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**INFLUENCE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON LITERARY
JOURNALISM WITHIN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

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Abstract

The concept of artificial intelligence is gaining traction in journalism due to its pervasive impact in both theory and practice. This study examines the influence of Artificial Intelligence on literary journalism within the African context. Among other things, the study determined the level of application of Artificial Intelligence for literary journalism in Africa and the implications of Artificial Intelligence usage on literary journalism practice within the African context. The study was anchored on disruptive innovation theory, while an integrative literature review was used as research methodology, where secondary data were reviewed. Findings from the study revealed that the level of application of artificial intelligence tools for literary journalism practice in Africa is at varying levels, mostly at an emerging stage, which is still low compared to its Western counterparts. The study also discovered that AI applications are changing the narrative in African journalism practice from traditional-based journalism to hybrid journalism where AI tools are used to assist journalists in news sourcing, news processing and news dissemination. Be that as it may, the study revealed that the absence and/or non-implementation of ethical guidelines and legal frameworks on the use of AI in journalism practice in Africa is giving rise to privacy concerns among other ethical issues. The study concludes that over-reliance on AI can undermine the creativity and originality of journalists, thereby leading to redundancy. It was recommended that policymakers and media

regulatory bodies should come up with an ethical guide and legal framework on the responsible use of AI to mitigate issues bordering on privacy and ethical concerns.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, literary journalism, Africa, influence, automation

Introduction

The advancement in information and communication technology is serving as the spring board for the evolution of many other technological innovations in the contemporary society. This advancement is permeating every facet of human endeavor. Due to the multifaceted opportunities that these technologies offer, they have been adopted in virtually every profession to midwife and/or improve upon the prior existing practices. Journalism profession is not an exception to this as technological breakthroughs have led to the emergence of technologies like satellite technology, drone camera, robot reporters, Artificial Intelligence (AI) among others (Bello et al., 2023). Among the emerging technologies, artificial intelligence seems to occupy a prime place in both practice and theory owing to the giant strides it has recorded and still recording within a short period of being in limelight.

The advent of Artificial intelligence globally was attributed to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) computer scientist, John McCarthy who debuted the term Artificial Intelligence in the 1950s (Okunola, 2018). Mohammed (2019.) averred that “Artificial Intelligence or sometimes called machine intelligence is intelligence demonstrated by machines, in contrast to the natural intelligence displayed by humans and other animals.” It is the imitation of human intelligence by machines in the bid to solve human related problems. With the advancement in technology and the quest to find better, efficient and alternative ways of dealing with different human tasks most particularly energy draining tasks, such necessity was what birthed artificial intelligence which have become integral part of every sector today. As a result, this technology has been adopted for journalism practice owing to their capabilities in enhancing speed, efficiency and accuracy (Bello et al., 2023).

The application of Artificial intelligence in journalism practice is gradually becoming a widespread phenomenon in newsgathering, news processing and news dissemination across different parts of the world most particularly in advanced nations (Dammy, 2019; Talabi et al., 2024). In contemporary journalism practice, Artificial intelligence has being incorporated into journalism profession to complement human efforts and in some instances even replacing and/or displacing humans (Bello et al., 2023; Udoh, 2022). This development has eased the labourious processes involved in newsgathering, processing and dissemination. In developed nations like China, United Kingdom and the United States of America, news organisations have adopted the use of Artificial intelligence for diverse functions in the newsroom. Washington Post in the U.S. uses an in-house robot reporter named “Heliograf” which was instrumental in both coverage and reportage of 2016 Summer Olympic Games and the 2016 Elections thereby earning the Post an award of Excellence in the use of Bots (Serdouk & Bessam, 2023).

Arguably, Artificial intelligence and robots are not only complementing the role of human journalists in the newsroom but are also outperforming and displacing them. In China for instance, Xinhua News Agency in collaboration with Chinese search engine company Sogou.com developed the world first AI news anchor which has the ability to read news on “his” own with human-like exactitude and accuracy (Xinhuanet, 2019). In addition to developing another AI female news presenter by Xinhua News Agency, this nascent technology of AI reporter has the capacity to work 24-hours a day on its official website and various social media platforms thereby reducing cost and improving efficiency for the organisation; a feat which cannot be carried out by a human reporter (Bello et al., 2023; Xinhuanet, 2019).

