

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AI GENERATED MEDIA NARRATIVES IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

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Abstract

The creation and dissemination of all forms of media content has been greatly changed due to the rapid advancements of artificial intelligence (AI) technology. These Same AI technologies have the ability to create immersive narratives in media, which impact people's opinions, emotions and behaviour on multiple levels. The use of this technology in so-called "third world" countries poses a special challenge to media organisations because of a lack of Digital Literacy, Regulatory Frameworks and Psychological Support Systems; therefore, it may result in different psychological outcomes than those of other nations. This research study looking exclusively at the psychological impacts of AI-generated media narratives on people in third world countries. It specifically look at the emotional responses, perceived trustworthiness, perceived credibility and level of trust in media sources as well as anxiety and behavioural intentions. To conduct this research study, a mixed-methods approach is used. Quantitative data obtained through a quantitative structured questionnaire that administered to adult users of social media in selected third world countries. The quantitative aspect of the study use standardised psychological scales to measure anxiety, stress, perceived threat and perceptions of media trust. The qualitative part of the study consist of one on one, in-depth interviews, exploring the lived experiences and interpretive meanings of AI-generated narratives. The quantitative data from the surveys analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and the interviews will be thematically analysed for key trends. Preliminary results show that exposure to AI-generated narratives can lead to increased anxiety, decreased levels of trust in traditional media, an increase in scepticism towards authenticity of information, and a high potential for desensitisation to socio-political content. However, these effects are moderated by a person's level of Digital Literacy, socioeconomic status, and frequency of exposure, while critical media literacy appears to be a protective factor. The ability for artificial intelligence (AI), through digital media narratives, to alter behaviours, create emotional sensitivity and evoke scepticism within third-

world countries, provides evidence on how the psychological impact of these stories can be both positive and negative. The need for improved media literacy, the creation of verification models and development of regulatory frameworks related to cultural context is critical in order to alleviate any harmful effects that media AIs may have on individuals. This research adds to the growing body of evidence concerning the connection between AI technologies and mental health in developing countries and provides recommendations to policy makers, educators, and mental health professionals and media companies based on current literature.

INTRODUCTION

The changing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the evolution of the global media landscape affects both the manner in which we consume media, as well as the methods that we use to create media content. Artificial intelligence generated media narratives, including news, automated articles, synthetic videos, as well as algorithmically curated social media content, continue to be commonplace in the "information age". (Nasir, 2025) Digital Media technologies provide the capability to emulate human-like communication and narration; they also possess the power to build compelling and realistic stories that can change how the public perceives an issue and what value they place on those messages at unprecedented speed and volume. While AI technologies provide benefits, including greater efficiency and innovation, they have also raised serious concerns surrounding psychological manipulation of the audience, damage to the user's trust in the information ecosystem, and the a) impact upon communicator effectiveness, b) cost of communicating, and c) the potential effect on the user's ability to evaluate the veracity of such communications. (Zhang, 2019)

AI-generated Media Representation in Economically Disadvantaged Countries. The Social, Political, and Economic Consequences of AI-Generated Media Are Severely and Highly Significant in Economically Disadvantaged Countries Due to a Combination of the Following: Socio-political Instability, Economic Vulnerability, Limited Educational Access, Rapid Digital Penetration. (West, 2018)

Limited Digital Literacy due to the rapidly expanding "digital divide" created by electronic and digital communications. Limited or Lack of

Regulatory Frameworks for Digital and Electronic Communications. The primary source of news for many people is through social media, meaning they are at greater risk of receiving and consuming emotionally charged and misinformationally disproportionate AI-generated narratives. (Nasir, 2025) AI-generated narratives have been shown to affect public perception, reinforce stereotypes, increase fear, and cause psychological distress. Exposure to synthetic forms of media may also cause audiences to become uncertain about what is real and what is not; they may not know where or how to draw the line between reality and simulation, causing them to become confused, anxious, distrustful, and overloaded with cognitive dissonance. (Anwar, 2025)

Psychological reactions to AI-generated narratives can include: increased levels of stress, increased feelings of threat, increased emotional sensitization, loss of agency, changes to an individual's intended behavior. Persons in developing countries may also suffer from anxiety, stress, and perceived threats, along with emotional desensitization and loss of agency, and are often in already stressed economies. (Khattak, 2025) Furthermore, their access to adequate mental health services and understanding of digital manipulation is very limited. consequently, the impact of AI-Generated narratives disproportionately significant on vulnerable populations, as well as impacting the digital divide and influencing collective political behavior, public health behavior, and social cohesion. (Vinuesa, 2020)

