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Chapter Seven



Combating Deepfakes through Awareness Creation: The Role of the Media

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Abstract

This chapter appraised the role of the media in combating deepfakes in Nigeria. It examined the dangers of deepfakes in Nigeria, highlighting the various sectors where deepfakes have featured prominently, and undermined public trust to include politics, the media, as well as individual lives. Anchored on Agenda Setting theory, the chapter highlighted the concerns of deepfakes ranging from its potential to be used for malicious purposes at the individual level, the ability of deepfakes to promote false propaganda, alter historical records, create fake

scientific evidence and court statement, commit virtual crimes, as well as corporate blackmail. The chapter proceeded to mirror the role of the mass media in combating deepfakes among which were awareness creation on authenticating deepfake contents, educating the public on existing legislative remedies, as well as sensitizing the people on available detection and verification tools. The chapter concluded that addressing the issue of deepfakes in Nigeria required a multifaceted approach, including legal reforms, technological advancements, but most of all public enlightenment. Hence, the media's role in combating deepfakes through awareness creation is indispensable. It maintained that, such proactive approach will not only help to mitigate the immediate risks posed by deepfakes but also foster a more informed and resilient society capable of navigating the challenges of the digital age.

Keywords: Deepfakes, Awareness, Mass media, Artificial Intelligence, Combating

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has continued to evolve, churning out several associated technologies. One of such technologies is the Deepfakes. As novel as it is, it has come with several concerns. Deepfake technology, which uses artificial intelligence to create hyper-realistic but fake videos, audio recordings, and images, has garnered global attention due to its potential to deceive and manipulate public perception. In Nigeria, the rise of deepfake technology poses significant concerns, ranging from political manipulation and social unrest to personal reputational damage and

economic fraud. Thus, the proliferation of deepfakes presents unique challenges and dangers, necessitating heightened awareness and proactive measures to mitigate its impact.

Nigeria is experiencing a rapid increase in digital media consumption. According to the *Nigeria Digital Economy Diagnostic Report* by the World Bank (2019), Internet penetration has grown substantially, with millions of Nigerians accessing digital content daily. This digital boom, while beneficial for information dissemination and connectivity, also makes the populace vulnerable to the manipulative capabilities of deepfake technology. More so, Nigeria's complex political landscape is susceptible to the destabilizing effects of deepfake technology (Okoro and Emmanuel, 2020). During elections and political campaigns, deepfakes can be used to spread misinformation, discredit political opponents, and influence public opinion. The 2019 general elections saw significant misinformation campaigns, underscoring the potential for deepfakes to exacerbate political tensions. In a country where ethnic and religious diversity can readily lead to friction, the spread of fake videos and audio can incite violence and social unrest.

In the same vein, the credibility of news and information is crucial in maintaining an informed citizenry. However, deepfakes can undermine trust in media outlets and social platforms, leading to a skeptical public that may struggle to distinguish between real and fake content (Ojebode, 2020). This erosion of trust can have long-term implications for democracy and governance, as people may become disillusioned with both the media and political institutions. Deepfakes equally pose economic threats. Financial scams using manipulated videos or audio to deceive individuals and organizations can result in significant financial losses (BBC News, 2019). For instance, a deepfake audio was used to trick

a UK-based energy firm into transferring \$243,000, demonstrating the potential economic damage this technology can inflict. In Nigeria, where digital financial services are growing, the risk of such scams is a pressing concern. Additionally, the Nigerian legal framework is currently ill-equipped to address the challenges posed by deepfakes. While there are laws against cybercrimes and defamation, the specific nuances of deepfake technology require updated regulations and enforcement mechanisms (Akinboade, 2021). This legal gap makes it difficult to prosecute offenders and protect victims adequately. In view of these multifaceted dangers, there is an urgent need for public awareness and education on the risks associated with deepfakes. .

