their own biases and assumptions during the analytical process.

To ensure reliability and validity, Lorelli Nowell et al. (2017, 4) propose several criteria for thematic analysis:

- Credibility – Ensuring that data is accurately represented.
- Transferability – Assessing whether findings are applicable to other contexts.
- Dependability – Maintaining consistency and transparency in the research process.
- Confirmability – Evaluating whether findings are based on objective evidence.

Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis provides an effective and structured approach for analyzing large and diverse datasets, such as YouTube comments. The flexibility of this method, its ability to systematically identify patterns, and its capacity to reveal both explicit statements and implicit meanings make it particularly valuable in understanding perceptions of copyright and ethical concerns in AI-generated music. Furthermore, the systematic coding process enhances transparency, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions reflected in user comments (Braun and Clarke 2006; Nowell et al. 2017).

From a broader perspective, thematic analysis serves not only as a qualitative research tool but also as a critical framework for understanding user behavior on digital platforms.

Data Collection and Sampling Strategy

To answer RQ1 and RQ2, the study analysed 4,141 comments posted under the five most-engaged Turkish AI cover videos on YouTube, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis steps. To identify relevant AI cover videos for thematic analysis, a search query using the keywords "AI cover Turkish songs" (AI cover Türkçe şarkılar) was conducted on YouTube. The search results were filtered based on view count, with videos receiving the highest number of views prioritized. Selection criteria included both view count and the number of user comments, ensuring that videos with high engagement levels were analyzed. A purposive sampling approach was adopted to focus on videos with significant audience interaction, while intensity sampling was applied to select those with the most substantial engagement.

The initial data corpus consisted of 4,141 public comments posted beneath the five AI-cover videos listed in Table 1. A light cleaning routine was applied: duplicate entries, non-Turkish comments, and 112 remarks containing hate speech, personal insults, or off-topic promotional links were removed. The resulting analytic dataset comprised 4,029 comments (97.3% of the raw corpus). Comment IDs, timestamps, and anonymised user names were retained only for audit purposes and were not disclosed in the final report.

Only publicly accessible, anonymized comments were analyzed and no user data was stored during the research process. Ethics approval is not required for publicly available data. By focusing on highly viewed and frequently commented videos, this study aims to capture dominant trends in audience discussions. However, the popularity bias must be acknowledged, as less-engaged videos may contain alternative or less-represented viewpoints.

Thus, the study operates under the assumption that highly engaged samples provide insights into general trends but may not fully represent the entire audience spectrum.

Based on these criteria, the following five videos were selected for analysis:

Video Title	YouTube Links	YouTube Views	Total Comments
Cem Karaca & Barış Manço - Sana El Pençe Durmam (Yapay Zeka Cover)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDMKNmQ2pVI	3,1 million	2383
Cem Karaca - İçimde Ölen Biri Var (RVC AI COVER)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YNr6MZqUZk	2,2 million	265
Sezen Aksu ft Mabel Matiz - Sana Yıldızları Ödediğimden AI Cover	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3C8geJ6ipWw	1,2 million	209
Cem Karaca & Barış Akarsu - Taş Duvarlar (Yapay Zeka Cover)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgisFGX-a5A	1 million	336
Cem Karaca & Barış Manço - Senden Güzeli Mi Var (Yapay Zeka Cover)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgHtfscvgpE	1 million	948

Table 1: Information About the Videos Selected for Analysis[3]

An inductive codebook was developed through two iterative cycles. In Cycle 1 the first author produced an open-coding scheme on 10% of the corpus (n = 403). Cycle 2 involved a second author (an associate professor in media studies) who blind-coded the same subset. Inter-coder agreement reached Cohen's $\kappa = 0.82$, indicating substantial reliability (McHugh 2012). Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, after which the refined codebook (32 descriptive codes) was applied manually to the complete data set in a spreadsheet environment (Microsoft Excel). Reflexive memos were maintained throughout to monitor potential researcher bias.

Credibility was enhanced through analyst triangulation (dual coding) and a thick description of illustrative excerpts. Dependability criteria were met by maintaining an audit trail of coding decisions. Finally, confirmability was addressed via reflexive journaling and peer debrief sessions.

•••

3 Date Of Data Extraction: February 10, 2025

As an exclusion criterion, a small number of comments containing spam or offensive language were omitted, while all other comments on the five selected videos were included in the analysis.

