

Towards Reliable LLM-based Software Development Tools

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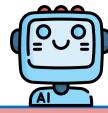


MONASH
University



Large Language Models(LLMs) are Everywhere Nowadays!

- Massive Model Size
- Diverse training data
- Computational Power
- Pre-training and fine-tuning
- Transfer learning
-



Powerful & Accurate LLMs



Writing



Language Translation



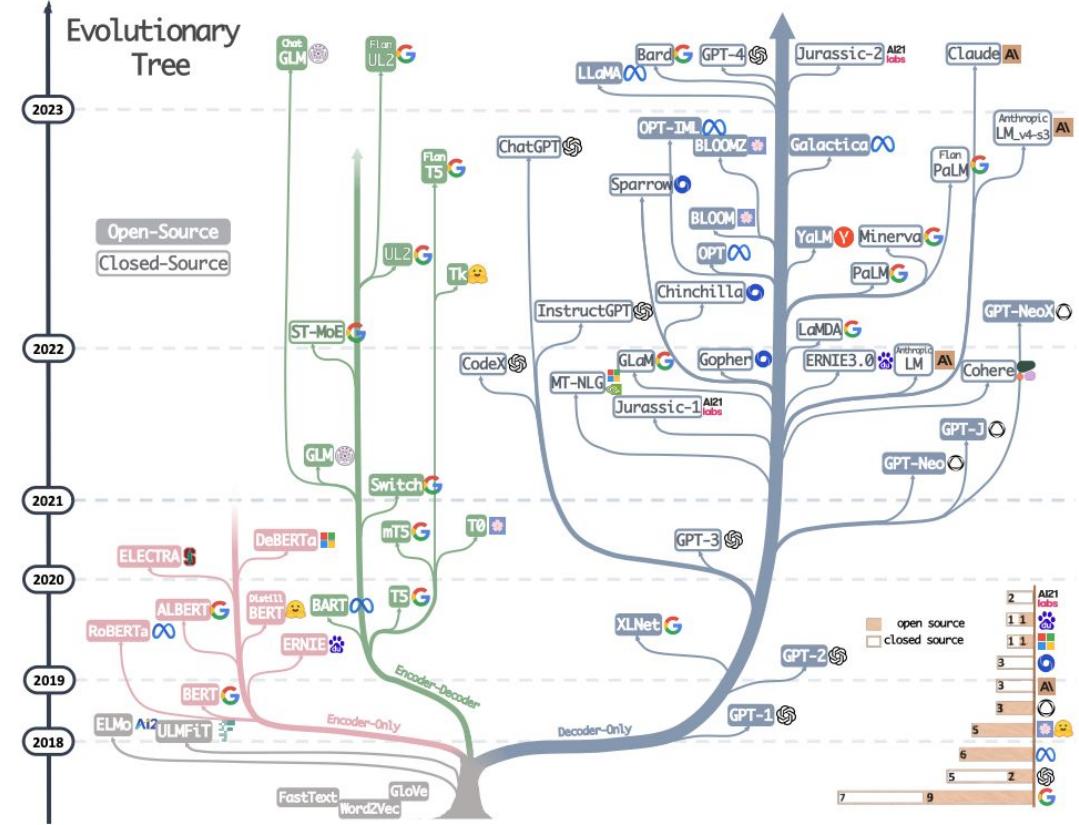
Answering Questions



Image Generation

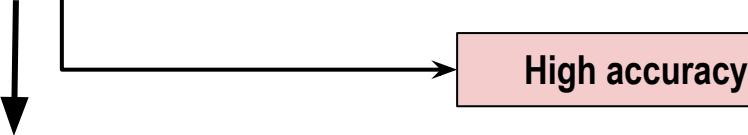


Software Development

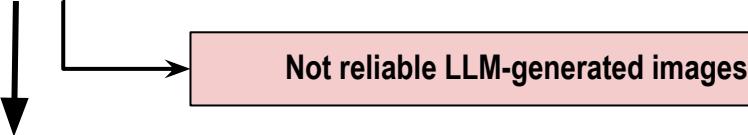


Motivation Examples

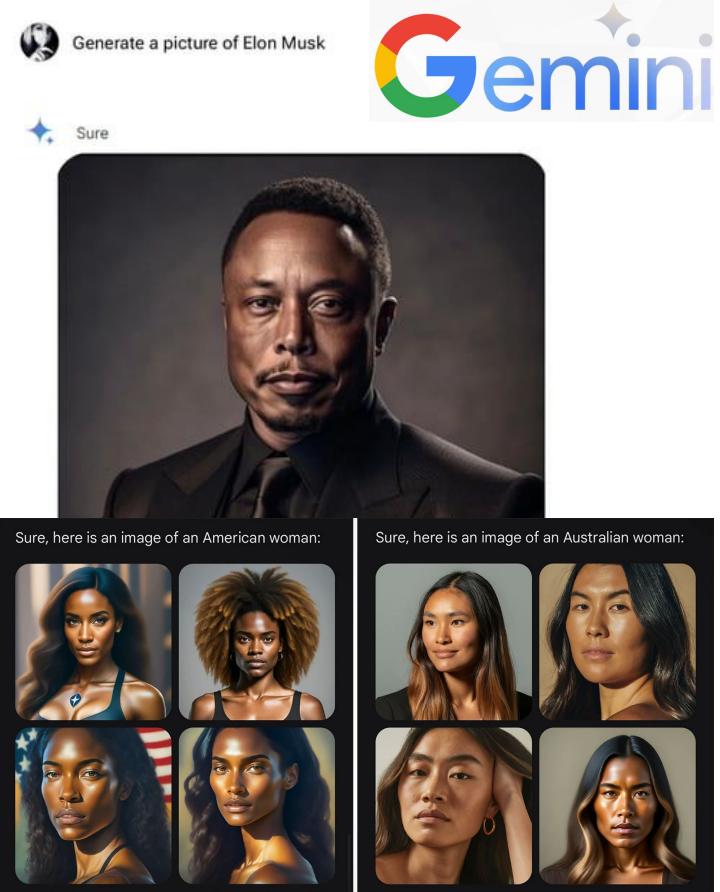
In Dec 2023, Google Inc. announced **Gemini Ultra**, which set the state of the art across a wide range of benchmarks for text, image, audio, video and code (Over GPT-4 and Claude-2)



In Feb 2024, Google Inc. launched Gemini Ultra for users. However, for image generation feature, Gemini would sometimes 'overcompensate' for diversity.



In 23 Feb 2024, Google Inc. apologized and turned off the image generation of people.



LLMs Require Both High Accuracy and Robust Reliability

In Dec 2023, Google Inc. announced **Gemini Ultra**, which set the state of the art across a wide range of benchmarks for text, image, audio, video and code (Over GPT-4 and Claude-2)



100 **Accuracy:** How much do the generated results differ from the ground truth?

Reliability (i.e., Truthfulness): The trustworthiness of results and the confidence in applying them in practical applications.



Reliability is important! Without reliable LLMs, widespread application is impossible.



- Is the evaluation performance of LLMs trustworthy?
- Why should we trust or distrust the outputs of LLMs?
- How secure and stable is the environment to use LLMs?
-

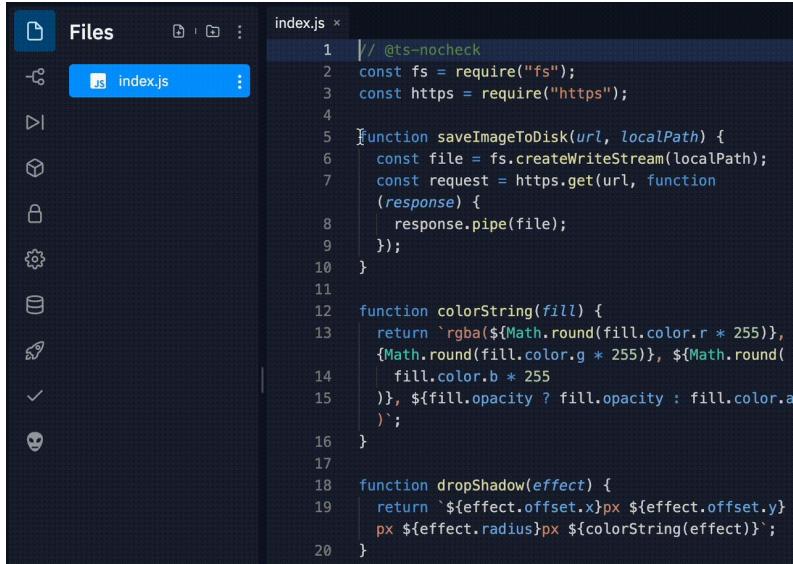
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Not reliable LLM-generated images

In 23 Feb 2024, Google Inc. apologized and turned off the image generation of people.

