The uptake of AI in Zimbabwean mainstream newsrooms: Perspectives of journalists

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Abstract

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has intensified around the world and the journalism and media industry has not been left behind as journalists have also adopted its use. The paper investigates the adoption and integration of AI in the journalism and media industry in Zimbabwe, coming from a social constructionist perspective. The paper interrogates how journalists in the mainstream media are utilising AI in their journalism practice. It reveals the negative and positive impacts of using AI in the practice of journalism in third-world countries like Zimbabwe. The study reveals that Zimbabwean journalists take advantage of the opportunities offered by the use of AI. The study exposes that Zimbabwean journalists use AI in advancing their sourcing, news gathering and writing news stories. The paper also provides an understanding of how Zimbabwean journalists use AI in a world where technology seems to be taking over in almost every industry and overcoming the traditional ways of doing things. The study combined both qualitative and quantitative methods and it was carried out in Harare and in-depth interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data from ten and 12 journalists respectively. The journalists were purposively selected from three traditional media houses in Harare comprising Alpha Media Holdings, Zimpapers and Radio Zimbabwe. The findings reveal that AI has not been fully embraced and more needs to be done to promote its uptake and adoption. It was also established that journalists believe that AI is more like a double-edged sword offering opportunities and threats.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; newsrooms; Zimbabwe; Zimpapers; Alpha Media Holdings

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has reshaped the way people work, research and communicate. It has also revolutionalised industries by automating tasks previously performed by humans and the media and journalism industry has not been left behind. This paper interrogates the adoption and integration of AI in Zimbabwean newsrooms. Khan (2023) suggests that the media industry has now seen an opportunity whereby they can enhance workflows, increase output, personalize content and re-imagine how media is produced, distributed and consumed. Automated journalism, also referred to as 'robo-journalism,' uses artificial intelligence to produce news articles, sports summaries and financial assessments (Khan, 2023). According to Kothari and Cruikshank (2022), newsrooms across the world are exploring how AI can be used to advance the sourcing, organization and distribution of stories. The incorporation of AI in newsrooms designates the use of algorithms to analyse data from multiple sources, scenes from objects, faces, colours, and translate speech into text, audio, video and identity sentiment (Marconi et al., 2017).

Various scholars have researched the use of AI in newsrooms and have established that journalists use AI across the news making process, from news gathering to news production and news distribution (Journalism AI team report 2019). While this is so, Munoriyarwa et al. (2023) postulate that AI-based news production practices are still relatively new in Africa. Peiser (2019) on the other hand argues that journalists struggle to understand AI technologies and how it is used in newsrooms. Based on these scholarly ideas, this paper unpacks how journalists in Zimbabwean newsrooms use AI, and it reveals how AI has been incorporated in the media and journalism field. The paper seeks to provide an understanding of how Zimbabwean journalists use AI in a world where technology seems to be taking over almost every industry and overcoming the traditional ways of doing things. It also highlights the threats of using AI in the media and journalism industry and the ethical dilemmas that have emerged with the adoption and incorporation of Artificial Intelligence in the journalism field. In-depth interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data from journalists who were purposively selected from three traditional media houses in Harare.

The use of AI in newsrooms

The uptake, adoption, adaptation and integration of artificial intelligence in journalism is growing the world over. The Global North leads this wave with China and the United States advancing at a strong but different rate (Radoli, 2024). On the other hand, Gondwe (2023) reveals that the exponential growth observed in most countries of the Global South, especially sub-Saharan Africa, evinces a fundamental paradox, because to him, most official organizations, including governments, are still operating offline. Though Radoli (2024) believes AI has its roots in the 20th century with the development of digital computers, its widespread use and discussion is relatively new. The adoption of AI and automation techniques in newsrooms started in 2006, with Thomson Reuters automating the generation of financial news stories on its online platform (Kothari and Cruikshank, 2022). Research regarding the use of AI in journalism is predominantly focused on Western countries, and to our knowledge, very few scholars have explored its use and implications in Africa. In other words, in Africa, research at the intersection of AI and journalism is still emerging (Munoriyarwa, 2024). This signifies that many studies about the use of AI in newsrooms have been done in Western countries; as a result, there is need for studies focusing on third-world countries, considering the issue of the digital divide.