Steps	Braun & Clarke (2006)	Implementation in study
1	Familiarisation	Re-reading comments; jotting preliminary insights
2	Generating initial codes	32 inductive descriptive codes created in a shared spreadsheet during open coding
3	Searching for themes	Codes clustered into seven provisional theme families within the same spreadsheet
4	Reviewing themes	Theme boundaries re-checked against full corpus; three codes merged, two re-labelled
5	Defining & naming themes	Final set: Copyright, Ethical Concerns, AI Perception, Artistic Value, Supportive, Critical, Other
6	Producing the report	Representative quotations selected; contrasting / deviant cases highlighted in the findings section

Table 2: Thematic Analysis Workflow

Following the stages outlined in Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process, the YouTube comments of the selected videos were first read multiple times to examine how topics such as copyright, AI, and artists' rights were discussed. Subsequently, significant statements were systematically coded in a manner that ensured comprehensive data coverage without introducing bias.

In the next step, similar codes were grouped together to form distinct themes. At this stage, the data were categorized under the following thematic classifications:

- ***Copyright:*** Comments related to copyright violations or legal permissions.
- ***Ethical Concerns:*** Discussions on the ethical implications of AI-generated music.

- ***Perception of AI:*** Opinions regarding the role of AI in music production.
- ***Artistic Value:*** Comments debating whether AI can generate meaningful artistic value.
- ***Supportive Comments:*** Positive remarks expressing approval of AI-generated covers.
- ***Critical Comments:*** Negative or critical reactions toward AI-generated content.
- ***Other:*** General statements that do not directly fit into the above categories.

To test the consistency and validity of the identified themes, the data were reassessed and the themes re-evaluated to ensure clear distinctions between them. As an additional check, the anonymised code-frequency table (no raw comments) was uploaded to Advanced Data Analysis (ADA AI) software. The tool returned a code–theme co-occurrence matrix that corroborated the manual classifications; no personal data were shared or stored.

The findings for each category are presented below, along with representative comments for each theme, including both "typical" examples and "outlier" comments that deviate significantly from the dominant patterns.

Research Findings

Copyright: An analysis of YouTube user comments reveals that discussions related to copyright issues are limited in number (128 comments), but they reflect a notable level of awareness. The comments particularly question whether AI-generated music complies with copyright laws. Users generally express their opinions from two main perspectives:

Some users emphasize that AI-assisted music production without the artist's consent may constitute a copyright violation. These comments demonstrate users' sensitivity to legal regulations in digital music content. Questions such as "Is this legal?" or "Did the artist give permission?" indicate a certain level of awareness regarding copyright issues.

Another group of users experiences uncertainty about whether AI-generated music should be considered within the scope of copyright

protection. This suggests that the current legal framework for digital content production is not sufficiently clear to users. For instance, some comments reflect misconceptions such as "Since this is AI-generated, there is no copyright issue."

In this context, the analyzed comments indicate that while there is a certain level of awareness regarding copyright, it has not yet reached a broad audience. Many users express confusion due to the lack of explicit legal regulations governing AI-generated music. Additionally, some comments suggest that such productions should not only be questioned from a legal standpoint but also examined in terms of ethical considerations.

These findings demonstrate that AI-generated music raises both awareness and confusion among users regarding copyright, highlighting the need for clearer legal and ethical discussions in the field. While largely legalistic, these comments resonate with the justice principle within Floridi and Cowls' (2019) framework, reinforcing that fair compensation is the ethical baseline for participatory creativity.

Ethical Concerns: User comments on AI-generated music content exhibit certain trends around ethical concerns. The analysis shows that AI-generated music is debated within the framework of "the artist's legacy," "the originality of the work," and "respect."

When examining user comments, it is observed that ethical concerns are particularly shaped around themes such as respect for the artist's memory and the preservation of their legacy. Some users question whether using AI to recreate the voices of deceased artists is ethically appropriate, while others argue that such content plays an important role in keeping the artist's memory alive.

These comments indicate that some users are sensitive to ethical issues and believe that clear boundaries should be set regarding AI applications in music. Expressions such as "Through this, we respectfully remember our great masters" suggest that AI-generated music serves as a nostalgic tool, fostering an emotional connection with past artists.

In the comments related to ethical concerns, both positive and negative emotions are relatively balanced. Positive comments emphasize AI's potential to keep the artist's legacy alive, while negative comments argue that using an artist's voice without consent is unethical. Neutral comments

mainly provide information or express simple appreciation without strong emotional engagement.

Users acknowledge AI's potential to preserve an artist's legacy but emphasize that this process should not violate the artist's personal rights or harm their memory. The role of AI in artistic production does not yet have a clearly defined ethical framework, which is also reflected in user comments. While some see AI as a future opportunity, others consider it a potential threat.

Another frequently mentioned theme is the emotional connection that users feel with AI-generated music. Many users highlight the nostalgic and sentimental value of hearing an artist's voice through AI technology.