This development is giving rise to the debate among scholars and media practitioners as to whether AI and Robots will one day replace human journalists or it will continue to solely serve its complementary role. Regardless, the fact remains that the use of Artificial intelligence has come to stay in journalism considering the significant contribution it is making in the recent years (Galily, 2018). Nsude (2020) stated that the adoption of Artificial intelligence in journalism provides opportunities like speech to text conversion, speech recognition, unsupervised and supervised machine learning, machine vision, and natural language generation and processing, news anchoring/presentation, social media audience engagement among others.

In spite of the multifarious opportunities brought about by the application of AI in journalism practice, the adoption of artificial intelligence for journalism in Africa is still evolving with the most use cases in Kenya and South Africa as compared to the global south where it is ubiquitous (Udoh et al., 2023; Okiyi & Nsude, 2019, Ogola, 2023). This slow-paced adoption is courtesy of different factors bedeviling the diffusion of innovation in the continent ranging from perceived attendant professional and ethical challenges that may undermine journalists' ingenuity, creativity, and skillfulness (Bello et al., 2023); late adoption of technological improvements as evidence in the failure to switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting (Nwanyanwu & Nwanyanwu, 2021); journalists' fear of replacement by AI and robots; reluctance to adopt the nascent technology among other (Okocha & Ola-Akuma, 2022).

Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing journalism practice in places where it has been adopted in Africa. The traditional narrative of human based journalism is paving way for augmented journalism where machine is complementing human efforts in carrying out labourious tasks to allow human journalists focus on other more sensitive tasks that might be inappropriate for machine assistance. Although, different studies have been carried out on the integration of AI in journalism practice as well as the challenges and prospects of Artificial intelligence usage in journalism, adequate attention has not been given to examining the influence of Artificial intelligence within the African context. This study seeks to bridge the perceived research gap.

Objectives of the Study

The overarching objective of the study is to examine the influence of Artificial intelligence on literary journalism within African context. The specific objectives are to;

- i. Determine the level of application of Artificial Intelligence for literary journalism in Africa
- ii. Ascertain how Artificial Intelligence has improved literary journalism practice within African context
- iii. Examine the implications of Artificial Intelligence usage for literary journalism in Africa
- iv. Identify the challenges associated with the application of Artificial intelligence on literary journalism in Africa

Review of concepts

In order to provide contextual meaning to this study, the major concepts that constitute the current study were reviewed by synthesizing the perspectives of different scholars as well as providing new insights in line with the current study.

Artificial Intelligence

The concept of artificial intelligence emerged from the scholarly contribution of John McCarthy in 1956 at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Guanah et al., 2020). Artificial intelligence connotes the attempt to imitate human and/or natural intelligence through the use of computer applications, programmes and robots. Developments in information and communication technologies have given rise to an era where sophisticated technologies are given the ability to

mimic human intelligence in carrying out tasks that were previously done by solely humans (Okocha & Ola-Akuma, 2022; Okunola, 2018). Similarly, Asemah (2024) added that Artificial Intelligence refers to the ability of computer applications or computer-controlled robot to execute activities commonly associated with rational and/or intelligent beings. In his study, Ekhato (2024) described Artificial intelligence as the capability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform activities commonly associated with intelligent beings. This, therefore, means that any computer system that can perform human-like qualities such as learning, adapting, synthesizing, self-correcting, and manipulating data to perform a task involving complicated processes is known as Artificial Intelligence.

AI are essentially computer applications and tools endowed with the ability to simulate human intelligence through manipulation of existing data to carry out any assigned task. These machines have the ability to scan through large data sets within split of seconds to outsource data used in performing any given task with mathematical precision. Owing to the speed and precision with which AI are used to do tasks previously assigned to humans, they have been largely adopted across different fields of human endeavour including journalism today (Udoh et al., 2022). Asemah (2024) and Udoh et al (2022) opined that Artificial intelligence could be classified into taxonomies of machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, reasoning and problem solving, robotics, adaptive and autonomous systems, speech recognition and expert systems.

