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Expert Perspectives on Detecting Fake News and Misinformation Governance Using Generative Artificial Intelligence in Nigeria: A Qualitative Exploratory Study

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Abstract. The rapid spread of misinformation in digital communication environments presents significant challenges to information integrity, particularly in emerging media ecosystems such as Nigeria. Recent developments in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) have introduced new possibilities for detecting and managing misleading information across digital platforms. This study investigates how generative AI can contribute to governing information integrity within Nigeria's misinformation ecosystem from a communication perspective. Using an exploratory qualitative approach, the study draws on in-depth interviews with experts in artificial intelligence, machine learning, digital media, and information governance. The findings reveal that generative AI can enhance the monitoring of misinformation by identifying misleading narratives, analyzing persuasive message patterns, tracking the spread of viral content, and supporting real-time verification processes in journalism and fact-checking. However, the study also shows that the effectiveness of AI technologies depends on contextual adaptation, ethical governance, and collaboration among stakeholders. AI systems alone cannot fully address misinformation challenges without the support of media literacy initiatives and institutional communication strategies. The study concludes that generative AI can play a significant role in strengthening information integrity within digital public communication.

Keywords: Generative artificial intelligence; Misinformation; Digital communication; Information integrity; Algorithmic governance; Nigeria

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1. Introduction

The integrity of information represents a fundamental pillar of democratic communication and public knowledge formation in contemporary societies. Reliable information ecosystems enable citizens to make informed decisions, engage in civic participation, and sustain public trust in institutions. However, the rapid expansion of digital media environments has increasingly complicated the maintenance of information integrity. The proliferation of misinformation and disinformation across online platforms has become one of the most pressing challenges confronting modern communication systems. Scholars have widely recognized that misinformation can undermine democratic discourse, distort public opinion, and weaken institutional trust within digital societies (Li, 2024; Masuwd et al., 2025; Miconi et al., 2024; Schröder & Guenther, 2025).

The rise of social media platforms has significantly accelerated the dissemination of misleading information within the digital public sphere. Platforms such as Facebook, X, WhatsApp, and YouTube enable information to circulate rapidly without sufficient verification mechanisms, allowing false narratives to spread widely before corrective information can intervene. This phenomenon has intensified concerns among communication scholars and policymakers regarding the reliability of online information environments. Research shows that social media infrastructures not only amplify misinformation but also complicate the process of verifying news credibility within increasingly fragmented media ecosystems (Aboyade, 2022; Ahmed & Msughter, 2022; Anumudu & Ibrahim, 2020; Apuke & Omar, 2021).

In response to these challenges, scholars and practitioners have emphasized the importance of strengthening fact-checking mechanisms and information verification processes within digital communication systems. The rapid growth of user-generated content requires both media professionals and ordinary users to adopt stronger information literacy practices to assess the credibility of online content. Studies indicate that misinformation and disinformation have become structural features of contemporary media environments, demanding collaborative responses from journalists, technology developers, and regulatory institutions (Rahman et al., 2025; Tufchi et al., 2023).

Nigeria represents a particularly critical context for examining the dynamics of misinformation within rapidly evolving digital ecosystems. As one of Africa's most populous countries and a major hub of digital communication, Nigeria has experienced significant growth in internet connectivity and social media adoption. While these developments have expanded access to information and public participation, they have also intensified the circulation of misleading narratives related to political processes, public health crises, security issues, and ethnic tensions. Empirical studies highlight that misinformation circulating through digital platforms has increasingly influenced public opinion and social stability within Nigeria's communication landscape (Anagba et al., 2025).

The risks associated with misinformation in Nigeria extend beyond communication dynamics to broader concerns about national security and public safety. Disinformation campaigns and manipulated narratives have the potential to escalate social conflict, undermine trust in governance institutions, and influence electoral processes. Research examining public awareness of misinformation in Nigeria suggests that the spread of false information through digital media can significantly impact societal stability and policy decision-making (Jimada, 2023; Lawal et al., 2025; Wonodi et al., 2022). These developments highlight the urgent need for innovative technological and governance

strategies capable of addressing the complexity of misinformation within contemporary digital environments.