Unarguably, collaboration between government agencies, tech companies, and civil society organizations can foster a resilient information ecosystem; awareness creation among the public on how to identify deepfakes, verify information, and report suspicious content is nevertheless essential. The proliferation of deepfake technology presents significant challenges that necessitate a comprehensive awareness campaign spearheaded by the mass media. In Nigeria, the mass media can play a crucial role in safeguarding political stability by educating the public on the dangers of deepfakes and how to identify them. During election periods for instance, media outlets can run dedicated segments and fact-checking initiatives to expose deepfake content. Accordingly, a report by the Center for Democracy and Development (2019) highlighted the surge of digital misinformation during Nigeria's 2019 elections, emphasizing the need for vigilant media practices to combat such threat. In the United States, media organizations like CNN and *The New York Times* have established teams to fact-check political content and debunk deepfakes. Adopting similar practices in Nigeria can help maintain the integrity of its democratic processes.

Also, by providing accurate information and debunking false content, the mass media can help maintain social trust. Regular programming on recognizing and understanding deepfakes, coupled with public service announcements, can educate the populace. Platforms like BBC News have been instrumental in highlighting how misinformation impacts social movements, and Nigerian media can emulate these efforts to strengthen social cohesion. In like manner, the Nigerian Communications Commission (2021) has acknowledged the need for updated regulations and public awareness to address digital threats. Media campaigns that highlight real-world examples of deepfake fraud and provide guidelines on prevention can enhance economic security. Consequently, the mass media can collaborate with financial institutions and cybersecurity experts to educate businesses and the general public about these threats. Awareness campaigns can include practical advice on how to verify communications and protect against deepfake fraud.

Additionally, mass media can offer platforms for experts in law and psychology to discuss the legal and personal ramifications of deepfakes. Educational programs can inform the public about their rights and the legal recourses available in cases of deepfake victimization. Internationally, outlets like *The Guardian* have published in-depth articles on the personal impacts of deepfakes, helping to raise awareness and advocate for victims. Nigerian media can adopt similar approaches to support affected individuals and promote legal reforms. In a nutshell, the mass media in Nigeria have critical roles to play in creating awareness about the concerns surrounding deepfakes. By educating the public, debunking false content, collaborating with experts, and advocating for regulatory reforms, the media can mitigate the negative impacts of deepfake technology. Against this backdrop, this chapter aims to examine the concerns of deepfakes in Nigeria,

and the role of the media in addressing such concerns through awareness creation.

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on Agenda Setting theory. This theory posits that the media help to put pictures in our heads, Lippman (1922). This explains the power of the mass media to set agenda and raise issues of public importance. Similarly, McCombs and Shaw (1972) wrote that members of the “audience not only learn about public issues through the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the media puts on it.” The justification of this theory lies in the fact that the news media ought to give adequate coverage to issues relating to deepfakes and its harmful effects on national security, particularly the artificial intelligence generated videos. In other words, if the mass media frequently discuss issues pertaining to the dangers of deepfakes and ways to identify it, the society will be well equipped with information that can help them avert the effects or violence that could be thrown up by such synthetic images.

Deepfakes

Deepfakes, is a combination of the terms “deep learning” and fakes. It describes the use of artificial intelligence for realistic image combination. Essentially, it is used to combine and superimpose existing images and videos onto source images or videos. Deepfake technology leverages on machine-learning algorithms to insert faces and voices into video and audio recordings of actual people and enable the creation of realistic impersonations out of digital whole cloth (Cole, 2018; cited in Chesney & Citron, 2019). The result is a realistic-looking video or audio making it appear as if someone said or did something. Although deepfakes can be created with the

consent of people being featured (example: Queen Elizabeth II 2020 Christmas broadcast), more often, they are created without it (Chesney & Citron, 2019). Deepfakes first rose to prominence in early 2018. At the time, a developer adapted cutting edge artificial intelligence techniques to create software that swapped one person's face for another (BBC News, 23 Dec., 2020). However, the process has since become much more accessible. There are now numerous apps that require just a single photo in order to substitute a real person's face for the fake one. Thus, in December, 2020, the technology was used to create a deepfake of Queen Elizabeth II, delivering a Christmas message on Channel 4. Channel 4 explained that the intention was to give a stark warning about fake news in the digital age (BBC News, 23 Dec., 2020).

