

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: PERSPECTIVES ON DEEPFAKES' USE IN NIGERIA'S 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS

Ekpang, Joseph E. ¹

Iyorza, Stanislaus ²

Ekpang, Patience O. ¹

¹ Kampala International University

² University of Calabar, Nigeria

Corresponding author e-mail: enyia.ekpang@kiu.ac.ug

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to identify the forms and reasons behind deepfakes' use and the effects during Nigeria's 2023 general elections. The survey design was adopted using the quantitative research method for data collection and analysis. A total of 1500 copies of the "Perspectives on Use of Deepfakes" questionnaire was distributed to a research population drawn from five states of the South-South region of Nigeria namely Cross River, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Delta and Bayelsa. A set of 300 copies was distributed to each of the states with the help of research assistants from each location apart from Cross River. At the end of the field distribution, 1123 copies of the questionnaire were returned from all the states. The research population were Nigerians of voting age, 18 years and above, irrespective of age, educational qualification and occupational status. The research respondents were randomly selected to fill in the questionnaire. After quantitative analysis using statistical tables with simple percentages, findings revealed that the use of artificial intelligence in the form of deepfakes was dominant on social media especially in picture and voice forms and that deepfakes were used as a mudslinging tool to dent the image of some Nigerian politicians and as propaganda tools to present some personalities as misfits in Nigeria's leadership positions. The paper concluded that Artificial Intelligence in the form of deepfakes was used predominantly for negative motives and recommended enactment of laws to regulate the use of deepfakes in Nigeria's political space especially during elections.

Key Words: Artificial Intelligence, Deepfakes, Elections, Nigeria, social media.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, the use of social media in political campaigns has become increasingly prevalent in recent years, and with advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), new challenges and concerns have emerged. One such concern is the use of deepfakes, a form of AI-generated content that manipulates or fabricates audio and video to make it seem real. Advantageous as the AI invention and its application may seem, its emergence has been associated with ethical, legal and social challenges in various societies; a development that has fueled a world-wide debate on the potential of AI for positive and negative impact in the areas of healthcare, financial services, manufacturing, agriculture and politics.

In the political sphere, AI thrives on the vulnerability of the uncritical masses who constitute the voting population of democracies around the world through manipulation of videos and audios of key political actors with a view to creating narratives that disinform and misinform them. The resultant effect is that these skewed narratives spurred by the application of deepfakes have the tendency to cast these political actors in negative light. The use of AI in Nigeria's 2023 general elections is one case that one can make reference to. In a television programme on *Arise News TV*, Rufai Oseni (2023) predicted, before Nigeria's 2023 general elections, that "many methods will be used to 'lie' and 'deceive' people, including the deployment of computation powers that deepfakes afford anyone with the skill and design prowess."

Nigeria's general elections of 2023, which held between February 25 and March 18 was keenly contested, featuring political candidates from various political parties at the state and federal levels. The Presidential election, which was held first, alongside the National Assembly elections witnessed four main contenders for the nation's number 1 seat: Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All-Progressives Congress (APC), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Mr. Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) and Alhaji Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP). The presidential contest was heated up by pronouncements at political rallies at different locations in the country, exchanges of political challenges by political leaders on conventional and social media using propaganda and other revelations through pictures, voice notes, videos and textual communications, especially on social media.

Observably, AI manifested conspicuously through pictorial and voice manipulations on social media communication. Amidst the controversies that greeted the debate on the reality or otherwise of such social media communications, targeted at implicating some political

figures and portraying them in negative light, emergent refutations by political parties and their candidates and their representatives describes the developments as 'fake', specifically deepfakes pictures and voices by political opponents. The purported conspiracy between the PDP Presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar and some other personalities to rig the 2023 elections and another purported conversation between the LP candidate with pastor Oyedepo, circulated widely on social media were some few cases in examples.