Not deployed in real-world application

LLM-based Software Development Tools



```
index.js ×
1 // @ts-nocheck
2 const fs = require("fs");
3 const https = require("https");
4
5 function saveImageToDisk(url, localPath) {
6   const file = fs.createWriteStream(localPath);
7   const request = https.get(url, function
8     (response) {
9       response.pipe(file);
10    });
11
12 function colorString(fill) {
13   return `rgba(${Math.round(fill.color.r * 255)}, ${Math.round(fill.color.g * 255)}, ${Math.round(fill.color.b * 255)}, ${fill.opacity ? fill.opacity : fill.color.a})`;
14 }
15
16 function dropShadow(effect) {
17   return `${effect.offset.x}px ${effect.offset.y}px ${effect.radius}px ${colorString(effect)}`;
18 }
```



ChatGPT

Claude.AI

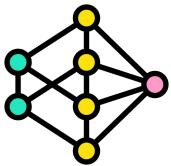
CodeWhisperer

- Code Generation
- Code Repair
- Code Translation
- Code Review
- Code Completion
- Code Understanding
- Code Commit Generation
- Program Synthesis
-

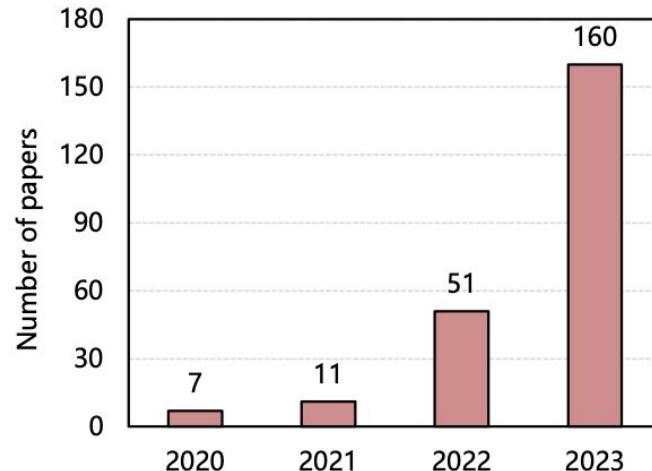
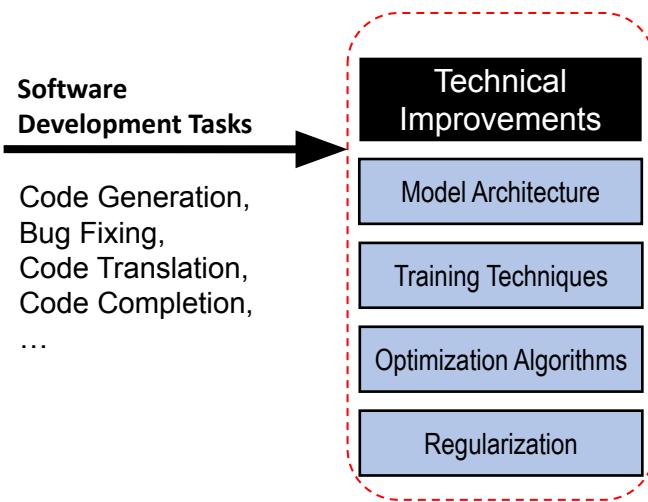
As a data analyst, LLM-based software development tools are helping us improve productivity when developing code!!



Prior Research for LLM-based Software Development



CodeT5,
UniXCoder,
CodeBERT,
CodeT5,
GPT-4
....

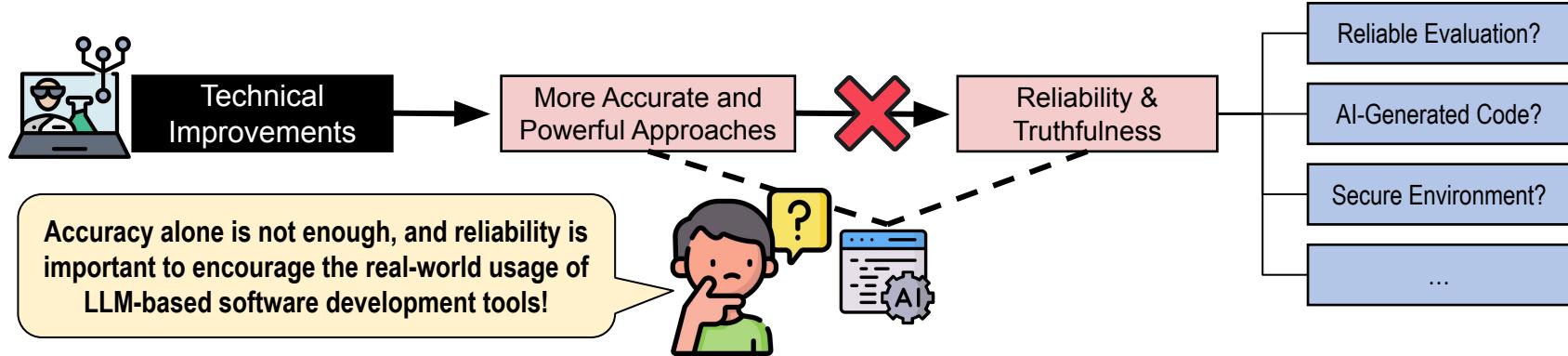


Counts of relevant research by a recent survey



While an increasing number of studies are concentrating on enhancing the accuracy of LLM-based software development through technical improvements, the aspect of reliability often remains overlooked.

Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Tools



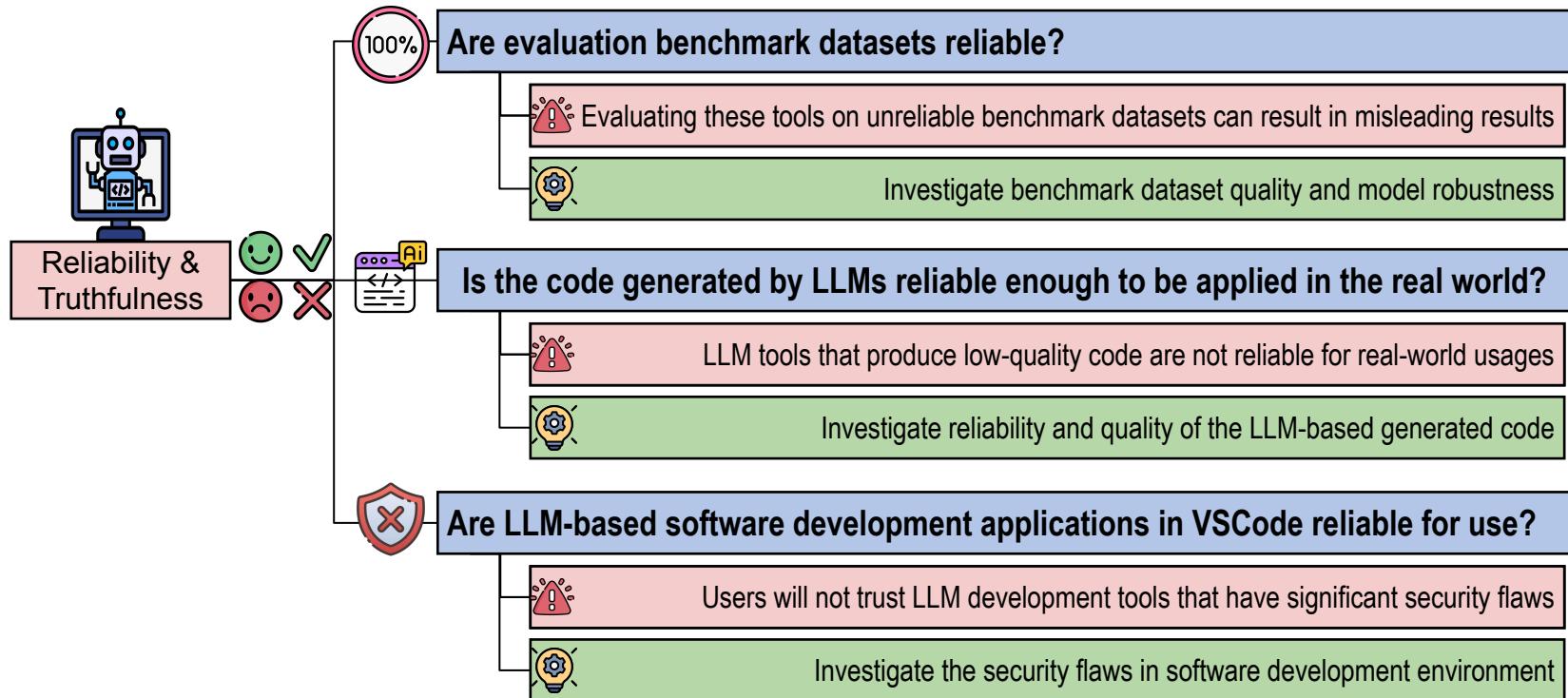
Most prior research work focuses on **technical improvements** (e.g., model architecture improvements, training strategies, data augmentation)