In contemporary journalism practice, Artificial intelligence tools are used to generate articles and reports, transcribe interviews to text, edit articles and reports to be devoid of grammatical and spelling mistakes, create repositories for storing multimedia data, cast headlines, summarise reports, edit videos, audio and pictures, among others. Examples of these tools include but are not limited to Grammarly, Auris, Canva, Restream, ChatGPT, Hubspot CRM, Hootsuite insight, Persado, Sprinklr, IBM Watson, Adobe Sensei, Mailchimp, Cortex, Conversica, Sprout Social, Buzzsumo, Pathmatics, Otterai, leaps among others (Ijidola, 2024).

Literary Journalism

Journalism is basically concerned with the art of collecting, processing and analyzing information for public consumption. Hasan (2013) defines journalism as the business of collecting, analyzing, verifying and presenting news regarding current events, trends, issues and people. The whole gamut of journalism revolves around finding answers to the questions “Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?” which are fondly referred to as the five (5) Ws and H in journalism parlance. Literary journalism is connected with the aspect of journalism that focuses on creative writing and publication of stories. According to Zdovc (2004), literary journalism is a genre of print media journalism that combines elements of literature and journalism in a perfect blend to give the reader a pictorial representation of the society. It is a style of writing where literature dovetails with journalism to give the audience a picturesque of the society. Literary journalism developed as a reaction against factographic and objective journalism, which utilises the techniques of realistic fiction to depict daily life events (Zdovc, 2004).

To Pelino (2024), literary journalism is a form of creative non-fiction in which the factual reporting is facilitated via the utilisation of narrative techniques and stylistic strategies that characterise fiction writing. It is an intersection of fiction and non-fiction style of journalism. Other nomenclatures used for literary journalism include, but are not limited to, narrative journalism and creative non-fiction, among others. This form of journalism goes beyond providing information to the readers to entertaining them using creative approach that involve narratives and rhetorical techniques. It spite of the creativity that is weaved into literary journalism, the story is always verifiable and the non-fictional elements are retained. Suffice to day that literary journalism is a

juxtaposition of the elements of fiction and non-fiction spiced up with creative techniques to illustrate an interesting story via print media.

Theoretical framework

Disruptive innovation theory was selected to provide theoretical underpinning for the study. The theory was propounded by Christensen and Bowler in 1995 (Terry, 2020; Yebi & Cudjoe, 2022). The theory seeks to explain how disruptive innovations affect businesses in a situation where disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence, which have had long and proven performance trajectories, redefine and even replace existing technologies. The major assumption of the theory is the tendency of new innovation to challenge and alter the values and *modus operandi* that have defined a given activity. Christensen and Bowler (1995), cited in Yebi and Cudjoe (2022), further stated that the likelihood of innovative technology to cause disruption is dependent on the technology's ability to stand the test of performance trajectory, where it is able to attract traditional customers.

In the same vein, Păvăloaia and Necula (2023) averred that Artificial Intelligence is one of the most disruptive technologies of the 21st century. As a disruptive technology, Artificial intelligence is transforming the traditional practice of journalism that was human-based to a new form of journalism that is machine-assisted and sometimes even machine-based "journalism" as it is with the recent use of AI robot editors, reporters and news anchors.

Research Methodology

Integrative Literature review was adopted as a suitable methodology for this study. Integrative review method is a method that summarises and analyses past empirical or theoretical literature to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon (Broome 1993 cited in Whittlemore, 2005). According to Christmal and Gross (2017), an integrative literature review method is a non-experimental approach where researchers objectively evaluate, summarize, and draw conclusions about a subject matter through a methodical search, categorization, and thematic analysis of previous qualitative and quantitative research studies on the topic under investigation. This research method is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to objectively analyse past and current relevant literature on impact of Artificial Intelligence on literary journalism in Africa. The objective analysis of current and past literature will enable the researcher to identify existing gaps in extant literature on the current subject towards proffering possible solutions and or recommendations for future research.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study were discussed thematically in line with the objectives of the study

