ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF AI-GENERATED CONTENT IN COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA STUDIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Artificial intelligence (AI) and automated technologies have made great inroads into tertiary education across the globe including Nigeria. Communication and Media Studies is one of the areas where the impact is already being felt as students rely on automated technologies to generate content for their class assignments and projects. With the unbundling of Mass Communication into several departments across university and polytechnic systems in Nigeria, raising ethically minded individuals and professionals across the different dimensions of communication and media studies has been placed in the front burner. AI use has become increasingly compounded by the non-availability of a regulatory framework in Nigeria's educational system. Employing qualitative literature review, this study leans on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as its theoretical framework to expose the use of AI tools and the ethical implications of their use in media studies in Nigeria. The study recommends a paradigm shift in media literacy to include developing technical skills and technologically innovative tools for the detection of AI-generated content.*

KEYWORDS: Artificial intelligence; AI; Journalism; Media studies; Mass communication; Ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has made a giant stride into diverse professions including media as its increasing use in media practice has resulted in the transformation of media production, distribution and audience engagement. Its presence revolutionises sectors like education and school leadership (Uche, 2024; Obiora & Uche, 2024), enables effective paywall usage in online newspaper (Obiora & Uche, 2023a), enhances film production (Obiora & Adikuru, 2024a), promotes intervention strategy through creation of memes and emojis (Obiora et al., 2025; Obiora & Adikuru, 2024b), paves ways for authors to create content and have convenient processes of book publishing (Uche & Obiora, 2022), cements media convergence and public relations (Obiora, 2024), changes the way advertising practitioners operate (Nwodu et al., 2025; Dunu et al., 2017), and creates avenues for health communicators to achieve societal development (Ezeaka, 2024a; Ezeaka & Umennebuaku, 2024). This development represents a paradigm shift in knowledge management, decision-making processes, and work structures between humans and technological advancement with experts and researchers (Pate, 2024; Murray et al., 2020; Diakopoulos, 2019; Carlson, 2018; Bakir & Andrew, 2018; Caswell & Dörr, 2017; Schwab, 2017; Diakopoulos & Koliska, 2017) expressing ethical concerns about the use of AI.

A major area that AI has impacted is automation which has revolutionised media practice. Some experts in media practice are of the view that AI by automating basic routine tasks, offers practitioners the freedom to focus m, ore on strategic and investigative reporting (Obiora, Nwammuo & Nwammuo, 2025; Nwodu, 2025; Team EMB, 2023; Marconi, 2020; Beckett, 2019). AI tools can help practitioners with content production by handling tasks such as new media ideation, that is, coming up with ideas for social media posts, thumbnail photos and titles. AI algorithms help to generate news stories from structured data. Reuters, The Associated Press, The Washington Post and Bloomberg have adopted such automation in their media practice. This robot journalism delivers news content at a speed and scale that humans cannot attain thereby enhancing efficiency (Graefe, 2016; Dörr, 2016).

Through the deployment of natural language processing and machine learning, AI can unveil patterns in large amounts of data that will be almost impossible for manual processing and analysis. This enables media outlets to deliver news stories based on data that reveal serious and significant trends in society (Chua & Westlund, 2019). Data mining, visualisations and statistical techniques can be used to uncover crime and election results. Growth in data-driven media practice is significantly impacted by government open portals and transparency initiatives (Lewis & Westlund, 2015).

This AI data-driven media practice is very essential as it enables the media to hold the government and corporate organisations to account through in-depth investigative journalism. The massive fraud involving private individuals and high government officials as discovered by the Panama Papers remains a pointer to the importance of data-driven media practice (Ezeaka, 2024b; Wright, 2016). Through data-driven journalism, practitioners are poised to decipher patterns and trends in datasets that could have remained hidden (Coddington, 2015).

Furthermore, in media practice, AI enables content consumers and diverse media audiences to consume contents that are tailored to their particular interests (Thakkar et al., 2020; Wang, 2020). Through AI tools, media organisations can deliver news based on a user's preferences (Obiora & Uche, 2022). This is done through programmed instructions that focus on an

individual's online behaviour and activities across diverse sites including social media platforms. The algorithms analyse the individual's acts and recommend content that is in tandem with their interests (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018). Personalised news feeds, according to Dörr (2016), are rejigging how media audiences consume content; thus, enhancing audience engagement by making media practice more accessible and user-centric.