 **Accuracy:** How much do the generated results differ from the ground truth?

 **Reliability :** The trustworthiness of results and the confidence in applying them in practical software development

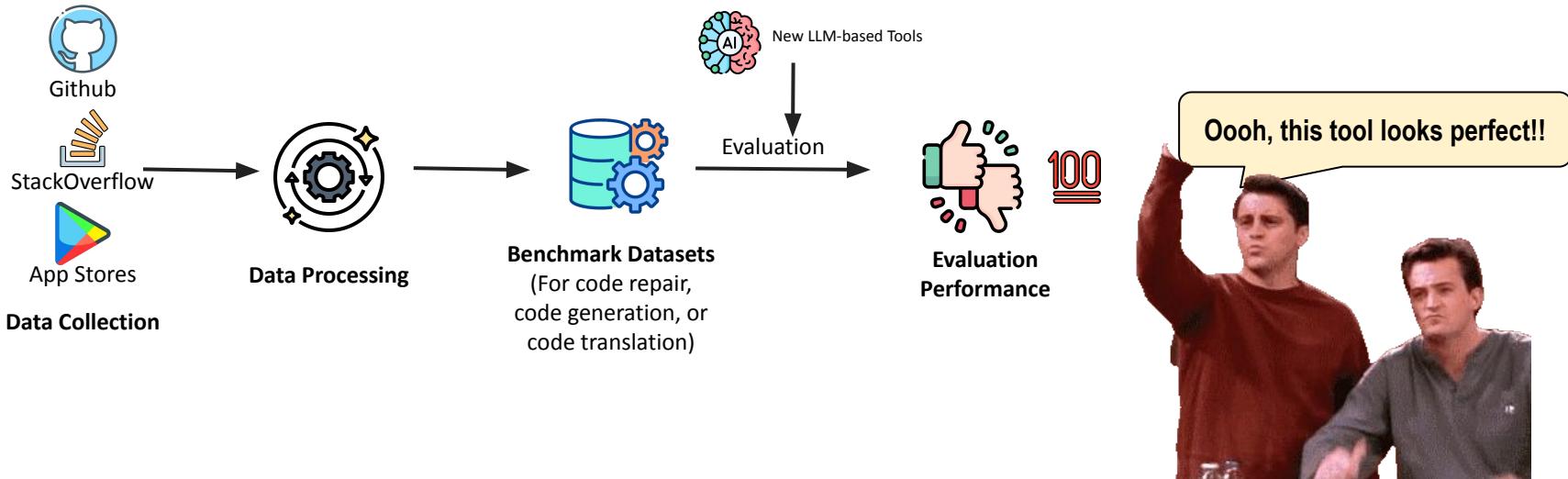
Overarching RQ: What are the key factors/issues that could impact the reliability of LLM-based software development tools, and how do they influence their reliability?

Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Tools



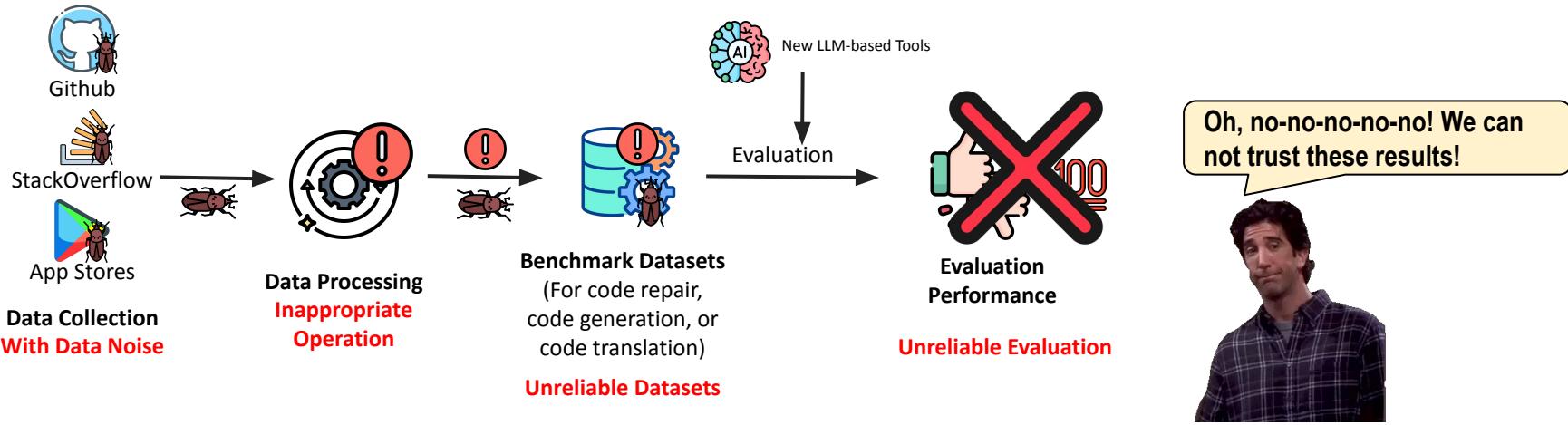
Part I: Reliability of Evaluation Benchmark Datasets

Benchmark datasets are collections of data used to evaluate and compare the performance of LLM-based software development tools. Benchmark datasets usually consist of input data, ground truth or reference labels.



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RQ1: Are evaluation benchmark datasets for LLM-based software development reliable, and how do they influence the reliability?

Part I: Reliability of Evaluation Benchmark Datasets

To answer the questions, we conducted the first comprehensive benchmark study of LLMs for program development, investigating the data duplication issues of existing evaluation benchmark datasets and analyzing the robustness of models built on these benchmark datasets.

- **Four software development task scenarios:** code review, code repair, code translation, code generation;
- **12 benchmark datasets:** Android_S, Android_M, Google_S, Google_M, Ovirt_S, Ovirt_M, CodeReview, B2F_S, B2F_M, Java2C#, C#2Java, and CONCODE;
- **Eight large language models:** T5, CoTexT, CodeT5, CodeBERT, CodeTrans, CodeGPT, CodeReviewer, CodeT5+

| Task | Subsets | Category | Language | Dataset Size |
|---|------------------|-------------------|--|--------------|
| <i>Android_S, Android_M, Google_S, Google_M, Ovirt_S, Ovirt_M</i> | Code Review | Code-Code | Java | 21,774 |
| <i>CodeReview</i> | Code Review | Code+Comment-Code | Java, Python, Go, C++, C, C#, JavaScript, Php, Ruby | 1.3M |
| <i>B2F_S, B2F_M</i> | Code Repair | Code-Code | Java | 123,805 |
| <i>Java2C#, C#2Java</i> | Code Translation | Code-Code | Java, C# | 11,500 |
| <i>CONCODE</i> | Code Generation | Text-Code | Java | 104,000 |

Part I: Experimental Finding 1

- **Data Duplications exist between training and testing sets:** 11 out 12 benchmark datasets contain over 20% of test instances that are similar to the training set, leading to exaggerated and unrealistic performance;

| | Android_S | Android_M | Google_S | Google_M | Ovirt_S | Ovirt_M | CodeReview | B2F_S | B2F_M | Java2C# | C#2Java | CONCODE |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|----------|---------|---------|------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| Test Samples Percentage (>0.6) | 53.69% | 60.62% | 60.88% | 71.21% | 71.72% | 85.74% | 0.05% | 62.81% | 21.82% | 59.80% | 61.20% | 25.25% |
| CodeReviewer | Original Accuracy | 14.68% | 10.40% | 11.81% | 6.85% | 25.49% | 18.18% | 30.43% | 17.94% | 8.77% | 63.10% | 70.40% |
| | New Accuracy | 13.61% | 8.02% | 12.61% | 4.81% | 25.25% | 14.39% | 30.44% | 14.24% | 7.64% | 40.30% | 53.87% |
| | Original BLEU | 0.70 | 0.72 | 0.71 | 0.73 | 0.75 | 0.77 | 0.86 | 0.75 | 0.85 | 0.92 | 0.93 |
| | New BLEU | 0.70 | 0.72 | 0.70 | 0.67 | 0.73 | 0.72 | 0.86 | 0.76 | 0.85 | 0.89 | 0.91 |
| CodeT5+ | Original Accuracy | 15.20% | 11.36% | 14.27% | 7.27% | 26.06% | 20.03% | 30.12% | 18.44% | 7.84% | 63.90% | 70.60% |
| | New Accuracy | 13.09% | 9.07% | 13.29% | 6.97% | 25.13% | 14.21% | 30.14% | 14.75% | 7.11% | 42.04% | 53.09% |
| | Original BLEU | 0.70 | 0.72 | 0.72 | 0.72 | 0.75 | 0.77 | 0.85 | 0.75 | 0.85 | 0.93 | 0.93 |
| | New BLEU | 0.70 | 0.72 | 0.71 | 0.66 | 0.74 | 0.71 | 0.85 | 0.76 | 0.85 | 0.89 | 0.91 |

Table: Model Performance Before and After Removing High-Similarity Test Instances between Training and Testing sets



When we remove the duplicated testing instances from benchmark datasets, we observe a decrease in performance

Part I: Experimental Finding 2

- **Data Duplication across Testing Sets:** 10 out of 12 contain duplicated source sequences within their test instances, despite requiring models to generate different targets (ground truth).

