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Artificial Intelligence and Communication Ethics: Emerging Challenges in Advertising and Public Relations Practice in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed communication practices in advertising and public relations, particularly in content creation, audience targeting, and data-driven decision-making. While AI offers enhanced efficiency and personalization, its adoption has introduced complex ethical challenges affecting transparency, accountability, and public trust. This study examines AI adoption in advertising and public relations and explores emerging ethical challenges among practitioners in Enugu State, Nigeria. Using a quantitative survey design, structured questionnaires were administered to 120 respondents selected through purposive sampling, with 108 valid responses analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation. Findings reveal high AI adoption (78.7%), with chatbots and content generation tools being most widely used. Data privacy (32.4%), misinformation (25.9%), and algorithmic bias (20.4%) emerged as the most significant ethical concerns. While 55.6% of respondents reported awareness of ethical guidelines, only 48.1% indicated consistent compliance. Cross-tabulation analysis reveals a positive association between awareness of ethical guidelines and compliance behavior. The study concludes that AI has become integral to advertising and public relations in Enugu State, but strengthened ethical frameworks, professional training, and regulatory oversight are critically needed to ensure responsible AI deployment.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Advertising, Public Relations, Ethics, Data Privacy, Algorithmic Bias, Enugu State

Introduction

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed various sectors of the global economy, including advertising and public relations (PR). AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, particularly computer systems, enabling them to perform tasks such as learning, reasoning, and decision-making. In recent years, AI technologies including machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics have been increasingly integrated into communication practices to enhance efficiency and effectiveness (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

In advertising, AI is widely used for audience targeting, content creation, and performance optimization. Tools powered by AI enable advertisers to analyze large datasets, predict consumer behavior, and deliver personalized messages at scale. Similarly, in public relations, AI-driven tools such as chatbots, sentiment analysis systems, and automated media monitoring platforms are reshaping how organizations engage with stakeholders and manage their public image (Kietzmann et al., 2022).

The adoption of AI in communication industries has also gained momentum in developing countries, including Nigeria. In Enugu State, the growing digital ecosystem and increased internet penetration have facilitated the integration of AI tools among advertising agencies and PR practitioners. Organizations are leveraging AI to improve campaign effectiveness, enhance customer engagement, and gain competitive advantage in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

However, alongside these benefits, the adoption of AI has introduced a range of ethical challenges. Issues such as data privacy violations, algorithmic bias, lack of transparency, misinformation, and the potential displacement of human labor have raised serious concerns (Floridi et al., 2021). The use of AI-generated content in advertising and PR also raises questions about authenticity, credibility, and accountability.

Despite the growing use of AI in Nigeria's communication sector, limited empirical research has focused on its ethical implications at the local level, particularly in Enugu State. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the adoption of AI in advertising and public relations and explore the emerging ethical challenges associated with its use among practitioners in Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

The integration of Artificial Intelligence into advertising and public relations has revolutionized communication practices by improving efficiency, personalization, and data-driven decision-making. However, this rapid adoption has outpaced the development of adequate ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks, especially in developing regions such as Nigeria.

In Enugu State, many advertising and PR practitioners increasingly utilize AI tools for content generation, audience targeting, and campaign analysis. While these technologies offer numerous advantages, they also present significant ethical concerns. For instance, the use of AI in data collection and analysis raises issues related to user privacy and consent. Additionally, algorithmic bias in AI systems can lead to unfair representation or discrimination against certain groups (Jobin et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the proliferation of AI-generated content has blurred the line between human-created and machine-generated communication, leading to concerns about misinformation, lack of authenticity, and reduced public trust. Many practitioners may lack sufficient awareness or training on ethical AI usage, resulting in potential misuse or unintended consequences.