An artificial intelligence (AI) technology called “generative adversarial networks” (GANs) is the primary source of deepfake technology; it combines two artificial neural networks to produce remarkably realistic images, videos, and sounds. GANs work by using a dataset of images, videos, or sounds to train a 'generator' and a 'discriminator', where the generator tries to create images that fool the discriminator into thinking they are real. Feeding a deep learning algorithm footage of two people trains it to swap faces, in other words (Eigbedion, 2021). Generative models can be used to produce three main types of deepfake videos: face-swap, lip-sync, and puppet-master. Face-swap videos, which replace a face with another person's face, are the easiest and lowest quality deepfake to produce (Dunard, 2021). Mobile applications such as Snapchat have had similar features for years, and face-swapping is often obvious, as there is usually little done to maintain consistencies such as face movements and position. Lip-sync videos use existing videos of people, and AI manipulates the movements of the mouth to fit new audio. A famous example of a lip-sync deep fake is the BuzzFeed News-

produced video of Barack Obama warning of the dangers that deepfakes and disinformation pose, with Jordan Peele serving as the voice actor (Dunard, 2021). The most realistic type of fake videos are puppet-master videos, where a performer acts and says things that they want the target to appear to be doing. Then, using AI tools, the video is used to animate the target as having said and done what the performer did.

Deepfakes in Nigeria

The spate of false conspiracies which thrived on WhatsApp in Nigeria as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, offers a relevant example of how fake messages can fuel misinformation. The present state of Nigeria makes her a tinder box that can be lit using one deepfake, and she may burn to the ground unless her citizens take the necessary precaution instead of looking at Artificial Intelligence as one distant future yet to materialize. Domestically, deepfakes pose a threat to Nigeria's political and economic processes by targeting specific politicians, business leaders, companies, and news events. They also have a high potential to be used in areas with less technological literacy and areas under less scrutiny, where false information can spread for longer periods without being detected. If used by hostile governments, deepfakes could even pose threats to Nigeria's security or impair her international relations (Green, 2019). Watts (2019) states that deepfake proliferation presents two clear dangers; over the long term, deliberate development of false synthetic media will target government officials, institutions and democratic processes with the goal of subverting democracy and demoralizing the citizens. In the near and short term, circulation of 'deepfakes' may incite physical demonstrations under false pretenses, initiate public safety crises and spark the outbreak of violence. Thus, countering disinformation campaigns and other malicious attacks that utilize deep fakes

will require more than just detection methods. Education and communication with the public will need to be part of any counteraction effort.

Consequently, one highlight of deepfake manifestation in Nigeria is that experienced by some members of staff of a notable television station in Nigeria, Channels. Channels television reports (Channels Television, 2024) how it spotted five deepfake videos, using the station's anchors and guests to deceive the unsuspecting public. According to the report, a terribly executed deepfake video and audiovisual flops were used to promote a mobile app for winning money, using the television anchor person, Mr Kayode Okikiolu. Another deepfake spotted was that of an advertisement on diabetes treatment using Chamberlain Usho; while another was a deepfake video promoting drugs for muscle pain using Nneota Egbe and Ayo Makinde. But the perfect video among them was the one that used Anne Nwaghodoh to promote a supposedly breakthrough treatment for hypertension and those of the NCDC director-general, Dr Ifedayo Adedifa (Channels Television, 2024). Accordingly, the station had to put out a disclaimer on their social media handles to notify members of the public. They reported the videos, and further notified relevant government agencies about the issue.