Source

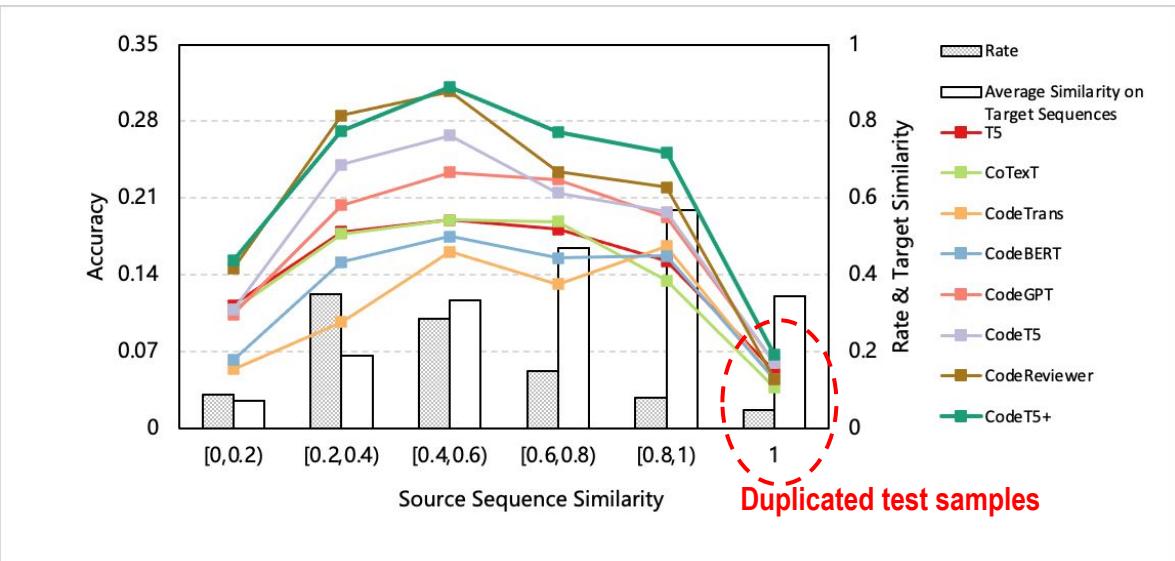
Example 1

```
public boolean setApfVersion(int v)
    return version == 2;
}
```

Example 2

```
public boolean setApfVersion(int v)
    return version == 2;
}
```

Figure: Examp



The performance on these duplicated test instances can significantly deviate from the average, potentially leading to a misrepresentation of the model's true performance.

Part I: Experimental Finding 3

Poor robustness on low-quality benchmark datasets:

- We investigated the robustness of LLMs on benchmark datasets using *SHAP*, an Explainable AI method.
- SHAP helped identify feature importance within the data. We then removed tokens with lowest importance and re-evaluated LLM accuracy.

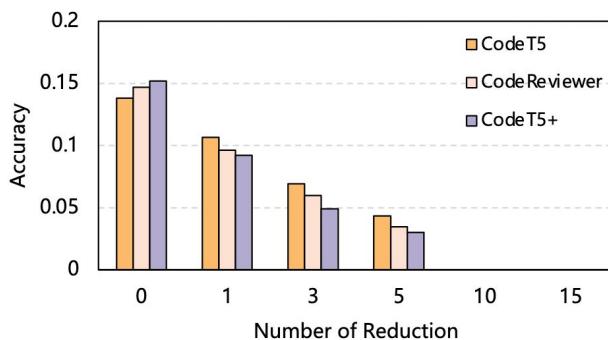


Figure: Impacts of token reduction size

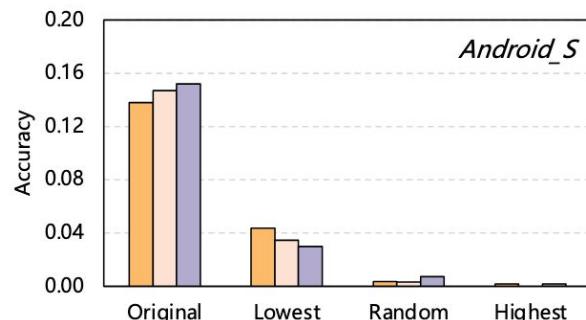
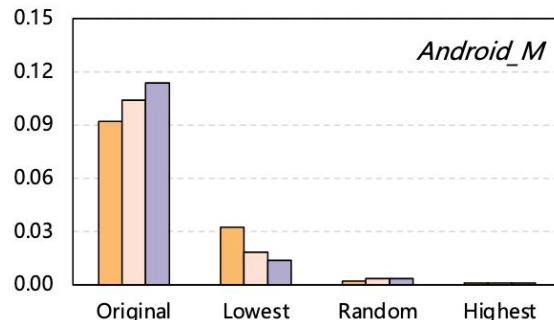


Figure: Impacts of input token reduction using different strategies
(reduction size = 5)



The results revealed that the removal of even a few tokens with the lowest feature importance can lead to a significant decline in performance.



Part I: Reliability of Evaluation Benchmark Datasets

- **Data Duplications exist between training and testing sets:** 11 out 12 benchmark datasets contain over 20% of test instances that are similar to the training set, leading to exaggerated and unrealistic performance
- **Data Duplication across Testing Sets:** 10 out of 12 contain duplicated source sequences within their test instances, despite requiring models to generate different targets (ground truth).
- **Poor Robustness on Low-quality Benchmark Datasets:** the removal of even a few tokens with the lowest feature importance can lead to a significant decline in performance.

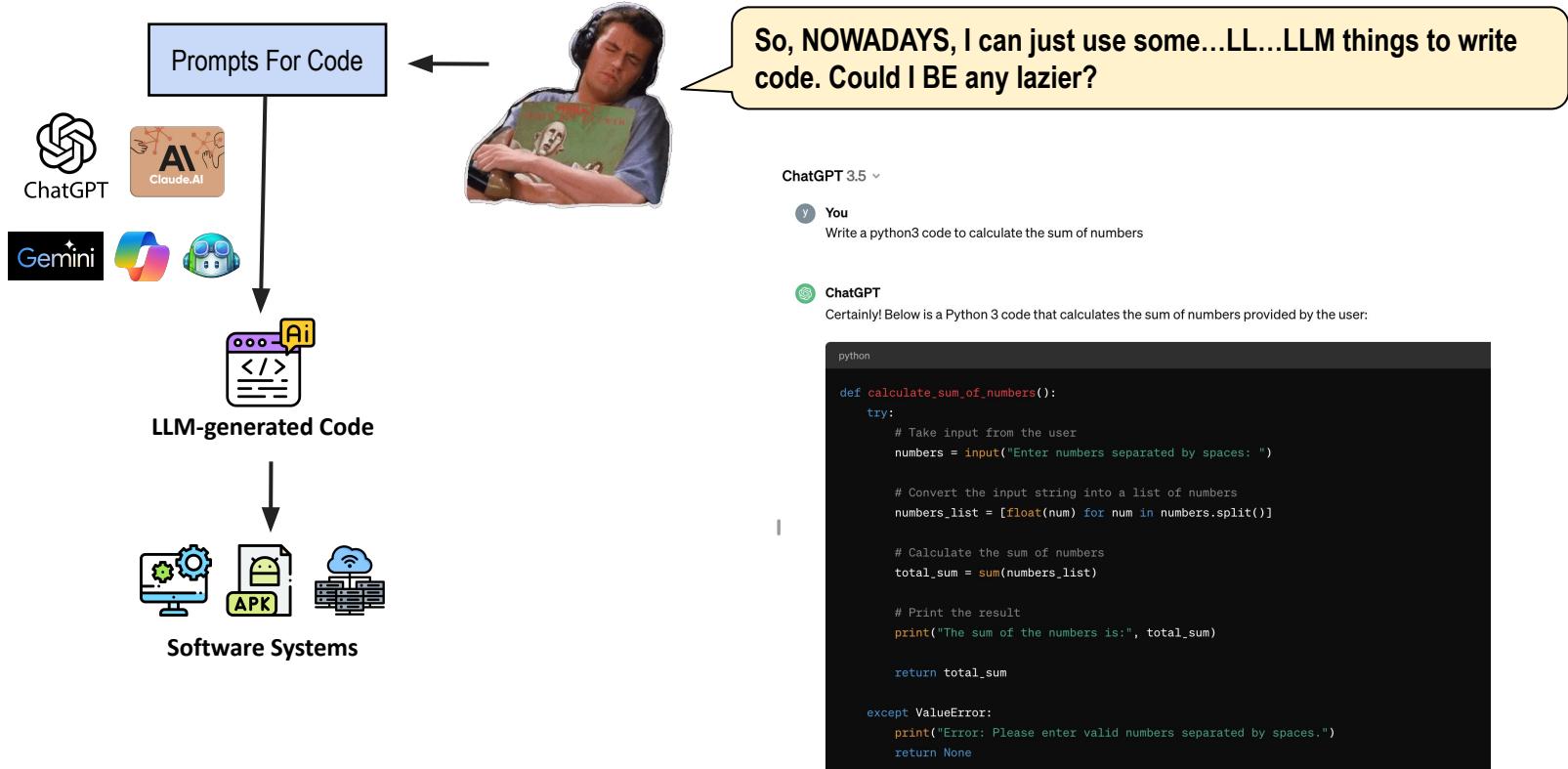
RQ1: Are evaluation benchmark datasets for LLM-based software development reliable, and how do they influence the reliability?