There has been an increase in the availability of AI-generated content; however, there is still very little empirical evidence on how this type of content

impacts one's mental health from a cultural perspective. Most of the research to date has focused on the creation of technology, ethical issues, and regulatory issues in more developed countries, but most of the research which has been conducted pertaining to developing countries has been very limited in scope. As such, the lack of research related to the psychological impact that AI-generated content has on users in developing countries indicates a strong need for systematic studies that can explore users' perceptions of how narratives generated by AI systems understood, internalized, and processed emotionally. (United Nations, 2021)

This research study focuses on examining AI-generated media narratives on mental health in the context of the developing world and looks at some key variables such as: anxiety, perceived credibility, trust in media, ability to regulate emotions, and behavioural intentions. By using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, this project seeks to reveal more about how an AI generated digital environment affects the mental health and social attitudes of the people within that environment. The results from this research help contribute to the body of literature that currently exists regarding AI and mental health and provide valuable insight into best practice for media organizations, policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals who wish to help create informed interventions that promote digitally literate, resilient societies.

Background

Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to be able to produce content in many different formats (text, images, sound, video), that are so human like, to the degree that they can generate content independently of experts, etc. AI-powered tools and services include such technologies as: large language models (LLM), image generator networks (DNN), chatbots, automated journalism systems, and algorithms for customizing media, personalized message creation for customers/user groups based on user preferences/emotion/behavior, all allow for mass customization of media content. (Umeh, 2019)

Because of the rapid generation of content, the increased levels of customization at the same time (i.e., creating a media narrative for every individual) and the speed with which AI-generated media narratives affect how people create their opinions of the world, risk, how they view each other, the level of social trust that they have and how their emotions affect their feelings of safety/wellbeing (Tsanni, 2024)

Historically, media effects research has studied how people develop opinions and behaviors towards issues and brands based on the messages presented to them (through "traditional" mass-media forms, such as newspapers, radio, TV, etc.). With the introduction of AI-generated media narratives, there are now significant qualitative changes in how people will respond to these narratives. Unlike traditional mass media forms, AI-generated narratives do not have an identifiable human "creator", can be easily copied from one medium to another and have the ability to modify themselves based on user interaction with the content. (Schmelzer, 2018)

The ability of AI-generated content to produce hyper-realistic simulations of media (Nasir, 2025) creates confusion for audiences on the distinction between what is "real" and what is not. When an individual experiences this type of cognitive/facial recognition uncertainty about their perception of the world around them, he/she experience feelings of emotional confusion (i.e., the risk that they may act on their emotional response rather than based on facts) and erode trust in all sources of information (including the sources of media narratives).

Developments in digital ecosystems and AI technologies demonstrate the increasing speed of these developments relative to the regulatory framework and media literacy efforts in developing nations. For a number of developing countries, significant structural challenges include poverty, political instability, weak institutional oversight, limited access to quality education, and lack of mental health services. At the same time, there has been a rapid increase in the use of mobile devices and social media as a means of accessing news and public information for many individuals. Within these contexts, the implications of AI-generated

narratives can have strong psychological effects based on how they portray sensitive or polarizing issues. (Okolo, 2024)

In these countries, individuals are likely to experience more anxiety, stress, fear, and confusion regarding AI-generated narratives related to sensitive issues. Repeated exposure to AI-generated messages that contain manipulation or fear-inducing messages can also lead individuals to become desensitized to these issues and create a sense of a hopelessness or diminished personal agency. While the psychological impact of AI-generated messaging may be both complex and dual in nature, it can also have a wide range of potential positive psychological effects, including increased engagement and empowerment, as well as greater access to information. (Obozintsev, 2018)

Global research on technology development, ethics involved with algorithms and regulations associated with technology within artificial intelligence (AI), has primarily focused on technology development, ethics involved with algorithms, and regulations associated with AI, with little attention to psychological experiences within the Global South. Most studies that have collected information on mental well-being caused by using digital media (Nasir, 2025) focus solely on using social media, the effects of cyberbullying, and the amount of screen time users have had, without specifically excluding content produced by AI from content created by other human beings. This creates a lack of understanding of the particular qualities of AI that may change how individuals experience emotions or think. (Nisbet, 2008)

Given the increasing accessibility of AI-generated media in developing nations, it is important that we begin to understand the impacts that it may have on mental wellness in these unique sociocultural and economic circumstances. To formulate appropriate media literacy programs, regulations, and mental health interventions for people living in these regions, we must understand the ways that people interpret, trust, resist, or internalise AI-generated news. This research serve to contextualize AI-generated media within larger discussions regarding information disorder, digital

inequality, and psychological wellness, allowing researchers to examine how these behaviours ultimately affect people and communities within developing nations. (Nguyen, 2023)