Scholars concur that the inception of AI transformed newsroom practices saw AI serving an augmentative rather than a substitutive role in journalism (Kevin-Alerechi et al., 2025). AI is useful in the creation, production, and distribution of news products and services (De-Lima-Santos and Ceron, 2021). They went on to say that some of the most notable applications of AI in journalism include improved research tools, automatic language translation and speech-to-text conversion, real-time news alerts, and quick source authentication. In addition to meeting the increasing demand for individualized user experiences on both established and upcoming platforms, these technologies allow journalists to create stories that are more accurate and richer (Kevin-Alerechi et al., 2025). The current study examines how journalists in Zimbabwe use AI, at a time when scholars have noted that in some countries AI has transformed newsroom practices. Therefore, there is need to study whether AI use has changed journalism practice in Zimbabwe and the way journalists research, write and distribute their stories.

Munoriyarwa et al. (2023) observe that while debates have reached advanced levels in the Global North, there is still a glaring lack of research on how AI has been appropriated in African newsrooms. A study by Okiyi and Nsude (2019) examines challenges that could hinder

the integration of AI into journalism practice in Nigeria (Kothari & Cruikshank, 2022). On the other hand, Kioko et al. (2022) examined the extent of the use of AI in Kenyan newsrooms and they sought to establish the factors that drive or hinder its adoption. They found that newsrooms in Kenya are catching up by adopting the technology in varying degrees to meet different needs -- from news gathering to packaging it. This reflects that African newsrooms are also integrating the use of AI. Ogola (2023) examined the use of AI in African media using case studies from countries selected from East, Western and Southern Africa and he established that while there is use of AI among some newsrooms in Africa, the adoption and integration of AI tools and systems is still relatively low. The big well-resourced media organisations have invested in AI systems, compared to smaller media organisations. Key challenges facing the adoption of AI include gap in knowledge about it, resource constraints and the fear of the negative impact, cultural resistance in newsrooms, and marginalisation of women (Ogola, 2023).

On the other hand, Munoriyarwa, Chiumbu and Motsaathebe (2023) examined the uptake of AI in South African mainstream newsrooms. Their study sought to determine the extent to which AI has been adopted and how journalists and editors perceive its appropriation in news-making practices and they established that there was a slow, varied but methodological uptake of AI practices in South Africa's mainstream newsrooms. Another study by Munoriyarwa (2024) explores the socio-technological barriers to the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) - powered solutions in five countries of the global south – South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini, Botswana and Zimbabwe. He established that there were socio-technological barriers to the uptake of AI technologies within newsrooms such as economic challenges and what he termed the 'black-boxed' nature of these AI technologies which imposes a violent skepticism among African journalists. He argued that these barriers should be understood to comprehend the affordances and capacities of these technologies in newsrooms. In Zimbabwe, Ndlovu (2024) conducted a study on the audience perceptions of AI-driven news presenters. He used the Centre for Innovation and Technology (CITE)'s Alice, an AI-powered news anchor in Zimbabwe, as a case study. The study by Ndlovu (2024) mainly focused on audiences and their perceptions on the AI news anchor. While it was done in Zimbabwe, there is need to understand how journalists in the mainstream media in the country utilize AI. Though various studies conducted by scholars confirmed the increased use of AI in Africa, there is dearth of research on the adoption and integration of the technology. Considering that the limited amount

of literature on the adoption of AI in African newsrooms (Ogola, 2023; Munoriyarwa et al., 2023; Ndlovu, 2024) fails to adequately address the phenomenon, it is prudent to investigate the adoption and integration of AI in journalism and the media industry in Zimbabwe. A review of the literature shows that further research is needed to understand how AI is being integrated in journalism in Zimbabwe considering its context and challenges. Hence, this current study examines how Zimbabwean journalists in the mainstream media utilize AI.