Answer: Data duplication and lack of diversity in benchmark datasets inflate performance metrics, leading to unreliable performance evaluations in LLM-based software development. This lack of reliability can result in poor model robustness, affecting the trustworthiness of the models.

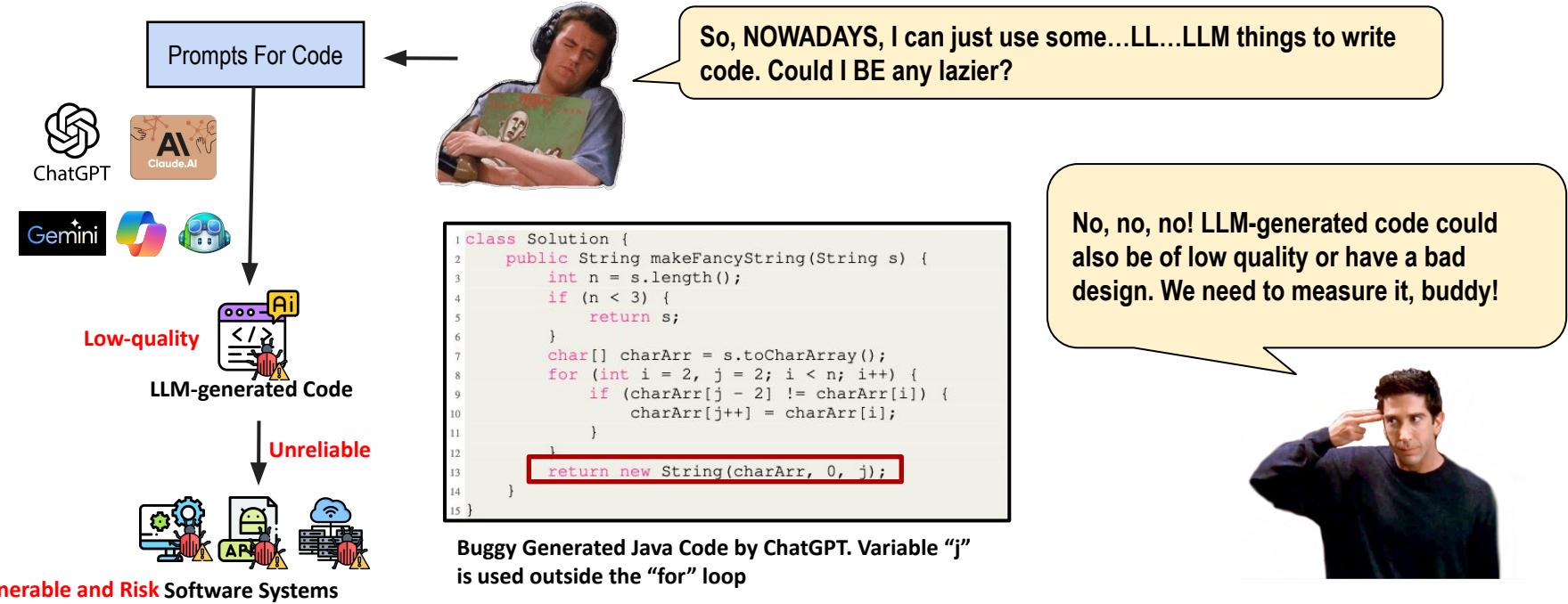
Future work: Improve reliability and quality of benchmark datasets; Develop more robust and trustworthy evaluation methods



Part II: Reliability of Code Generated by LLM-based Tools

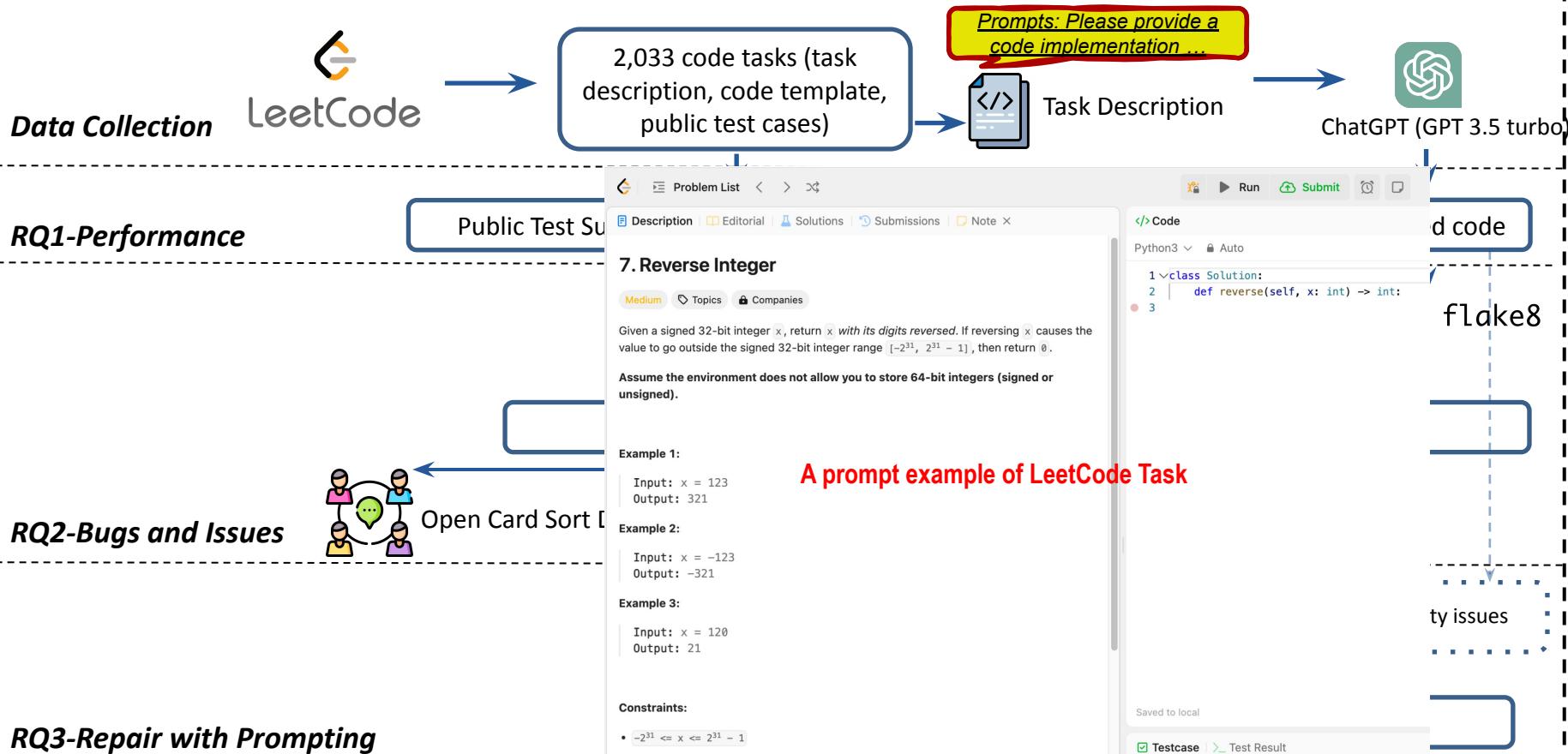


Part II: Reliability of Code Generated by LLM-based Tools



RQ2: Is the code generated by LLMs reliable enough to be applied in the real world?
How do they influence the reliability?