Problem Statement

AI technology is rapidly proliferating in the media production realm and generating tremendous amounts of AI-based media narratives across digital platforms. These narratives are increasingly influencing the views of citizens in most Third World Countries regarding many issues concerning politics, health, economy, and society. The vulnerability of individuals in these countries to psychological influences (e.g., anxiety, fear, confusion, loss of trust, desensitization) as a result of their inadequate digital literacy and lack of regulatory mechanisms and awareness about AI-generated media is weak. (McQuail, 2020) Furthermore, although AI-generated media is expanding very rapidly within these developing world contexts, there is a lack of empirical research to systematically investigate and analyze the psychological impact of AI-produced media on these audiences. Most studies conducted to date have examined either the technological advancements of AI or ethical implications of AI in developed countries (Nasir, 2025) and very few have investigated the actual emotional and cognitive experiences of users in the Global South. Thus, these studies provide little if any, evidence based knowledge to policymakers, educators, and mental health practitioners with which to create protective measures or support systems for those who are especially vulnerable to the influence of AI-generated media. As a result, the main issue of this study is how AI-generated media narratives impact the psychological health, perceptions and behavior of individuals from Third World Countries. The objectives of this study are to explore the extent and nature of the psychological impact of AI-generated media narratives.

Research Gap

The Psychological Impact of AI Generated Narratives on Different Countries: There has been an enormous growth in the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for content creation and

distribution; however, there has been relatively little research done to study the impact of AI-generated narratives in developing regions. Most of the academic and clinical literature regarding the psychological effects of media uses predominantly in developed regions and focuses primarily on technology, ethics, algorithmic bias, and governance frameworks. The literature additionally fails to adequately address how AI-generated narratives may impact people's emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses to digital content in contexts where resources are limited. (Makridakis, 2017)

For the majority of research on media psychology in developing regions, researchers have primarily focused their efforts on investigating the use of social networking sites, the spread of disinformation, or media use without differentiating between AI-generated narratives and human created media, thereby under-representing the full range of psychological impacts that may occur as a result of exposure to AI-generated narratives. Specifically, the characteristics of AI-generated narratives, such as automation, hyper personalization, synthetic realism, and scalability are not well understood in relation to specific psychological outcomes such as anxiety, perceived threat, and loss of trust, cognitive overload, and desensitisation. (Nguyen, 2022)

In addition, there is little empirical research that combines contextual variables unique to developing countries such as low levels of media literacy, inadequate regulatory frameworks, political risk, social instability, and lack of mental health resources. Very few studies evaluate potential moderating factors such as digital skills, economic position, and level of exposure, and cultural context that might influence an individual's psychological response to an AI-produced story.

There is also a methodological gap in this area of inquiry since current research relies primarily on either conceptual discussions or descriptive data as opposed to a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches using empirical methodologies that measure psychological

indicators quantitatively while examining lived experiences qualitatively.

Given the above, further evaluation is needed to:

- Determine differences between AI-produced stories and traditional media with respect to their psychological impacts.
- Identify particular psychological responses exhibited by people in the developing world
- Identify the influence of contextual and demographic moderating variables on the above-mentioned impacts.
- Develop recommendations on mental health, media literacy, and policy based on the findings.

By addressing these gaps, we can expand our understanding of the field of media psychology and AI communication while providing practical recommendations for stakeholders in the developing world.

Objectives

1. Investigate the psychological symptoms (anxiety, stress, perception of danger, etc.) felt by the consumer when exposed to AI-created media narratives from the perspective of a developing nation's audience.
2. Determine the connection between the amounts of time spent consuming AI-created media, and changes in audience members' attributions, feelings, and intentions toward some behavioural outcome.
3. Identify the moderators (digital literacy, socio-economic status, etc.) that impact the consumer's psychological impact of AI-created media narratives.

Research Questions

1. What type of psychological symptoms does the consumer experience from AI-created media narratives, specifically those from developing nations?
2. How the time does spent consuming AI-created media narratives relate to perceptions of anxiety, perceived credibility, media trust, and behavioural intentions?
3. What contextual factors and individual factors (digital literacy, socio-economic status, etc.)

moderate the psychological effects of AI-created media?

