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Radio Journalists' Usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) In the Creation of Content: A Case Study of Clouds Fm, Upendo Radio, TBC and EFM

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ABSTRACT

This study navigates all that comes with artificial intelligence and how the media has embraced artificial intelligence by looking at radio journalists' use of artificial intelligence in content creation. This study analyzes artificial intelligence awareness in media, the artificial intelligence tools that are highly used, and the way media ethics are affected by artificial intelligence adoption in media. The major and key findings of the study include the lack of policies to guide artificial intelligence usage and, threats of artificial intelligence to skills such as writing and editing, job displacement, digital divide, and defamation. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, and recommendations are presented to cement on the foundation of building a brighter future for media in Tanzanian context in the era of artificial intelligence. This study employs a qualitative approach to obtain the best results. This study adopts the Human-Machine Communication (HMC) theory to guide the study. This study provides a very important ground for the growth of Tanzanian media in the era of artificial intelligence, by providing an understanding of where media has come from, where media is now, and the future of media lensing the opportunities and threats and how to face the future of media in the right approaches and strategies.

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become one of the most transformative forces in the 21st century, influencing how individuals communicate, work, learn, and interact with technology. Despite its growing presence in daily life, public understanding of AI remains limited and fragmented. For many people, AI is associated with futuristic concepts such as robots and automation, while others might use AI tools regularly without fully grasping how they function or the history behind them. This knowledge gap highlights the importance of revisiting the roots of AI to better contextualize its current applications, especially in fields such as media and broadcasting (Cave & Dihal, 2020). Understanding the historical evolution of AI allows researchers and practitioners to appreciate its depth, complexity, and relevance across various sectors.

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies like Natural Language Processing (NLP), Machine Learning (ML), and Deep Learning is revolutionizing various sectors, including radio journalism for AI technology has been disruptive (Newman, 2023).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are used in radio journalism for tasks such as content creation and radio programs (Kuyucu, 2019). AI has also been useful in radio journalism by analyzing vast amounts of data to identify trends, predict events, and locate relevant sources that, in turn make radio journalism relevant valid (Harliantara, et al 2024). This has had an impact on audience engagement and improved listeners' satisfaction by personalizing radio content, and prioritizing listeners' preferences (Harliantara, et al 2024).

In the case of Tanzania, there is no difference in how AI has revolutionized communication at all levels, including how journalism with media houses and newsrooms incorporates AI integration (AI4MD, 2025). This growing AI adoption in Tanzania signals an ongoing digital transformation that is not only confined to urban centers but is gradually reaching rural and underserved areas, thereby democratizing access to information and opening new opportunities for citizen participation in the media and governance.

2. Statement of the Problem

In the field of media, AI has brought forth the problem of losing important skills for creating content that resonates with the public, such as story writing, creativity, and authenticity, as it has brought forth the urgency and emergence in journalism that 75% of newsrooms have incorporated AI in news gathering, content creation, and news dissemination, so as to increase the quality of news, content, and making media houses together with journalists stay relevant in this fast-moving world (Calvo Rubio & Torrijos, 2024). This has shifted the field from serving the public to the urge to stay in the market at any cost, even if it implies losing important media skills along the way.

This revolution has come with the good and the bad, as some radio journalists faced some consequences with the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA) for fake news charges, unknowingly using AI-generated images as the source of their content during radio programs, a scenario that happened with one of the Clouds FM journalists during the campaigns in 2020, when he used an image that was generated by AI to report on the progress of a political candidate campaign (Sasali, 2024).

3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Human-Machine Communication (HMC) theory to guide the study. Components and principles of the theory. The different theories used to explain the AI and journalism phenomenon by different scholars have mostly referred to technology as a tool for communication, and there has been no theoretical attention paid to the technology (machine) as a source/communicator (Lewis, Guzman, & Schmidt, 2019).

The concept of human communication has been boxed as a process of exchanging information that takes place between human beings alone, and where technology is involved, it only plays the role of a medium tool for communication (Guzman, 2018). Theoretical frameworks that have been used to navigate communication in the era of AI such as Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) developed by Venkatesh (2003), still regard technology and machines as channels and media for communication. This theoretical framework aims to explain user intentions regarding the adoption of new technology and their subsequent usage behavior (Nemr, 2024).

4. Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence has been laid in the foundations of radio systems since the 1960's, while the official use of Artificial Intelligence and radio broadcasting was in 1979 with the (Radio Computing System) (RCS). Artificial Intelligence has been used in radio systems to enable the archiving and preparations of radio content such as music, and radio programs. RCS in radio systems performs the work-load of many people; in other words, it simplifies the operations in the radio that were to be carried out by a number of people. Artificial Intelligence RCS performs tasks such as sorting thousands of songs, grouping them together, and arranging them in a playlist for radio programs (Kuyucu, 2019).

