

**PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE OF JOURNALISTS IN BENIN CITY,  
TOWARDS FAKE NEWS IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.**

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**Abstract**

This study examined the perceptions and attitudes of journalists in Benin City, Nigeria, toward AI-generated fake news and the use of AI-based tools for its detection. Anchored in the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the study adopted a survey research design involving all 210 registered members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Benin City chapter. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analyzed using simple percentages and tables. Findings reveal that a large majority of journalists perceive AI-generated fake news as widespread and increasing in Nigeria's media landscape. While journalists generally expressed positive attitudes toward AI-based verification tools and recognized their potential to enhance accuracy and restore public trust, the actual level of adoption remains moderate. Major challenges identified include poor internet connectivity, unstable electricity supply, high cost, and limited availability of advanced AI verification tools. The study concludes that although journalists in Benin City are increasingly aware of and receptive to AI solutions, infrastructural and economic constraints continue to hinder effective integration. The study recommends targeted training, improved digital infrastructure, and institutional support to enhance the responsible adoption of AI in combating fake news within Nigerian journalism.

**Keywords:** Perception, Journalists, Fake news, Artificial intelligence, Attitude

**Introduction**

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is reshaping industries globally, with journalism increasingly experiencing profound transformation as a result of these innovations. AI driven tools are now embedded within newsrooms, influencing how news is gathered, produced, and disseminated through automated news writing, algorithmic content recommendation, real time audience analytics, and advanced fact checking systems. These developments are reshaping digital journalism in both nuanced and transformative ways, prompting critical questions about efficiency and innovation alongside deeper concerns regarding journalistic ethics, evolving professional roles, and the future of human agency within contemporary news production processes (Diakopoulos, 2019; Dörr, 2016).

In the past decade, fake news has emerged as one of the main concerns in the field of journalism (Cea & Palomo, 2021). This phenomenon has grown in relevance alongside the expanding strategic role of journalism, driven by the expansion of artificial intelligence (Kevin-Alerechi et al., 2025).

Recent advances in AI have been remarkable due to their speed and their impact. Generative AI represents a critical turning point in the evolution of artificial intelligence, particularly within content creation and editorial environments. Beyond automating discrete journalistic tasks, AI technologies are increasingly integrated transversally across the news production workflow, reshaping not only how content is generated and distributed but also how media organizations are structured and operate internally (Londoño-Proañó & Buele, 2025). This growing integration is influencing newsroom culture, redefining professional routines, editorial decisionmaking, and power relations between human journalists and algorithmic systems. Consequently, earlier predictions that AI would play a decisive role in driving media

transformation are progressively materializing, as AI becomes embedded in the strategic and operational core of contemporary journalism (Cui, 2025).

Peña-Fernández et al. (2023) state that, although AI brings benefits to journalism, its adoption entails ethical challenges that must be proactively addressed. Its emergence has rekindled longstanding debates about the ambivalent nature of technological developments, particularly the tension between innovation, efficiency, and creativity on the one hand, and accountability, transparency, and professional responsibility on the other. While generative AI offers significant opportunities for enhancing productivity and expanding journalistic capacities, it simultaneously introduces new forms of insecurity related to ethical oversight, labor displacement, epistemic reliability, and public trust (Vrabič-Dežman, 2024; Wei et al., 2024; Schaetz et al., 2025). Collectively, these scholars emphasize that technological advancement in journalism must be accompanied by robust ethical frameworks and institutional preparedness to ensure that innovation does not undermine core journalistic values.

The integration of AI in journalism is not without ethical dilemmas. Beyond the potential benefits attributed to it, one of the most debated dilemmas is the inherent bias in AI algorithms, compounded by the risk of largescale dissemination of fake news. This has raised concerns about declining media trust among audiences. (Morosoli et al., 2025).