Hypotheses

- H1: There is a positive correlation between audience members living in developing countries who have been exposed to AI generated narratives through the media and increased levels of anxiety, stress and perceived threat.
- H2: Individuals who have been frequently exposed to AI-generated narratives through the media tend to have less confidence in traditional and online media sources and express more skepticism towards the authenticity of the information that they read, see and hear.
- H3: Individuals who are digitally/media literate and have been exposed to AI-generated narratives experience fewer negative psychological effects than individuals who are not digitally/media literate and have been exposed to AI-generated narratives.

Significance of Research

The importance of this research is multi-faceted. First, it addresses a contemporary and under-researched phenomenon; the psychological ramifications of AI-generated media narratives specifically within developing regions of the world. In an age when AI-generated content is becoming ubiquitous, it is imperative to understand the emotional and cognitive influences of that type of content on an individual's psychological health, particularly in regions where a formal regulatory framework and mental health support system are lacking.

Second, this research make contributions to the theories and literature within the fields of media psychology, communication studies, and AI ethics by making a distinction between narratives that are created by humans versus those generated by AI, and examining the different psychological consequences stemming from those sources of information. Furthermore, this research contribute to the emerging body of literature on synthetic media, deep fakes, algorithm-driven content and their associated psychological consequences.

The research have implications for policymakers and regulators, as it enable them to develop national policies and legal frameworks that effectively address AI-generated misinformation, synthetic media abuse, and digital harm as well as creating evidence based guidelines for policymakers as they create interventions to protect vulnerable populations from psychological harm and manipulation.

The study provide educational institutions and media organizations with an understanding of the importance of strengthening their digital and media literacy programs. This research provide educational institutions and media organizations with valuable information regarding the development of curriculum, awareness campaigns, and training programs designed to help individuals evaluate and critically assess the validity of AI-generated narratives.

The findings of this research have implications for public health and mental health. They identify anxiety, stress, confusion, and erosion of trust related to AI-generated narratives. The findings of this research can support mental health professionals and non-governmental organizations in developing counselling strategies, community awareness programs, and resilience-building initiatives.

The study also contribute to the protection of democratic processes, social cohesion, and informed participation in third-world countries. By understanding how AI-generated narratives influence emotions and behaviour, societies may learn how to mitigate risks of polarization, fear, manipulation, and psychological vulnerability through the use of responsible and ethical AI.

Literature Review

As artificial intelligence progresses, research into how media cover and frame this technology is fairly scarce in the existing literature (Obozinstev, 2018), however, some studies have begun to address issues related to these technologies and the methods through which they have been discussed in various international media networks. A study conducted by fast and Horvitz (2016) investigated how public discourse regarding artificial intelligence has developed over the years. In order

to investigate how people perceived artificial intelligence throughout a period of time (and in particular to examine this phenomenon through the New York Times), authors collected more than three million articles published between January 1986 and May 2016 using an automated content analysis methodology. The study focused on determining the nature of authors' discussions surrounding artificial intelligence, as well as whether these discussions included a predominantly positive viewpoint or, on the other hand, a predominantly negative viewpoint of artificial intelligence. Additionally, the research also examined how the meaning attributed to artificial intelligence has evolved over the past 30 years.

The authors used an automated content analysis methodology to conduct the study. A dataset of articles was generated by querying the New York Times public API and retrieving article metadata for all daily published articles that contained a reference to artificial intelligence (for example: title of article, section of publication, current URL). Once an article had been identified, the authors used the Beautiful Soup Python package to extract the article's full text from the URL. Results show a significant increase in the number of articles containing references to artificial intelligence beginning in late 2009 coinciding with a resurgence in the use of neural networks ("deep learning") in the areas of natural language processing and perception tasks. For the 30 years of AI and media coverage, most of the news perspective was positive rather than negative, indicating that the amount of positive reported stories was approximately 2-3 times that of the total negative reported stories. The dominant topics covered included: space weapons, chess, search engines, robots, and driverless or autonomous vehicles. This conclusion is consistent with prior findings that the conversations about AI have grown in number and continue to be primarily positive (e.g., healthcare). Furthermore, Brennen, Howard and Nielsen, (2019) looked at eight months' worth of AI-related news from six of the largest British newspaper companies and conducted a critical discourse analysis of the way that these news organisations

are reporting on the increasing use of AI in society. They found that almost all of the analysed articles reported on the challenges of business created by AI, and that most of the products being discussed are produced by industry (including mobile phones, automobiles, athletic footwear, as well as consumer products like sexually explicit robots). They found that AI ethics were also a common theme in the way that the articles reported on this technology. Through these framing choices, the ways that such groups define issues related to science in socially-based ways; and how journalists and the public have been able to report on, perceive and/or interact with these issues. In an investigation of the international news media's interpretation of automation technologies and artificial intelligence (AI), Nguyen & Hekman (2021) sites four prominent news organisations; The New York Times, The Guardian, Wired, and Gizmodo. Nguyen & Hekman sought to determine how much coverage of AI was provided between 2010-2020 and whether specific AI themes are connected to data vulnerability themes of surveillance, bias, cybercrime and information disorder. They found that overall AI coverage increased steadily throughout the decade, with numbers almost quadrupling in the 2010-2015 period, and article lengths increased by nearly 39% from 2010 through to 2020. Between 2010 and 2020 AI news coverage rose steadily until peaking in 2018 at which point it started to decline.