Another demonstration of deepfakes has been in the complex political landscape of the country, which is particularly vulnerable to the disruptive potential of deepfakes. Deepfakes can be weaponized to create false statements or actions attributed to political figures, potentially inciting violence or swaying public opinion unjustly. According to the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD), the 2019 general elections witnessed a surge in digitally manipulated content aimed at discrediting opponents and misleading voters.

Davis (2024) reports that some of the deepfakes seen during the Nigerian election were intended to enhance the public perception of Peter Obi, a presidential candidate with a large youth following. Obi also had the most engaged social media presence of all the candidates. There was a deepfake video of Hollywood actors endorsing Obi and a deepfake of Elon Musk and Donald Trump declaring support for him as well. Endorsements from celebrities or public figures from the West are considered a weighty validation of political campaigns, so those were two prominent examples targeted toward improving the public perception of a particular candidate.

Eleanya (2023) also reports that the lawyers of the Labour Party Presidential candidate for 2023, Mr. Peter Obi, filed a lawsuit against a Lagos-based online media company, People's Gazette, over a published audio purporting to reveal a private conversation between Obi and Bishop David Oyedepo, the founder of Winners Chapel, one of the largest churches in Nigeria. Eleanya (2023) captures the phenomenon thus: in the leaked audio, one of the men whose voice shared keen similarities to Obi's was urging the other man who is supposed to be Oyedepo to canvas for Christian votes for him. As of April 10, (2023), the leaked audio had been viewed (listened to) over 10.3 million times, according to twitter statistics. The audio, which was denied by the presidential candidate, was described as "deepfake" by his party. Although the Lagos-based online media company, People's Gazette said it stood by the authenticity of what was termed deepfake, it suspended the reporter who wrote the report over his reaction to complaints online; reactions that queried the integrity of the organization.

Likewise, there was a shallow fake video debunked by Reuters which showed Bola Tinubu facing criticism for an incoherent response during a Chatham House event during the campaigns. Another deepfake that made the rounds a few

hours to the voting was a manipulated audio of another candidate, Nigeria's former vice president Atiku Abubakar discussing plans to rig the election. That was a deepfake audio that had some impact on people's perceptions, judging by the audio's viral spread. Eleanya (2023) states that the Atiku, Okowa and Tambuwal audio, which was released prior to the February 25 presidential election had the three politicians supposedly plotting to rig the election by compromising the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Prof. Mahmud Yakub. Like Obi, Atiku dismissed the audio, describing it as fake and the work of political detractors.

The use of AI in forms of deepfakes in Nigeria's political history, also preceded the 2023 elections. The deepfake video on former Governor of Edo State and former APC National Chairman, Adams Oshiomole in a raw sex clip, with his face barely seen, was refuted and described as manipulative product of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Bosai (2012) explains that the "sex scandal" picture of Adams Oshiomhole, being circulated was manufactured by agents of failed individuals and/or politicians, using the technique to superimpose his face on another picture. A very close examination of the picture revealed his face was taken from a picture captured in a different engagement, and that the body of the man in the culled picture was far younger. In other climes, Menneses (2021) reports that the 2020 United States Presidential Election witnessed an overwhelming use of deepfakes in attempts to manipulate public opinion. Deepfake videos impersonating political figures, including candidates, were circulated on social media platforms. These videos often contained false statements or fabricated events, contributing to the spread of misinformation and confusion among voters.

In Brazil, Garcia (2019) observes that a video in May 2018, prior to Brazil's election showed Brazil's far-right president Jair

Bolsonaro dressed as Chapulin Colorado a famous character from 1970's Mexican Television show. The video went viral, reaching over 100,000 views on YouTube (and over 900,000 on Twitter) with a fake-Bolsonaro misquoting his own campaign slogan: "Brazil above everything, God above everyone". The 2018 Brazilian Presidential Election generally was marked by the widespread dissemination of fabricated videos and images targeting various political candidates. Deepfakes were used to create highly persuasive content, often depicting candidates engaging in illicit behaviour or expressing controversial opinions. Such content had the potential to mislead voters and undermine the credibility of candidates. This underscores the impact of deepfakes on public perception and the challenges faced in countering their influence.