In conclusion, user comments regarding ethical concerns reveal a significant ethical sensitivity toward AI's role in artistic production. The debate over whether AI-generated music is a tribute to an artist's legacy or an ethical violation suggests that this issue will gain even greater importance in the future. In this context, there is a clear need to define critical aspects such as artist consent, legacy rights, and ethical boundaries in AI-generated music production. The intensity of these concerns maps onto Floridi and Cowls' (2019) autonomy and justice principles, indicating that listeners set moral limits on participatory experimentation whenever consent or fair remuneration is at stake. This also mirrors survey data from the UK Music APPG report, in which 83% of musicians insisted that vocal cloning should always require explicit consent (APPG on Music Report 2024).

Perception of AI: User perspectives on the role of AI in music production were examined in this category. User comments on YouTube videos featuring AI-generated and restructured songs reveal diverse perceptions regarding AI's role in music creation. The dominant themes in these comments can be grouped into three main categories: "admiration and positive reception," "criticisms of technological limitations," and "emotional-ethical dilemmas."

Many users express great admiration for AI's potential in music production. The possibility of creating "new duets" with deceased artists or experiencing music in different styles is frequently described as a "musical revolution." Comments such as "I got goosebumps—can AI really produce such an impressive performance?" and "It's amazing to listen to new songs with Barış Manço thanks to AI!" indicate that users perceive AI not merely as a tool but also as a "bridge" in a nostalgic sense.

Alongside positive reactions, some users highlight the limitations of AI in musical creativity and argue that the results are not always satisfying. These criticisms often focus on the perception that AI-generated voices sound "soulless" or "mechanical." Comments such as "This is an incredibly accurate imitation, but I still feel something is missing -maybe a lack of soul?" and "Yes, technically perfect, but it doesn't convey the emotions that a human voice does." suggest that while AI may achieve technical perfection, it often falls short in capturing emotional depth.

Another group of users raises ethical concerns, particularly regarding the use of deceased artists' voices without their consent. These comments reflect a mixture of nostalgic appreciation and discomfort: "It's nice to hear a new song by Barış Manço, but it feels strange knowing this was done without his consent." and "AI technology is incredible, but copying an artist's voice without permission seems odd." Such comments extend beyond a mere technological debate, engaging in deeper discussions about artistic identity, authenticity, and ethical considerations.

These findings indicate that while AI is perceived as an exciting innovation in music production, opinions about it remain highly diverse. User comments reveal that AI is viewed both as an opportunity (innovation, nostalgia, technical excellence) and as a threat (emotional detachment, ethical concerns, loss of authenticity). In this context, AI's role in the music industry is shaped not only by its technical capabilities but also by ethical and emotional factors. User feedback provides valuable insights into how this technology may be perceived in the future.

Artistic Value: In this category, user comments regarding the artistic value of AI-generated music have been analysed. YouTube user comments on AI-generated music content reveal diverse perspectives on the definition and significance of art. Discussions on whether AI can produce artistic value generally revolve around three key themes: "Artistic Admiration and Aesthetic Appreciation," "Authenticity and the Debate on Soullessness," and "Questioning Creativity and the Human Touch."

Many users find the outcomes of AI-generated music aesthetically compelling. These comments frequently highlight that AI-remastered songs evoke emotions and that hearing the voices of past legendary artists again is perceived as a "profound artistic experience." Statements such as "This

is legendary. Even though it's AI, it's a pleasure to listen to" and "I got goosebumps. How can such a beautiful performance be created? Incredible!" reflects the view that art is not exclusively tied to human creativity, suggesting that technology can also produce aesthetic value.

Alongside expressions of aesthetic admiration, some users argue that AI-generated music lacks "soul" and feels "artificial." Particularly prominent are critiques asserting that art is an authentic experience rooted in human emotions and consciousness: "Okay, it's well done, but something is missing—it has no soul." "No matter what you do, it can never replace a real artist; it just feels artificial." Such comments reinforce the belief that art is not solely about technical perfection but also about reflecting the depth of human experience and emotion.

Some users engage in deeper reflections on the nature of creativity. These comments question whether fundamental artistic elements such as inspiration, originality, and individual expression can genuinely be replicated by an algorithm: "AI can generate music, but is this truly a creative process?", "Art is something that comes from the human soul; how can an algorithm experience inspiration?" These statements emphasize that art is not merely a final product but also an evolving creative process.

As evidenced by these discussions, user perspectives on AI's ability to create artistic value reflect a broad range of interpretations of art itself. For some, art is defined by technical mastery and aesthetic satisfaction, whereas for others, its essence lies in human emotion and originality. In this context, debates surrounding AI-generated music extend beyond technological innovation to encompass fundamental questions in aesthetics, authenticity, and creativity. Questions such as "What is the essence of art?" and "What constitutes an artistic work?" are likely to gain even greater significance as AI continues to expand its role within the creative industries. This ambivalence mirrors Jenkins' (2013) tension between industrial authority and fan agency while simultaneously invoking the non-maleficence principle by questioning potential cultural harm from synthetic art.