Social Construction of Technology

The Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) (Pinch & Bijker, 2002) theory informs the study as it seeks to explore how Zimbabwean journalists use AI in newsrooms. According to Oti-Sarpong et al. (2022), the theory presents an approach for empirically investigating interactions between people, technology, and context-specific elements (e.g., institutionalised structures, regulations, and professional practices). In other words, it delves into the relationship between society and technology, hence relevant to the study in that it looks at connection between journalists in Zimbabwe and their use of AI in newsrooms. The research, therefore, investigates how journalists interact with technology in executing their professional duties. The founders of the theory, who are social constructivists, argue that technology does not determine human action, but rather human action shapes technology. Further, they are also of the view that technological innovation is not the result of the mythical and lone man who introduces new 'technologies' and release them into 'society,' starting a series of expected or unexpected impacts (Lin & Li, 2021; Oti-Sarpong et al., 2022). The theory helps to explore how AI has been adopted and integrated into the media field. Its focus is not on what technology does to people, but on what people do with technology. Therefore, the theory will help the research in digging deeper as to what journalists do with the technology, especially when executing their duties. It also describes how social groups perceive the potential, value, use and efficacy of technologies. Therefore, there is need to understand how journalists perceive the value of using AI in their news making process. The SCOT theory helps in the understanding of how AI is being integrated into the media sector as the theory suggests that technology is a socially created object that is influenced by some social, cultural and institutional factors rather than being a set outcome (Khan, 2023). He further notes that in the media industry, SCOT theory reflects how media companies, content creators, governments and other stakeholders have affected the adoption of AI.

The SCOT framework helps understand how journalists in this case who are viewed as a social group utilize AI in newsrooms. It is relevant to the study as it emphasizes that the development, use and meaning of technology are shaped by social, cultural and economic factors. This means that the use of AI in newsrooms is shaped by the above factors suggesting that different journalists in this case may interpret AI's role and capabilities differently, for instance one journalist may see AI as a threat to journalism and not use it while one may embrace it and see it as a valuable tool that will enhance the journalism profession. As such the theory provides a better understanding of the examination of how AI is being adopted in Zimbabwean newsrooms. This shows that the framework provides room to interpret an individual's understanding and use of AI, which can be affected by various factors as suggested by the theory.

Methodology

The study used the mixed method approach that combines and integrates qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single research study. It involves collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data to understand a phenomenon better and answer the research questions. Creswell (2013) postulates that mixed research is when investigators collect and analyse data, integrate the findings, and draw inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or programme of inquiry. The study also employed the convergent design in which quantitative and qualitative data were simultaneously collected and analysed separately. The mixed research method approach is used when quantitative and qualitative data alone will not sufficiently answer the research question. By collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data in the same study, one can draw more meaningful conclusions.

The research employed in-depth interviews to gather data from 10 journalists who were purposively selected from three media houses in Harare (Zimpapers, AMH and ZBC - Radio Zimbabwe), to get an understanding of how media organisations in Zimbabwe use AI. Boyce and Neale (2006), state that an in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interview with a small number of respondents, to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation. The three media houses were purposively chosen because they provide a balanced study as Zimpapers and AMH cover

both public and privately owned print media, while Radio Zimbabwe represents the broadcast sector.

The research also utilised questionnaires to gather data on how journalists use AI in newsrooms. Iwaniec (2019) argued that questionnaires can be administered easily and can return a wealth of information in a relatively short space of time. Lee (2006) articulates that questionnaires provide time for respondents to think about their answers and can offer confidentiality or anonymity for the respondents. Twenty questionnaires were distributed amongst journalists in the industry and 12 were returned. The journalists were randomly selected from the media houses under study and printed copies were distributed to the respondents. The study examines how AI has been integrated into Zimbabwean newsrooms, unpacking the opportunities and negative impacts of using AI in journalism as well as exploring ethical issues associated with the use of AI in the media industry.

Data analysis and discussion

The study revealed that journalists in Zimbabwe are slowly incorporating, adopting and integrating AI use in newsrooms, especially in the news making process. Basically, AI is influential to journalism practices as it aids in content creation, story generation, research and fact-checking, concurrently speeding up investigations. It is also used in transcriptions, audience engagement, copy-editing, language translation and multilingual reporting. The research also established that journalists have negative perceptions on AI use and there are ethical dilemmas associated with the use of AI in journalism. The following sections discuss the findings in detail.

The integration of AI in the newsrooms

According to Kevin-Alerechi *et al.* (2025), the use of AI in newsrooms is in line with general industry-wide goals aimed at reducing operating expenses, boosting output and providing higher-caliber journalism on a large scale. By doing repetitive activities like interview transcription and financial report parsing, AI-driven editorial assistants help overcome resource constraints and free up human journalists to concentrate on interpretive analysis, narrative consistency, and investigative depth. Additionally, integrating AI promotes flexibility, allowing newsrooms to quickly adjust in reaction to audience input and new trends, preserving relevance in a fiercely competitive digital landscape.