Also, during the 2018 local elections in Taiwan, deepfake technologies were employed to manipulate the speeches of political candidates. By altering speech content or context, deepfake-generated videos aimed to damage the reputations of candidates and mislead voters. Reinl (2018) corroborates that China spread "fake news" via social media to swing Taiwanese voters away from President Tsai Ing-wen's party. Worst still, in late 2018 in Gabon, Dunard (2021) reports that a video intended to reassure citizens of President Ali Bongo's good health was called a deepfake by his political opponents. They pointed out that his eyes seemed immobile and did not move in sync with his jaw. Outside, experts following the controversy said that there was no way to know for sure if the video was a deepfake, but his opponents launched an unsuccessful coup as a result of their belief that it was. These deepfakes posed a serious threat to the credibility and fairness of the electoral process, demonstrating the potential for deepfakes to sway public opinion and influence election outcomes.

Economically, deepfakes present a new frontier for fraud. Cybercriminals can use AI-generated audio or video to impersonate business executives, leading to unauthorized transactions and significant financial losses. The Nigerian financial sector, which is already battling cybercrime, faces an increased threat from such sophisticated scams. Additionally, individuals may suffer reputational damage from deepfake content used to blackmail or defame, affecting their personal and professional lives. Unfortunately, Nigeria's legal framework currently lacks specific provisions addressing the creation and distribution of deepfakes. While existing laws on cybercrime and defamation provide some recourse, they are insufficient to tackle the unique challenges posed by AI-generated content.

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has acknowledged the need for updated regulations to address digital threats effectively. On the technological front, there is a growing need for advanced detection tools and public awareness campaigns. Tech companies and researchers are developing algorithms to identify deepfakes, but widespread implementation and public education are crucial. Collaborative efforts between the government, tech industry, and civil society are necessary to mitigate the risks associated with deepfakes.

Deepfakes: The National Concerns

- **Malicious Use against Individuals**

One of the most concerning aspects of deepfakes is their potential to be used for malicious purposes at the individual level, such as cyber-bullying, defamation, blackmail, or impersonating someone for financial gain. The technology is also being used to create deepfake pornography, which has raised concerns about the exploitation of individuals and the potential for abuse. In 2017, deepfake celebrity pornography, with faces of celebrities superimposed onto adult actresses

became a huge trend and was shared on Reddit and various pornography sites. This nightmare happened to prominent Indian journalist, Rana Ayyub, (Tillet & Gazis, 2019). In 2018, a pornographic video using Ayyub's face was shared over 40,000 times on social media platforms. Ayyub was forced to delete some of her social media accounts and stay offline, due to an influx of abusive messages, and rape threats.

- **Promotion of False Propaganda**

Deepfakes have the power to drive certain propaganda campaigns which can be used to manipulate public opinion and spread disinformation, ultimately leading to a distorted view of reality (Raath, 2024). For example, regarding the ongoing conflict with Russia, Ukrainian intelligence recently warned that a deepfake of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was being circulated, in which he is seen calling for Ukrainians to surrender. Despite many platforms taking the video down, it continues to pop up on several social media sites like Facebook, Reddit, and TikToksowing discord among the public and making it harder for them to discern the truth.

- **Alteration of Historical Records**

Deepfakes could also be used to alter historical records, such as footage of political speeches or important events in a way that changes people's memories of what actually happened. This could lead to confusion and uncertainty about what actually happened in the past, eroding public trust in historical records and media ultimately feeding into conspiracy theories (Raath, 2024). By allowing false narratives to spread unchecked, deepfakes can further polarize society and create fertile ground for disinformation campaigns. This, in turn, undermines the credibility of the media as tools for communication, which is critical for democracy and social cohesion.