Facebook, Google News and other media platforms leveraging AI tools gather data in real-time from content consumers as they interface with the platforms. Their queries via clicks, and other online activities are documented for personalised attention whenever such sites and platforms are subsequently visited. This gives rise to echo chambers, a situation where users are exposed to only content that appeals to them (Uche & Obiora, 2016; Pariser, 2011). In the aspect of changing how business is done after the COVID-19 lockdown, the convergence of AI and social media has enhanced seamless online commercial activities for both traders and customers in spite of space and time (Obiora & Uche, 2023b; Obiora & Kenechukwu, 2021).

As AI continues to make great inroads in the media, innovative means of AI integration becomes essential (Kuo & Li, 2023). Aside from upscaling and enhancing both media students and professionals' skills, Nigerians need to exercise caution while employing AI and automated tools in academia due to high proclivity towards abuse. AI-generated content also presents algorithmic bias. Machine learning algorithms are trained on datasets that can depict biases which amplify existing social inequities and perpetuate stereotypes. Incidences of gender biases and racial discrimination are rife because of the use of some of these AI tools (AI Now Institute, 2020; Noble, 2018). Therefore, these unethical practices and professional problems that surround AI's usage ought to be addressed by all stakeholders (Pate, 2024; Uche et al., 2024; Horska, 2020; Sukhodolov et al., 2019). Academics, especially in media studies in Nigeria must ensure that future media professionals are equipped with critical thinking skills and ethical frameworks to responsibly practice in an AI-infested mediasphere.

In this study, media studies, communication and media studies and media education refer to the same concept. The terms are used interchangeably in this study.

Statement of the Problem

AI-generated content has been applied across media and communication fields including advertising, journalism, entertainment and social media. This integration of AI especially in media has resulted in massive transformation in the profession with its consequent ethical implications both for the professionals and students of media studies. These days, news agencies employ AI in the automation of reports for routine events such as sports and weather (Marconi & Siegman, 2017). AI tools have also been used to create audio-visual images that can represent real events and personalities through deepfake technology. This development has influenced governance and politics as these AI-driven technologies have become great tools for disinformation, misinformation and manipulation.

AI-generated content is increasingly becoming indistinguishable from human-created media content. From super-realistic synthetic media and deep fakes to algorithm generated news stories, AI is transforming the media news production process posing a significant challenge to the cherished principles of media accountability, authenticity and objectivity. Thus, the boundaries between human and machine authorship have become increasingly blurred (Anagba et al., 2025; Uche et al., 2024; Chesney & Citron, 2019; Buchanan, 2019). According to Wardle

(2019), this scenario has serious implications as fake reportage can influence behaviour by altering public opinion.

Thus, AI-generated content presents both opportunities and ethical dilemmas. The lack of clear ethical guidelines and understanding of AI applications in the field of communication and media further complicates its adoption. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the ethical considerations and practical applications of AI-generated content in media studies in Nigeria. Hence, the objectives of this study are to examine the use of AI-generated content in communication and media studies in Nigeria, explore the practical implications and propose measures to ensure ethical usage.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative literature review to examine the practice and ethical implications of AI-generated content in media studies in Nigeria. The methodology focuses on synthesizing existing research to provide an in-depth understanding of the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in communication and media studies, using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a theoretical lens.

Theoretical Framework

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a theoretical framework designed to predict and explain user acceptance of innovative technology (Davis, 1989). TAM is hinged on two core variables or constructs that determine the acceptance of any new technology or innovation. The variables are perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). Perceived usefulness (PU) refers to the prospective users' subjective belief that deploying a given system or technology would enhance their job performance in the context of their organization whereas perceived ease of use (PEOU) indicates the extent to which an individual believes that using a particular technology will be free of much stress or effort. Technology acceptance is noted aside from approval, as the favourable and steady utilisation of innovative technology (Umrani & Ghadially, 2008). TAM has been significantly modified to enhance its applicability across different contexts with PU also seen from the context of a system adding to a user's task performance (Davis et al., 1989; Davis, 1989). Both PU and PEOU influence a user's Attitude Toward Using (ATU) and Behavioural Intention to Use (BI), which are critical predictors of actual system use. TAM has been extended to include additional factors such as social influence and facilitating conditions; thus, further enhancing TAM's predictive power (Venkatesh, Thong & Xu, 2016).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in relation to the topic 'Practice and Ethics of AI-Generated Content in Media Education in Nigeria', provides a framework for understanding the use of AI tools in media education particularly as the constructs of perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) help to underscore media students' preference for AI tools for their media education.

Most of the students of media studies are computer literate and internet savvy, thus they can easily navigate the terrains of AI with much ease coupled with their inquisitive mind and high propensity to learn, relearn, adopt and adapt to innovative technology. This is in line with the two constructs of TAM and thus underpinned this work.