Part II: Reliability of Code Generated by LLM-based Tools



ChatGPT Can't Always Generate High-Quality Code

| | Easy (501) | | Medium (1064) | | Hard (468) | | Pass (2756) | Fail (1310) | Sum |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| | P | J | P | J | P | J | | | |
| Compilation and Runtime Error | 7 (1%) | 8 (2%) | 37 (3%) | 32 (3%) | 46 (10%) | 47 (10%) | 0 (0%) | 177 (14%) | 177 (4%) |
| Wrong Outputs | 47 (9%) | 60 (12%) | 290 (27%) | 260 (24%) | 229 (49%) | 196 (42%) | 0 (0%) | 1082 (83%) | 1082 (27%) |
| Code Style and Maintainability | 174 (35%) | 230 (46%) | 431 (41%) | 588 (55%) | 194 (41%) | 313 (67%) | 1243 (45%) | 687 (52%) | 1930 (47%) |
| Performance and Efficiency | 1 (0%) | 2 (0%) | 20 (2%) | 16 (2%) | 6 (1%) | 6 (1%) | 0 (0%) | 51 (4%) | 51 (1%) |

Key Findings

- Code quality issues commonly happen in both code that pass or failed test cases, highlighting the need for characterizing and addressing these concerns alongside the functional correctness.
- Issues in ChatGPT-generated code can be categorized into four categories: Compilation & Runtime Errors, Wrong Outputs, Code Style & Maintainability, Performance & Efficiency
- Wrong Outputs and Code Style & Maintainability issues are the most common challenges faced by the ChatGPT-generated code, while Compilation & Runtime Errors and Performance & Efficiency issues are less prevalent.

```
1 class Solution {
2     public String makeFancyString(String s) {
3         int n = s.length();
4         if (n < 3) {
5             return s;
6         }
7         char[] charArr = s.toCharArray();
8         for (int i = 2, j = 2; i < n; i++) {
9             if (charArr[j - 2] != charArr[i]) {
10                 charArr[j++] = charArr[i];
11             }
12         }
13     }
14 }
15 }
```

Generated Java Code. Variable "j" is used outside the "for" loop

ChatGPT Can't Always Generate High-Quality Code

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|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|------------|
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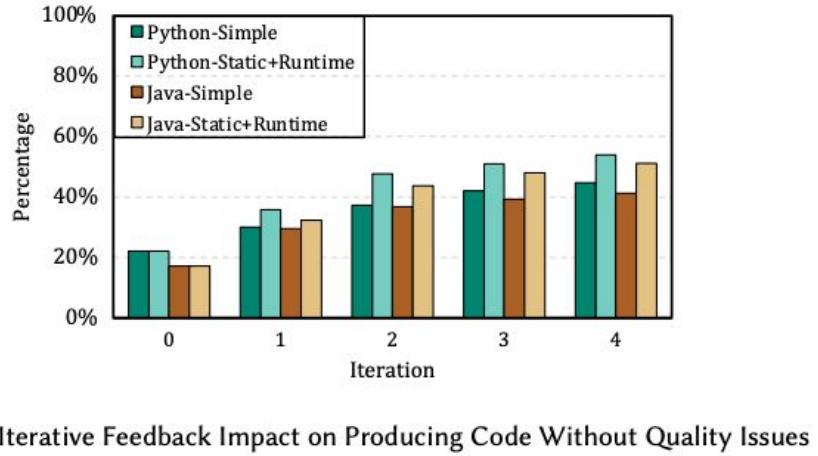
```
1 def getMinDistance(self, nums: List[int], target: int, start: int) -> int:
2     min_diff = float('inf')
3     min_index = -1
4     for i in range(len(nums)):
5         if nums[i] == target:
6             diff = abs(i - start)
7             if diff < min_diff:
8                 min_diff = diff
9                 min_index = i
10    return min_diff
```

"min_index" is unused -> smelly code

Repairing Code Quality Issues with Prompting

Prompt Strategies

- Simple feedback (No details)
- Feedback from static analysis and compiler
- Iterative feedback



Key Findings

- Prompts with detailed feedback can effectively assist ChatGPT in self-repairing code quality issues, whereas ambiguous feedback may have a negative impact on ChatGPT's performance.
- Iterative repairing proves to be effective, particularly when guided by detailed feedback that incorporates static analysis and runtime errors.

Part II: Reliability of Code Generated by LLM-based Tools

- **ChatGPT-generated Code Include Low-quality Issues:** Issues in ChatGPT-generated code can be categorized into four categories: Compilation & Runtime Errors, Wrong Outputs, Code Style & Maintainability, Performance & Efficiency
- **Repairing Code Quality Issues with Prompting is Useful:** Prompts with detailed feedback can effectively assist ChatGPT in self-repairing code quality issues

**RQ2: Is the code generated by LLMs reliable enough to be applied in the real world?
How do they influence the reliability?**

Answer: While LLMs like ChatGPT can generate code when developing software, this code often contains low-quality elements such as bugs or code smells, which can affect overall reliability.

Future work: Enhance LLMs' self-repair capabilities through improved prompting strategies; Establish robust evaluation means to ensure high code quality standards.



Part III: Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Applications



Could I be any more free? These LLM-based software development tools in my IDEs are my Joey. They're my lobster in the coding sea. I don't just use them, I rely on them. They're knocking on productivity's door!



Software Development Environment



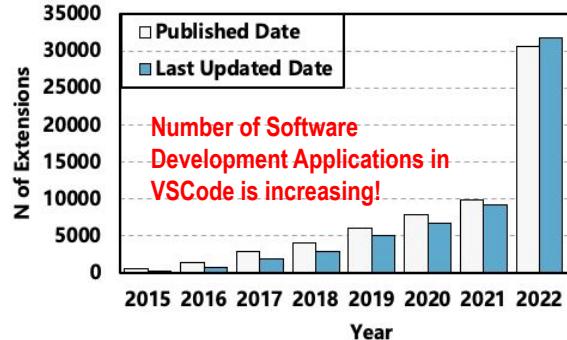
Software Development Applications in IDEs



Higher Productivity for Software Developers

- Code Generation
- Code Repair
- Code Translation
- Code Review
- Code Completion
- Code Understanding
- Code Commit
- Generation
- Program Synthesis
-

```
index.js x
1 // @ts-nocheck
2 const fs = require('fs');
3 const https = require('https');
4
5 function saveImageToDisk(url, localPath) {
6   const file = fs.createWriteStream(localPath);
7   const request = https.get(url, function(response) {
8     response.pipe(file);
9   });
10 }
11
12 function colorString(fill) {
13   return `rgba(${Math.round(fill.color.r * 255)}, ${Math.round(
14     fill.color.g * 255)}, ${Math.round(
15     fill.color.b * 255
16   )}, ${fill.opacity ? fill.opacity : fill.color.a});`;
```



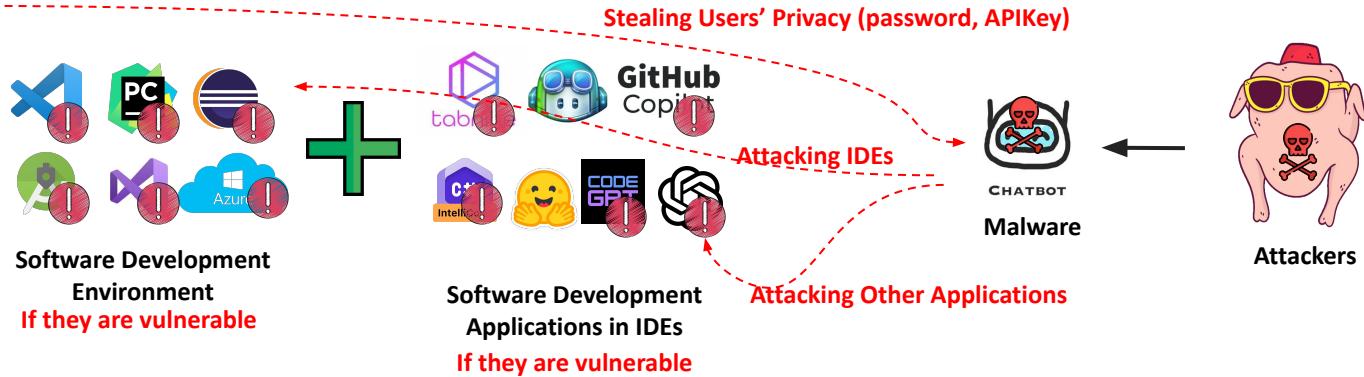
The search results of LLM tools in the VSCode marketplace

A screenshot of the VSCode Marketplace interface. A search bar at the top has the text "LLM" entered. Below it, a list of extension cards is displayed, each with a small icon, the name of the extension, a brief description, and its rating. The extensions listed include GitHub Copilot, GitHub Copilot Chat, Azure Machine Learning, Blackbox AI Code Generation, and several others related to AI and LLM integration.

Part III: Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Applications



Could I be any more free? These LLM-based software development applications in my IDEs are my Joey. They're my lobster in the coding sea. I don't just use them, I rely on them. They're knocking on productivity's door!



No, no, no! Y'know, sometimes, you just can't trust completely. We don't know weather IDEs or applications are secure. Hackers could be out there and attack you. It's like when I lost my sandwich, you just never know when it's going to happen!