As technology is constantly growing, and communication is evolving, radio cannot negate the integration of AI in their systems and operations. As much as technological growth and AI advancements are considered positive, there is the other side of the coin to it (Harliantara, Sompie, & Sutika, 2024). The positive side of Artificial Intelligence in radio is the promise and hope that it brings about helping radios stay relevant in the fast-growing technological world that tends to face complexities with the changing listener behaviors and radio relevance (Harliantara, et al 2024).

Although the origin of AI in radio broadcasting can be traced back several decades, its development has grown exponentially in recent years, prompting both excitement and caution. Recognizing its historical roots helps media professionals and researchers not only appreciate its capabilities but also anticipate the challenges it presents. Thus, the study of AI in radio is not just about technology; it is also about its cultural, ethical, and professional implications in modern journalism and broadcasting.

AI is a great technology that improves the efficiency of radio broadcasting in today's world. On the other hand, AI raises ethical concerns and the costs of acquiring the right AI tools for operation, and to train staff on the efficient use of such AI tools, all of which incur financial costs (Harliantara, et al 2024).

These challenges highlight the need for inclusive, sustainable AI strategies in the media industry. While larger, well-funded radio stations may be able to implement high-level AI systems, smaller and regional stations often struggle with access, infrastructure, and skilled personnel. This disparity raises questions about the future digital divide in broadcasting, and whether AI might unintentionally widen the gap between major urban and rural broadcasters.

Furthermore, ethical concerns such as job displacement, data privacy, and reduction of human oversight in editorial decisions continue to be topics of debate among scholars and professionals.

Around 2023, the journalism field was predicted to thrive due to different factors, and as predicted, the results proved that journalism thrived in 2023 (Newman, 2023). This is because journalism thrives better when there are major events and news to be reported, and in 2023, with events such as the Ukraine and Russian war, news on the aftermaths of the COVID 19 pandemic and so much more, gave journalism so much room to thrive. However, with all that room to thrive, there was the other side of the coin, whereby people started deflecting from all the news and events that were being reported, for all those events only added fear to people and people started disconnecting themselves from the news.

According to Newman (2023), the content that made journalism thrive is the same content that made people disconnect from news; therefore, journalism had to find ways to navigate the two sides, the side where journalism could thrive and grow, and the side where people are getting disconnected from the news content so as to stay relevant to the audience. As navigation and the balance were to be done, the year prior, in 2022, there was great growth in the innovation of AI that seemed to have brought hope in the field of journalism, given the fact that the relevance of the media, news, and journalists to the audience was to be highly considered, which again posed two sides of the coin to the journalism field (Newman, 2023). Advancements in AI innovations have posed both opportunities and challenges to journalism. As much as there are two sides of the coin when it comes to AI, in the times we are in, for relevance and sustainability, journalism is urgently forced to incorporate AI in all its fields, especially in content creation, news gathering, and news (de-Lima-Santos & Ceron, 2022).

5. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach because it sought to understand the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of radio journalists regarding their use of artificial intelligence (AI) in content creation. Qualitative research is

particularly suitable when the aim is to explore a phenomenon in depth from the perspective of those experiencing it. In this case, the goal is not to quantify Artificial Intelligence (AI) usage, but to interpret how journalists engage with, make sense of, and are impacted by AI tools within their specific working environments.

Kamal (2019) highlighted that qualitative research is important when trying to understand how people make sense of a situation in their own words. For this study, qualitative methods have helped bring the human side of AI usage in journalism to light, revealing not just what tools are used, but also why AI tools have been embraced or not embraced by radio journalists.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 correspondents that including radio journalists, program producers/editors, content managers, and IT specialists at Clouds FM, Upendo Radio, TBC, and EFM through purposive sampling. I interviewed the content manager and program producer/editor from each selected radio station to gather in-depth information on strategic approaches to digital transformation, organizational readiness for AI adoption, and ethical and regulatory considerations at all angles by hearing about AI from different angles.

Interviews with radio journalists and professionals: Informed verbal consent was obtained from all participants prior to audio-recorded data collection. Verbal consent was used to accommodate participants' professional contexts and to reduce any concerns related to documentation and confidentiality.

6. Findings and Discussions

6.1 Misuse and ethical risks.

With all the good that comes with AI in the field of media in Tanzania and globally, the findings show that it is necessary to acknowledge that AI needs people to operate or command it. This raises another negative concern about AI in the careers of media and journalism.

All the correspondents from the radio stations had the same view about AI and that it is a threat to not only media and journalism but also to humanity.