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have introduced new possibilities for addressing the challenges of misinformation detection and information verification. AI-driven systems particularly those based on machine learning and natural language processing have demonstrated promising capabilities in identifying patterns of misleading narratives and detecting manipulated digital content. Scholars have noted that AI-based tools can significantly enhance the capacity of media organizations and fact-checking institutions to analyze large volumes of online information more efficiently (Vicari & Komendatova, 2023). In the African context, machine learning algorithms have also been explored as potential technological solutions for detecting fake news circulating across social media platforms (Espoir et al., 2024; Khosa et al., 2024).

More recently, the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has further transformed the landscape of digital communication and misinformation management. While generative AI technologies have raised concerns about the potential creation of sophisticated synthetic misinformation, they also offer new opportunities for automated fact-checking, narrative analysis, and credibility assessment. Studies indicate that generative AI tools and large language models may enhance users' ability to evaluate the reliability of online information and assist in identifying misleading narratives within complex digital communication networks (Arar et al., 2025; García-Peñalvo et al., 2024; Kalota, 2024; Kelly et al., 2023). Furthermore, emerging research suggests that users increasingly rely on generative AI chatbots as tools for verifying the credibility of news encountered online (Saviano et al., 2025; Siddals et al., 2024).

Despite these technological advancements, significant gaps remain in understanding how generative AI can be effectively integrated into broader governance strategies for safeguarding information integrity, particularly within Global South contexts. Much of the existing research on AI-driven misinformation detection has focused on technologically advanced media environments, leaving limited empirical insights into how such technologies may function within developing digital ecosystems. Therefore, this study aims to explore how generative artificial intelligence can contribute to governing information integrity within Nigeria's misinformation ecosystem. By examining expert perspectives on the opportunities, challenges, and governance implications of AI-driven misinformation detection, this research seeks to contribute to the growing interdisciplinary dialogue between communication studies, digital governance, and artificial intelligence research.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative exploratory research design to investigate how generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) can contribute to governing information integrity within Nigeria's misinformation ecosystem. A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to understand expert perspectives, interpret emerging technological dynamics, and explore governance implications associated with the use of artificial intelligence in combating misinformation. Qualitative methods are particularly appropriate when examining complex socio-technical phenomena where technological development intersects with media systems, regulatory frameworks, and communication practices (Lim, 2025; Morgan, 2022; Pratt, 2025).

The primary data collection method consisted of semi-structured expert interviews with professionals working in fields related to artificial intelligence, machine learning,

natural language processing, digital media governance, and misinformation research. Expert interviews allow researchers to obtain in-depth insights from individuals who possess specialized knowledge and practical experience in a particular domain. The participants were purposively selected based on their professional involvement in AI development, digital media analysis, or misinformation mitigation strategies. This purposive sampling ensured that the study captured informed perspectives relevant to the intersection between emerging technologies and information governance.

Data collection was conducted through online interviews using video conferencing platforms to accommodate the geographical distribution of the experts. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and followed a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore several thematic areas, including the potential of generative AI for misinformation detection, the ethical implications of algorithmic interventions, governance challenges in digital media environments, and the role of institutional collaboration in safeguarding information integrity. All interviews were recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed to facilitate systematic analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This analytical approach allows researchers to identify recurring patterns, key concepts, and emerging themes within qualitative data. The analysis process involved several stages, including familiarization with the interview transcripts, open coding, categorization of codes into broader thematic clusters, and interpretation of findings within the framework of communication governance and artificial intelligence studies. Through this process, the study identified key themes related to technological opportunities, governance challenges, ethical considerations, and institutional responses to misinformation in Nigeria's digital communication ecosystem. To ensure the credibility and rigor of the study, several qualitative validity strategies were implemented. These included triangulation of expert perspectives, careful documentation of the coding process, and iterative interpretation of themes to maintain analytical consistency. Ethical considerations were also addressed throughout the study process, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and the anonymization of participant identities. These measures were taken to ensure that the study adhered to ethical standards while generating reliable insights into the role of generative AI in governing information integrity.