The proliferation of fake news has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges to journalism and democracy in the 21st. The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed the information ecosystem in paradoxical ways. On the one hand, AI-powered tools such as deepfakes, synthetic text generators including large language models, and automated propaganda bots have significantly accelerated the production and dissemination of fake news, making deceptive content faster to produce, less costly, and increasingly difficult for audiences to

distinguish from authentic journalism. These technologies amplify the scale, speed, and persuasive potential of misinformation, posing substantial challenges to information integrity and democratic discourse.

On the other hand, AI is simultaneously being deployed as a countermeasure against misinformation. AI-based detection systems, automated factchecking algorithms, and content moderation tools are increasingly used by media organizations and digital platforms to identify, flag, and mitigate fake news and manipulated content. This dual role of AI underscores its complex and contested position within contemporary journalism, where the same technologies that enable misinformation are also central to efforts aimed at preserving credibility and public trust (Shu et al., 2023).

Despite the growing body of literature on fake news and AI globally, very few studies have examined how journalists in the Benin perceive and respond to AI-driven misinformation (Simon & Camargo, 2021). Understanding journalists' perceptions and attitudes is critical because journalists remain primary gatekeepers of public information and are increasingly expected to verify AI-generated content while sometimes using AI tools themselves (Broussard & Boss, 2024).

The proliferation of AI-enabled misinformation has intensified longstanding credibility and verification challenges in Nigerian journalism, where a highly competitive political environment, ethno-religious diversity, and heavy reliance on digital and social media platforms have made the news ecosystem especially vulnerable to false and manipulated content. Although empirical studies document the widespread circulation of misinformation during elections and crises and link it to voter misperception, political polarization, and sporadic offline violence, they pay limited attention to the growing role of AI-generated content such as deepfake videos and synthetic audio, as well as how journalists understand and respond to these developments. Evidence from the 2023 general

elections indicates a rise in digitally altered and AI assisted political content circulated across major social media platforms, yet Nigerian journalists make limited use of AI driven verification tools, relying largely on manual practices and informal peer networks. Consequently, a critical gap exists in Nigerian scholarship regarding journalists' perceptions of AI, the factors driving low adoption of AI based verification tools, and how infrastructural constraints, trust concerns, and professional realities shape journalists' readiness to use AI both as a perceived threat to credibility and as a potential resource for safeguarding journalistic integrity.

This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining how journalists in Benin City, Nigeria, perceive the threat of AI-enabled fake news, their confidence in detecting it, and their attitudes toward adopting AI tools for verification and news production.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study was carried out to:

1. Examine the perceptions of journalists in Benin regarding the prevalence of AI generated fake news
2. Assess the attitudes of journalists in Benin towards the use of AI tools for detecting fake news.
3. Determine the extent to which journalists in Benin presently adopt AI based verification technologies in their daily news production activities.
4. Evaluate the challenges faced by journalists in Benin in integrating AI solutions into their fact checking practices.

### **Empirical Review of Related Studies**

Empirical studies indicate that journalists in Nigeria generally perceive fake news and digitally manipulated content as pervasive within the contemporary media environment, particularly on social media platforms. Abdulazeez, Omale, and Florence (2024) demonstrated that

disinformation and false narratives significantly shape public opinion among the Nigerian electorate, with journalists acknowledging that misinformation has become more sophisticated due to digital and algorithmic amplification. Although the study did not focus exclusively on AI generated fake news, it suggests that journalists increasingly associate misinformation with advanced digital manipulation. Similarly, Isah, Nelson, and Kadiri (2021) found a high level of awareness of fake news during the 2019 general elections, with respondents identifying social media as the primary channel through which manipulated content circulates, reinforcing journalists' perception of an escalating misinformation problem.

Research focusing on Benin City further reinforces these perceptions. Isah, Jibrin, Egwa, and Ehiagwina (2024) examined journalists' perceptions of digital transformation in multimedia operations and found that while digital technologies have enhanced content quality and audience engagement, they have also intensified journalists' exposure to misinformation and unverified content. Journalists in Benin perceived digital and social media platforms as accelerating the spread of false information due to weakened gatekeeping structures and limited institutional fact checking mechanisms. This finding is significant for understanding perceptions of AI generated fake news, as it highlights growing concern among journalists about technologically mediated misinformation within digitally transformed newsrooms.