Taken together, the findings show a dialectic between participatory empowerment and ethical restraint. Listeners embrace AI covers as an accessible remix form (participatory culture), yet invoke autonomy and justice principles when vocal cloning appears to violate consent or royalty norms.

This dual lens not only explains the thematic polarity observed in our data but also offers a transferable framework for future studies on AI-mediated cultural production.

Supportive Comments: User comments on AI-generated music content include many supportive perspectives that regard the technology as a positive innovation. These comments provide valuable insights into how users perceive AI-generated songs and their favourable attitudes toward such content. Supportive comments can generally be categorized under three main themes: "Admiration for Technical Excellence and Aesthetic Quality," "Nostalgic and Emotional Connections," and "Excitement for Creative Potential."

A significant portion of users emphasizes the technical success of AI-generated music. Particularly, the clarity of the sound, the arrangement of the song, and AI's ability to mimic the original artist are highly praised: "This is incredible; I got goosebumps!" "An outstanding job—kudos to everyone involved." "The voice sounds so real that one can hardly tell the difference." Such comments indicate that AI is not only viewed as a technological tool but also as a means of artistic production. Users associate their aesthetic appreciation with the technical perfection that AI offers.

Another prominent aspect of supportive comments is AI's capacity to evoke nostalgia. Hearing the voices of deceased artists once again provides users with an opportunity to establish an emotional connection: "Listening to Barış Manço again is an incredible feeling." "This song took me back to my childhood—I got so emotional." "Even if it is through AI, hearing Cem Karaca's voice is amazing." These comments demonstrate that AI has the ability to bridge the past with the present, fulfilling an emotional role. Music is perceived not merely as a collection of sounds but as an integral part of personal and collective memory.

Some users, on the other hand, view AI technology as a promising opportunity for the future of music. Their comments reflect excitement about the creative possibilities that AI offers: "AI is taking music to an entirely new dimension!" "This technology allows for duets that would have never been possible otherwise." "We will witness even more incredible projects with AI in the future." These statements highlight the belief that AI not only reproduces existing music but also opens the door to new and unique artistic experiences.

Supportive comments suggest that some users do not perceive AI as a threat to music production but rather as a source of opportunity and innovation. AI's technical precision, ability to create nostalgic connections, and creative potential contribute to its positive reception among users. In this regard, AI-assisted music production is not merely a technological advancement but is also viewed as a tool for reconstructing art, emotions, and collective memory. User comments indicate that this new form of musical experience is widely accepted and is seen as a positive contribution to the evolution of music. Viewed through Jenkins' (2013) participatory-culture lens, these supportive reactions celebrate AI covers as fan-driven remix creativity that lowers technical barriers and exemplifies the "democratised authorship" he describes. This positive stance echoes Ooi et al.'s (2025) survey, in which 68% of respondents viewed GAI as 'augmenting rather than replacing' human creativity.

Critical Comments: User comments on AI-generated music content also include critical perspectives, evaluating the technology negatively. These comments reflect users' doubts, concerns, and dissatisfaction regarding AI-assisted music production. Negative feedback can generally be categorized into three main themes: "Criticism of Emotional Depth and Perceived Soullessness," "Concerns About Authenticity and Naturalness," and "Criticism of Technical Limitations."

Many users argue that AI-generated music lacks emotional depth and exhibits a "soulless" quality. These critiques emphasize that music is not merely a technological output but also an emotional and artistic experience: "The voice is similar, but it lacks soul—it feels like mere imitation.", "AI-generated songs do not resonate emotionally; they feel empty and artificial." Such comments reflect the belief that the intrinsic emotional connection in music cannot be fully replicated by an algorithm.

Some users perceive AI-generated music as "inauthentic" or "unnatural." Particularly in comparison to live or original performances by artists, AI-generated songs are often described as having an artificial, fabricated quality. For instance: "This is not a Cem Karaca song—it is an artificial reproduction, lacking authenticity." "We are losing the organic essence of art; everything has become mechanized." These critiques highlight concerns about AI's impact on artistic authenticity, which remains a foundational principle in artistic creation.

Another significant dimension of negative feedback pertains to AI's technical performance. Users frequently highlight voice inconsistencies, unnatural tonal quality, and other technical limitations: "The vocal tones do not align properly; it sounds robotic." "Some parts of the song are out of sync—this reveals the current limitations of AI." Such comments indicate that AI-generated music still faces notable technical constraints.