3. Results and Discussion

The results report findings from 20 purposive key-informant interviews with participants drawn from Nigerian experts in the domains of AI, Machine Learning and a Natural Language Processing. The study sought expert judgements on whether Generative AI can help detect falsehoods in Nigeria and, if so, how such tools must be designed and governed to avoid doing harm to fragile social cohesion. These themes are presented below with sub-themes, representative quotations, and explicit linkage to the study's research questions and theoretical frameworks. Table A1 presents a summary of the themes generated from the KII data, which are presented interpretively in the paragraphs that follow.

Table 1 Thematic Code Tree

S/N	Theme	Sub-Themes	Short Description	Exemplar Quotation (Code)
1	Familiarity with GenAI	Technical awareness;	Most experts familiar with	"I'm familiar with the terrain… well above average when it

S/N	Theme	Sub-Themes	Short Description	Exemplar Quotation (Code)
	and ML	varied depth	GenAI concepts; depth varies across disciplines	comes to machine learning for fake-news identification. …. In developed world, it is widely used, they make use of it. I know in developing countries like Nigeria, people don't really care much about that. That is why it is easier to deceive almost the entire nation based on fake news. " (P1, Professor)
2	Technical affordances and limits	Detection strengths; multimodal checks; data dependence	GenAI useful for triage, semantic matching and provenance checks but performance depends on domain data	"Neural networks model how human beings think… you still go a long way to see if the thing is wrong." (P2, AI Researcher)
3	Data quality and labelling	Label reliability; bias; pre-training mismatch	Poorly labelled or biased datasets undermine detectors; local corpora lacking	"If data are not properly labelled… that is the beginning of major challenge." (P3, ML Engineer)
4	Language and domain coverage	Low-resource languages; local idioms; domain scope	Off-the-shelf models fail for Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Pidgin English and domain-specific matters	"We must look into a domain that we are familiar with… go narrow, then scale." (P4, Senior Academic)
5	Social heuristics and amplification	Brand trust; peer sharing; celebrity reposts	Brand cues and social endorsement increase reach of clones and lower verification	"People keep sharing because it came from what I thought was the real Daily Trust page." (P5, ML expert)
6	Emerging deceptive techniques	Generative deepfakes; cheap-fakes; reinforcement of patterns	Producers adapt; generative tools produce text, images and video that evade signature checks	"Large language models are able to create text in a way that seems original… we now have extra work to try to spot a fake." (P2, AI Researcher)
7	Ethical, legal and privacy	User data privacy;	Concerns about surveillance,	"User outside will not have access to that data… who do

S/N	Theme	Sub-Themes	Short Description	Exemplar Quotation (Code)
	concerns	transparency; accountability	rights infringement and opacity of pre-trained models	you give access to?" (P6)
8	Role of human oversight and inoculation	Human-in-the-loop; media literacy; pre-bunking	Experts emphasise hybrid systems, public education and newsroom signalling	"It must be human in the loop… and we must train people to spot fakes." (P1, Professor)