Empirical evidence also suggests that journalists' attitudes toward the use of AI tools for detecting fake news are largely positive but cautious. Isah et al. (2024) reported that a majority of journalists in Benin demonstrated high awareness of AI applications in journalism and recognized their potential for enhancing fact checking, accuracy, and newsroom efficiency. However, these positive attitudes were tempered by ethical concerns, fear of job displacement, and skepticism about the reliability and transparency of automated systems. These findings align with the Centre

for Democracy and Development (2023), which observed that while Nigerian journalists acknowledge the usefulness of AI driven verification tools, many remain wary of their implications for professional autonomy and editorial judgment.

Despite relatively positive attitudes, studies consistently reveal low to moderate levels of adoption of AI based verification technologies in newsroom practice. Isah et al. (2024) found that although over half of surveyed journalists in Benin reported using some form of AI tool, usage was largely limited to basic functions such as transcription, content personalization, and simple fact checking rather than advanced tools for detecting deepfakes or synthetic media. Similarly, the Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (2022) reported that Nigerian journalists predominantly rely on manual verification methods and informal peer networks, even during periods of heightened digital manipulation, indicating that AI driven verification tools are yet to be fully institutionalized within newsrooms.

Several empirical studies have identified structural and infrastructural challenges that hinder the integration of AI into journalistic fact checking practices. Isah et al. (2024) noted that financial constraints, inadequate digital infrastructure, and limited technical expertise significantly restrict journalists' ability to adopt AI based verification tools in Benin. These findings are supported by Isah et al. (2024) in their study on digital transformation, which revealed that poor broadband penetration, high data costs, erratic power supply, and inconsistent regulatory enforcement continue to undermine effective use of advanced digital technologies in Nigerian media organizations. Such constraints reduce journalists' readiness to experiment with or fully integrate AI solutions into routine newsroom operations.

Ethical and professional concerns further shape journalists' engagement with AI technologies. Isah et al. (2024) documented journalists' fears regarding algorithmic bias, loss of

editorial control, and the potential misuse of AI tools to legitimize false or misleading content. The

PTCIJ (2022) study similarly found that journalists often prefer human judgment over automated verification because accountability and professional responsibility are central to journalistic norms. These concerns contribute to resistance or hesitation in adopting AI driven verification systems, even when journalists recognize their potential benefits.

The broader democratic implications of digitally and AI assisted misinformation also influence journalists' perceptions and practices. Abdulazeez et al. (2024) showed that false narratives amplified through digital platforms contribute to political polarization and distorted public opinion, thereby increasing pressure on journalists to verify content accurately and swiftly. The EU Election Observation Mission (2023) likewise reported that digitally manipulated content during the 2023 Nigerian general elections undermined trust in electoral institutions, highlighting the growing challenge faced by journalists in countering sophisticated forms of misinformation with limited technological resources.

Overall, the reviewed empirical studies reveal a significant gap in Nigerian journalism scholarship regarding AI specific misinformation and verification practices. While existing research addresses digital transformation, fake news prevalence, and general awareness of AI in journalism, there remains limited empirical evidence on journalists' perceptions of AI generated fake news, their attitudes toward AI based verification tools, the extent of their adoption in daily news production, and the contextual challenges shaping these processes, particularly within Benin City newsrooms. This gap underscores the need for further empirical investigation, which the present study seeks to address.