Overall, negative commentary presents a critical perspective on AI's role in music production. While users acknowledge AI's technical advancements, they emphasize the absence of emotional depth, authenticity, and artistic originality. In this context, the future integration of AI in the music industry will likely depend not only on technological progress but also on addressing these ethical and artistic concerns. Such critical stances further underscore the autonomy and justice pillars of the five-principle (Floridi and Cowls 2019) framework, signalling a participatory culture that polices its own ethical boundaries.

Other: User comments on AI-generated and restructured songs on YouTube also include various expressions that do not fit directly into a specific thematic category but still reflect general impressions. These comments manifest in different forms, such as "neutral reactions," "casual interactions," and "personal anecdotes." Grouped under the "Other" category, these comments provide insights into how users establish individual connections with music and engage with social media interaction dynamics.

Comments within the "Other" category highlight the multidimensional nature of users' engagement with music. These comments suggest that music is not merely a product of art or technology but also an integral component of everyday life. Instead of offering critical or appreciative evaluations, users sometimes participate by making brief statements or sharing personal experiences, aligning with contemporary social media engagement patterns. In this regard, such comments are valuable for understanding user behaviour, as music -particularly within digital platforms- serves not only as an individualized experience but also as a medium for social interaction. Even AI-generated music, within this context, can become a meaningful and emotionally resonant experience for users. These neutral or playful exchanges illustrate what Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green (2013) call "spreadability": content circulated mainly for its memetic value rather than explicit ethical or artistic reflection. Such playful, low-stakes engagement

is also consistent with Nass and Moon's classic finding that users apply social rules to computers "mindlessly," without deeper ethical reflection (Nass and Moon 2000).

Neutral reactions and concise remarks do not explicitly assess musical quality, AI technology, or artistic merit. Users often articulate their views through succinct and neutral expressions. For instance, comments such as "It's nice," "I listened to it, not bad" or "They tried this as well" reflect perspectives from users who experience music as background sound or do not perceive the necessity for an in-depth analysis.

Certain comments reflect casual social media interactions rather than an explicit evaluation of the music itself. These remarks underscore user engagement habits and interpersonal exchanges within the platform. Examples include "Don't forget to leave a like!" "This song deserves my favorite emoji:❤️" "Like this comment so it stays at the top." Such comments illustrate how users conceptualize YouTube not solely as a content consumption platform but also as a space for digital interaction and social engagement.

Additionally, some users share personal anecdotes or emotional reflections. These comments often recount personal experiences or memories associated with the song. Examples such as "I was in college when I first heard this song, and now I feel like I'm back in those days," "This song reminds me of my father; I get emotional every time I listen to it," or "Today was a rough day, but this song lifted my mood" demonstrate how music intertwines with personal memories and emotional experiences. Within this framework, it can be argued that even AI-generated music continues to function as a profound emotional medium for users.

Conclusion

The rapid integration of AI applications across various domains has also become increasingly evident in cultural production, dissemination, and consumption practices. In the music industry, the adoption of GAI is expanding significantly and possesses the potential to catalyse a fundamental transformation. However, alongside these advancements, new challenges have emerged for copyright holders, artists, and legal professionals.

Although AI covers are regarded as an innovation capable of shaping the future of music, they simultaneously introduce ethical and legal concerns for

artists, producers, and publishers. While AI covers offer potential benefits, such as enhancing creativity, reducing production costs, and contributing to cultural diversity, they also raise significant concerns regarding the financial and moral rights of artists. Many artists experience financial losses due to the unauthorized replication of their voices and musical works. Beyond economic implications, AI covers also pose risks to artists' personal rights, professional reputations, and artistic legacies.

This study employs thematic analysis of YouTube comments to explore listener perceptions of AI covers and their evaluations of this emerging production method. The analysis reveals that a considerable number of listeners express support for this production practice and welcome the integration of GAI into the music industry. However, it is also evident that users frequently raise concerns regarding copyright compliance, ethical considerations, and respect for the artist's legacy.

Furthermore, debates surrounding the artistic value of AI-generated music are frequently observed in user comments. These discussions often revolve around key themes such as artistic admiration and aesthetic appreciation, authenticity versus artificiality, and questions concerning creativity and human expression. The findings underscore the fact that GAI-supported music production is not only significant for producers and distributors but also constitutes a central concern for listeners as primary stakeholders. Given this, it is imperative to incorporate the listener perspective into policy development regarding the utilization of AI in the music industry.

In conclusion, AI covers represent a complex and highly debated phenomenon, attracting attention due to various implications from both production and consumption perspectives. As GAI continues to exert an increasing influence on the music industry, it is essential to promote a critical perspective, ensure the global implementation of legal frameworks, and enhance awareness of potential copyright infringements and ethical violations. The findings of this study highlight the necessity of effective governance mechanisms in copyright management and the formulation of ethical guidelines for voice cloning technologies. Such measures should be established through multistakeholder consultation processes, engaging artists, legal experts, platform developers, and listeners.