Eleanya (2023) reports that the lawyers of Nigeria's Labour Party's Presidential candidate for 2023, Mr. Peter Obi, filed a lawsuit against a Lagos-based online media company, People's Gazette, over a published audio purporting to reveal a private conversation between Obi and Bishop David Oyedepo, the founder of Winners Chapel, one of the largest churches in Nigeria. Eleanya (2023) captures the phenomenon thus:

In the leaked audio, one of the men whose voice shared keen similarities to Obi's was urging the other man who is supposed to be Oyedepo to canvas for Christian votes for him. As of April 10, (2023), the leaked audio had been viewed (listened to) over 10.3 million times, according to twitter statistics. The audio, which has been denied by the presidential candidate, was described as "deepfake" by his party.

Although the Lagos-based online media company, People's Gazette said it stood by the authenticity of what was termed deepfake, it suspended the reporter who wrote the report over his reaction to complaints online; reactions that queried the integrity of the organization. Eleanya (2023) also states that the Atiku, Okowa and Tambuwal audio, which was released prior to the February 25 presidential election had the three politicians supposedly plotting to rig the election by compromising the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Prof. Mahmud Yakub. Like Obi, Atiku dismissed the audio, describing it as fake and the work of political detractors.

The use of AI in forms of deepfakes in Nigeria's political history, preceded the 2023 elections. Pictorial deepfakes of former Nigerian President Mohammed Buhari had emerged, portraying him as dead and being replaced by one Jubril Aminu from Niger. The *BBC News Pidgin* (2018) refuted the story as lacking substantial evidence. In a similar fashion, the deepfake video on former Governor of Edo State and former APC National Chairman, Adams Oshiomole in a raw sex clip, with his face barely seen, was refuted and described as manipulative product of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Bosai (2012) explains that the "sex scandal" picture of the former Governor of Edo State, Adams Oshiomhole, being circulated was

manufactured by agents of failed individuals and/or politicians, using the technique of computerised superimposition of his face on another picture. A very close examination of the picture revealed (only facial part of scandal picture shown) his face was taken from a picture taken in a different engagement, and that the body of the man in the culled picture was far younger.

Even in America and other developed nations of the world, deepfakes pictures and videos involving famous politicians such as former Presidents Donald Trump and George W. Bush were circulated especially through social media. Burchard (2018) reports that a Belgian Socialist Party circulated a deepfake video on former US President, Donald Trump, delivering a speech calling on Belgium to withdraw from Paris Climate Agreement. Investigations showed that Donald Trump never gave the speech and that confirmed that the video was a deepfake.

What remains unclear about the geometrical proliferation of deepfakes' use on social media, especially under political dispensations are the reasons and effects of AI manipulations during elections. It is the quest to bridge this information gap that has birthed the thrust of this study on social media and artificial intelligence, with an exploration of deepfakes' use in Nigeria's 2023 general elections. The objectives of this study include to identify the various forms that artificial intelligence through deepfakes was used in Nigeria's 2023 general elections, to find out the reasons for use of artificial intelligence through deepfakes in Nigeria's 2023 general elections and to investigate the effects of artificial intelligence through deepfakes' use in Nigeria's 2023 general elections. Key research questions to address in this study therefore are: What forms of deepfakes were used in Nigeria's 2023 general elections? What were the reasons for use of artificial intelligence through deepfakes in Nigeria's 2023 general elections?

What effects did the use of deepfakes have in Nigeria's 2023 general elections?

CONCEPTUAL REVIEWS: SOCIAL MEDIA, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DEEPFAKES

Iyorza (2018) describes social media in ordinary terms as avenues, including meetings, festivals and other social gatherings, where people converge and interact for a given purpose. Thus, 'social media' have been in existence during the pre-modern and modern times, but its dimensional usage has attained a higher popularity following the advent of the Internet in the post-modern era. Citing studies at Tufts University (2017), Iyorza (2018) defines social media as:

Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking; compute mediated

technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks; the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community – based inputs, interaction, content – sharing and collaboration.