Impact of Artificial Intelligence on literary journalism in Africa: An integrative Literature Review Approach

Extant literature is replete with the different nuances on the impact of artificial intelligence on literary journalism in Africa

Level of application of Artificial Intelligence for literary journalism in Africa

Advancement in information and communication technologies has brought about different technological breakthroughs in the society today. One of such breakthroughs is the advent of artificial intelligence which is fast becoming popular in every facet of human endeavour. In the Western world, artificial intelligence (AI) tools have been largely adopted and applied in virtually every repetitive and human task due to the multifarious potentials they possess (Graefe and Bohlken, 2020). AI tools are being applied in the fields on medicine, transportation, educations, governance, and journalism among others. As programmed machines with the ability to generate

large amounts of data with a high level of accuracy within a short span of time, AI tools have proven to improve productivity in workplaces while saving much time and energy required to carry out those tasks manually (Okocha & Ola-Akuma, 2022). This has facilitated their widespread adoption in developed countries where employers of labour and technocrats are adopting AI tools to save cost and improve efficiency. Guanah et al (2020) opined that the advent of AI has impact on various sectors of the society, including journalism practice in numerous ways, especially now that journalists can use AI-generated smart templates to gather and disseminate news reports easily on various issues

Be that as it may, the level of application of artificial intelligence tools for literary journalism practice in Africa is at varying levels across different parts of the continent. Studies in some parts of Africa show there is a high level of awareness of AI tools among journalists, while the adoption level is still low, owing to several factors that are inhibiting the adoption of innovations generally within the African region (Ismail et al., 2024; Okiyi & Nsude, 2019). Gondwe (2023) stated that generative AI like ChatGPT operates on a limited and non-representative African corpus, making it selective on what is considered civil and uncivil language, thus limiting its effectiveness in the region. This shows that although there is a high level of application of artificial intelligence tools in other parts of the world, the case is different in Africa, as the population of people who have adopted the use of artificial intelligence across different fields, including journalism, is infinitesimally insignificant compared to the large population of people who are yet to adopt such innovation in Africa.

How Artificial Intelligence has improved literary journalism practice within the African context

The different processes involved in journalism have been revolutionised courtesy of artificial intelligence. AI tools are being utilised in countries like the United States and China for news gathering, news processing/editing and news dissemination, which are the three major stages in journalism practice. There is an ever-growing adoption and application of AI tools in journalism practice in the Western world. China's Xinhua news agency made the debut of using an AI robot to serve as a news anchor in 2018 (Guanah et al., 2020; Okocha & Ola-Akuma, 2022). Similarly, in the United States, Associated Press also used AI for automated news writing services where several news stories and articles were said to have been written within a short period of time (Ismail et al., 2024). The time taken and laborious processes involved in news gathering, news processing and news dissemination are being simplified, obliterated and easily facilitated today using automated processes where AI tools process high volumes of news with a high level of accuracy within a very short time that would not have been possible manually (Okiyi & Nsude, 2019).

This practice of news automation makes it possible for a few people to carry out several roles and tasks required in a journalism outfit, aided by AI tools and robots. It could be deduced that this practice of automated journalism using AI tools and robots reduces stress and human involvement in repetitive tasks, so as to allow journalists to focus on other creative and managerial tasks involved in journalism that may not be assigned to AI and/or robots. Evidently, this style of journalism minimises cost, time delay and at the same time increases efficiency in journalism practice (Noain-Sánchez, 2022). This presents a paradigm shift from manual-based and/or traditional journalism to an automated journalism where humans are being aided by AI tools and robots to carry out the roles of news gathering, processing and dissemination with much ease and speed. Journalism practice is now a hybridization of human and machine efforts to achieve a given task.