The largest portion of AI news began to change from theoretical/science fiction discussions to being about real-world economic, social, cultural and political impact. AI quickly changed from being a niche issue to a much broader and recognised issue. Additionally, AI is frequently discussed as having the most potential when connected with risks such as algorithmic bias, prejudice, and surveillance, as well as privacy and in the case of healthcare, disease identification. During the investigation, Bunz & Braghieri (2021) examined the framing of AI in news media from 1980 through to 2019, using content analysis of 365 articles. The resulting trends supported the concept that AI was often framed as having a superiority to that of a human's expertise. Bunz & Braghieri's analysis included an investigation of

the number of times AI for health care is framed as better than or replacing the medical expertise of humans from three English language newspapers in the United States and England. The study found a higher degree of personification of AI systems than expected based upon past knowledge and research findings. Many articles feature AI either replacing or outperforming physicians, with 38% of articles falling into this category and 16% including all three major variables, meaning that many articles identify AI as replacing specialists, outperforming specialists, and utilizing AI in a human capacity. The Wall Street Journal was very positive about AI during the time period of study. Approximately 49% of the articles from The Wall Street Journal published between 2015 and 2019 expressed positive sentiments towards AI technologies.

The degree to which financial news sources anthropomorphized AI exceeded that of other news sources: 29% were positive with respect to AI in The Guardian and 31% in The Daily Telegraph. In conclusion, the majority of news items portray hypothetical technologies as anthropomorphized; as such, anthropomorphizing of future technologies presents potential avenues for further research in the future. Nguyen (2023) analysed how AI is portrayed in feature films and found that the social climate is changing from a fear of being harmed by AI, to the societal realisation that AI has many potential benefits. The results indicate there is an imbalance between the "hope" and "fear" factors of AI in movies; the majority (70%) of movies reflect society's hopes for AI. Between 1980 and 2000 movies regarding AI are concerned about AI surpassing humans; however, over time, movies have presented the view of AI as an assistant to humans on complex tasks. Movies produced today depict individuals' concerns over their personal data and their overdependence on AI for decision making. When applying the cultivation theory, repeated positive depictions of AI could lead to more favourable public opinions regarding AI over time. Zhang & Dafoe (2019) studied Public Opinion about AI in the US and examined how there is very little Public Opinion data regarding

AI, which makes it critical for understanding the impact of media coverage of AI.

In their survey about AI, Warttainen (2020) also examined the demographic factors that affect the public's perception of AI and how this relates to trust in government, military funding, and superior intelligence. The majority of respondents 41% said they somewhat supported the development of AI, while 22% opposed it. The findings show that demographic variables, such as education, income level, computer expertise, and gender, significantly impact levels of support for AI. In addition, the survey found that most Americans (82%) support strong regulation of AI. The study also identified challenges associated with AI, including surveillance, civil liberties, privacy, cyberattacks, and preventing the dissemination of harmful content related to AI. Warttainen (2020) used a small quantitative content study to analyse American and Chinese newspapers' perspectives on AI. In total, 96 articles are reviewed. Based on the analysis of these articles, Warttainen found that most of the articles regarding AI were framed within a geopolitical, economic, or cultural context. The Chinese media focused on the use of AI for global impact and economic growth. American media outlet focused on issues related to ethics, accountability, and prejudice. Warttainen's research also found that articles about AI industry products were cited less frequently than expected by earlier research. The majority of the articles reviewed focused on the role of AI within nations' strategies and not on AI as a technology. American media portrayed the United States to be a leader in the field of AI and highlighted the success of the United States in developing AI.

Theoretical Framework

This research builds upon the integration of media effects theories and psychological views on how our brains process the information as well as otherwise through AI-created media narratives on the public of developing nations. The theoretical structure represents a correlation between exposure to an AI-created narrative, and the resulting psychological outcomes as defined by the

mediating processes of cognition, emotion, and context.