- **Creation of Fake Scientific Evidence**

Deepfakes can be used to create fake scientific evidence to support an untrue claim or hypothesis. For example, deepfakes can create false scientific evidence that claims climate change is caused by external factors, which can have serious implications; policymakers may be less likely to take action to address climate change if there is widespread skepticism about its causes.

- **Creation of Fake Confessions or Statements in Court Cases**

Deepfakes could be used to create fake confessions or statements in court cases or to manipulate security footage to create alibis for criminals (Raath, 2024). This could lead to false narratives being created around the events of the crime, with people believing a) that the perpetrator didn't commit the crime or b) that an innocent person did. Over time, this false narrative could become ingrained in the collective memory of those involved in the case, with them believing it to be fact.

- **Goldmine for Criminal Organizations and Virtual Scams**

Deepfakes can be a goldmine for criminal organizations and virtual scams. A possible even larger concern than image and video manipulation is the ability of deepfake technology to mimic someone's accent, intonation, and speech patterns with incredible accuracy. While many people are familiar with Photoshop and the ability to alter images, deepfake technology, especially voice mimicry, is unknown to almost everyone outside of the data science and machine learning fields (Tillet & Gazis, 2019). Manipulated audio or synthesized speech can be used in virtual kidnapping scams where victims are often targeted through social media and receive phone calls demanding ransom for a loved one. These scams often include an actor in the background who screams for help. Victims who believe they hear their loved one on the other end

of the line transfer ransom money often before contacting the police. In a digital age where many parents share videos of their children online, this scam could easily be accelerated using deepfake audio (Tillet & Gazis, 2019).

- **Corporate Blackmail**

In the corporate sector, deepfakes can be used as a more heinous form of black-hat marketing. Companies could create deepfake videos of a rival company's CEO making defamatory or offensive statements and leak the videos via social media. The biggest concern however, is the usage of deepfakes to cause widespread civil unrest (Watts, 2018). Watts specifically voiced worries about China, whose AI capabilities rival the United States, and Russia. In a sort of modern version of war propaganda posters, foreign adversaries could use deepfakes to incite fear among citizens of a country; unfortunately, it is incredibly difficult to refute a falsified video after it has been watched. Robert and Danielle (2018) point out that deep fakes raise the stakes for the “fake news” phenomenon.

Deepfake and Synthetic Media Example Links

Channels television anchor persons:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bm-Sv3BgO4>

Obama BuzzFeed: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/craigsilverman/obama-jordan-peelee-deepfake-video-debunk-buzzfeed>

Queen Elizabeth's Christmas Speech: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/queen-deepfake-channel-4-christmas-message-b1778542.htm>

David Beckham Anti-Malaria PSA: <https://www.campaignlive.com/article/deepfake-voice-tech-used-good-david-beckham-malaria-campaign/1581378>

World Leaders Sing “Imagine”: <https://scifi.radio/2019/05/29/watch-world-leaders-sing-for-peace-in-canny-ais-imagine->

video/

Nancy Pelosi Doctored Video: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2020/08/11/fact-check-video-pelosi-altered-and-selectively-edited/3332920001>

Mark Zuckerberg: <https://www.technologyreview.com/2019/06/12/134992/facebook-deepfake-zuckerberg-instagram-social-media-election-video/>

Source: US Department of Home Land Security (n.d)

Typical scenarios in which realistic-looking videos and audio clips can be used to bolster lies include:

- i. Fake videos could feature public officials taking bribes, uttering racial epithets, engaging in adultery, or attending meetings with spies or criminals.
- ii. Soldiers could be shown carrying out extra-judicial killings in crisis-prone zones or certain regions in the country, precipitating waves of violence and even strategic harms to a war effort.
- iii. A deepfake might falsely depict a white police officer shooting an unarmed black man while shouting racial epithets.
- iv. A fake audio clip might “reveal” criminal behavior by a candidate on the eve of an election.
- v. A fake video might portray a government official doing or making defamatory statements about a neighboring country, potentially disrupting diplomatic ties or even motivating a wave of violence.