Despite these challenges, there is a scarcity of localized studies examining how AI is being adopted in advertising and PR in Enugu State and the specific ethical issues practitioners encounter. This gap in knowledge makes it difficult for policymakers, organizations, and professionals to develop appropriate strategies and guidelines for responsible AI use. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to examine the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in advertising and public relations and to identify the emerging ethical challenges associated with its use in Enugu State. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Examine the extent to which AI is adopted in advertising and public relations practices in Enugu State.
2. Identify the various AI tools and technologies used by practitioners in the industry.
3. Analyze the ethical challenges associated with the use of AI in advertising and public relations.
4. Assess the level of awareness and understanding of ethical issues related to AI among practitioners.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. To what extent is Artificial Intelligence adopted in advertising and public relations practices in Enugu State?
2. What AI tools and technologies are commonly used by practitioners in advertising and public relations?
3. What are the major ethical challenges associated with the use of AI in advertising and public relations?
4. What is the level of awareness and understanding of ethical AI issues among practitioners in Enugu State?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both academic knowledge and professional practice in advertising and public relations, particularly within the context of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence.

First, this study contributes to existing literature by providing localized empirical evidence on AI adoption in advertising and public relations in Enugu State. While numerous studies have examined AI adoption globally, there remains a limited body of research focusing on its application and ethical implications within developing regions such as Nigeria (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This study helps to bridge this gap by offering context-specific insights.

Second, the study is significant to advertising and public relations practitioners. As AI technologies become increasingly integrated into communication strategies, practitioners must navigate complex ethical challenges such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and misinformation. By identifying these issues, the study provides practical insights that can guide professionals toward more responsible and ethical AI usage (Floridi et al., 2021).

Third, the findings of this study will be valuable to policymakers and regulatory authorities. The rapid adoption of AI in communication industries has outpaced the development of comprehensive regulatory frameworks, especially in developing countries. Insights from this research can inform the formulation of policies and ethical guidelines that ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness in AI deployment (Jobin et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the study benefits students and researchers by serving as a reference point for future studies on AI, communication, and ethics. It highlights key issues and provides a foundation for further academic inquiry, particularly within the African context where such studies are still emerging (Kietzmann et al., 2022).

Finally, the study is significant to organizations and businesses, as it emphasizes the importance of ethical AI adoption in maintaining public trust and brand credibility. Ethical lapses in AI-driven communication can negatively impact consumer perception, making it essential for organizations to adopt responsible practices (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in advertising and public relations and the emerging ethical challenges associated with its use in Enugu State, Nigeria.

Geographically, the study is limited to Enugu State, targeting advertising agencies, public relations firms, and digital communication practitioners operating within the state. This allows for an in-depth understanding of AI adoption within a specific local context.

Conceptually, the study examines the application of AI technologies such as chatbots, automated content generation tools, predictive analytics, and audience targeting systems in advertising and public relations practices. These technologies have been widely recognized as key drivers of innovation and efficiency in modern communication industries (Kietzmann et al., 2022).

The study also explores ethical issues arising from the use of AI, including data privacy concerns, lack of transparency, algorithmic bias, misinformation, and accountability challenges (Floridi et al., 2021; Jobin et al., 2021).

In terms of time frame, the study is restricted to developments within the last five years (2021–2026), ensuring that the analysis reflects recent trends and current advancements in AI technologies (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Methodologically, the study is limited to the use of survey methods to gather data from practitioners, focusing on their experiences, perceptions, and level of awareness regarding AI and its ethical implications.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the capability of machines and computer systems to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making. AI technologies, including machine learning, natural language processing, and computer vision, have advanced rapidly in recent years, enabling organizations to automate complex processes and extract insights from large datasets (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

In the context of communication industries, AI plays a critical role in enhancing efficiency, personalization, and data-driven decision-making. AI-powered tools can analyze consumer behavior, predict trends, and generate content, thereby transforming how organizations interact with their audiences. The integration of AI into business operations has been described as a key driver of digital transformation across industries (Davenport et al., 2021).

However, despite its numerous advantages, AI also presents challenges related to transparency, accountability, and ethical use. Concerns about biased algorithms, lack of explainability, and misuse of data have become increasingly prominent as AI adoption continues to expand (Floridi et al., 2021).