**Opinion Review****The Evolution of Fake News in the Artificial Intelligence Era**

The arrival of generative artificial intelligence has fundamentally altered the scale, speed, and believability of disinformation. Early fake news relied on crude photo editing or textual fabrication; today, large language models (GPT4, Grok, Claude, LLaMA3) can generate entire news articles indistinguishable from human writing within seconds (Brown et al., 2020; OpenAI, 2023). Similarly, generative adversarial networks (GANs) have democratized deepfake production: a 2023 study showed that opensource tools can now create convincing deepfake videos on a laptop in under two hours (Mirsky & Lee, 2021; Paris & Donovan, 2022). Automated botnets and micro targeting algorithms further amplify synthetic content across closed messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram, which dominate information flows in Nigeria (Umar & Oyewo, 2024). Vaccari and Chadwick (2020) describe this transition from “cheap fakes” to “deep fakes” and “shallow fakes” (low effort but high impact AI assisted edits), noting that the latter are far more common in resource constrained environments because they require less computational power.

**Journalists’ Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in Digital Journalism**

The integration of Artificial Intelligence into journalism has sparked diverse reactions among journalists globally, shaped by technological exposure, newsroom culture, and regional contexts. Generally, perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in journalism oscillate between enthusiasm for its efficiency and apprehension about its implications for editorial independence, job security, and ethical standards.

Many journalists perceive Artificial Intelligence as a transformative tool capable of enhancing productivity, particularly in automating repetitive tasks such as transcription, content tagging, and fact checking (Diakopoulos, 2019). This perception is grounded in the potential of

Artificial Intelligence to reduce workload and free up time for in-depth investigative reporting.

According to Francesco Marconi and Alex Siegman (2017), journalists in technologically advanced newsrooms have expressed appreciation for Artificial Intelligence's role in enabling faster and more accurate reporting.

However, concerns persist about the reliability and transparency of Artificial Intelligence driven journalism. Studies by Konstantin Dörr (2016) and Lewis, Guzman, and Schmidt (2019) reveal that journalists fear a loss of control over editorial content, as algorithms might lack contextual sensitivity or be biased in data interpretation. There is also apprehension that increased automation could devalue the professional role of human journalists, particularly in contexts where labor markets are already strained.

Ultimately, perceptions of Artificial Intelligence among journalists are shaped by a complex interplay of awareness, training, institutional support, and broader societal values. As Artificial Intelligence continues to evolve, fostering open dialogue, participatory design, and digital literacy training for journalists will be essential in aligning innovation with ethical journalism practice.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Diffusion of Innovations Theory**

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI), developed by Everett M. Rogers (1962) and later refined (Rogers, 2003), explains how new ideas, technologies, or practices spread within a social system over time. The theory posits that adoption does not occur simultaneously; rather, individuals progress through adopter categories innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards based on their perceptions, attitudes, and readiness toward an innovation. Central to the diffusion process are five perceived attributes of an innovation: relative advantage,

compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability, which collectively influence the rate and extent of adoption.

By applying the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, this study systematically explains variations in AI adoption among members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Benin City. The theory provides a robust lens for understanding how perceptions, attitudes, and readiness interact to shape adoption behaviour, while also guiding practical interventions such as targeted training and awareness initiatives to accelerate the diffusion of AI technologies in local journalism practice.

### **Methodology**

This study employed Survey approach, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the perception and attitude of journalists in Benin City, Nigeria, towards fake news in the era of artificial intelligence within the NUJ Benin City chapter. This survey approach is particularly appropriate for in-depth investigation within a bounded context (Yin, 2018), allowing for an intensive examination of how local journalists engage with emerging AI technologies in their professional environment.

The study's population consists of all 210 registered members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Benin City, Edo State, as documented in the official membership records of the NUJ Edo State Council (circa, 2025). This comprehensive group encompasses journalists working across print, broadcast, and digital media platforms within the city. Their diverse backgrounds, including varying levels of experience, specialized fields, and familiarity with technological tools, make them a representative sample for investigating perceptions of artificial intelligence in digital journalism (Isah et al. 2025).

The population was manageable hence there was no need for adopting any sampling techniques, as a result all the 210 registered members of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Benin City, Edo State participated in the study.

The questionnaire was employed as an instrument of primary data collection. The questionnaire was used because it has the advantage of being administered to a large number of people at the same time. It requires less skill to administer, and respondents have greater confidence in their anonymity.