The study revealed that the integration of AI in Zimbabwean newsrooms is a budding trend that comes with both opportunities and challenges. The respondents' experiences of using AI in news production and distribution reveal that the journalism industry in Zimbabwe is adopting the technology, though the uptake is still low. It is important to note that in journalism, AI enhances the quality of news as it thrives to perfect the news gathering, production and distribution process. The research revealed that reporters are using AI to source news, write headlines, and manage pay-walls to increase subscriptions. In some instances, the reporters use AI in performing transcriptions as well as turning stories into audio feeds. Journalists have also embraced AI to perform copy-editing, data analysis, capture and share news, ideas, and opinions. The findings correspond with the Journalism AI team report's (2019) assertion that journalists use AI across the news making process -- from news gathering to news production and news distribution.

A journalist at AMH indicated that AI is now an integral part of his work as he uses it in writing, editing and fact checking.

> *I use language generators to help with writing and editing. While I don't rely solely on AI for content creation, these tools can assist with organisation of ideas, suggesting alternative phrases, and even fact-checking. I utilize a variety of AI apps, including natural language processing tools for text analysis and generation. I also use language generators like language translation tools and content suggestion platforms. I also use apps like Grammarly for writing assistance.*

The research also established that AI is being used in Zimbabwean newsrooms to perform various activities such as automating routine tasks like data analysis, content generation, and transcription, allowing journalists to focus on more in-depth reporting. Other journalists indicated that they use AI mainly when they need to generate ideas on how to tackle a story as they indicated that AI provides a wealth of ideas that can be helpful in getting started. A features editor at one of the media houses said:

> *Yes, l sometimes use Gemni, and ChatGPT AI to give me direction on what l can look at. It also helps in crafting questions l could possibly ask and also the summary searches on what has been reported on, and what other angle to explore in a topic.*

This, according to the respondent, quickens the news production process; hence it becomes easy to meet deadlines. The assertion is in line with what Amponsah and Atianashie's (2024) view that the use of AI in journalism started by using algorithms designed to automate news stories like financial summaries or sports results but now it encompasses data, content personalization, investigative journalism assistant and even shaping editorial decisions. Furthermore, AI tools can analyze large datasets quickly, helping journalists uncover trends and insights that can lead to more informed reporting. The findings reveal that journalists are now able to meet deadlines and ease pressure through the integration of AI. The responded went on to add that:

> *In most cases, even if as reporters we are under pressure, we are in a position to beat the deadline through AI. The use of AI tools like Explore, Poe and Meta eases pressure, saves resources and time, while at the same time producing a quality in-depth product.*

Another senior journalist with Zimpapers - Herald newspaper said:

> *Artificial intelligence is more efficient and faster in news distribution. It is also very convenient because in most cases, I work from home. Gone are the days when news processes were conducted in the physical newsroom. You can compile and file a story from the field using your cellphone as long as you are connected to the internet or data.*

The above assertion shows how AI eases the news production process and makes it faster and cheaper. This was confirmed by another senior reporter with AMH (The Standard), who said that artificial intelligence is incorporated into the newsrooms to enhance and complement journalists' capabilities, particularly when it comes to content generation. She further added that artificial intelligence is being used to identify topical issues that audiences are talking about online. The information will then be used to craft stories which likely attract audiences. She explains how AI simplifies her work:

> *I use AI to identify topics or issues that audiences are talking about online to attract audiences. With AI, we are able to conduct data journalism, follow trends, likes and dislikes. Because of that AI is helping us to churn out content relevant to the audiences.*

An online journalist at Alpha Media Holdings who is in data journalism believes that it is no longer about text journalism and therefore he uses AI to improve the quality of stories**.**

> *I am a multimedia journalist. I am into data journalism and I have been using AI tools like data wrapper and flourish for graphical presentations. I believe it's no longer about text in journalism but to create content which aligns with the audience. When statistics are compressed in a graphical presentation, it can be easy and interesting to read. Also, I use Canva for designs that can fit into my stories. I also use Inshot, Power Durectore, Lightrom and Data wrapper.*

> *AI has introduced innovative tools such as Reel Framer, a human-AI co-creative system that translates textual content into visual scripts and storyboards, balancing information with entertainment for formats such as social media reels.*

Multimedia journalists also indicated that they use AI-driven tools for analysis and confirmation of images and videos. They use picture recognition systems which confirm visual content, trace the genesis of user-generated media and sense objects in real-time video feeds. These tools enhance journalistic credibility, while equipping newsrooms to adapt to changing media dynamics. This is in line with the research findings that AI is now being adopted for various reasons and tasks as journalists use it for data analytics and content generation.