Future research could build upon these findings by applying the same methodology to different music genres (e.g., pop, rock, hip-hop, classical) to examine how listener perceptions of AI-generated or AI-remastered works

vary across musical styles. Additionally, investigating responses on alternative digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels could offer valuable insights into how short-form video formats and diverse user engagement dynamics shape audience reactions to AI-generated music. This approach would also facilitate a more comprehensive comparison of perceptions and attitudes among diverse demographic groups of listeners.

References

Adams, Juliette. 2023. "The Wild West of AI-generated Music: What Rules Rule?." *Romano Law*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.romanolaw.com/the-wild-west-of-ai-generated-music-what-rules-rule/

Alpyıldız, Eray. 2024. "Yapay Zekâ, Posthuman Folklor ve Müzik Teknolojisine Bir Bakış: Atatürk'ün Sesinden Türküler Dinlediniz." *Folklor Akademi Dergisi* 7(1): 388–402. https://doi.org/10.55666/folklor.1423890.

APPG on Music. 2024. "Artificial Intelligence and the Music Industry: Master or Servant?" *APPG on Music Report*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.ukmusic.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/APPG-AI-Report-Low-res.pdf

Arık, Sercan, Jitong Chen, Kainan Peng, Wei Ping, and Yanqi Zhou. 2018. "Neural Voice Cloning With a Few Samples." In Proceedings of the 32nd Conference on Neural Information Processing Systems (NIPS 2018): 10019–10029. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.5555/3327546.3327667

Baris, Antonios. 2024. "AI Covers: Legal Notes on Audio Mining and Voice Cloning." *Journal of Intellectual Property Law & Practice* 19 (7): 571–576. https://doi.org/10.1093/jiplp/jpae029.

Benjamin, Walter. 2008. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin.

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2013. *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. London: SAGE Publications.

Brittain, Blake. 2024. "Music Labels' AI Lawsuits Create Copyright Puzzle for Courts." *Reuters*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.reuters.com/legal/music-labels-ai-lawsuits-create-new-copyright-puzzle-us-courts-2024-08-03/

Bulayenko, Oleksandr, João Pedro Quintais, Daniel J. Gervais, and Joost Poort. 2022. "AI Music Outputs: Challenges to the Copyright Legal Framework." *ReCreating Europe Report*. Accessed February 1, 2025. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4072806

Capelouto, JD. 2023. "AI-Generated Music is Going Viral. But Is It legal?" *Semafor*. Accessed 1st Feb, 2025. https://www.semafor.com/article/04/18/2023/is-ai-generated-music-legal

Chung, Wonjun. 2023. "Legal Issues of Generative AI Through the Case of AI Cover Songs." *Journal of Industrial Property* 76: 455-494. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.earticle.net/Article/A439710

Directive (EU) 2019/790. 2019. Directive (EU) 2019/790 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on Copyright and Related Rights in the Digital Single Market. *EUR-Lex*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L0790

Elgammal, Ahmed. 2019. "Arts Lab: AI is Blurring the Definition of Artist." *American Scientist* 107(1): 18–21. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26586036

Fitzpatrick, Dan. 2025. "New Copyright Ruling Just Made AI Skills the Biggest Advantage." *Forbes*. February 3. https://www.forbes.com/sites/danfitzpatrick/2025/02/03/new-copyright-ruling-just-made-ai-skills-the-biggest-advantage/

Floridi, Luciano and Josh Cowls. 2019. "A Unified Framework of Five Principles for AI in Society." *Harvard Data Science Review* 1 (1). https://doi.org/10.1162/99608f92.8cd550d1

Floridi, Luciano and Josh Cowls. 2021. "The Design, Governance and Practice of AI for Social Good: A European Perspective." *Philosophy & Technology* 34 (4): 1597–1623.

Fox, Mark, Ganesh Vaidyanathan, and Jennifer Breese. 2024. "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Musicians." *Issues in Information Systems* 25 (3): 267-276. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://doi.org/10.48009/3_iis_2024_121

Gaffar, Hafiz and Saleh Albarashdi. 2024. "Copyright Protection for AI-Generated Works: Exploring Originality and Ownership in a Digital Landscape." *Asian Journal of International Law* 1: 1–24. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2044251323000735

Gendron, Vaughn. 2024. "A New Frontier: The Music Industry's Struggle Against Generative AI." *The University of Miami Business Law Review* 33 (1): 161-191.