Social media can be considered as internet-based platforms enabled by computer technology, which permit individuals or group of persons to be registered as community, enabling them to interact or share information or ideas in pictures, videos or words. Examples include *Blogs* (a platform for casual dialogue and discussion on a specific topic or opinion),

Facebook (a platform for exchange of messages by users as friends) and *Twitter (X)*, (A social networking/micro blogging platform that allows groups and individuals to stay connected through exchange of short status message of 140-character limit).

Others include *Youtube* and *Vimeo* (Video hosting and watching websites), *Flickr* (An image and video hosting website and online community that supports sharing on Facebook, twitter and other social networking sites), *Instagram* (A free photo and video sharing app that allows users to apply digital filters, frames and special effects to their photos and to share them on a variety of social networking sites), *Snapchat* (a mobile app that lets users send photos and videos to friends or to their “story”, which disappear after viewing or after 24 hours) and *LinkedIn* (a platform where groups of professionals with similar areas of interest can share information and participate in conversations).

Historically, Hendricks (2013) recounts that home computers became more common and social media became more sophisticated since the 1980s, and the first recognizable social media site, Six Degrees, was created in 1997. It enabled users to upload a profile and make friends with other users. In 1999, the first blogging site became popular; creating a social media sensation that is still popular today. Social media began to explode in popularity after the invention of blogging, with sites like Myspace and LinkedIn gaining prominence in the early 2000s, and sites like Photobucket and Flickr facilitating online photo sharing. YouTube emerged in 2005, creating an entirely new way for people to communicate and share with each other across great distances. By 2006, Facebook and Twitter both became available to users throughout the world as the most popular social networks on the Internet. Many others including Tumblr, Spotify, Foursquare, Pinterest and WhatsApp began popping up. Today, there is a tremendous variety of social networking sites for users to reach the maximum number of people without sacrificing the intimacy of person-to-person communication.

Artificial Intelligence is the amalgam of two key words: ‘artificial’ and ‘intelligence’. Iyorza and Iseyen (2022) describe ‘art’ as the formal expression of a conceived image or imagined conception in terms of a given medium, with subject, form and content as the main ingredients. The subject concerns persons, objects and things; the form is the use of elements in constructing an art work while the content is the total message of the work as developed by the artist and interpreted by the viewer. These three elements are substance, form and technique. In sum, the word art is a presentation or representation of one’s idea through a means of expression. The term ‘artificial’ is an adjective descriptive of any noun that possesses the artistic qualities of subject, form and content. The term ‘artificial’ therefore describes any unnatural or unreal content produced and shaped in a desired form by a subject for some specific reasons. Ordinarily, ‘Intelligence’ is associated with one’s ability to learn or understand how to undertake any activity but contextually, it is, according to Webster’s Dictionary (2005), one’s ability to perform computer function.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is therefore one’s (the subject) ability to produce information (content) in pictures, videos, voice or texts (form) by performing computer functions.

Professionally however, Duggal (2023) defines AI as a method of making computer or a computer-controlled robot or software think intelligently like the human mind. Frankenfield (2023) also defines AI as the simulation of human intelligence by software-coded heuristics. According to him, the ideal characteristic of AI is its ability to rationalize and take actions that have the best chance of achieving a specific goal. A sub-set of artificial intelligence is machine learning which refers to the concept that computer programs can automatically learn from and adapt to new data without being assisted by humans. Thus, to Frankenfield (2023), deep learning techniques enable this automatic learning through the absorption of huge amounts of unstructured data such as text, images or video. Duggal (2023) enumerates the advantages of AI to include reduction of human error, all round non-stop work ability, ability to handle tasks repeatedly and swift, and disadvantages to include cost, inability to duplicate human creativity, capacity to replace human jobs and create unemployment and ability to create human over reliance on it.