Journalists in Zimbabwe also use the speech-to-text and transcription tools in the collecting news. Reporters indicated that they use systems such as Google's Cloud Speech-to-Text and IBM Watson's Speech to Text API to rapidly convert recorded interviews, press conferences, and broadcast segments into textual formats.

> *The automation of interview transcription using AI-driven speech-to-text tools prove valuable for investigative journalism and other data-intensive beats, where large volumes of audio could be processed and indexed with unprecedented efficiency. We use the tools, yes, although there are embedded challenges which include difficulties with domain-specific terminology, accents and background noise.*

Some of the AMH journalists who were interviewed believe that with specific reference to Zimbabwean newsrooms, which are financially struggling, smaller newsrooms with limited

resources can leverage AI tools to compete more effectively with larger outlets, improving their overall output. This was confirmed by an editor with a local publication who said:

> *AI has helped bring convenience into the media industry. Research is now at our fingertips, no more need to waste time moving from one place to another for research. You can now do it from your office or newsroom and you are able to compare stories from different sites and places.*

The editor added that they are now able to quickly generate images and scripts that they can use in newsrooms, while at the same time; they can easily fact check their products, before disseminating to the audiences. This reflects that AI is seen as offering huge opportunities for the media industry and if well adopted and integrated journalists and media houses can greatly benefit.

It can, therefore, be argued that Zimbabwean journalists have adopted AI in some of their news making processes, although findings reveal that much still needs to be done considering that Zimbabwe is lagging when it comes to technological advancements. Moreover, this has affected the appropriation and integration of AI technologies. The findings from Zimbabwean media reflect that the uptake of AI is still low as witnessed by Ogola (2023), who examined the use of AI in African media using case studies from countries selected from East, Western and Southern Africa, and he established that while there is use of AI among some newsrooms in Africa, the adoption and integration of AI tools and systems is still relatively low on the continent. Key challenges facing the adoption of AI include a gap in the knowledge about it, resource constraints and the fear of the negative impact of AI, cultural resistance in newsrooms, and marginalization of women (Ogola, 2023).

On the other hand, findings from questionnaires revealed that journalists in Zimbabwe believe AI is slowly being integrated into the news making process, as seven (58%), out of twelve questionnaires that were returned indicated that they use AI for research, three (25%) said for writing stories and only one (8%) indicated that he uses it for content distribution and only one (8%) participant indicated that he uses AI for all the mentioned purposes.

The pie chart below shows how AI is being used in the Zimbabwean newsrooms.