The questionnaire was a valid instrument for the study. The questionnaire served as a valid and appropriate instrument for this study, as it was carefully structured to measure both the independent and dependent variables identified in the research. The items were designed to be brief, clear, and direct in order to facilitate easy understanding and quick responses, with each question requiring approximately thirty seconds to complete. In addition to the quantitative items, the qualitative aspect of the study was addressed through the inclusion of open-ended questions that allowed respondents to express their views, experiences, and perceptions in their own words.

For this study, the pretest and the test methods were used to test data reliability collectively. This entails asking the same respondent after an interval of one or two weeks. The method employed by the researcher to analyze data that were collected from the respondents was the simple percentage and statistical tables. The data collected were tabulated and itemized according to responses received. It was done this way:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Respondents}}{\text{Total Number of Respondents}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

**Data Presentation and Analysis****Objective One: To examine the perceptions of journalists in Benin regarding the prevalence of AI generated fake news****Table 1: Journalists' Awareness of the Presence of AI-Generated Fake News Among Journalists**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	18	8.6
Disagree	32	15.2
Agree	94	44.8
Strongly Agree	66	31.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in Table 1 show that a majority of respondents (76.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that AI-generated fake news such as deepfakes, synthetic texts, and manipulated audio or video content is already very common in Nigeria's media landscape.

**Table 2: Perceived Increase in AI-Generated Fake News in the Last 2–3 Years**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	14	6.7
Disagree	29	13.8
Agree	101	48.1
Strongly Agree	66	31.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in Table 2, a large proportion of respondents (79.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that the prevalence of AI-generated fake news has significantly increased in the last two to three years. This perception reflects the rapid advancement and accessibility of generative AI tools during this period.

**Table 3: Journalists' Perception of AI-Based Fake News Detection Tools as Valuable**

Innovations

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	12	5.7
Disagree	26	12.4
Agree	98	46.7
Strongly Agree	74	35.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 indicates that a substantial majority of respondents (81.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that AI-based fake news detection tools are valuable innovations capable of improving journalistic work. This demonstrates a generally positive attitude among journalists toward the integration of AI into verification practices.

**Objective Two: To assess the attitudes of journalists in Benin towards the use of AI tools for detecting fake news.**

**Table 4: Optimism That AI Tools Can Restore Public Trust in Journalism**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	16	7.6
Disagree	34	16.2
Agree	93	44.3
Strongly Agree	67	31.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

Results in Table 4 show that 76.2% of respondents expressed optimism that AI tools can help restore public trust in journalism by combating misinformation. However, 23.8% expressed disagreement, possibly reflecting ethical concerns or fears of over-reliance on automated systems.

**Objective Three: To determine the extent to which journalists in Benin presently adopt AI based verification technologies in their daily news production activities.**

**Table 5: Frequency of Use of AI-Based Verification Tools**

Frequency of Use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Never	22	10.5
Rarely (less than once a month)	38	18.1
Occasionally (1–3 times a month)	69	32.9

Frequently (weekly)	52	24.8
Very Frequently (daily)	29	13.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 reveals that most respondents (71.5%) use AI-based verification tools at least occasionally, while 28.6% rarely or never use them. This suggests that AI tools are gradually becoming part of journalistic routines in Benin City, although daily usage remains limited.

**Table 6: Types of AI and Digital Verification Tools Used in the Past 12 Months**

Tool Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reverse image/video search tools	142	67.6
Deepfake detection apps/software	54	25.7
Automated fact-checking plugins	61	29
Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT)	88	41.9
Other tools	19	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

The data in Table 6 show that reverse image and video search tools are the most commonly used verification technologies. Generative AI tools also recorded notable usage, reflecting their growing relevance in newsroom practices. Bradshaw and Howard (2019) similarly observe that journalists tend to adopt tools that are easily accessible and compatible with existing workflows.