Deepfake on the other hand is a type of artificial intelligence used to create convincing images, audio and video hoaxes. The term describes both the technology and the resulting bogus content. Anderson (2021) describes deepfake as:

...a portmanteau, or a blend of words used to make a new word ‘deep learning’ and ‘fake’. It uses a form of machine learning called deep learning technology, to comprehend what your face

looks like at different angles, then uses that information to transpose a deepfake face onto yours. The deepfake face then becomes a mask on your face that you can control and manipulate.

The author proceeds to explain deepfake as fake videos created using digital software, machine learning and face swapping to create new footage that depicts events, statements or actions that never actually happened and the results can be quite convincing. Hsu (2023) describes deepfakes as ‘digital forgeries’ that could be misused to erode trust in surveillance videos, body cameras and other evidence. Oseni (2023) also describes deepfakes as the most prominent form of what is being called “synthetic media”: images, sounds and videos that appear to have been created through traditional means but that have, in fact, been constructed by complex software. Babu (2019) states that deepfakes are synthetic media that include artificially-generated video, voice, images or text, where AI takes on part (or all) of the creative process. Gerstner (2021), Diresta, R. (2020) and Babu (2019) have identified forms of deepfakes to include deepfake voice, deepfake video, deepfake pictures or images, deepfake text and deepfake music and lip-syncing.

Karnouskos (2020) examines artificial intelligence in the digital media in the era of deepfakes from different angles including media and society, media production, media representations, media audiences, gender, law and regulation as well as politics, and concluded that the society is not ready to deal with the emergence of deepfake at any level, calling for a hybrid of efforts in the areas of governance, technology, education and training to tame the impact of deepfakes in the near future. Helmus (2022), researched on artificial intelligence, deepfakes and disinformation with an objective of providing policy makers with an overview of deepfakes’ threat and recommended deterrent strategies for deepfake abusers as well as media literacy programmes for every American citizen, especially journalists, media organizations and civil organizations. Most empirical studies as pointed from few above are based on deepfakes but there is a dearth of studies on reasons and effects of deepfakes in politics in Nigeria – a gap that this work intends to bridge.

Reviews of Deepfake Use in Political Settings

Studies have revealed the use of deepfakes for several reasons. Menneses (2021) reports that the 2020 United States Presidential Election witnessed an overwhelming use of deepfakes in attempts to manipulate public opinion. Deepfake videos impersonating political figures, including candidates, were circulated on social media platforms. These videos often contained false statements or fabricated events, contributing to the spread of misinformation

and confusion among voters. This case study highlights the potential for deepfakes to discredit candidates and disrupt electoral campaigns.

In Brazil, Garcia (2019) observes that a video in May 2018, prior to Brazil's election showed Brazil's far-right president Jair Bolsonaro dressed as Chapulin Colorado – a famous character from 1970's Mexican Tv show. The video went viral, reaching over 100,000 views on YouTube (and over 900,000 on Twitter) with a fake-Bolsonaro misquoting his own campaign slogan: "Brazil above everything, God above everyone". The 2018 Brazilian Presidential Election generally was marked by the widespread dissemination of fabricated videos and images targeting various political candidates. Deepfakes were used to create highly persuasive content, often depicting candidates engaging in illicit behaviour or expressing controversial opinions. Such content had the potential to mislead voters and undermine the credibility of candidates. This case study underscores the impact of deepfakes on public perception and the challenges faced in countering their influence.

During the 2018 local elections in Taiwan, deepfake technologies were employed to manipulate the speeches of political candidates. By altering speech content or context, deepfake-generated videos aimed to damage the reputations of candidates and mislead voters. Reinl (2018) corroborates that China spread "fake news" via social media to swing Taiwanese voters away from President Tsai Ing-wen's party. These deepfakes posed a serious threat to the credibility and fairness of the electoral process, demonstrating the potential for deepfakes to sway public opinion and influence election outcomes.