1. UGT (Uses and Gratifications Theory)

• The Uses & Gratifications theory is a media theory that states that an audience has an active and intentional desire or need to obtain particular forms of media content for specific purposes, i.e., for example, information and/or knowledge, to provide entertainment, and to form social relationships and identities. Machine-created media narratives represent a form of media content produced by AI:

• Users are intentionally or unintentionally accessing material related to a machine-produced narrative for various reasons (e.g., as news or to clarify their understanding of something), as well as for emotional or mental relief.

• The specific type and frequency of machine-created material accessed based upon the user's needs, wants and/or possible gratifications sought (e.g., during a crisis) and the ability to access real-time updates.

• Regularly accessing and viewing the various machine-created narratives enhances a user's cognitive ability and increases their general emotional receptiveness to machine-produced media.

• The UGT theory helps to explain the reasons that individuals utilize machine-generated content, as well as to define the psychological effects of the over use of a machine-generated narrative.

2. Identifying Common Ground with Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory provides an explanation for how the accumulation over time of specific Narrative Media through traditional means has played a role in shaping one's views of the world. This is also applicable in the case of AI-mediated Narratology: a) protracted exposure to frightening, biased or artistic narratives likely cause the viewer to develop a heightened state of either fear, anxiety or mistrust; b) repeated portrayals of crises, uncertainty or chaotic political environments may influence the viewer's outlook and/or belief system; and c) the ability of an AI to tailor content

to the individual viewer based on past preferences have a cumulative effect on the cultivation effect by forcing the viewer to be continuously exposed to the same themes. Therefore, the cumulative impact of AI-generated narratives, particularly in developing societies, can be explained through this theory.

Cognitive Load Theory

Cognitive load theory states that an individual's cognitive processing capabilities are finite. Due to this fact, artificial intelligence generated content will create an overwhelming amount of information, grow at exponentially increasing rates and can be written in ways that are extremely realistic. For these reasons, AI-generated materials potentially: a) create an immense load on cognitive resources; b) make it nearly impossible to distinguish between real or artificial content; and c) lead to cognitive disorientation and fatigue related to cognitive overload. This theory provides an explanation for why stress levels and indecisiveness result from the ambiguity and high volume of AI-generated narrative.

4. Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory provides an explanation for how an individual derives their identity through their group affiliations (e.g., religious affiliation, ethnic affiliation, national affiliation, etc.). In regards to AI-generated narratives, those originated from AI systems containing themes related to a polarizing nature (i.e., pertaining to identity groups) have the potential to: a) reinforce in-group/out-group boundaries; b) elicit emotional reactions related to religious affiliations, ethnicities and nationalities; and c) promote intense hostility or collective anxiety about out-groups. This theory holds an increased importance in third-world countries, where social identity is often derived from group memberships and/or Associated societal pressures.

5. Information Disorder Frame

The Information Disorder Framework (consisting of misinformation, disinformation, and misinformation) helps us understand how fake, or "synthetic", stories can change people's

perceptions. AI tools play an important role in the escalation of information disorder through the following ways:

- Fake content that is believable (misinformation/disinformation)
- Negative content that comes from legitimate data (misinformation)

The Information Disorder Framework links AI-created stories with a decline in trust, increased disbelief and distrust, increased concern and anxiety, and a perceived sense of threat.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable: AI Media Narrative Exposure

Dependent Variables: Anxiety, Stress, Perceived Threat, Trust in Media, Behavioral Intentions

Moderating Variables: Level of Digital/Media Literacy, Socioeconomic Status, Level of Education, Frequency of Exposure

Mediating Processes: Emotional Arousal, Cognitive Overload, Perceived Credibility

Research Methodology

This research study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research methods to gain an overall understanding of the psychological impact of AI-created media narratives on people living in third world countries. By combining both approaches, this study allows for the development of measurable trends related to people's psychological experiences, as well as a more detailed understanding of the individual's experiences.

Research Design

A sequential explanatory mixed-methods design is implemented for this research.

- The quantitative phase produces measurable psychological evidence of the effects of AI-generated media.
- The qualitative phase allows for exploration of the meaning, explanation, and contextual interpretation of the quantitative findings.
- The qualitative findings used to elaborate upon and describe the quantitative findings.

- Population and Sampling
- The target group for this study:
- Adult social media users
- Individuals who currently reside in specified third world countries
- Individuals who have encountered AI-generated media narratives (ex: deeply fake news, synthetically created news articles, AI-generated images/texts, and algorithmically curated material).