These examples emphasize how a well-executed and well-timed deepfake might generate significant harm in a particular instance, whether the damage is to physical property or lives, in the wake of social unrest or panic or to the integrity of an election. The threat posed by deepfakes, however, also has a long-term, systemic dimension. The spread of deepfakes will

threaten to erode the trust necessary for democracy to function effectively for two reasons. First, and most obviously, the marketplace of ideas will be injected with a particularly dangerous form of falsehood. Second, and more subtly, the public may become more willing to disbelieve true but uncomfortable facts. Cognitive biases already encourage resistance to such facts, but awareness of deepfakes may enhance that tendency, providing a ready excuse to disregard unwelcome evidence (Liar's dividend). At a minimum, as fake videos become widespread, the public may have difficulty believing what their eyes (or ears) are telling them even when the information is quite real, (Robert & Danielle, 2018).

The Media and Deepfakes

Regulation can be used to address deepfake-related concerns, but other “combative approaches” approaches can be used to combat the harm that deepfakes cause, which includes, first, education and training (Dunard, 2024). Regrettably, majority of the Nigerian public are unaware of the dangers of deepfakes. Guanah, Obi and Ginikachukwu (2020) carried out a content analysis study on artificial intelligence and its reportage in select Nigerian newspapers. The study was anchored on the agenda-setting theory. The authors studied three newspapers (The Punch, The Guardian, and Vanguard newspapers) to identify the story types through which AI stories were reported by the newspapers and to examine if the newspapers gave prominence to AI stories. The study revealed that only 64 AI stories appeared in the selected newspapers throughout 2019. It also discovered that most of the stories were in photograph form, and that prominence was not given to AI stories by the newspapers. It was concluded that since automation may be the future, newspapers must start to intensify educating the public about AI through their coverage. The study recommended that newspapers should give prominence to AI stories. Also, they should report AI

stories with all story types, and place such stories in all the prime sections of the newspapers.

Ohiro (2024) explored the relationship between deepfakes and the right to reputation, analysing the current legal framework and its limitations. The study identified limitations in existing laws and highlighted the need for a tailored legal framework to protect reputations in the digital age. The author however recommended legislative reform and increased awareness, noting that the government should engage in raising awareness about deepfakes and digital literacy generally. Raising public awareness and education about deepfakes, the paper maintains, has the potential to help individuals detect deepfakes. Therefore educating individuals in Nigeria about the potential repercussions of manipulated media content will increase awareness of the issue. This heightened awareness, in turn, will encourage the allocation of cognitive resources towards detecting deepfakes. Furthermore, educating the public about deepfakes can help them be more critical of online content and less likely to fall victim to manipulation.

Guanah and Oribhabor (2024) evaluated Benin City's residents' knowledge and attitude towards deepfake technology. The main objectives of the study were to: determine the level of knowledge of Benin City's residents about deepfake technology, and find out the Benin City's residents' perception of deepfake technology. The study utilised technological determinism theory. The researchers found that majority of the respondents had knowledge of deepfake technology. They also said that the widespread use of deepfake technology leads to misinformation spreading faster. The respondents had a negative perception of the deepfake technology; hence, the researchers recommended that more awareness should be created, and that there should be media literacy for individuals to protect themselves from

falling victims of deepfake manipulation. By staying informed on the existence and potential risks associated with deepfakes, individuals can develop critical thinking skills and assess media sources more effectively.