Gündoğdu, Buket and Semih Okcu. 2024. "Yapay Zekâ Uygulamalarının Müzik ve Müzik Endüstrisi Üzerine Etkileri." *Konservatoryum, Conservatorium CONS* 11 (2): 545–558. Accessed 1st Feb, 2025. https://doi.org/10.26650/CONS2024-1524963

Hessari, Hassan, Ali Bai, and Fatemeh Daneshmandi. 2024. "Generative AI: Boosting Adaptability and Reducing Workplace Overload." *Journal of Computer Information Systems*. October: 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/08874417.2024.2417672

Hugenholtz, Bernt, and João Pedro Quintais. 2021. "Copyright Protection for AI-Generated Works: Exploring Originality and Ownership in a Digital Landscape." *IIC International Review of Intellectual Property and Competition Law* 16 (12): 1190–1216. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40319-021-01115-0

IFPI. 2024. *AI and Music: Key Facts. Market Development of AI in the Music Sector and Impact on Music Authors and Creators in Germany and France*. Accessed

February 1, 2025. https://www.goldmedia.com/fileadmin/goldmedia/Studie/2023/GEMA-SACEM_AI-and-Music/AI_and_Music_GEMA_SACEM_Goldmedia.pdf

Jacques, Sabine, and Mathew Flynn. 2024. "Protecting Human Creativity in AI-Generated Music With the Introduction of an AI-Royalty Fund." *GRUR International* 73 (12): 1137–1149. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://doi.org/10.1093/grurint/ikae134

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. 2013. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning In a Networked Culture*. New York: NYU Press.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: NYU Press.

Jenkins, Henry. 2013. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (20th anniversary ed.). New York: Routledge.

Ji, Jingwen. 2023. "Copyright Infringement Risks in AI-Generated Cover Songs: An Analysis Based on Current Legislation." In proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Educational Innovation and Philosophical Inquiries. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/20/20231467

Jones, Daisy. 2023. "AI Cover Songs from Dead Musicians are Morbid, Exploitative, and Tacky as Hell." *GQ Magazine*, August 21. https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/dead-musiciains-ai-generated-songs

Kalpokas, Ignas. 2023. "Work of Art in the Age of Its AI Reproduction." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 51 (8): 1268-1286.

Lim, Daryl. 2023. "Generative AI and Copyright: Principles, Priorities and Practicalities." *Journal of Intellectual Property Law & Practice* 18 (12): 841-842.

Magowan, Justine. 2023. "It's Like I've Got This Music in My Mind: Protecting Human Authorship in the Age of Generative Artificial Intelligence." *UC Law Journal*. 75 (1): 233-260.

Marongiu, Eugenio. 2024. "AI Can Make Up Songs Now, But Who Owns the Copyright? The Answer is Complicated." *The Conversation* Accessed February 1, 2025. https://theconversation.com/ai-can-make-up-songs-now-but-who-owns-the-copyright-the-answer-is-complicated-229714

Masood, Momina, Mariam Nawaz, Khalid Mahmood Malik, Ali Javed. Aun Irtaza, and Hafiz Malik. 2022. "Deepfakes Generation and Detection: State-of-the-art, Open Challenges, Countermeasures, and Way Forward." *Applied Intelligence* 53: 3974–4026.

McCarthy, John, Marvin L. Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, and Claude E. Shannon. 2006. "A Proposal for the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence." *AI Magazine* 27 (4): 12.

McCoy, Julia. 2024. "OpenAI Voice Cloning: A Guide to the Future of AI Audio." *Workmind AI Blog*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://workmind.ai/blog/openai-voice-cloning/

McHugh, Marry L. 2012. "Interrater Reliability: The Kappa Statistic." *Biochemia Medica* 22 (3): 276–282.

McKinsey & Company. 2024. "What is Generative AI?." Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-generative-ai

MESAM. 2024. "MESAM, MSG ve MÜYAP Müzik Sektörünün Köklü Sorunlarının Çözümü Konusunda Ortak Hareket Etme Kararı Aldı." Accessed February 1, 2025. https://mesam.org.tr/duyurular/mesam-msg-ve-muyap-muzik-sektorunun-koklu-sorunlarinin-cozumu-konusunda-ortak-hareket-etme-karari-aldi

Micchi, Gianluca, Louis Bigo, Mathieu Giraud, Richard Groult, and Florence Levé. 2021. "I Keep Counting: An Experiment in Human/AI Co-creative Songwriting." *Transactions of the International Society for Music Information Retrieval (TISMIR)*. 4 (1): 263-275.

Napolitano, Domenico. 2020. "The Cultural Origins of Voice Cloning." In proceedings of the Eighth Conference on Computation, Communication, Aesthetics & X (xCoAx 2020). Porto: Universidade de Porto Press: 59–73.