Note: *n = 20 KIIs; codes P1–P6 represent anonymised participants*

Table 1 summarizes the key themes derived from the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with 20 experts and presents a thematic code tree that captures the major dimensions of generative AI use in addressing misinformation. The analysis identifies eight main themes: familiarity with generative AI and machine learning, technical affordances and limitations, data quality and labeling challenges, language and domain coverage issues, social heuristics and amplification dynamics, emerging deceptive techniques, ethical and legal concerns, and the role of human oversight and inoculation strategies. The findings show that while most experts demonstrate a relatively strong awareness of generative AI technologies, their depth of expertise varies across disciplinary backgrounds. Experts acknowledge that AI systems can assist in detecting misinformation through semantic analysis, pattern recognition, and multimodal verification; however, their effectiveness is highly dependent on the quality of training data and the availability of locally relevant datasets. The table also highlights structural challenges such as the limited support for low-resource languages (e.g., Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Pidgin English), the influence of social trust and celebrity amplification in spreading misinformation, and the emergence of sophisticated generative techniques such as deepfakes and AI-generated narratives. Furthermore, participants raise important ethical and regulatory concerns related to privacy, transparency, and data governance. Overall, the themes emphasize that although generative AI offers valuable technical capabilities, effective misinformation governance requires hybrid approaches that combine AI tools with human oversight, media literacy initiatives, and institutional communication strategies.

3.1. Familiarity with GenAI and perceived utility

Participants reported general familiarity with machine learning and GenAI, but depth of technical understanding varied. Nigerian experts in the domains of AI, Machine Learning and a Natural Language Processing described a confident grasp of neural networks, reinforcement learning and transfer learning; newsroom practitioners and regulators tended to frame GenAI in operational terms (what it can do for verification workflows). Across the sample, GenAI was seen as immediately useful for semantic triage (quickly sorting content according to its meaning to determine which items require immediate attention, fact-checking or intervention) and rapid cross-document retrieval.

For example, P1 says, "*I'm familiar with that terrain, but not excellently. At least well above average… the machine learning techniques that are employed to do that. … In developed world, it is widely used, they make use of it. I know in developing countries like*

Nigeria, people don't really care much about that. That is why it is easier to deceive almost the entire nation based on fake news." (P1)

3.2. Detection strengths: triage, provenance and multimodal potential

Experts identified three technical roles for GenAI in detection workflows, especially from ML perspective. First, rapid triage (prioritisation of information based on urgency, importance or severity) was emphasised: models can prioritise content for human review, flagging high-risk items. Second, provenance retrieval and cross-referencing of archival materials was seen as an important capability for images and video. Third, multimodal inspection (text, image and audio combined) could raise detection sensitivity for sophisticated manipulations.

Regarding that, P2 remarks, "*Machine learning I believe can be used to detect if an image has been altered… neural networks can be used to trace back the origin of the news using some form of network analysis. …and then in recent times I know they now employ the reinforcement learning. What that is all about is that there are some pre trained learning models before, and then, maybe in Nigeria we now have our own data, we can just put in addition on those trained models, what we referred to as reinforcement learning*." (P2)

3.3. Core constraint data quality, labelling and bias

A near-unanimous concern was data quality. Experts described common labelling errors, contradictory annotations and politically or culturally biased training sets. The cascade effect was clear: labelled training data of poor provenance produce biased detectors. Several participants recommended local corpus development as indispensable.

P3 stresses that constraint thus, "*If you have a situation where data are not properly labelled, that is the beginning of major challenge… who actually labelled that data*?

Furthermore, data availability, annotation bias and the growing sophistication of generative systems were central themes in participants' accounts. Participants emphasised the absence of a ready, well-labelled Nigerian corpus for training detection models: "There is no ready-made dataset we can just feed the model" (P3). Labelling bias was identified as a direct risk to classifier fairness: "If every story with his photo is tagged as fake, the model will learn that" (P3). Several informants flagged synthetic text and imagery as a rising verification burden: "LLMs [Large Language Models] now write and image tools make pictures that look real, spotting fakes is harder" (P3). Time pressure for verification was repeatedly noted: "By the time you check the video, it has already spread" (P3). These constraints together limit the immediate deployment of fully automated GenAI detection without curated data and human oversight.

3.4. Language, domain specificity and the advice to narrow scope

Several experts warned against one-size-fits-all models. Nigeria's language diversity and domain-specific forms of deception (security rumours, election clips and religiously framed content) require bespoke approaches. The pragmatic advice was to start with familiar domains and local languages, build reliable datasets and then scale up.