**Objective Four: To evaluate the challenges faced by journalists in Benin in integrating AI solutions into their fact checking practices.**

**Table 7: Infrastructure Challenges (Internet and Electricity)**

Severity Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not a challenge at all	21	10
Mild challenge	47	22.4
Severe challenge	74	35.2
Very severe challenge	68	32.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 7 indicates that 67.6% of respondents rated poor internet access and unstable electricity supply as severe or very severe challenges. This underscores infrastructural limitations as a major barrier to effective AI adoption in journalistic practice within Benin City.

**Table 8: Cost and Availability of Advanced AI Verification Tools**

Severity Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not a challenge at all	18	8.6
Mild challenge	39	18.6
Severe challenge	81	38.6
Very severe challenge	72	34.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>

As shown in Table 8, a significant majority of respondents (72.9%) identified the high cost or limited availability of advanced AI verification tools as a severe or very severe challenge. This supports UNESCO's (2023) position that cost and unequal access remain major obstacles to AI integration in newsrooms across the Global South.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are discussed in relation to the research objectives and situated within existing empirical and scholarly literature.

#### Perceptions of journalists regarding the prevalence of AI generated fake news

Findings from Tables 1 and 2 indicate that journalists in Benin City overwhelmingly perceive AI generated fake news as prevalent and rapidly increasing within Nigeria's media landscape. A substantial majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that AI generated misinformation, including deepfakes, synthetic texts, and manipulated audio or video content, is already common, while nearly four fifths reported a noticeable increase over the past two to three years. This perception reflects journalists' lived professional experiences in a media environment increasingly shaped by generative AI technologies and algorithmic amplification.

These findings align with Abdulazeez, Omale, and Florence (2024), who demonstrated that disinformation and false narratives have become more sophisticated and influential in shaping public opinion in Nigeria due to digital and algorithmic systems. Although their study did not explicitly isolate AI generated content, the respondents' recognition of technologically advanced

manipulation supports the perception identified in this study. Similarly, Isah, Nelson, and Kadiri (2021) found high awareness of fake news during Nigeria's 2019 elections, with journalists identifying social media as the main channel through which manipulated content spreads. The present findings extend this literature by showing that journalists now increasingly associate misinformation not merely with false reporting but with AI enabled content generation and manipulation.

The perception of rising AI generated fake news is also consistent with broader scholarly observations on the evolution of disinformation. Vaccari and Chadwick (2020) and Mirsky and Lee (2021) note a global shift from crude misinformation to AI assisted synthetic media that is harder to detect and more believable. In the Nigerian and West African context, studies by Apuke and Omar (2021), Ojebode et al. (2022), and Orlu-Orlu and Ekeanyanwu (2023) document how such content spreads rapidly through platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook, reinforcing journalists' concerns observed in this study.

### **Attitudes of journalists towards the use of AI tools for detecting fake news**

The findings related to Objective Two show that journalists in Benin City generally hold positive attitudes toward the use of AI tools for combating fake news, although these attitudes are not without reservations. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, a large majority of respondents regarded AI based fake news detection tools as valuable innovations and expressed optimism that such tools could help restore public trust in journalism. This suggests that journalists recognize AI not only as a source of misinformation but also as a potential solution to the credibility crisis facing the profession.

These results are consistent with Isah et al. (2024), who found high awareness and cautious optimism about AI applications among journalists in Benin, particularly regarding fact checking

and newsroom efficiency. The findings also echo observations by the Centre for Democracy and Development (2023), which reported that Nigerian journalists increasingly view AI driven verification tools as necessary countermeasures against digital manipulation, even as they remain wary of ethical implications and over reliance on automation.

However, the minority of respondents who disagreed that AI tools could restore public trust reflects persistent ethical and professional concerns. This skepticism aligns with broader debates in journalism studies, where scholars such as Napoli (2019) and Carlson (2015) caution that algorithmic systems may undermine editorial autonomy, accountability, and transparency if not properly governed. Thus, while journalists' attitudes are largely favorable, they are tempered by fears of technological dependence and ethical risk.