There is concern that AI can be misused, for instance, to create deep fakes to defame people from citizens to political and religious leaders or for unethical purposes, such as an incident in Tanzania where AI was used to undress people on X Space.

There has been another concern regarding AI usage in media and journalism. Most of the correspondents shared the threat of being unethical with AI as media experts and journalists. This is due to the changes in the means of creating content in this AI era. For instance religious media with a correspondent from Upendo Radio shared the risk of being unethical as a result of being overwhelmed with AI in content creation so as to stay relevant, at the expense of ethics.

From E FM, one of the correspondents cemented on the ethical concerns with AI usage because AI can provide wrong information and not everyone verifies what they gather from AI, which adds to the risk of being unethical.

The consensus among many journalists is that AI is a tool to be used with caution, and that it should complement and, not replace human intelligence and skills. It's about using AI to assist rather than letting it do everything.

6.2 Discussions

The findings from interviews conducted with radio journalists from four Tanzanian radio stations revealed a complex and multifaceted view of artificial intelligence (AI) within journalistic practice. The results highlight both opportunities and challenges associated with AI use in content production, and emphasize critical implications for media policy, professional development, and the future of journalism in Tanzania. As noted by Loscote, Gonçalves, and Quadros (2024), the adoption of AI in media environments presents significant benefits in terms of operational productivity, but also raises critical concerns about the future role of human journalists and editorial oversight.

Many journalists refer to AI as an accelerator, noting that it improves workflow efficiency by handling time-consuming tasks such as fact checking, transcribing speeches, generating interview questions, and summarizing content. However, Zhang (2025) warns that while AI can enhance efficiency, overreliance on the risks of these technologies undermines the delicate judgment and ethical reasoning that human journalists provide. This concern is echoed by Tanzanian journalists who expressed caution about fully replacing traditional methods with AI, fearing a loss of authenticity and diminished public trust.

Another challenging concern discovered in the interviews was the lack of formal policies or ethical frameworks governing the use of AI in Tanzanian journalism. Participants consistently emphasized the need for national and institutional guidelines to regulate AI, particularly in relation to misuse, such as deepfakes and misinformation. The current environment in which AI is used without policies in place raises serious ethical and legal questions. Amigo and Porlezza (2025) emphasize that the unregulated use of AI in journalism can undermine public trust and add to the spread of false information, underscoring the necessity of proactive governance.

There is widespread agreement that regulatory bodies, such as the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), should collaborate with media stakeholders to develop context- specific AI governance frameworks. Such frameworks would provide ethical guidelines and establish standards for responsible AI use tailored to the unique challenges faced by the Tanzanian media sector. The consensus highlights that, without these structured policies, the risks posed by AI could outweigh its benefits, potentially compromising the integrity and credibility of journalism in the country.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

It is worth noting that the findings of this study are crucial, and eye opening is a key point for the direction and redirection of journalism in this era, where AI is everywhere and technology keeps advancing daily affecting the field of journalism at large, not

just in content creation but also in running media houses and managing media houses from a business perspective while ethically serving the public at the same time. The implications extend to ethical concerns, skill development, and policy formulation, signaling that a multi-dimensional approach is essential for sustainable growth in this sector.

This conclusion underscores the necessity of balancing technological advancement with human judgment and critical thinking to maintain the core values of journalism, such as authenticity, accountability, and public service. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge that advocates for a proactive and inclusive approach to AI integration, ensuring that the future of journalism remains dynamic, relevant, and ethical in a world where the role of AI will continue to expand.

7.2 Recommendations

This study recommends that learning institutes, from lowest to highest levels, incorporate practical AI studies into their sy llabi. This integration should not be limited to theoretical knowledge but should emphasize hands on and relevant applications of AI technology.

Media owners should prioritize ongoing training programs for the staff. Continuous professional development focused on AI advancements, ethical considerations, and practical applications will equip journalists and other media professionals with the necessary skills to adapt to and thrive in an increasingly AI-driven environment. Regular training sessions will also help employees remain informed about the rapid changes that AI brings to the media landscape, fostering a culture of innovation and resilience.

Furthermore, with the advent of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), which promises to significantly expand AI capabilities, it has become even more imperative for journalists to remain committed to lifelong learning. Staying updated with technological advancements and adapting to new tools will be key for journalists to maintain relevance and effectively navigate the challen ges and opportunities presented by AI.

Moreover, policy-makers ought to have a special force that foresees and predicts trends that directly impact Tanzania's growth at all levels, such as AI. Once perceived or detected it has become difficult to contain and manage, so as to position policy ma kers at an advantageous stand-point that will help put up policies in place that would guide journalists' usage of AI in a positive and profitable manner.

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