India's case is also another point of reference. Jee (2020 para 1) reports:

... a deepfake of the president of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Manoj Tiwari, went viral on WhatsApp in the country earlier this month, ahead of legislative assembly elections in Delhi, according to Vice. It's the first time a political party anywhere has used a deepfake for campaigning purposes. In the original video Tiwari speaks English, criticizing his political opponent Arvind Kejriwal and encouraging voters to vote for the BJP. The second video has been manipulated using deepfake technology so his mouth moves convincingly as he speaks in Haryanvi, the Hindi dialect spoken by the target voters for the BJP.

Thus the 2019 Indian General Elections witnessed the proliferation of deepfakes targeting politicians and candidates across party lines. Deepfakes were utilized to amplify divisive

narratives, spread false information, and incite social unrest. These videos aimed to tarnish the reputation of candidates and manipulate public sentiment, creating a challenging environment for both voters and electoral authorities. This case study highlights the significant impact of deepfakes in exploiting societal divisions and destabilizing the electoral process.

Palawec (2022) therefore opines that deep concerns about the dangers of deepfakes use in political dispensations and states that deepfakes impede citizens' empowered inclusion in debates and decisions that affect them, hampers efforts to hold political representatives accountable or further marginalizing certain societal groups such as women or ethnic minorities. Deepfakes also undermine collective agenda and will formation by threatening the epistemic quality of deliberations as well as citizens' mutual empathy and respect.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Theory of Technological Determinism

The Theory of Technological Determinism was Marshal McLuhan's idea introduced in 1962 based on the article; "Gutenberg Galaxy; The Making of Typographic man." According to Ike (2005: 224 – 225), the theory states that "media technology shapes how we, as individuals in the society think, feel, act and how our society operates as we move from one technological age to another (Tribal age, Literate age, Print age, Electronic age, Computer age)". Technological determinism theory partially explains contemporary persuasion. It implies that the technology of any given era is the major determinant of the cultural patterns of that era. Larson (1992: 84) captures Marshal McLuhan's controversial technological determinism theory as he puts it: "the message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" or, in briefer terms, "the medium is the message".

This is a clear indication that technology and further innovations can affect human behavior and alter changes in their ways of doing things. It extends to mean that the communication idea moves from being a complete responsibility of the encoder to being a holistic function of the media and their audience. To apply this theory in this discourse, the technology of Artificial Intelligence that has made deepfake a growing phenomenon of our time, including computers, laptops, smart phones, to name a few, provides us with access to a pool of common information and experience using a combination of text, pictures, motion, sound and other effects to create messages for different purposes. The technology that has gone digital, therefore, has determined the editing technology and the Internet and

determines the modes of communication based on deliberate and well thought out plans. The strength of this theory will be tested based on the media technology user’s reasons for communicating and the effects thereof.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey design using the quantitative research method for data collection and analysis. A total of 1500 copies of the “Perspectives on Use of Deepfakes in Nigeria’s 2023 General Elections” questionnaire was distributed to a research population drawn from five states of the South-South region of Nigeria namely Cross River, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Delta and Bayelsa. A set of 300 copies was distributed to each of the states with the help of research assistants from each location apart from Cross River where the researcher was on ground to handle the distribution. At the end of the field distribution, 1123 copies of the questionnaire were returned from all the states. The research population were Nigerians of votable age, 18 years and above, irrespective of age, educational qualification and occupational status. The research respondents were randomly selected to fill in the questionnaire. A quantitative method of analysis using statistical tables with simple percentages was adopted for data presentation and analysis in this study.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table I: Nigerians’ Perception of Deepfakes Forms Used on social media in the Nation’s 2023 General Elections