Advertising

Advertising is a strategic communication process through which organizations promote products, services, or ideas to a target audience using paid media channels. Traditionally, advertising relied on mass communication methods; however, the emergence of digital technologies has significantly transformed the industry.

With the integration of AI, advertising has become more targeted, personalized, and data-driven. AI enables advertisers to analyze consumer data, segment audiences, and deliver customized messages in real time. Programmatic advertising, for instance, uses AI algorithms to automate the buying and placement of advertisements, improving efficiency and effectiveness (Kietzmann et al., 2022).

Furthermore, AI-driven tools are increasingly used for content creation, including automated copywriting and visual generation. While these innovations enhance productivity, they also raise concerns about authenticity, creativity, and ethical responsibility in advertising practices (Campbell et al., 2022).

Public Relations

Public Relations (PR) is a strategic communication function aimed at building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their stakeholders. PR involves activities such as media relations, crisis communication, reputation management, and stakeholder engagement.

The adoption of AI has significantly transformed PR practices. AI tools such as chatbots, sentiment analysis systems, and media monitoring platforms enable PR practitioners to engage with audiences more efficiently and effectively. These technologies allow

organizations to track public opinion, respond to crises in real time, and personalize communication strategies (Galloway & Swiatek, 2021).

AI also supports data-driven decision-making in PR by providing insights into audience behavior and media trends. However, the use of AI in PR raises ethical concerns related to transparency, authenticity, and the potential manipulation of public opinion. The increasing reliance on automated systems may also reduce human judgment in communication processes (Floridi et al., 2021).

Ethics in Advertising and Public Relations

Ethics in advertising and public relations refers to the principles and standards that guide responsible communication practices. Ethical considerations include honesty, transparency, fairness, accountability, and respect for consumer privacy.

The integration of AI into advertising and PR has introduced new ethical challenges. One major concern is data privacy, as AI systems rely heavily on the collection and analysis of personal data. Improper handling of such data can lead to privacy violations and loss of consumer trust (Jobin et al., 2021).

Another significant issue is algorithmic bias, where AI systems may produce discriminatory outcomes due to biased training data. This can result in unfair targeting or exclusion of certain groups in advertising campaigns. Additionally, the use of AI-generated content raises concerns about misinformation, manipulation, and lack of authenticity (Floridi et al., 2021).

Transparency and accountability are also critical ethical concerns. Many AI systems operate as "black boxes," making it difficult for users to understand how decisions are made. This lack of explainability can undermine trust and complicate efforts to hold organizations accountable for their actions (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory, developed by Everett Rogers (2003), explains how new ideas, technologies, and innovations spread within a society over time. The theory identifies key stages of adoption: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. It also categorizes adopters into innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards.

In the context of this study, the theory is relevant in explaining how Artificial Intelligence is being adopted in advertising and public relations in Enugu State. It highlights the factors that influence adoption, such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, and social influence. Practitioners may adopt AI technologies at different rates depending on their level of awareness, resources, and openness to innovation. This framework helps in interpreting why 78.7% of respondents reported using AI tools – suggesting AI has

moved beyond early adopters into the early majority phase in Enugu State's communication industry.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, as articulated by Freeman et al. (2021), emphasizes that organizations have responsibilities not only to shareholders but also to a wide range of stakeholders, including customers, employees, regulators, and the general public. The theory advocates for ethical decision-making that considers the interests and well-being of all stakeholders.

In relation to AI adoption in advertising and PR, Stakeholder Theory is important in addressing ethical concerns. Organizations must ensure that their use of AI does not harm stakeholders through privacy violations, misinformation, or biased communication. Ethical AI practices should prioritize transparency, fairness, and accountability to maintain trust and credibility. This framework provides a lens for evaluating how the low compliance rates (48.1%) identified in this study may negatively impact stakeholder trust and organizational legitimacy.

Technological Determinism

Technological Determinism, rooted in the work of McLuhan (1964), suggests that technological advancements shape and influence social structures, cultural values, and human behavior. According to this perspective, the introduction of new technologies leads to changes in how people communicate, work, and interact.