AI in Media Studies

There are diverse ways that AI tools have been deployed in media studies, some of which include:

Simulated Reportage

AI can transform how communication and media is taught and learned. AI has the capacity to simulate news coverage and as such equip media students with reportorial skills in a controlled and safe environment that will help them at graduation. It should however be noted that virtual experiences often lack the human touch which exists in a physical world which are important in specific types of learning (Tang & Cooper, 2024).

Personalised Learning

Leveraging AI enables educators to trade off one-size-fits-all traditional model of teaching thereby providing interactive and personalised teaching-learning experience for students. AI has capacity to assess and deeply analyse students' learning patterns; thereby enhancing personalised learning beyond just making recommendations (Almasri, 2024; Zhai et al., 2021). Nonetheless, personalised learning systems depend mainly on the representativeness and quality of the data they are trained on which are equally susceptible to algorithmic bias (Almasri, 2024).

Inclusive and Targeted Learning

The use of AI in media studies can ensure an enhanced interactive and immersive learning environment that makes communication and media studies accessible and engaging to students with different needs and from diverse backgrounds. The media educators can track and assess students' learning outcomes thereby creating the needed space for support and targeted attention. These interventions will benefit the students in so many ways including immediate feedback on their academic performance and addressing knowledge gaps to enhance understanding for better performance in their chosen career.

Areas of AI use in Media Studies by Nigerian Students

Students of communication and media studies have relied heavily on AI to help them in different areas to accomplish diverse tasks that have direct impact on their academic career such class work and project writing through the following ways:

Grammar and Fact-Checking: AI-driven apps like Grammarly help students of media studies with real-time grammar checks, offering suggestions for improved writing to ensure conciseness and precision of language. Apart from class works, take-home assignments are equally edited relying on Grammarly. This enhances their work and makes them look like professionals. Furthermore, generative AI such as ChatGPT and Meta AI equally assist them in writing media content. These students can generate outlines and ideas, research certain topics of interest among others by simply deploying these AI tools. AI also helps media students to check the accuracy of information by scanning and verifying databases where content is generated. Certain AI algorithms can cross-check statistics, and flag suspicious news items and quotes to mitigate falsehood and misinformation (Graves, 2018). Thus, ensuring efficiency, accuracy and proper time management which could have been lost on long hours of writing, proofreading and editing (Bradshaw, 2018).

Translation and Summarisation: AI-driven translation and summarisation tools are particularly useful for breaking news and time-sensitive content. Many institutions that offer media studies and broadcasting courses usually have broadcast stations and editing rooms where they embark on practicals. AI can then condense lengthy articles into concise summaries for quick review by editors, making it easier to distribute information across multiple platforms. AI tools can also translate content into various languages, expanding the reach to global audiences. These tools can be customised to reflect local cultural sensitivities, as Montalvo and Núñez (2021) note, further supporting campus media in reaching diverse populations within the community.

Search Engine Optimisation and Content Editing: To optimise content for search engines, AI tools analyse keywords and audience engagement patterns to create compelling headlines and improve SEO. This ensures that content ranks well in search results, driving visibility and audience reach (Dick, 2020). AI-generated headlines are crafted to capture attention while maintaining alignment with an article's content. Beyond SEO, headline crafting and text editing, AI tools assist with image and video editing by automating tasks like light adjustment, cropping, transcription, and captioning. AI-powered systems can summarize video content and generate captions, enabling editors to focus on more intricate aspects of media production. This automation streamlines the workflow, allowing for faster and more efficient content delivery.

Personalisation of Content: AI enables personalised content recommendations by analysing user behaviour and browsing history. This customisation allows student editors and journalists to tailor content to specific audience preferences, enhancing user engagement. Research by Thurman and Schiffers (2019) supports the idea that personalised content can improve audience retention and satisfaction by aligning with individual interests.

Implications of AI-generated Content on Media Studies

The use of AI-generated content raises ethical concern that often include:

Quasi Media Professionals

The unethical practices inherent in unregulated AI use in media studies have the potential of churning out semi-media professionals. These poorly trained and unethically minded media practitioners will do disservice to the journalism profession. Already the media space is filled with citizen journalists from diverse backgrounds who lack the necessary training and requisite qualifications for media practice (Uche, 2024). This set of individuals who battle for audience's attention with their different content coupled with unethically, poorly trained and AI-influenced media graduates will sound the death knell for the journalism profession.

Academic Fraud

One of the major areas of ethical concern as it relates to media studies is the matter of project writing. Students have often relied on generative AI especially ChatGPT to write their project and theses. Aside from that, students taking Critical Writing and Review in their Media Studies often resort to ChatGPT and Meta AI to help them with most of their assignments such as literary reviews and media content analysis. This unethical practice promotes cheating and makes the students lazy, academically poor and deficient in their course work.