Stressing that point, P4 has this to say, "*It's better to just look into a domain that for this particular research we are linking this to… go narrow, then scale… "So, from the way it works, we have to look at it from the natural language processing side as well. We will borrow ideas from both angles, and at the end of the day we still need to vectorise the content before most of these machine-learning algorithms can even run. There are quite a*

number of stages involved before you can reach that final point where the system can say whether something is fake news or not." (P4)

3.5. Social heuristics, clone pages and amplification pathways

Participants highlighted the social ecology that enables falsehoods. Brand trust and social endorsement emerged as strong facilitators. Several academia-related experts reported that audiences attach credibility to a name or logo regardless of provenance, which is a pattern that makes clone pages effective vectors.

P4 was one of those who highlighted that, "*People bring what happened in 1980 and reframe it… the image gives credence to the news. …AI has been used to spot fakes. So, this also includes AI-generated content. And also, machine learning can be used to trace back neural networks; for example, can be used to trace back the origins of the news using some form of network analysis that will trace back to the origins of the news, and lets us know if the origin is actually fake or not*." (P4)

3.6. Adaptive adversaries: generative deepfakes and the arms race

Experts recognised an active arms race. As detectors improve, generators shift tactics: phrase paraphrasing, multimodal composition and provenance obfuscation. Participants described generative models as both problem and partial solution: they can enhance detection but also empower adversaries.

One participant, P2, expressed their concern: "*Large language models are able to create text in a way that seems original… because of the sophistication of those algorithms, we now have extra work to try to spot a fake*. *Yes … I believe [that machine learning] can be used to detect if an image has been altered. For example, an image in the news*." (P2)

7. Governance, ethics and privacy: trust deficits and accountability gaps: Regulatory and ethical concerns were prominent. Participants raised issues about user privacy when harvesting training data, opacity of pre-trained models and lack of recourse for mislabelling. The consensus was that detection tools must be transparent, auditable and operate with explicit data-use policies.

P6 expressed those concerns thus, "*User data privacy… who do you actually give access to? That is very, very important*." (P6)

8. Human oversight, inoculation and the centrality of media literacy: Experts consistently argued that GenAI must be embedded in human-centred systems. Media literacy and inoculation were seen as essential complements to technical tools. A multi-tiered approach received strong endorsement: automated triage, followed by human verification, followed by public pre-bunking campaigns.

P1 pivotally emphasised that point well: *"[Gen]AI can assist, but human adjudication and media literacy must be part of the design*." (P1)

3.7. Generative AI and the Transformation of Digital Communication in Governing Information Integrity

The findings of this study reveal that generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has begun to transform the dynamics of digital communication in Nigeria's misinformation ecosystem. Experts interviewed in this research highlighted that AI technologies are increasingly capable of identifying misleading narratives, tracking the spread of viral misinformation, and supporting real-time verification processes across digital platforms. From a communication perspective, this development reflects the growing role of algorithmic systems in shaping how information is produced, circulated, and interpreted

within networked media environments. As digital communication infrastructures become more automated, the governance of information integrity increasingly depends on the interaction between technological systems and communicative practices among media institutions, platforms, and audiences.

In the context of communication theory, the spread of misinformation can be understood through the lens of the networked communication environment, where information flows rapidly across interconnected platforms and user networks. Research by Castells (2007) suggests that contemporary communication operates within a "network society," in which digital networks facilitate the rapid diffusion of information, including both credible news and misleading content. The findings of this study confirm that Nigeria's digital ecosystem reflects this pattern, where social media platforms and messaging applications play a central role in amplifying misinformation. Generative AI therefore emerges as a communication governance tool capable of monitoring and interpreting complex patterns of information flow within these digital networks (Connolly-Ahern et al., 2025; Fuchs, 2023; Siebers, 2020).