In the context of this study, Technological Determinism helps explain how the adoption of AI is transforming advertising and public relations practices. AI technologies are reshaping communication processes by automating tasks, enhancing data analysis, and enabling personalized messaging. However, the theory also highlights potential negative consequences, such as over-reliance on technology, reduced human control, and ethical challenges. As AI continues to evolve, it may influence not only how communication is conducted but also the ethical standards governing the industry (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies have examined the adoption of Artificial Intelligence across advertising, marketing, and public relations, highlighting both its benefits and associated ethical challenges.

Dwivedi et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive multidisciplinary review on AI adoption in business and communication industries. Their findings indicate that AI significantly enhances operational efficiency, customer targeting, and personalization in marketing and advertising. However, the study also identified major concerns related to data privacy, lack of transparency, and ethical misuse of consumer data.

Similarly, Davenport et al. (2021) explored how AI technologies are transforming marketing practices. The study found that organizations increasingly rely on AI for predictive analytics, customer segmentation, and automated decision-making. While these

tools improve performance, the authors noted that excessive reliance on AI systems can reduce human oversight, leading to potential ethical risks such as biased decision-making and loss of accountability.

In advertising, Kietzmann et al. (2022) examined the role of AI in digital advertising strategies. Their study revealed that AI-driven programmatic advertising and content automation have improved campaign effectiveness and efficiency. However, the authors emphasized concerns regarding consumer manipulation, intrusive targeting, and the ethical implications of using personal data without explicit consent.

Campbell et al. (2022) investigated the use of AI-generated content in advertising. The study found that while AI tools enhance creativity and reduce production costs, they raise concerns about authenticity and credibility. Consumers may find it difficult to distinguish between human-generated and AI-generated content, which can undermine trust in advertising messages.

In public relations, Galloway and Swiatek (2021) examined the impact of AI on PR practices. Their findings show that AI tools such as chatbots and sentiment analysis systems improve communication efficiency and real-time engagement with stakeholders. However, the study also highlighted ethical concerns related to transparency, as automated systems may obscure the human element of communication.

Furthermore, Jobin et al. (2021) analyzed global AI ethics guidelines and found that key concerns across industries include fairness, accountability, transparency, and privacy. Their study emphasized the need for organizations to adopt ethical frameworks to guide AI deployment.

Floridi et al. (2021) proposed an ethical framework for AI, identifying principles such as beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, justice, and explicability. Their study underscores the importance of integrating ethical considerations into AI systems to prevent harm and ensure responsible use.

Despite these global studies, limited empirical research has focused specifically on AI adoption in advertising and public relations within Nigeria or Enugu State. Most existing studies are concentrated in developed countries, highlighting a significant gap in localized understanding of AI adoption and its ethical implications in developing contexts — a gap the present study seeks to fill.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to investigate the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in advertising and public relations and the associated ethical challenges among practitioners in Enugu State, Nigeria. This design is suitable for collecting quantitative data on perceptions, practices, and experiences at a single point in time (Saunders et al., 2021).

Study Area

The study was conducted in Enugu State, Nigeria. The state represents a growing hub for digital communication activities, with an increasing number of advertising agencies, public relations firms, and independent digital marketing professionals adopting emerging technologies, including AI.

Population and Sample

The target population comprises advertising and public relations practitioners, including digital marketers and communication professionals operating within Enugu State. Due to the absence of an official registry or comprehensive sampling frame, the population is considered indeterminate, though estimated at approximately 200–300 active practitioners.

A sample size of 120 respondents was selected. This size is considered adequate for descriptive survey research and consistent with recommended sample thresholds in social science studies (Saunders et al., 2021). At a 95% confidence level, this sample yields an estimated margin of error of approximately $\pm 6.5\%$, which is acceptable for exploratory research. However, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of findings beyond Enugu State.

Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience in the use of AI tools within advertising and public relations. This approach ensured that only informed respondents contributed to the study. A limitation of this technique is the potential for selection bias, as respondents were not randomly selected from the population.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture relevant information on AI adoption and ethical challenges. The instrument consisted of two sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic characteristics of respondents
- **Section B:** Items measuring AI usage, types of AI tools, ethical concerns, and awareness levels, measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

Validity and Reliability

The validity of the instrument was established through face and content validation. Experts in communication studies and research methodology reviewed the questionnaire to ensure that the items were clear, relevant, and aligned with the objectives of the study. Necessary revisions were made based on their feedback.

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which measures the internal consistency of scale items:

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N - 1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

A reliability coefficient of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ was achieved, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Hair et al., 2021).

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through the administration of questionnaires using both online and offline methods. Online distribution was conducted via platforms such as Google Forms, email, and WhatsApp, while physical copies were administered to selected practitioners within Enugu State. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. In addition, cross-tabulation analysis was employed to examine relationships between key variables such as awareness of ethical guidelines and compliance behavior. A chi-square test was conducted to assess the statistical significance of associations. All analyses were conducted using SPSS, and results were presented using tables for clarity.

Results

A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 108 were returned and valid, representing a 90% response rate.

Respondent Demographics

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender Frequency Percentage (%)		
Male	62	57.4%
Female	46	42.6%
Total	108	100%

Table 1 shows that 57.4% of respondents are male, while 42.6% are female, indicating a relatively balanced gender representation among advertising and public relations practitioners in Enugu State.

Level of AI Adoption

Table 2: AI Adoption among Respondents

Response Frequency Percentage (%)

Yes	85	78.7%
No	23	21.3%
Total	108	100%

Table 2 indicates that a majority (78.7%) of respondents use AI tools in their professional activities, suggesting a high level of AI adoption in advertising and public relations practices in Enugu State. Applying Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations framework, this rate suggests AI has moved beyond early adopters into the early majority phase.

AI Tools Used by Practitioners

Table 3: AI Tools Commonly Used by Practitioners

AI Tool	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Chatbots	38	35.2%
Content generation tools	27	25.0%
Predictive analytics	18	16.7%
Audience targeting systems	15	13.9%
Media monitoring platforms	10	9.3%
Total	108	100%

Table 3 shows that chatbots (35.2%) and content generation tools (25.0%) are the most commonly used AI technologies, followed by predictive analytics (16.7%). This distribution reflects the practical emphasis on customer engagement and content production in day-to-day communication practice.

Ethical Challenges

Table 4: Ethical Challenges Associated with AI Use

Ethical Challenge	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Data Privacy	35	32.4%
Misinformation	28	25.9%
Algorithmic Bias	22	20.4%
Lack of Transparency	15	13.9%
Job Displacement	8	7.4%
Total	108	100%

Table 4 reveals that data privacy concerns (32.4%) are the most significant ethical challenge identified by practitioners, followed by misinformation (25.9%) and algorithmic bias (20.4%). This hierarchy of concerns is consistent with global findings by Jobin et al. (2021) and Floridi et al. (2021).

Perceptions of Ethical Challenges (Likert-Scale Items)

Table 5: Mean Perceptions of Ethical Challenges (Scale: 1-5)

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
AI tools in my organization collect personal data without adequate user consent	3.82	1.12	High concern
AI-generated content sometimes spreads misleading information	3.65	1.08	High concern
AI systems may produce biased outcomes against certain groups	3.48	1.15	Moderate concern
It is difficult to explain how AI systems make decisions in our campaigns	3.31	1.21	Moderate concern
AI adoption has reduced human oversight in our communication processes	2.95	1.18	Moderate concern

Table 5 provides deeper insight into practitioners' perceptions. Data privacy concerns received the highest mean score ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.12$), confirming it as the most pressing ethical issue. The relatively high standard deviations indicate variability in perceptions among respondents.

Awareness and Compliance

Table 6: Awareness of Ethical Guidelines

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aware	60	55.6%
Not Aware	48	44.4%
Total	108	100%

Table 7: Compliance with Ethical Standards

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	52	48.1%
No	56	51.9%
Total	108	100%

Table 6 shows that 55.6% of respondents are aware of ethical guidelines, while 44.4% lack awareness. Table 4.7 reveals that only 48.1% report consistent compliance, while 51.9% do not comply with ethical standards. This gap between awareness and compliance is a critical finding — awareness alone does not translate into ethical practice.