Upsurge of Filter Bubbles and Bias

AI also raises ethical concerns around personalised news. With AI, questions of transparency, bias and "filter bubbles" (where people see only certain types of information) are on the rise (Pariser, 2011). The risk of isolating certain news items and diverse voices remains a significant threat engendered by personalised news delivery as one of the democratic functions of media practice which is to inform the public or media audience from a broad and balanced perspective becomes compromised (Bodo et al., 2019). Data privacy is another issue, as some third parties access media audiences' data without consent, which compromises journalistic integrity. According to Curry and Hammonds (2021), journalists (both professionals and students) face ethical challenges when AI infringes on privacy, especially in investigative reporting.

Dealing with Ethical Challenges

Ethics in AI-generated content extends beyond media studies to all areas of education. Thus, it calls for a holistic and all-embracing approach to address. All stakeholders in media education, including lecturers and students must be involved. There is the need for familiarisation of all with AI tools so that the uses, requirements and implications on academic integrity are known to curtail the level of abuse and misuse. AI in educational contexts is not just about technical issues but includes its implications to society regarding social justice, protection of intellectual property and individual's privacy (Hermansyah et al., 2023; Adams et al., 2022; Akgun & Greenhow, 2021; Uche et al., 2016).

Integrating AI into media studies and education in general presents ethical challenges, as it does in other fields of human endeavour. Lecturers and instructors in communication and media studies have often been confronted with ethical dilemmas. Assignments and class projects are performed sometimes in real time with generative AI such as ChatGPT and Meta AI since there seems to be low level of awareness to communication laws by these students as well as the students having indifferent attitude towards communication laws (Obiora & Onyeka, 2022; Onyeka & Obiora, 2021). Discerning educators have raised high concern about this new wave and way of cheating. Adams et al. (2022) aver that educators have a new obligation to re-evaluate their responsibilities towards ethical practice because of the integration of AI into educational settings as algorithmic biases engender and perpetuate inequities which need to be critically addressed.

There is a need to develop the needed ethical framework and policy for AI integration in educational settings irrespective of course of study. Beyond that, education should be holistic thus, character formation and reformation should be integrated in the deployment of AI in education both for students and teachers and even would-be-teachers irrespective of age and race (Cathrin & Wikandaru, 2023; Kiemde & Kora, 2022; Bozkurt et al., 2021).

RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

Investment in Tech and Source Disclosure: Since it is difficult for the unsuspecting media audience to distinguish between human-created content from AI-generated content, developing technologically innovative tools for the detection of AI-generated content becomes essential. This should incorporate the labelling of such content for the information of the media audience.

Media Literacy and Capacity Building: There should be proper and adequate training of media students regarding ethical requirements in media practice. The media audience on the other hand should be educated through enlightenment campaigns across traditional and new media to enhance their ability to evaluate media content. Educating the media audience to critically analyse content before consumption will help safeguard society from the danger of misinformation and disinformation.

Cross-sectoral Collaboration: Evolving ethical framework in media studies calls for the cooperation and collaboration of all stakeholders both in the education and media industry in Nigeria. This is to ensure that every needed input for a workable policy document is developed to cater for the needs of the academia and industry. This policy framework will specify the guidelines for the use of AI-generated content that meets industry standards. This will ensure and assure the credibility and integrity of media studies across training institutions in the digital age.

Pragmatic Pedagogy: There should be a pedagogical shift towards educating media students beyond media literacy to developing technical skills and knowledge about AI to enable them detect manipulations by critically assessing sources of media content and understand the implication of disseminating and passing off AI-generated content as human generated. To curtail algorithmic biases, media studies must also include a deliberate emphasis on AI training processes to ensure transparency in AI content creation and deployment. Training in media studies should also include programmes that specify both AI's potentials for disinformation and content verification.

CONCLUSION

As AI becomes an everyday phenomenon, media studies have the responsibility of addressing the ethical concerns surrounding its use especially among students and media professionals who rely on AI-content-generation tools. Admitted that AI tools can enhance creativity and productivity, nevertheless, these automated technologies come with certain risks especially when used to manipulate or represent reality. Therefore, lecturers and instructors in the field must have answers to the questions revolving around transparency, accountability and user consent. Media students of today who are the media professionals of tomorrow must not only have head knowledge but also develop technical and ethical reasoning skills for managing and responsibly deploying AI tools across diverse fields, such as journalism, advertising, public relations, strategic communication, film and multimedia studies. AI being an evolving technology, all stakeholders - developers, media students, educators and users in the media industry must exercise a high level of caution to preserve the highly cherished media principles of accuracy, objectivity, fairness and trustworthiness.

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