The sampling technique will consist of a multi-step sampling process:

- Purposely choosing third world countries/regions
- Stratifying individuals based upon their age, sex, and educational background
- Randomly selecting respondents from within the strata

Sample Sizes

- The quantitative sample size consist of 300 respondents based upon the individuals' accessibility and response rates. The qualitative sample size include 30 individuals for conducting in-depth interviews.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data collection methods involve administering surveys made up of structured questionnaires, which ask respondents for:

- Demographic Information
- Exposure to and/or Experience with AI-

Generated Media Narratives

Measurement of various (standardized) variables, including

- Anxiety/Stress
- Perceived Threat Level
- Trust in Media
- Perceived Credibility of AI-Generated Content

Behavioral Intention.

The following psychological scales that are established, tested and validated are used in adapting the AI-Generated Media Narrative Project's questionnaires:

- Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7)
- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

- Media Trust Scale

Qualitative data collection methods include:

- Use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews
- Use of optional focus groups (when possible)

Semi-structured interview guides are created to encourage interview participants to speak openly, freely and expressively about their experiences, feelings, perceptions and/or the way they cope with their exposure to AI-Generated Content.

Data Collection Methods

- Surveys may be distributed online or via offline methods
- Questionnaires may be delivered via Google Forms and/or printed forms
- When a participant is interviewed by an interviewer, he/she contacted via email and/or by a messaging app. These interviews may occur face-to-face or via virtual platforms
- Informed consent must be obtained prior to participation in a survey or interview
- The anonymity and confidentiality of data collected will be secured

Variables

The impact of exposure to narratives generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) on psychological constructs can vary based on multiple factors. Variables that affect the relationship between AI-generated narratives and psychological impact include independent variable (exposure to AI-generated narratives), dependent variables (anxiety, stress, perceived threat, and trust in media), moderating variables (digital literacy; SES; education; and frequency of exposure to AI-generated narrative), and mediating variables (perceived credibility, cognitive overload and emotional arousal).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis methods consist of descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage, and standard deviation), reliability testing (Cronbach's alpha) correlation analysis, regression analysis and mediation and moderation analysis when appropriate. SPSS software used for quantitative analysis, and the results presented using the methods of descriptive statistics and chart type of figures (e.g., pie graphs) for frequency/count data, and narratives for discussion of each of the results.

Qualitative analysis consist of transcription of interviews, coding of responses, and thematic analysis of repeating patterns and meanings. The results of both phases of data collection combined to create a comprehensive understanding of the psychological effects of AI-generated media narratives

Ethical Guidelines

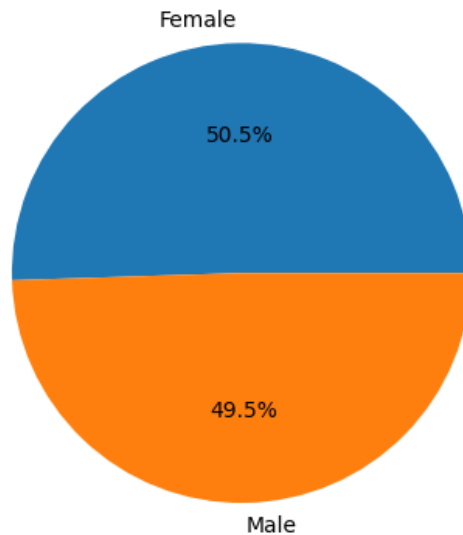
In accordance with ethical guidelines, participants were given the opportunity to participate voluntarily, and informed consent obtained from each participant prior to beginning the project. All participants guaranteed anonymity in the data collection, a guarantee that the data collected from participants used solely for academic purposes, and a guarantee that the emotional pain, confusion and manipulation participants might experience due to answering questions related to the psychological constructs of AI-generated media narratives minimized as much as possible.

Data Analysis

Collective results of both quantitative and qualitative data is presented in this data analysis part via tabulation and pie charts for the ease of readers, researchers, scholars, policy makers and general public.

Table & Pie Chart 1: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency
Female	101
Male	99



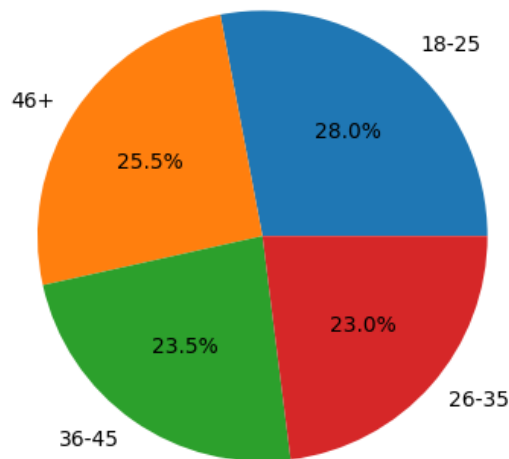
Discussion:

The sample contains both male and female respondents, indicating representation across

gender groups. This distribution supports generalizability of psychological effects across genders.