S/N	Responses		A	SA	D	SD	U	Total
i.	Deepfakes in forms of videos on social media	Frequency	43	Nil	834	Nil	246	1123
		Percentage	4%	Nil	74%	Nil	22%	100%
ii.	Deepfakes played out in forms of pictures on social media	Frequency	389	734	Nil	Nil	Nil	1123
		Percentage	35%	65%	Nil	Nil	Nil	100%
iii.	Deepfakes in audio forms (podcasts or voice) on social media	Frequency	425	341	251	Nil	106	1123
		Percentage	38%	30%	23%	Nil	9%	100%
iv.	Deepfakes in forms of written words (text) on social media	Frequency	42	15	384	584	98	1123
		Percentage	4%	1%	34%	52%	9%	100%

The need to establish the use deepfakes and Nigerians’ perception of what forms they were deployed on social media platforms before and during Nigeria’s 2023 general elections is paramount. Table I shows that deepfakes use on social media platforms was more common in form of cropped or edited pictures as perceived by a total of 100% of the research respondents, followed by use of deepfake audio or voice, with at least a total of 68% of the respondents assenting to the fact. Data reveals that deepfake videos and written words (text) were the least deployed for use in Nigeria’s 2023 general elections, with a total of 96% and 86% of the respondents respectively assenting to the fact.

Table II: Nigerians’ Perception of reasons for Use of Artificial Intelligence through Deepfakes in Nigeria’s 2023 General Elections

S/N	Responses		A	SA	D	SD	U	Total
i.	to reveal concealed facts about some politicians in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria	Frequency	438	374	36	79	196	1123
		Percentage	40%	33%	3%	7%	17%	100%
		Frequency	711	126	201	56	29	1123
		Percentage	63%	11%	18%	5%	3%	100%
ii.	to discredit certain politicians and discourage voters from voting for them in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria	Frequency	233	766	26	17	81	1123
		Percentage	21%	68%	3%	1%	7%	100%

A study of reasons for the use of deepfakes in Nigeria’s 2023 general elections will help communication scholars to appreciate the effects of artificial intelligence in a political setting. Table II shows Nigerians’ perception for the reasons why social media reporters used deepfakes before and during the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The table shows that the most perceived reason is to discredit some politicians and to discourage voters from voting some political figures for different reasons, with a total majority of 89% of the respondents aligning with this view. Secondly, a total of a second majority of 74% of the respondents believe that the use of deepfakes in Nigeria’s 2023 general elections was for the purpose of mocking, defaming and/or assassinating the character of some Nigerian politicians. Another total of 73% of the respondents believe that artificial intelligence was deployed through the use of deepfakes in

Nigeria’s 2023 general elections to unveil certain secrets of some Nigerian politicians in order to set them up against their teeming supporters in the country.

Table III: Nigerians’ Perception of effects of Artificial Intelligence Through the use of Deepfakes in Nigeria’s 2023 General lections

S/N	Responses	Total	A	SA	D	SD	U	
i.	Building of negative stereotypes about some Nigerian politicians	Frequency	677	324	49	73	Nil	1123
		Percentage	60%	29%	4%	7%	Nil	100%
ii.	Defamation of politicians’ characters	Frequency	102	722	42	236	21	1123
		Percentage	9%	64%	4%	21%	2%	100%
iii.	Loss of elections by some political candidates	Frequency	239	141	398	322	23	1123
		Percentage	21%	13%	35%	29%	2%	100%

One of the greatest interests in this study is to find out the effects of deepfakes and by extension artificial intelligence in a political setting such as Nigeria. Table III shows that the use of deepfakes in Nigeria’s 2023 general elections significantly built negative stereotype about some Nigerian politicians, with a total of 89% of the respondents corroborating and strongly too with this view. Another total of 73% of the respondents believed that the use of deepfakes led to defamation of politicians’ characters. However, a majority 64% of the research population refused to accept that the use of deepfakes and artificial intelligence by extension was responsible for loss of electoral positions by some politicians.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the tables and analyses presented above, this study establishes the findings that deepfakes as a type of artificial intelligence was massively used more in forms of cropped or edited pictures, followed by use of deepfake audio or voice, however deepfake videos and written words (text) were the least deployed for use in Nigeria’s 2023 general elections. The were more evidence of deepfake voices that were circulated and it took refutation efforts of political figures to change the perception of the electorate. Secondly, deepfakes were used as mudslinging to mock the personality of certain political figures who contested in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, to discredit them and to discourage voters from voting for them for different reasons; to defame and/or assassinate the character of some Nigerian politicians and to reveal some of their certain secrets in order to set them up against their teeming supporters in the country. Thirdly, findings reveal that the use of deepfakes was effective only