Deepfake Awareness: The Role of the Media

The media has a critical role to play in creating awareness on deepfakes in Nigeria. Media organizations can educate the public about what deepfakes are, how they are created, and their potential dangers. By producing informative content such as articles, documentaries, and public service announcements, media outlets can enhance the general public's understanding and vigilance regarding deepfakes. Below are some roles that the mass media can play:

Role of the Media: Awareness on Authenticating Deepfakes Content

Wakefield et al. (2010) point out that, the potential of mass media campaigns lies in their ability to propagate simple and focused messages to a large, heterogeneous audience, repeatedly. Since technological deepfake detection solutions, no matter how good they get, will not prevent all deepfakes from getting distributed, it is incumbent on the mass media to improve public awareness as a major strategy to combat deepfakes especially in Nigeria where the issue is yet to receive maximum attention. As observed by Doermann (2019), individuals who share deep fake contents are part of the problem. Hence, policing content should be put in the hands of individuals rather than the government. It is imperative therefore for the mass media to sensitize the Nigerian public about deepfake and its dangers, enable individuals identify immediately whether or not something they are viewing or sharing is authentic. The media should also call for social media sites to moderate their content, endeavour to label synthetic media, increase public awareness of such

material and allow the public to make better decisions (Doermann, 2019).

Role of the media: Awareness on Legal and Legislative Remedies

According to Odorume (2015), the media has an impact on public opinion around the world. As such, one crucial step that the media should take is to promote the agenda on the implementation of statutes prohibiting certain deepfake content. Although the legal landscape related to deepfakes is complex, frameworks that can potentially be used to combat deepfakes in Nigeria include Copyright, Privacy, Seditious Act, Data Privacy Protection, Section 39 (2) and (3) of the 1999 Constitution, Defamation, etc. While it remains to be seen how these will play out in the courts, two things are clear: First, there is already a substantive set of legal remedies that can be used against deepfakes, and second, it is far too early to conclude that they will be insufficient.

Role of the media: Awareness on Detection and verification

Media coverage can focus on technological advancements and tools designed to detect and combat deepfakes, by reporting on the latest developments in AI and machine learning. Media can help inform both the public and policymakers about such effective countermeasures. Robert & Danielle (2018) point out that, before deepfakes can be combated, the public first have to learn how to find them. Automated detection can stop deepfakes from being published, instead of reacting to such content after the fact (Doermann (2019)). On top of detection, Watts (2019) insists on the development of verification methods which could determine the date, time, and physical origin of deepfake content.

Creating a deepfake involves a process that leaves telltale signs that sufficiently sophisticated detection algorithms can identify. For example, face-swapping creates resolution inconsistencies in the composite image which can be identified using deep learning techniques. However, regardless of how far technological approaches for combating deepfakes advance, challenges will remain. Technological solutions will only have impact when they are used. Given the modern-day inclination to share content on the internet, some deepfakes will inevitably reach their intended audience without going through detection software. Therefore, awareness creation is crucial at this point, as the mass media can publicize these verification tools and sensitize the Nigerian public/authorities on the need and ways to deploy them in controlling the spread of deep fakes.

Conclusion

This paper assessed the role of the media in combating deepfakes in Nigeria. The review of literature indicates that the various sectors where deepfakes have featured prominently, and undermined public trust include the political landscape of Nigeria, the media, as well as individual lives. The national concerns of deepfakes highlighted in the study ranges from its potential to be used for malicious purposes at the individual level, the ability of deepfakes to promote false propaganda, alter historical records, create fake scientific evidence and court statement, commit virtual crimes, as well as corporate blackmail. Accordingly, the role of the mass media in combating deepfakes includes among others, awareness creation on authenticating deepfake contents, educating the public on existing legislative remedies, as well as sensitizing them on available detection and verification tools.

Thus, addressing this issue of deepfakes in the country requires a multifaceted approach, including legal reforms,

technological advancements, but most importantly, public education. By proactively tackling the challenges posed by deepfakes, Nigeria can safeguard its democratic processes, protect its citizens, and maintain social order in the digital age. The media's role in combating deepfakes through awareness creation is indispensable. By leveraging their broad reach and influence, media organizations can educate the public, promote digital literacy, and advocate for necessary regulatory measures.

This proactive approach not only helps to mitigate the immediate risks posed by deepfakes but also fosters a more informed and resilient society capable of navigating the challenges of the digital age. Effective media engagement in this domain requires continuous effort and adaptation to keep pace with the evolving landscape of deepfake technology.

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