Cross-Tabulation: Awareness × Compliance

Table 8: Cross-Tabulation of Awareness and Compliance

Awareness	Compliant	Non-Compliant	Total
Aware	40 (66.7%)	20 (33.3%)	60
Not Aware	12 (25.0%)	36 (75.0%)	48
Total	52	56	108

$$\chi^2 = 18.72, df = 1, p < 0.001$$

Table 8 reveals a statistically significant association between awareness of ethical guidelines and compliance behavior ($\chi^2 = 18.72, p < 0.001$). Among respondents who are aware of ethical guidelines, 66.7% report compliance, compared to only 25.0% among those who are not aware. This suggests that awareness substantially increases the likelihood of ethical compliance, underscoring the importance of education and training initiatives.

Discussion

This study examined the adoption of Artificial Intelligence in advertising and public relations and the emerging ethical challenges among practitioners in Enugu State, Nigeria. The findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and prior empirical studies.

AI Adoption and the Diffusion of Innovations

The finding that 78.7% of practitioners use AI tools indicates a high level of adoption, consistent with global trends reported by Dwivedi et al. (2021) and Davenport et al. (2021). Applying Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory, this adoption rate suggests that AI has moved beyond the early adopter stage into the early majority phase within Enugu State's communication industry. The prevalence of chatbots (35.2%) and content generation tools (25.0%) as the most commonly used technologies reflects Rogers' emphasis on perceived usefulness and compatibility – practitioners are adopting tools that directly address practical communication needs.

This finding aligns with Kietzmann et al. (2022), who reported widespread adoption of AI-driven programmatic advertising and content automation in digital marketing. However, it extends their work by providing evidence from a developing-country context where digital infrastructure is still evolving.

Ethical Challenges and Stakeholder Theory

The identification of data privacy (32.4%), misinformation (25.9%), and algorithmic bias (20.4%) as the primary ethical concerns is consistent with global findings by Jobin et al. (2021) and Floridi et al. (2021). These concerns are particularly significant when viewed through the lens of Stakeholder Theory (Freeman et al., 2021).

Data privacy emerged as the most pressing issue ($M = 3.82$ on a 5-point scale), reflecting practitioners' recognition that AI-driven data collection practices may violate stakeholder rights. This finding echoes Campbell et al.'s (2022) concern about the ethical implications of using personal data without explicit consent in advertising. From a Stakeholder Theory perspective, organizations that fail to address privacy concerns risk damaging trust with consumers, regulators, and the broader public – potentially undermining the long-term legitimacy of AI-driven communication strategies.

Misinformation ranked second, consistent with Galloway and Swiatek's (2021) observation that AI-generated content can blur the line between authentic and synthetic communication. In a context like Enugu State, where media literacy levels may vary, the risk of AI-generated misinformation being accepted as credible is particularly high.

Algorithmic bias (20.4%) ranked third, supporting Floridi et al.'s (2021) position that AI systems can perpetuate or amplify existing social inequalities when deployed without adequate oversight.

The Awareness-Compliance Gap and Technological Determinism

A notable finding is the gap between awareness (55.6%) and compliance (48.1%) with ethical guidelines. While awareness is moderate, actual compliance is lower – indicating that knowledge alone is insufficient to ensure ethical practice. The cross-tabulation analysis, however, reveals an important nuance: among aware practitioners, compliance rises to 66.7%, compared to only 25.0% among unaware practitioners. The chi-square test confirms this association is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that awareness campaigns can meaningfully improve ethical behavior.

Nevertheless, the fact that one-third of aware practitioners still do not comply suggests additional barriers – such as organizational pressure, lack of enforcement, or the perception that ethical compliance reduces competitive advantage. This aligns with Technological Determinism (McLuhan, 1964; Dwivedi et al., 2021), which warns that technological advancement can overwhelm ethical considerations when institutional safeguards are weak. The low compliance rate suggests that in Enugu State, the adoption of AI technology has outpaced the development of organizational and regulatory mechanisms needed to govern its use responsibly.