It is common even within the African continent today to see journalists using AI tools like Auris, Restreams, NVIVO, among others, for transcription of audio and video records. This saves a lot of

time as lengthy audio and video records are being transcribed into texts and even translated into different languages within split seconds with digital precision. In addition to that, the news editing process has also become less cumbersome as AI tools are being utilised in newsrooms today to edit news contents from error in conventions, grammatical and spelling accuracy (Ubabukoh, 2017). The seemingly intractable issue of fake news is also being reduced to the barest minimum using AI tools like Google Fact Check Tools, ClaimBuddy, Meltwater, and Talkwalker to both detect and obliterate fake news and hate speech online (Ismail et al., 2024; Jamil, 2021; Zaragoza, 2023). Suffice to say that the application of artificial intelligence tools for literary journalism in Africa and other parts of the world is an innovation that has disrupted the traditional practice of journalism that was labour-laden and strenuous to a new practice of hybrid journalism where humans are being aided by machines to carry out assigned tasks, particularly those that are repetitive in nature. This gives credence to the major postulation of disruptive innovation theory where Păvăloaia and Necula (2023) averred that Artificial Intelligence is one of the most disruptive technologies of the 21st century that is transforming the traditional practice of journalism that was human-based to a new form of journalism that is machine assisted.

Implications of Artificial Intelligence usage for literary journalism in Africa

The adoption and application of artificial intelligence tools for journalism practice is not without its concomitant implications. Studies have shown that the application of AI tools for journalism practice in Africa portends several structural, professional, economic and legal implications (Bello et al., 2023; Okiyi and Nsude, 2019).

Structurally, AI tools are data-dependent from the way they were designed to function. They can only function based on the way they have been originally designed to respond to human prompts. This behooves that unless journalists are trained on how to give appropriate prompts to AI tools and robots in the newsrooms, the best cannot be maximized from the application of these tools (Okiyi & Nsude, 2023). Marconi (2016) posited that AI could completely transform the newsroom and the work of journalists, demanding new technical skills among journalists and the need for new, better workflows. Considering the poor technical know-how in the use of digital technologies in most African countries, the adoption of AI tools will require structural adjustment in journalism training to incorporate these tools in training journalists.

Economically, Guanah et al (2020) averred that many people stand the risk of losing their jobs to AI tools and robots. The authors spoke about the invasion of AI tools and robots as a new wave that will take away jobs from people. Those who adapt to these innovations will be rich and more successful, whereas those who do not catch up with this wave of change stand the risk of losing their jobs in the future (Guanah et al., 2020). Partovi (2018) notes that, in an analysis of 750 occupations by the McKinsey Global Institute, 51% of job activities are highly susceptible to automation. This implies that in the near future, automation could lead to retrenchment of workers in organisations and firms, including journalism, where these technologies are increasingly adopted. This looming loss of jobs to automation, particularly in Africa, where there is a high rate of unemployment, will further plunge the continent into abject poverty and economic crisis.

The journalism profession in Africa thrives on the traditional process of news gathering, news processing and news dissemination, where gatekeepers are seen as an indispensable component. The adoption and application of AI tools for journalism has transformed this traditional process both positively and negatively. As an achievement, AI tools are reducing the cost of production as certain laborious tasks are being carried out effortlessly and at low cost with less human involvement or totally without any human involvement. Professionally, Nwayanwu (2020) underscored the transformative processes the field of journalism faces today, not only at the level of the basic stages of news production and consumption, but also affects journalism at its core as data journalism,

which involves extracting useful information from data, writing articles based on the information and embedding visualizations in the articles that help readers to understand the significance of the story. As a dysfunction, AI tools and robots do not have emotions and self-awareness and, as such, are limited in functioning effectively when it comes to detecting sensationalism and cross verification of generated facts, which could be fallacious (Ismail et al., 2024; Gunanah et al., 2020).

The legal implications of the use of AI tools in African literary journalism are premised on the lack of an adequate legal framework addressing the excesses of these innovations in countries like Nigeria. Scholars have raised concerns over fake news, ethical challenges, fear of loss of jobs, algorithm biases, and privacy security that are taking centre stage owing to the unregulated use of artificial intelligence today (Udoh et al., 2022). These issues require re-examining the values and responsibilities of journalism and journalists in an ethical sense and to proffer a reasonable framework for the application of AI in journalism practice. More so, the current legal frameworks do not have a provision for charging chatbots for litigation on any legal infringement (Obianyor & Ater, 2023). This means AI cannot be held responsible for the violation of any journalistic code of ethics or breach of the law.