### **Extent of adoption of AI based verification technologies**

Findings addressing Objective Three reveal a moderate but growing adoption of AI based verification tools among journalists in Benin City. As shown in Table 5, over seventy percent of respondents reported using AI based verification tools at least occasionally, although daily usage remains relatively low. Table 6 further indicates that journalists tend to use more accessible and familiar tools such as reverse image and video search technologies, followed by generative AI tools, while more specialized deepfake detection applications record lower usage.

This pattern of adoption supports Bradshaw and Howard's (2019) argument that journalists are more likely to adopt tools that align with existing workflows and require minimal technical expertise. It also mirrors findings by Isah et al. (2024), who reported that although AI usage among Benin journalists is increasing, it is largely limited to basic applications rather than advanced verification technologies. Similarly, the Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (2022) found that Nigerian journalists continue to rely heavily on manual verification and peer

networks, suggesting that AI driven verification has not yet become fully institutionalized within newsrooms.

The findings also reflect global trends in AI adoption in journalism. Studies by Graefe (2016) and Powers (2019) show that news organizations worldwide initially adopt AI for efficiency-oriented tasks before extending its use to more complex editorial functions. The present study suggests that Benin journalists are at an early to intermediate stage of this adoption curve.

### **Challenges faced by journalists in integrating AI solutions into fact checking practices**

Findings related to Objective Four clearly indicate that infrastructural and economic challenges remain major barriers to effective AI integration. As shown in Tables 7 and 8, a strong majority of respondents identified poor internet access, unstable electricity supply, and the high cost or limited availability of advanced AI verification tools as severe or very severe challenges. These constraints significantly limit journalists' capacity to consistently use AI based tools in their daily work.

These findings strongly align with Isah, Jibrin, Egwa, and Ehiagwina (2024), who found that while digital transformation has improved multimedia operations in Benin City, inadequate infrastructure, high migration costs, and digital illiteracy continue to undermine technological integration in Nigerian media organizations. UNESCO (2023) similarly identifies cost, unequal access, and infrastructural deficits as major obstacles to AI adoption in newsrooms across the Global South.

Beyond infrastructural barriers, ethical and professional concerns further complicate AI integration. Previous studies by Isah et al. (2024) and PTCIJ (2022) highlight journalists' fears of algorithmic bias, loss of editorial control, and accountability challenges associated with automated

systems. These concerns help explain why adoption remains cautious and uneven despite generally positive attitudes toward AI tools.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that journalists in Benin City are highly aware of and concerned about the growing prevalence of AI generated fake news, hold cautiously positive attitudes toward AI based detection tools, and have begun to integrate such tools into their work at a moderate level. However, infrastructural deficits, cost constraints, skill gaps, and ethical concerns continue to limit widespread and sustained adoption. These findings confirm existing Nigerian and international literature on digital transformation and AI in journalism while contributing new empirical evidence specific to Benin City, thereby addressing a key gap identified in previous studies.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that AI-generated fake news poses a serious and growing challenge to journalism practice in Benin City and Nigeria as a whole. Journalists are increasingly aware of the presence and rising sophistication of AI-driven misinformation, which threatens the credibility of the media and the integrity of public discourse.

The study also concludes that journalists in Benin City generally view AI-based verification tools positively and recognize their potential to enhance accuracy and rebuild public trust in journalism. However, the actual use of these tools has not yet reached an advanced level, indicating a gap between positive attitudes and practical adoption.

**Recommendations**

In view of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Media organizations, journalism schools, and professional bodies should organize regular training programmes and workshops to equip journalists with the skills required to use AI-based verification and fact-checking tools effectively.
2. Government and relevant stakeholders should improve internet connectivity and electricity supply in Benin City to support digital journalism and the effective use of AI technologies.
3. Media organizations should invest in affordable AI verification tools and integrate them into newsroom routines to encourage consistent and widespread usage among journalists.
4. Journalists and media organizations should collaborate with technology companies, fact-checking organizations, and international media development agencies to access AI verification tools at reduced costs.

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