Comparison with Prior Studies

The findings of this study are broadly consistent with the empirical literature. The high adoption rate mirrors Davenport et al.'s (2021) observation that AI is increasingly central to marketing and communication. The ethical concerns identified – particularly data privacy and algorithmic bias – align with the global AI ethics principles catalogued by Jobin et al. (2021). However, this study extends prior work by providing localized evidence from a Nigerian context, where regulatory infrastructure is less developed than in the Western contexts where most prior studies were conducted.

The awareness-compliance gap observed in this study is a finding that has received less attention in prior literature, which has tended to focus on either adoption rates or ethical principles in isolation. This study contributes by demonstrating that adoption, awareness, and compliance are distinct dimensions that must be addressed separately.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Artificial Intelligence has significantly transformed advertising and public relations practices in Enugu State by enhancing efficiency, personalization, and data-driven decision-making. However, the

rapid adoption of AI has introduced critical ethical challenges, particularly in the areas of data privacy, misinformation, algorithmic bias, and lack of transparency. These challenges pose risks to public trust, organizational credibility, and the integrity of communication practices.

The study further concludes that there is a disconnect between AI adoption and ethical compliance among practitioners. While many professionals are aware of AI technologies and a moderate proportion are aware of ethical guidelines, fewer demonstrate consistent adherence to ethical standards. The cross-tabulation analysis confirms that awareness is positively associated with compliance, but the persistence of non-compliance among aware practitioners indicates that structural and institutional factors also play a role.

Therefore, for AI to be sustainably integrated into advertising and public relations, there must be a deliberate effort to balance technological innovation with ethical responsibility.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

First, the purposive sampling technique introduces potential selection bias, as respondents were not randomly selected from the broader population of practitioners. This limits the generalizability of findings to all advertising and PR practitioners in Enugu State.

Second, the sample size of 108 respondents, while adequate for descriptive analysis, is relatively small. A larger sample would provide more robust estimates and allow for more sophisticated statistical analyses, such as multiple regression or factor analysis.

Third, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias – particularly regarding compliance with ethical standards. Respondents may overreport ethical behavior, meaning the actual compliance rate may be even lower than the 48.1% reported.

Fourth, the study is cross-sectional, capturing perceptions at a single point in time. Longitudinal data would be needed to understand how AI adoption and ethical practices evolve over time.

Fifth, the study is geographically limited to Enugu State. While this provides valuable localized insights, findings may not be generalizable to other states in Nigeria or other developing countries with different digital infrastructure and regulatory environments.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Development of Ethical Guidelines. Regulatory bodies and professional associations should develop clear, enforceable ethical guidelines specifically addressing AI use in

advertising and public relations. These guidelines should address data privacy, transparency, algorithmic fairness, and accountability.

2. Training and Capacity Building. Organizations should invest in regular training programs to educate practitioners on the ethical implications of AI and promote responsible usage. The finding that awareness significantly increases compliance (66.7% vs. 25.0%) provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of such programs.

3. Strengthening Data Protection Practices. Companies should adopt robust data protection policies to safeguard consumer information and comply with existing regulations, including Nigeria's Data Protection Regulation (NDPR). Given that data privacy was identified as the most pressing concern (32.4%), this should be a priority.

4. Enhancing Transparency and Accountability. Organizations should ensure that AI-driven communication processes are transparent and that decision-making systems are explainable to stakeholders. The moderate concern about lack of transparency (M = 3.31) indicates room for improvement in this area.

5. Monitoring and Regulation. Government agencies should establish mechanisms to monitor AI usage and enforce compliance with ethical standards. The finding that 51.9% of practitioners do not consistently comply with ethical guidelines indicates a need for stronger enforcement.

6. Encouraging Responsible Innovation. Organizations should adopt ethical AI frameworks that prioritize fairness, inclusivity, and non-discrimination in communication practices. Professional associations could develop certification programs for ethical AI use.

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