Challenges associated with the application of Artificial Intelligence in literary journalism in Africa

Several challenges are associated with the use of artificial intelligence in literary journalism in Africa. These challenges are multidimensional as AI adoption in Africa is still at an emerging stage, which is usual with the adoption of every technological innovation in Africa. As a continent faced with a high rate of poverty, illiteracy, inept leadership, epileptic power supply and a diverse population who are often skeptical about innovations, among others, adopting technological innovations always takes time owing to these glaring factors. Bello et al (2023) stated that most journalists are reluctant in adopting the use of artificial intelligence due to the perceived professional and ethical challenges that undermine journalists' ingenuity, creativity and skillfulness. Adoption of artificial intelligence tools for journalism practice is expected to play complementary roles and not substitutionary as it appears to be now. However, when journalists begin to over-reli on these AI tools for most roles in news writing, processing and dissemination, such journalists are bound to become redundant over time (AlSedrah, 2017; Gbaden et al., 2024). This will consequently prove the fears of undermining journalists' creativity and ingenuity in discharging their roles to society.

In addition to these fears, studies have shown that AI cannot determine whether the input it receives is authentic or not (Guanah et al., 2020). This implies that if AI receives inaccurate input, the result will be false automatically. This heightens the doubt about the perceived credibility of automated news, as sometimes the source of the data is not traceable. This is opposed to the age-long tenets of journalism like truth and accuracy, where the veracity of facts and figures of journalistic products is not compromised. Conversely, not every data obtained via automation is verifiable, as artificial intelligence and robots seldom generate simulated data as opposed to real-time events. This portends a serious challenge to exacerbating the problem of fake news and misleading information.

Furthermore, poor technical know-how is another inhibition in the adoption of artificial intelligence tools for literary journalism in Africa. Most journalists lack the technical knowledge on how to use these AI tools, which serve as a major limitation to maximising their multifarious potentials for journalism in Africa (Ismail et al., 2024). Technical proficiency is paramount in using every digital innovation, including AI tools. The efficiency of artificial intelligence tools is highly dependent on the technical proficiency of the user to achieve the purpose intended, as they are mostly programmed to respond to prompts. Without the knowledge of their operation, the tools become useless even though endowed with limitless potential. The possession of technical competence by

contemporary African journalists is essential to enable them to explore the opportunities for the application of artificial intelligence tools in journalism practice.

Conclusion

It is apparent to note that artificial intelligence is changing the narrative in the practice of literary journalism on the African continent and the world at large. AI offers multifarious and unprecedented opportunities for journalists to leverage in facilitating news gathering, news processing and news dissemination. Be that as it may, over-reliance on artificial intelligence tools for literary journalism practice in Africa portends the challenge of undermining the creativity and ingenuity of human journalists. This can also consequently lead to retrenchment of journalists, especially those who are not attuned to the use of AI among other modern technologies. This calls for the need for proper orientation of journalists on the roles of artificial intelligence in journalism and the ethical guidance for using the same in Africa. Furthermore, to maximize the potential of AI in journalism and at the same time minimize the concomitant effects, journalism training institutions in Africa must incorporate AI in their curriculum to train journalists to take advantage of these innovations to enhance their efficiency and reduce unnecessary cost and long time spent in sourcing and packaging news stories.

Recommendations

1. There is a need for more orientation by professional and regulatory bodies like the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ) and the African Journalists Union (AJU) to encourage more journalists to embrace the use of artificial intelligence tools in performing their journalistic roles.
2. Policy makers and media regulatory bodies should come up with an ethical guide and a legal framework on the responsible use of AI to mitigate issues bordering on privacy concerns
3. Editors should oversee journalists to ensure that AI tools are used to complement their daily tasks and not to substitute for their creativity and ingenuity.
4. Journalists should always cross-verify information generated or refined using AI to ascertain the veracity and accuracy.

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