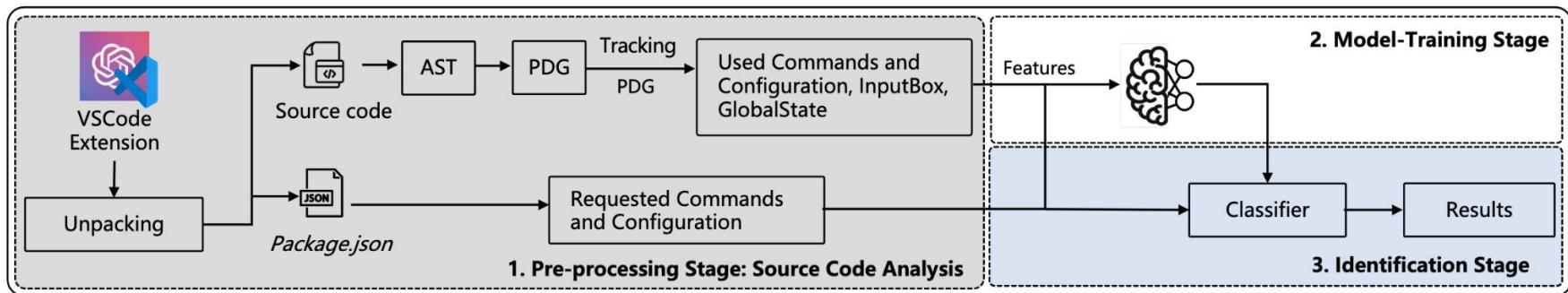
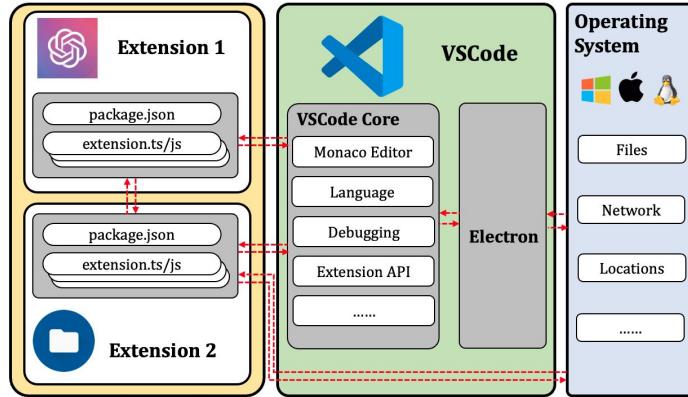


**RQ3: Are LLM development tools in our development environment reliable for use?
How do they influence the reliability?**

Development Environment (VSCode)

Key Differences from popular software ecosystem:

- **No Permission Protocols:** Extensions can access resources or carry out functions without permission granted by the host apps;
- **Event-Driven Activation:** Extension is launched by specific events;
- **Framework Differences:** A set of privileged official APIs



Security Risks for VSCode Extensions

- **Improper Credential Storage:** Despite the design of VSCode extensions to operate in isolation, not all data within an extension is isolated. Attackers can access other extensions' configuration and storage (Tabnine, EasyCodeAI).



The screenshot shows the Tabnine extension page in the VSCode Marketplace. At the top, there's a large purple hexagonal logo. Below it, the title "Tabnine: AI Autocomplete & Chat for Javascript, Python, Typescript, PHP, Go, Java & more" is displayed, along with the URL "tabnine.com". It shows 7,168,184 installs and a 4.2/5 rating from 551 reviews. A "Free" badge is present. The description highlights Tabnine as an AI coding assistant that generates code, writes unit tests, and explains legacy code across various languages like JavaScript, Python, Java, and TypeScript.

Below the main description are two buttons: "Install" and "Trouble Installing?".

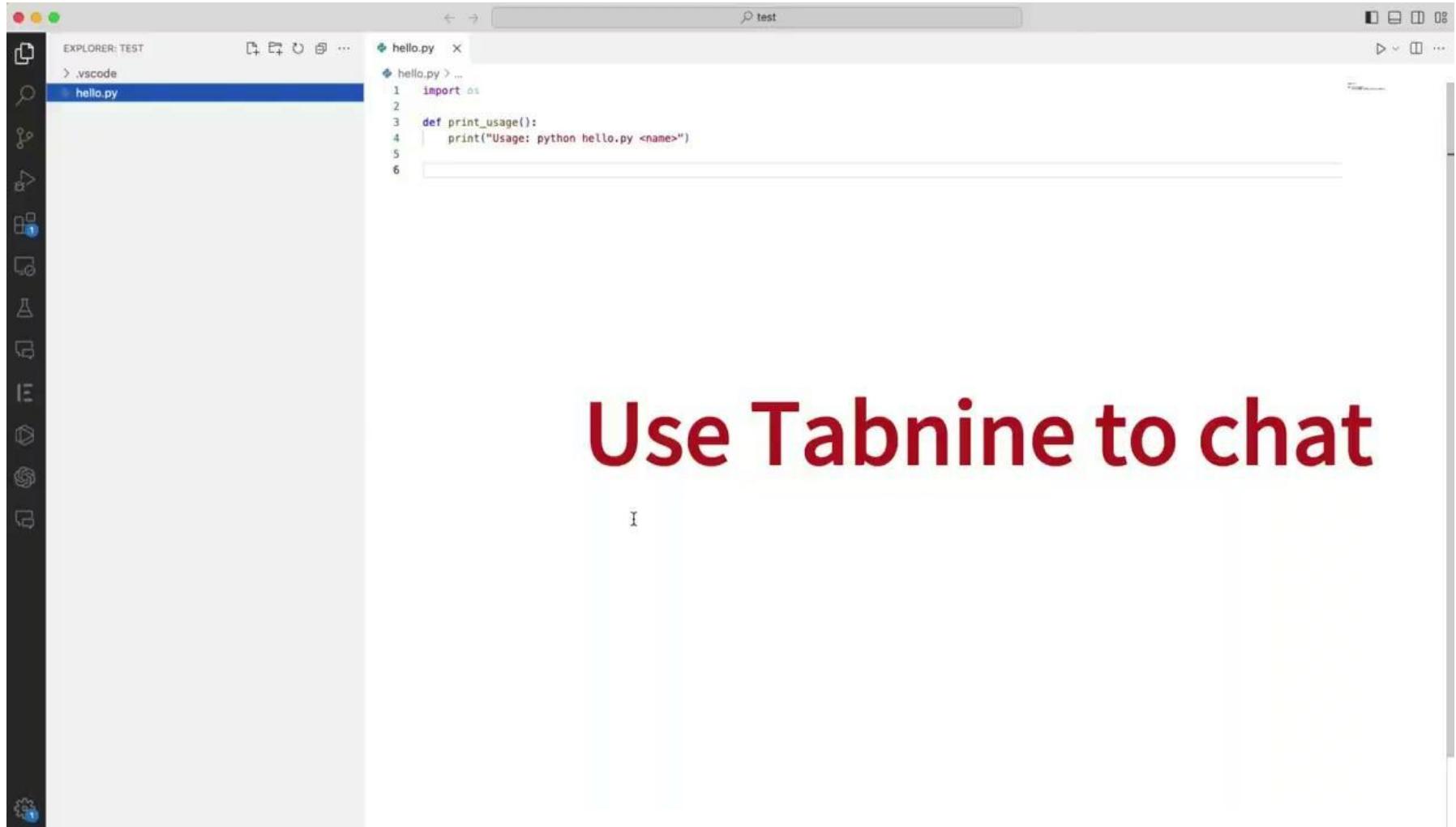
At the bottom of the main section, there are navigation links: "Overview", "Version History", "Q & A", and "Rating & Review".

Underneath the main content, there's a row of metrics: Stars (10k), Rating (4.2/5), Views (20M), Follow @Tabnine, Gitpod, and ready-to-code.

A sidebar on the right lists "Categories" such as Programming Languages, Snippets, and Machine Learning, with "Education" also listed. Below that is a "Tags" section containing a grid of labels for various programming languages and features like "ai", "autocomplete", "bash", "c", "c#", "c++", "chat", "code completion", "cpp", "csharp", "css", "documentation", "go", "golang", "haskell", "html", "intellisense", "java", "javascript", "julia", "jupyter", "keybindings", "kite", "kotlin", "lua", "method completion", "node", "nodejs", "nodejs", "objective-c", "objective-c", "ocaml", "perl", "php", "python", "react", "refactor", "ruby", "rust", and "snippets".