The results indicate that generative AI contributes to reshaping the communication practices of journalism and fact-checking institutions. Experts emphasized that AI-assisted tools enable journalists to process large volumes of digital content, detect emerging misinformation narratives, and verify claims more efficiently. This finding aligns with the concept of computational journalism, which highlights the integration of data-driven technologies into journalistic communication processes (Diakopoulos, 2019). Within this framework, generative AI functions as a communicative support system that enhances the ability of media organizations to respond quickly to misinformation circulating in the public sphere.

The study also reveals that misinformation in Nigeria is often disseminated through emotionally persuasive narratives and culturally contextualized messages. Communication scholars have long emphasized that persuasive messages can influence public opinion when they resonate with audience beliefs, identities, and social networks (Benkler, Y., Faris, R., & Roberts, 2018; DeCook, 2019). Experts interviewed in this research noted that generative AI systems can analyze linguistic patterns, narrative structures, and sentiment within digital messages to identify potentially misleading content. By examining these communicative elements, AI technologies help uncover how misinformation narratives gain traction within online communities.

The findings also highlight important limitations of relying solely on automated communication monitoring systems. Experts stressed that algorithmic systems may struggle to fully interpret cultural nuance, sarcasm, and context-dependent meanings within digital conversations. This limitation resonates with the broader argument that communication processes are inherently social and interpretive, requiring human judgment and contextual understanding (Couldry & Hepp, 2018). Therefore, while generative AI can enhance the detection of misinformation, human communicative expertise remains essential in evaluating the meaning and implications of digital messages.

Another important insight emerging from the findings is the role of audiences in shaping information integrity within digital communication systems. Experts argued that technological detection mechanisms cannot completely prevent misinformation if audiences continue to share unverified content. This observation supports the media literacy perspective in communication studies, which emphasizes the importance of critical audience engagement in evaluating information sources (Guess et al., 2020). In

this context, generative AI should be viewed as part of a broader communication strategy that includes public education and media literacy initiatives.

The study further suggests that governing information integrity requires collaborative communication between multiple stakeholders, including technology developers, media institutions, government regulators, and civil society organizations. Such collaboration reflects the concept of communicative governance, where public communication and institutional coordination play crucial roles in addressing complex societal challenges. By facilitating data analysis and information monitoring, generative AI can support more informed communication between these stakeholders in efforts to counter misinformation and strengthen public trust in digital information systems.

The findings demonstrate that generative AI is reshaping the landscape of digital communication by introducing new mechanisms for monitoring, interpreting, and responding to misinformation. However, the effectiveness of these technologies ultimately depends on how they are integrated into broader communication practices involving journalists, policymakers, technology developers, and audiences. Strengthening information integrity therefore requires not only technological innovation but also the development of responsible communication strategies that promote transparency, accountability, and critical engagement within digital public spheres.