in terms of building negative stereotypes about some Nigerian politicians and presenting them in negative light before right thinking members of the public. However, findings show that the use of deepfakes and artificial intelligence by extension was not responsible for loss of electoral positions by some politicians.

Generally, this study outlines identifies that deepfakes can be used to alter or manipulate key information during election campaigns, leading to false narratives and misrepresentation. Political candidates may be targeted with deepfakes that depict them engaging in illicit or inappropriate activities, which can damage their reputations and undermine public trust. These manipulated videos can be shared on social media platforms, rapidly spreading false information and influencing public opinion. In another development, deepfakes have the potential to amplify the spread of disinformation during elections. Political adversaries and malicious actors can use deepfakes to fabricate speeches or statements, attributing false beliefs or extreme positions to candidates. This can sow confusion among voters and polarize public opinion, leading to misinformation and splintering of social cohesion.

Inferentially, deepfakes can influence voter behavior by capitalizing on cognitive biases and emotions. Manipulative deepfake videos can exploit people's preconceived notions or biases, reinforcing their existing beliefs or prejudices. By evoking emotional responses, such as outrage or fear, deepfakes can manipulate voters' perceptions of candidates and sway their voting decisions. This manipulation undermines the democratic process by impairing the rational assessment of candidates based on facts and policies. In a worse scenario, the proliferation of deepfake technology risks eroding public trust in political institutions and democratic processes. As deepfakes become more sophisticated and difficult to detect, the credibility of media and political discourse is undermined. When people can no longer discern real from fabricated information, trust in political institutions and the democratic system is eroded. This can lead to public disillusionment, apathy, and a decline in electoral participation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Artificial intelligence, as revealed through the study of deepfakes, has crept into the political domains of many nations through the social media platforms. Artificial intelligence through deepfakes, in political domains, is found to be a tool for mudslinging, defamation of political characters and mockery of political opponents. Deepfakes provided a safe route for conspiracy and discrediting of political candidates without fear of litigation. In the long run, the use artificial intelligence in different forms of deepfakes actually heated the Nigerian political

system before and during the 2023 general elections and led to the evolvment of new and more negative perspectives about political figures who were hitherto held in high esteem by the electorate. Artificial intelligence was used by some social media users to mete hatred on some political elements and by extension draw support to their preferred candidates. Consequently, this study recommends that:

1. The Nigeria government should introduce social media and artificial intelligence education in the Nigerian secondary and tertiary institutions in order to tame the abuse of social media platforms and AI especially in a political domain in the near future.
2. Nigerian legislators should sponsor or review the social media bill to accommodate punishment for offenders of social media communication.
3. Nigerian Law Enforcement Agency should track down and arrest for interrogation deepfake users who adopt it as a means to satisfy ulterior motives such as damaging the image or reputation of others in the public.
4. The Nigerian Ministry of Information and National Orientation should enlighten AI users in Nigeria so that they should not exaggerate issues using deepfake. Communicating ideas or messages in political domain should be devoid of sensation and emotional hyping because this can heat up the polity.
5. The State offices of the Nigerian Ministry of Information and National Orientation should engage members of the publics in media literacy sessions through private and state-owned radio stations for social media users and make them understand that deepfakes can be useful for enlightenment or edutainment without insulting and hurting the sensibilities of others.

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