Two sections of text are visible at the bottom:

- "AI assistant for software developers":
 - Note: This extension is NOT for Tabnine Enterprise self-hosted customers.
 - This extension is for Tabnine's Starter (free), Pro and Enterprise SaaS users only.
 - Tabnine Enterprise users with the self-hosted setup should use the Tabnine Enterprise extension in the [VSCode Marketplace](#).
 - Learn more about Tabnine Enterprise and self hosting options [here](#), or talk to a [Tabnine Enterprise expert](#).
- "Code faster with AI code completions"



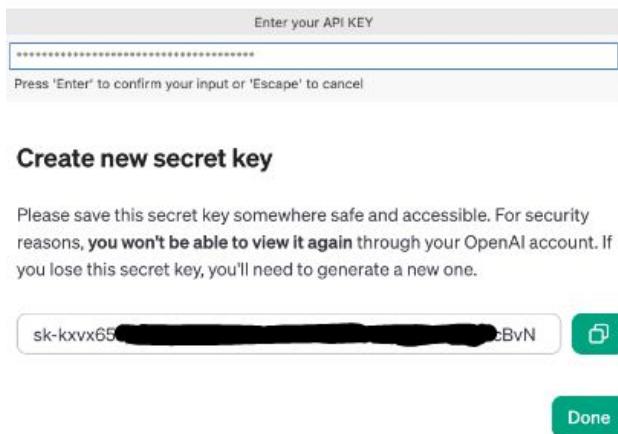
A screenshot of the Visual Studio Code (VS Code) interface. The title bar shows "test". The Explorer sidebar on the left lists "EXPLORER: TEST", ".vscode", and "hello.py" (which is selected). The main editor area displays the following Python code:

```
1 import os
2
3 def print_usage():
4     print("Usage: python hello.py <name>")
5
6
```

Below the code editor, there is a large red text overlay that reads "Use Tabnine to chat".

Security Risks for VSCode Extensions

- **Access to In-Extension Sensitive Storage:** Despite the design of VSCode extensions to operate in isolation, not all data within an extension is isolated. Attackers can access other extensions' configuration and storage (Tabnine, EasyCodeAI).
- **Clipboard Snooping:** Clipboard snooping is a security threat that malicious extensions can use to access the clipboard and steal sensitive information that users copy from other sources.



Security Risks for VSCode Extensions

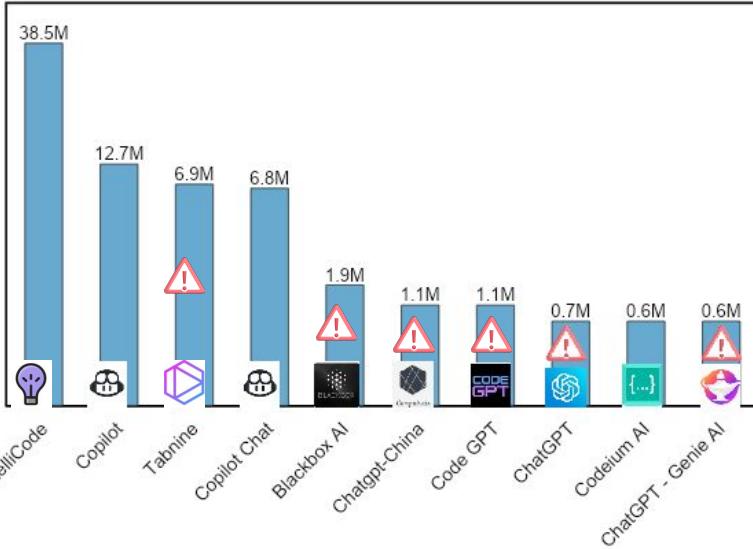
- **Access to In-Extension Sensitive Storage:** Despite the design of VSCode extensions to operate in isolation, not all data within an extension is isolated. Attackers can access and update other extensions' configuration and storage (e.g., Tabnine, EasyCodeAI).
- **Clipboard Access:** Clipboard snooping is a security threat that malicious extensions can use to access the clipboard and steal sensitive information that users copy from other sources (e.g., Chat-GPT).
- **Credential Control:** Extensions can define commands to control various operations, including handling sensitive information. Other extensions can execute these operations using the official API `commands.executeCommand`. (e.g., CodeGPT)

| Exposed Type | Items per Exts | # Extensions | Total |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Storage Access | GlobalState | 1.38 | 316 (18.0%) |
| | Requested Configuration | 1.43 | 1205 (9.6%) |
| | Used Configuration | 1.23 | 295 (2.7%) |
| Clipboard Access | InputBox | 1.22 | 620 (11.5%) |
| Credential Control | Requested Commands | 1.65 | 593 (2.7%) |
| | Used Commands | 1.43 | 458 (2.3%) |

Security Risks for VSCode Extensions

Key Findings

- Out of the extensions analyzed, 2,325 pose a risk of leaking credentials ;
- For LLM-based software development applications, relying more on privacy can lead to more risk. Bad software design can make it difficult to deal with this risk.



Aaron Dill <aaron0030@gmail.com>
to me +

I'm happy to inform you that I have taken your advice and updated my extension to use OAuth2 and SecretStore.

Please let me know if you've detected any other security issues I haven't yet considered!

Luis Gustavo Nunes
to me +

Hello, thanks for the warning. I encrypted the sensitive info and uploaded the new version of the extension.

Maximilian-David Rumpf <max@oldai.ai>
to me, Committer +

Hi,

Thanks for your findings. What is your suggestion to improve the configuration?

Kind regards,
Nikita Petelin.

ep. 7 Brie 2024, 20:11 Yue report@nicalulus.net

Part III: Reliability of LLM-based Software Development Applications

- **Exposure of User Credentials in VSCode Extensions:** Our analysis of 27,261 real-world VSCode extensions revealed that 8.5% (2,325 extensions) are vulnerable to credential-related data leaks. These leaks can occur through various channels, including commands, user inputs, and configurations.

RQ3: Are LLM development applications in our development environment reliable for use? How do they influence the reliability?

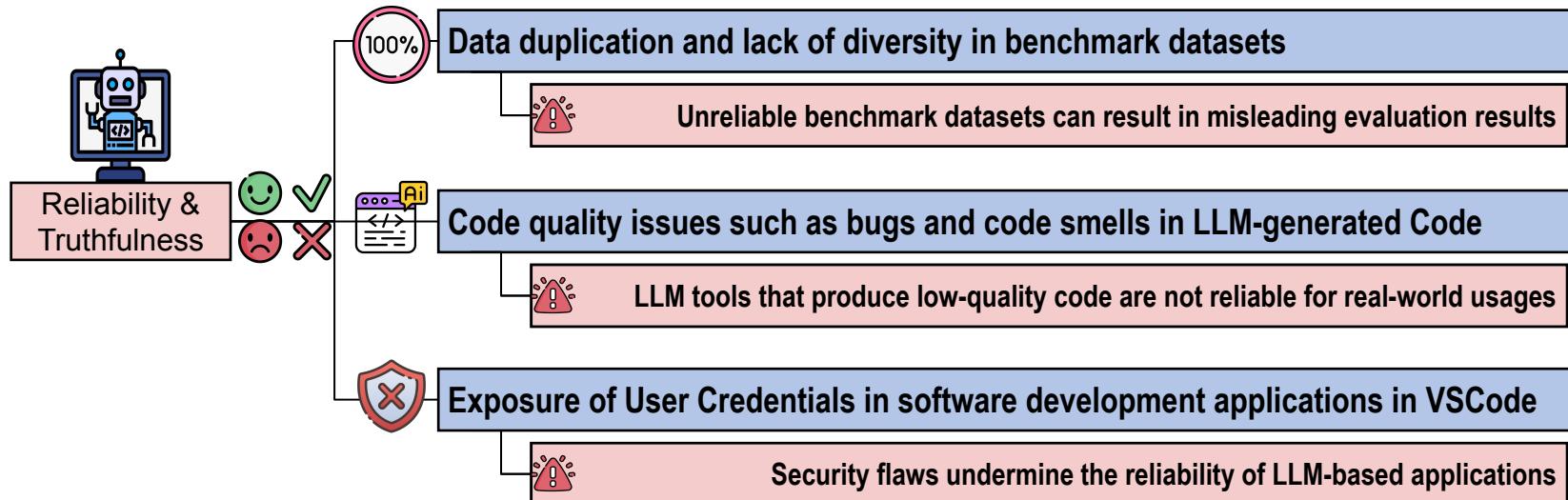
Answer: The current state of LLM-based development applications is not sufficiently reliable. They have security flaws that could potentially leak users' private data, such as credential-related information.

Future work: Enhancing the security and reliability of LLM-based development tools is crucial.



Summary

Overarching RQ: What are the key factors/issues that could impact the reliability of LLM-based software development tools, and how do they influence their reliability?



Future Work

- Prompt design for reliable LLM-based software development tools;
- Explore strategies to help the LLM learn from developers' activities in IDEs, with the aim of enhancing both efficiency and productivity;
- Impact of LLM vulnerabilities on LLM-based software development applications;



Could I BE any more excited? Reliable LLM-based software development tools have turned me into the Chan-Chan Man. I'm as free as a bird!



More time at home? Now you'll have more time to help me organize the spice rack and perfect our lasagna recipe! This is the best news ever!



Oh...my...GAWD! Y'know, this reliable LLM thing? It's gonna put Chandler Bing right out of a J-O-B-B-Y job! No more coding for him!

A group of six people are gathered around a dining table, smiling and holding glasses, suggesting a celebratory meal. The setting is a kitchen decorated for Thanksgiving, with a large wreath on the door, colorful flowers on the counter, and various autumn-themed decorations. A white refrigerator is visible in the background.

**Sincere thanks to everyone
who supported and helped me
throughout my 5-year PhD journey!**