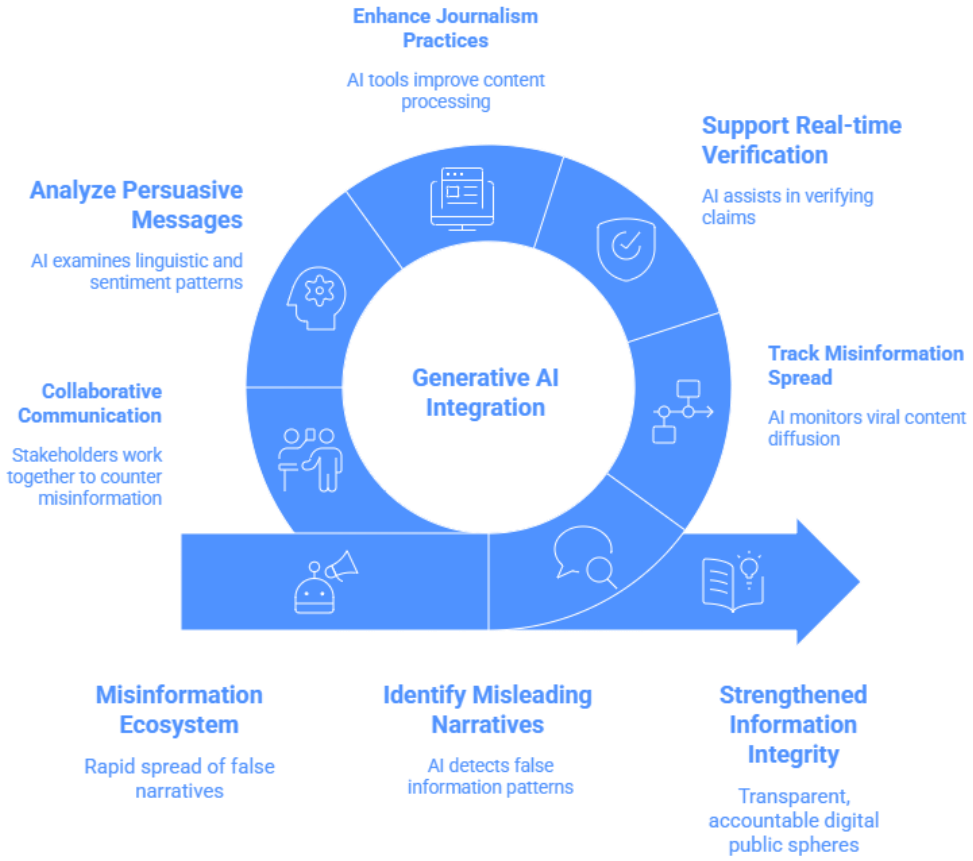

Figure 1 Diagrammatic Illustration of How Generative AI Transforms Digital Communication

Figure 1 illustrates how generative AI can help improve digital communication in addressing misinformation. In the current misinformation ecosystem, false information spreads quickly through online platforms and social media. By integrating generative AI,

communication processes can be strengthened in several ways. AI can track the spread of misinformation, identify misleading narratives, and analyze persuasive messages by examining language and sentiment patterns. It can also support real-time verification, helping journalists and fact-checkers process and verify information more efficiently. In addition, the figure highlights the importance of collaborative communication among stakeholders, including media organizations, technology developers, policymakers, and the public. Through these combined efforts, the use of generative AI can contribute to stronger information integrity and more transparent and accountable digital public communication.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the role of generative artificial intelligence in governing information integrity within Nigeria's misinformation ecosystem. The findings indicate that generative AI has significant potential to support digital communication systems in detecting and managing misleading information. Experts highlighted that AI technologies can track the spread of misinformation across digital networks, identify misleading narratives through linguistic and sentiment analysis, and assist journalists and fact-checking organizations in real-time verification processes. These capabilities demonstrate how AI-driven tools can strengthen information monitoring and improve the efficiency of communication practices within digital media environments.

The discussion further reveals that the effectiveness of generative AI in addressing misinformation cannot rely solely on technological capabilities. Instead, it must be integrated within broader communication processes involving journalists, policymakers, technology developers, and digital audiences. From a communication perspective, the study shows that generative AI contributes to transforming digital communication practices by supporting computational journalism, enhancing fact-checking mechanisms, and facilitating collaborative communication among stakeholders. However, the study also highlights that algorithmic systems face challenges in interpreting cultural context, linguistic nuances, and the complex dynamics of online communication. Therefore, human expertise, media literacy, and institutional collaboration remain essential components in strengthening information integrity within digital public spheres.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The study is based on qualitative insights from a limited number of experts, which may not fully represent the broader perspectives of all stakeholders within Nigeria's digital ecosystem. In addition, the study focuses primarily on expert perceptions rather than large-scale empirical data on AI implementation. Future research could expand this work by conducting quantitative or mixed-method studies examining the effectiveness of AI-based misinformation detection systems across different digital platforms. Further studies could also explore the role of audience behavior, media literacy, and regulatory frameworks in shaping the governance of information integrity in emerging digital communication environments.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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