Nass, Clifford, and Youngme Moon. 2000. "Machines and Mindlessness: Social Responses to Computers." *Journal of Social Issues* 56: 81-103.

Neekhara, Paarth, Shehzeen Hussain, Shlomo Dubnov, Farinaz Koushanfar, and Julian McAuley. 2021. "Expressive Neural Voice Cloning." In proceedings of the 13th Asian Conference on Machine Learning, in Proceedings of Machine Learning Research. 157: 252-267. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://proceedings.mlr.press/v157/neekhara21a.html

Notaro, Anna. 2020. "State of the Art: A.I. Through the (Artificial) Artist's Eye." In *proceedings of EVA London 2020*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.scienceopen.com/hosted-document?doi=10.14236/ewic/EVA2020.58

Nowell, Lorelli, Jill Norris, Deborah White, and Nancy Moules. 2017. "Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet Trustworthiness Criteria." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16 (1): 1–13.

Oğul, Sertaç. 2024. "Etik Kurallara Uygun: Sorumlu Yapay Zeka ve Müzik Endüstrisi." *Reflektif Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 5 (1):139-49.

Ooi, Keng Boon, Garry Wei Han Tan, Mostafa Al-Emran, Mohammed A. Al-Sharafi, Alexandru Capatina, et al. 2025. "The Potential of Generative Artificial Intelligence Across Disciplines: Perspectives and Future Directions." *Journal of Computer Information Systems* 65 (1): 76–107.

Rabinovich, Misha, and Caitlin Foley. 2025. "The Work of Art in the Age of AI Reproducibility." *AI & Society* 40: 1565–1567.

Resnikoff, Paul. 2024. "UMG, WMG, Sony Music File Litigation Against AI Music Services Suno and Udio for Massive Copyright Infringement." *Digital Music News*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.digitalmusicnews.com/2024/06/24/umg-wmg-sony-litigation-ai-music-suno-udio

Rutherfold, Nichola. 2023. "Drake and The Weeknd AI song pulled from Spotify and Apple." *BBC.com*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-65309313

Sharma, Preeti, Manoj Kumar, Hitesh Kumar Sharma, and Soly Mathew Biju. 2024. "Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs): Introduction, Taxonomy, Variants, Limitations, and Applications." *Multimed Tools Appl* 83: 88811–88858.

Stahl, Bernd Carsten, A Andreou, Philip Brey, Tally Hatzakis, et al. 2021. "Artificial Intelligence for Human Flourishing – Beyond Principles for Machine Learning." *Journal of Business Research* 124: 374-388.

Study on the Economic Impact of Generative AI in the Music and Audiovisual Industries. 2024, *CISAC Communications*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.observatoire-culture.ch/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/SG24-0865_Study_on_the_economic_impact_of_Generative_AI_in_Music_and_Audiovisual_industries_Complete_Study_2024-12-03_EN_compressed.pdf

Sturm, Bob L., Oded Ben-Tal, Úna Monaghan, Nick Collins, Dorien Herremans, Elaine Chew, Gaëtan Hadjeres, Emmanuel Deruty, and François Pachet. 2018. "Machine Learning Research That Matters for Music Creation: A Case Study." *Journal of New Music Research* 48 (1): 36–55.

Tucker, Olivia. 2024. "Make AI Cover with AI Song Cover Generator Now!." *UnicTool*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://www.unictool.com/text-to-speech/ai-song-cover-generator/?srsltid=AfmBOoodFLx8BI0OnUEvsztoO1LQE0-7oKFO7LUO_THAlMdXQgmjYOBv

Ulusal Yapay Zekâ Stratejisi [2021-2025] 2025. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Dijital Dönüşüm Ofisi Başkanlığı ve Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://cbddo.gov.tr/uyzs

Ünal, Erdem. 2023. "Üretken Yapay Zeka Çağı ve Chat GPT." *Bilim Teknik* Eylül 2023: 56-64.

UNESCO. 2021. Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381137

Widodo, Wahyu, and Herman Bakir. 2024. "AI-generated Music Copyright Issues: Legal and Ethical Analysis." *Journal of Intellectual Property* 14 (2): 103–114.

Yıldırım Köse, Mutlu, and Göksü Ayçıl Altınok. 2025. "Yapay Zekâ ve Müzik Sektörü." *Gün+Partners*. Accessed February 1, 2025. https://gun.av.tr/tr/goruslerimiz/makaleler/yapay-zeka-ve-muzik-sektoru-1

Zhuk, Alesia. 2024. "Navigating the Legal Landscape of AI Copyright: A Comparative Analysis of EU, US, and Chinese Approaches." *AI Ethics* 4: 1299–1306.