Use of AI in the news rooms

Legend: Researching · news writing · content distribution · All areas
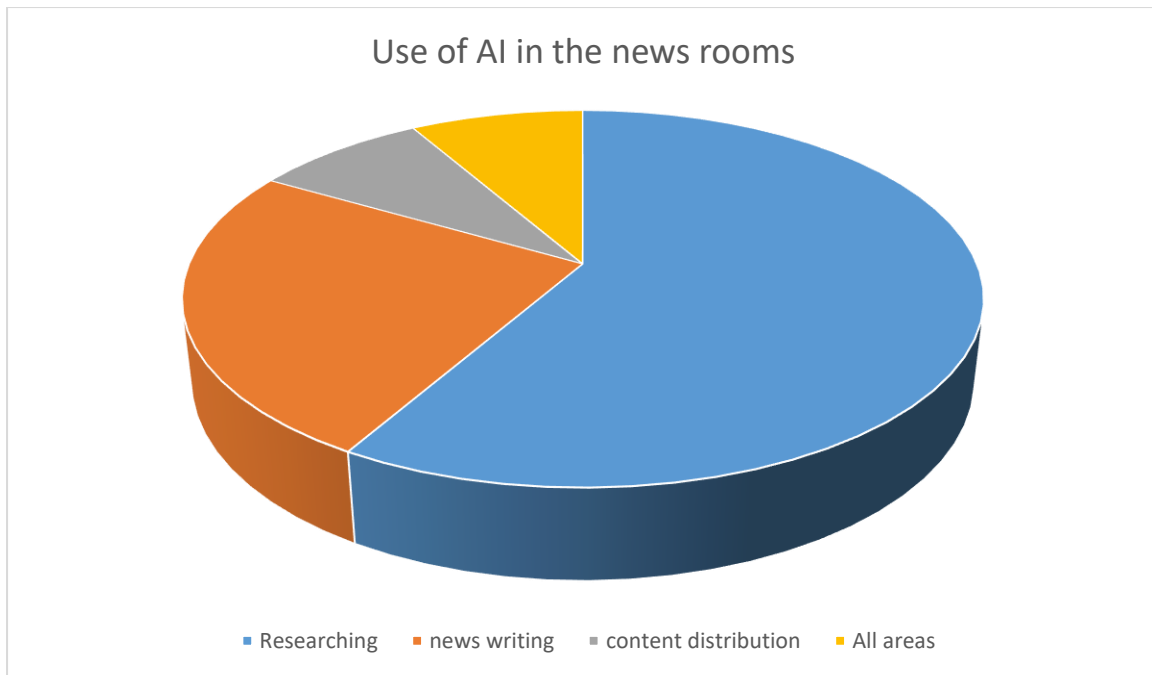
The findings also revealed that Meta AI and ChartGPT are the most commonly used AI tools as they are easily accessible, and journalists can use them to do research on various issues anytime.

The pitfalls of AI in journalism

While so much was said by the journalists about the positive impacts of using AI in the media industry, to some, the practice appeared to be a double-edged sword. The study established that there is a negative side to using AI in newsrooms. Some of the interviewees strongly believed that AI is promoting laziness among journalists, as they argued that some reporters are no longer carrying out fieldwork but relying on AI in constructing news. This, they believed, is promoting a culture of laziness and "desktop journalism" which defeats the whole process of investigative journalism. One of the interviewees said:

> *Over-reliance on AI could lead to a decline in critical thinking and investigative skills among journalists, potentially compromising the quality of journalism.*

A journalist with one of the media houses, who indicated that they sometimes go for months without receiving their salaries said:

> *Lazy journalism [SIC] is the way to go as we only put more effort into something that "pays." We just copy and paste. And let it go for production and publication.*

This presents an ethical dilemma as it also shows that at times, AI is being misused by journalists aiming to meet deadlines and worry less about the whole process. This can easily result in the fabrication of stories, using AI, while at the same time, the journalists churn out half-baked stories as they do not care much, since the media organization is not paying them their wages on time.

Another journalist argued that AI can make errors that originate from biased data that was used to train it. Consequently, the reproduction of these biases in the news content may carry potential financial, legal, and social liabilities. To support the congruence of this effect, a journalist and media trainer said:

> *AI systems may inadvertently propagate misinformation or biased narratives, especially if trained on flawed or skewed data. This can lead to public confusion and mistrust in the media. This is because some facts in journalism need checking and rechecking before publication.*

The above assertion is confirmed through the increasing number of retractions in both the print and electronic media. It shows that journalists tend to rush and publish unverified facts in a bid to have a scoop. Despite retractions and misinformation claims, one editor at AMH indicated that AI technologies are reshaping misinformation detection by integrating advanced natural language understanding and network analysis. These systems detect deceptive content, identify disinformation campaigns, and evaluate the credibility of a viral story with speed and accuracy. Algorithms such as stance detection determine whether articles support, refute, or neutrally report claims (Kevin-Alerechi *et al.*, 2025).

In addition, automation in journalism may threaten jobs for journalists, particularly in smaller news outlets. One journalist in one of the private print media stables said:

> *The three papers (published by the stable) are operating on skeletal staff and interns because of AI. Most of the trained and influential journalists were fired, retrenched or resigned. Basically, AI has led to a loss of experienced voices.*

While other journalists felt that they may lose jobs if AI becomes fully integrated into the media industry in Zimbabwe, others saw it differently as they argued that AI can never replace the human figure in journalism. The findings reveal that there are mixed feelings about the use of AI and some are living in fear while others are not worried as they claim that AI serves an augmentative rather than a substitutive role in journalism. This was noted by Munoriyarwa *et al.* (2023) that there are mixed feelings across newsrooms, including distrust and fear resulting from the adoption of AI. Weaver (2020) cited in Munoriyarwa *et al.* (2023) argued that the result of AI is beginning to show in newsrooms, as the number of journalists employed full time globally is declining, as robots are taking over as such the changes give journalists the reason to challenge the new technology. Responding to this one journalist said:

> *AI will never replace the human figure in journalism. There are different news beats which physically need a person on the ground, for example, general news, sports news, entertainment, etc. You know the value of news. Can a timely incident be automated? Can a bizarre incident be machine-automated? Can a court case and court proceedings be automated? AI is just a research-enhancing tool in journalism. It will never replace a person.*

On the other hand, the questionnaires also revealed mixed feelings concerning the issue of job displacement. Participants had various views concerning the issue. Responding to the question of whether AI is a threat to journalism that will lead to job displacement, most of the participants indicated that AI will not lead to job displacement, but the different thoughts reflect that there are some concerns about the impact of AI in the journalism field. The diagram below reflects how respondents think about AI and job displacement.

AI and Job displacement
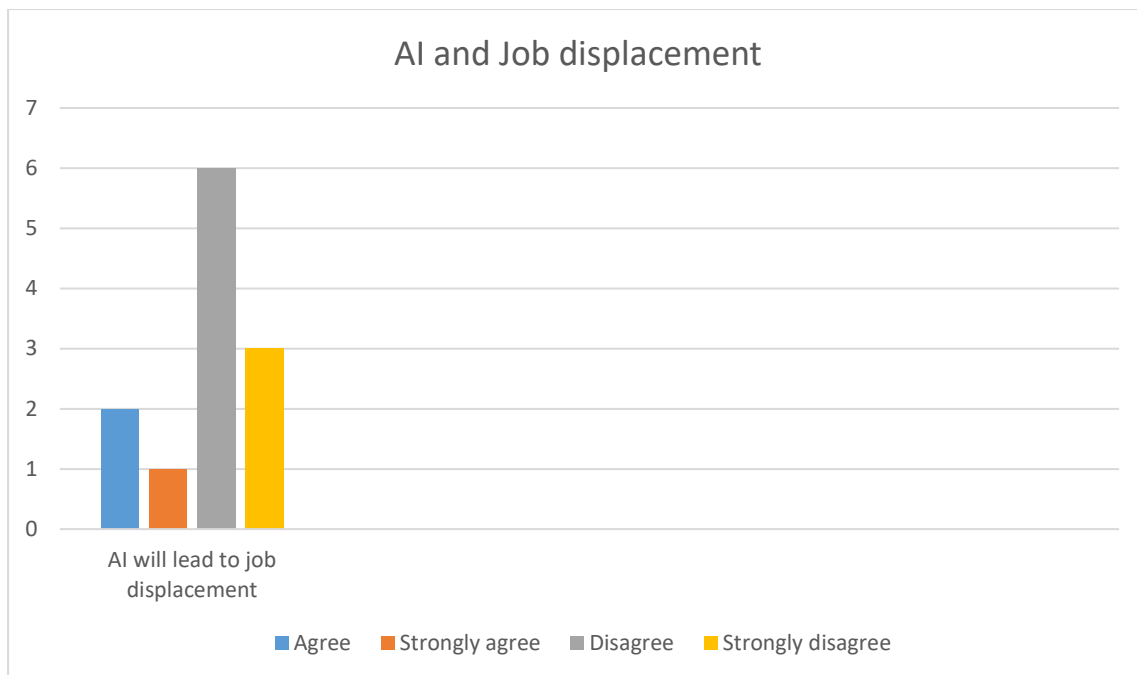
The diagram shows that the majority of the respondents do not agree that AI is a threat to journalism job displacements, with six (6) disagreeing, while three (3) strongly disagree. On the other hand, one (1) out of 12 respondents strongly agreed that it is a threat, while only two (2) agreed that AI can displace journalists in newsrooms. The above perception by journalists is cemented on the fact that machine-generated content may lack the human element and depth that human journalists provide and could result in superficial reporting that fails to engage with complex issues. Another journalist highlighted that; "*Journalism encompasses human first-hand balanced voices and with AI, human voices are silent. Pictures from photojournalists are essential to aid the authenticity of stories.*" This reflects that most journalists feel that they cannot be replaced by AI because of the nature of the journalism field.

