

Ethical Implications, Ownership, and Accountability of AI Usage in Media: An Empirical Inquiry from Non-Western Contexts

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Abstract— Artificial intelligence (AI) is progressively used to create, distribute, and personalize journalistic content which raises ethical, ownership, and governance inquiries, especially outside Western settings. Existing work is regionally uneven and theory-driven with inadequate empirical evidence on how journalism ethics, copyright, and platform accountability adhere when AI-generated misinformation enters the media ecosystems [6][7]. We examine ethical expectations, perceived ownership, and accountability mechanisms by using an Egypt-centered mixed-methods design (93 valid survey responses, 10 interviews, and field observations). We found deep demand for transparency and labeling, opposed views on ownership, and accountability expectations that highlight human and institutional roles.

Keywords: *AI in media – ethics – ownership – accountability – journalism - intellectual property – transparency - non-Western contexts – Egypt - mixed methods - misinformation*

I. INTRODUCTION

The media industry increasingly relies on AI for content creation, distribution, and personalization. This raises complex ethical, legal, and governance questions, such as editorial oversight, factchecking, and accuracy below [7]. Existing scholarships are heavily theory-driven and Western-centric, with limited empirical data from non-Western contexts [6]. Therefore, this study bases evidence in Egypt to explain how audiences and professionals connect journalistic ethics to intellectual property rights questions and to accountability mechanisms for AI-

generated misinformation and deepfakes. This paper is organized as follows. Section II covers the research gap and research questions. Section III presents the methodology and sample. Section IV reports the results, including qualitative findings. Section V introduces the discussion and implications. Section VI discusses limitations and recommendations. Section VII concludes.

II. RESEARCH GAP

Although AI ethics and newsroom automation are broadly discussed, empirical data from non-Western journalism contexts remains limited, especially on how professionals apply ethical principles into practical transparency and monitoring requirements [1]. Ownership and accountability are commonly regarded as two separate problems, despite the fact that media professionals and audiences may encounter AI-generated content as simultaneously an authorship problem and a policy dilemma [2][4]. In addition, deep-fake and misinformation concerns are usually framed as digital threats, when research also needs to determine which accountability mechanisms professionals and audiences consider legitimate and applicable [3]. Accordingly, the research questions are as follows:

- 1) How should journalism ethics adapt to AI-enabled reporting and content creation?
- 2) Who owns AI-generated media, and what are the implications for creators and consumers?
- 3) What accountability mechanisms are needed to address AI-generated misinformation on media platforms?

III. METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE

This study employs a mixed-methods design combining (i) a structured survey (93 valid responses) measuring attitudes toward ethics, ownership/IP, and accountability/regulation using Likert and multiple-choice items; (ii) ten in-depth interviews with media professionals spanning journalism, law, media direction, political science, and ethics; and (iii) field observations involving 27 first-year media students using ChatGPT to produce a script and an essay. We define "One Centered Mind" as the tendency for AI outputs to converge on similar framings regardless of user variation, operationalized here through analysis of students' AI-assisted texts for thematic and structural homogenization. Interview sampling was guided by thematic saturation: data collection continued until no substantially new themes emerged in participants' accounts of transparency, ownership, and accountability responsibilities.

The sample includes surveys distributed on media/communication students, digital content creators, industry professionals, and general audiences from the age group 19-45. Also, interviews for 10 professionals from journalism, law, media direction, political science, and ethics and field observations for 27 first-year media students.

IV. RESULTS KEY FINDINGS

Through interviews and surveys, respondents consistently highlighted transparency as a fundamental condition for public trust, especially through explicit labeling and proactive disclosure of AI-generated material. Regarding ownership, participants conveyed genuinely divided views: some attributed authorship and rights primarily to human creators, others to AI developers, and some to the AI system itself, which reveals a misalignment between current copyright law and public perceptions of authorship [2][4]. Concerning deep-fakes and misinformation, interviewed professionals asserted that governance must move from theory to practice; otherwise, seemingly impartial rules may create inconsistent impacts [5]. Moreover, student field observation outputs suggested a "One Centered Mind" effect; in other words, AI assistance appeared to standardize tone, narrative structure, and ethical framing even when individual students used different prompts.

V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

RQ1: The findings support the perspective that AI integration threatens core journalistic values unless ethical responsibility remains secured under human oversight along with transparency to enable audiences to assess content credibility [7]. Professionals in this study called for clear disclosure standards, which is a finding consistent with broader arguments that algorithmic systems require new ethical codes beyond traditional journalistic ones [6].

RQ2: Conflicting views on ownership reflect legal ambiguity. In the past, copyright protection was tied to human originality and creative agency only, which leaves ethical questions and open governance when AI generates expressive outputs [4]. The majority (79.9%) find current copyright law insufficient and 88.9% calling for international regulatory alignment proves that these legal gaps create significant real-world challenges for users and creators.

RQ3: Respondents agree on the human-centered accountability model whereby platforms and institutions apply credible and enforceable processes instead of relying solely on retrospective content removal [1]. The empirical finding that enforcement can produce politically uneven effects [3] reinforces the need for transparent and auditable governance standards that go beyond superficial neutrality.

VI. LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is contextually grounded in Egypt, and caution is advisable in generalizing findings to non-Western regions with different legal, cultural, and newsroom infrastructures. The qualitative component is exploratory in scale; therefore, the survey is not intended to estimate population-level impacts beyond the study setting. Subsequent research should expand geographic coverage, encompass additional media formats (e.g., audio and video deepfakes), and pursue an explicit comparative design with Western contexts.

Policy and regulation: International guidelines should define and clarify ownership, authorship, and licensing for AI-generated media. Labeling and provenance standards should be implemented across platforms. Cross-border collaboration is encouraged to align accountability standards for AI-driven misinformation.

Professional practice: Clear workflows should assign accountability to specific roles, such as creators, platform operators, editors, and AI developers parallel to resource allocation toward AI literacy and ethics training.

Education: AI ethics, factchecking, and media literacy should be integrated into curricula at all levels. Also, ongoing audience studies should be conducted to understand trust and acceptance across cultures and different media formats.

VII. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This paper offers empirical grounding for debates about AI ethics, ownership, and accountability in media that have been dominated by theory and Western-centric perspectives. Key findings indicate a universal demand for AI content labeling, inconsistent ownership acknowledgements, a human-centered accountability model, and evidence of "One Centered Mind" homogenization. The paper provides actionable directions for policymakers, media professionals, and educators. Future research should expand geographic scope, increase sample sizes, and evaluate how technical tools and human processes work together to prove media is real and regain public confidence.

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