Ethical dilemmas associated with the use of AI in journalism

The findings revealed that the use of AI in Zimbabwean newsrooms creates several ethical dilemmas. Participants highlighted that when AI generates content, it can be unclear who is responsible for inaccuracies or harmful information. This raises questions about accountability in reporting and the integrity of the news. Adjin-Tetty *et al*. (2024) observe that there are ethical aspects of using AI in the newsrooms and these include bias, accountability and motives for adopting the technology. Although AI is seen as helpful for fact-checking at times, it can also

spread false information as it may misattribute quotes and sometimes does not identify the sources of information (Adjin-Tetty *et al.,* 2024).

The interviewees stated that AI tools may use private data to alter content or target audiences, raising ethical issues about consent and the probable misuse of sensitive information. One of the interviewees said:

> *AI can create enormous fakes or misinformation that can mislead the audiences. This challenges the fundamental role of the Voluntary Media Council of Zimbabwe in providing accurate information. However, before publishing, you need to fact check. You cannot copy and paste everything AI gives you or you will attract lawsuits. AI can give you even a story with quotes when you did not give it any speech, so where are the quotes coming from? So if you copy and paste, you will be caught wanting at the end of the day.*

This shows that some ethical issues may arise with the use of AI. As noted by Kothari and Cruickshank (2021), inaccurate information collected by an algorithm and incorporated into a machine-generated story may be disseminated widely, given the speed of information diffusion online. This shows that inaccurate information has a chance of being incorporated into AI-generated stories and as a result, it may spread and reach wider audiences because of the wider reach of online media, and this may lead to the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation.

The study also revealed that AI may not fully grasp different local contexts, customs, or nuances, leading to wrong or insensitive coverage that does not resonate with local audiences. It also does not have the capacity in discourse analysis, selection of words and meaning especially in indigenous languages. According to Kothari and Cruickshank (2021), AI tools reflect values and biases of programmers who developed them. Values encoded into AI tools do not adjust to new realities, and African countries that rely on technology developed by the Global North or China will face challenges in trying to localize assumptions coded into the AI systems. Addressing these dilemmas requires careful consideration, ethical guidelines, and robust regulatory frameworks to ensure responsible use of AI in journalism.

A senior journalist with one of the leading broadcasting houses in the country highlighted that though there are some positives about the use of AI in the media industry, it is unfortunate that the same technology leaves a lot to be desired. He said:

The use of AI is good, but it misses the personalisation of the content created. In other words, the human element is not there. It means once you read or listen to an AI-generated piece you can tell that it was electronically generated. This detaches the message from listeners or readers as they can't emotionally connect with it.

The journalist's point of view cements the fact that AI technologies lack the human element and since they were not created in Africa, the content they generate will be void of the continent's norms and values, hence will be difficult to fulfill audiences' expectations.

A senior journalist at Radio Zimbabwe, one of the leading radio stations said that Zimbabwe media houses using artificial intelligence are facing the challenge of AI not being able to pronounce local names and places. The respondent said:

The issues of biases and its failure to pronounce local names and places in local languages are clearly pointed out by responses from the artificial intelligence interviewee, and these issues are hindering the advancement of Artificial intelligence in news reporting.

In this regard, she advocated for an urgent need to incorporate local languages into the artificial intelligence algorithms for a better experience for the audiences or receivers of the content. In other words, there is need for 'Africanisation' of the AI technologies to facilitate 'Africanised' content.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the integration of AI in Zimbabwean mainstream media newsrooms present significant potential to enhance journalism but must be approached thoughtfully. It also concludes that AI is slowly being adopted in Zimbabwe and much still needs to be done. Balancing innovation with ethical considerations is crucial for maximizing benefits while minimizing risks. There is need for continuous training when it comes to dealing with the threats of using AI. Additionally, careful consideration and regulation of AI in journalism is vital to ensure that it supports rather than undermines democratic values and the integrity of the media. The integration of AI may prompt the need for updated regulations to address issues

such as data protection, intellectual property, and media ethics. The study recommends that journalists need to be trained on how to effectively use AI in newsrooms and avoid over-reliance on the technology, to evade ethical dilemmas associated with the use of AI in the journalism and media industry. The study also recommends that journalism training schools should work together as well as partner with experts in AI so that students are well-equipped and skilled to become journalists who fit into the ever-changing world of journalism.

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