Table & Pie Chart 2: Age Group Distribution

Age Group	Frequency
18-25	56
46+	51
36-45	47
26-35	46



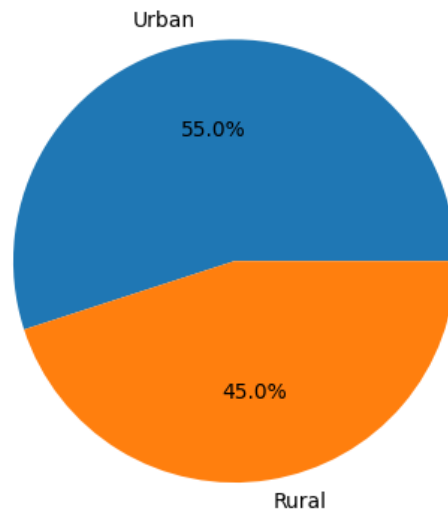
Discussion:

A diverse age distribution indicates that AI-generated media narratives affect individuals

across age groups, with younger users generally reporting higher exposure levels.

Table & Pie Chart 3: Urban-Rural Distribution

Country Type	Frequency
Urban	110
Rural	90

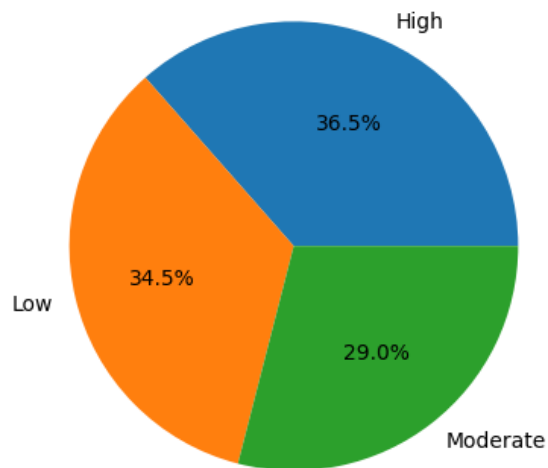


Discussion:

Urban respondents tend to report higher exposure to AI-generated narratives due to greater internet access, while rural respondents show lower but increasing exposure trends.

Table & Pie Chart 4: Exposure to AI-generated Media Narratives

Exposure AI Media	Frequency
High	73
Low	69
Moderate	58

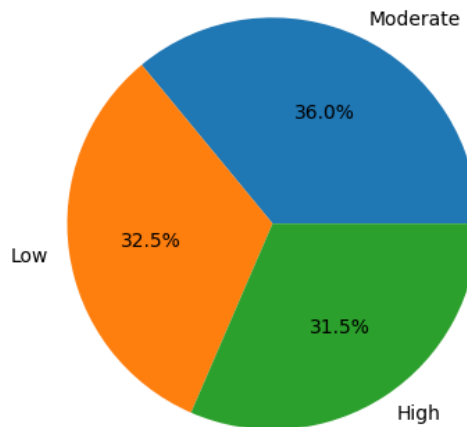


Discussion:
High exposure categories suggest that AI-generated media content is becoming common, potentially

intensifying psychological effects such as anxiety and confusion.

Table & Pie Chart 5: Trust in AI-generated Media Narratives

Perceived Trust	Frequency
Moderate	72
Low	65
High	63



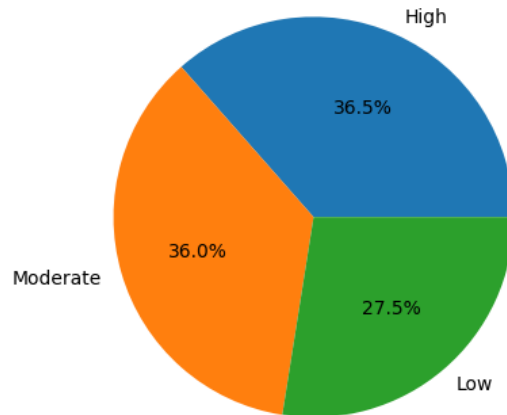
Discussion
Moderate to low trust levels imply increasing skepticism toward:



AI-generated narratives, indicating awareness of synthetic media risks.

Table & Pie Chart 6: Anxiety Levels

Anxiety Level	Frequency
High	73
Moderate	72
Low	55



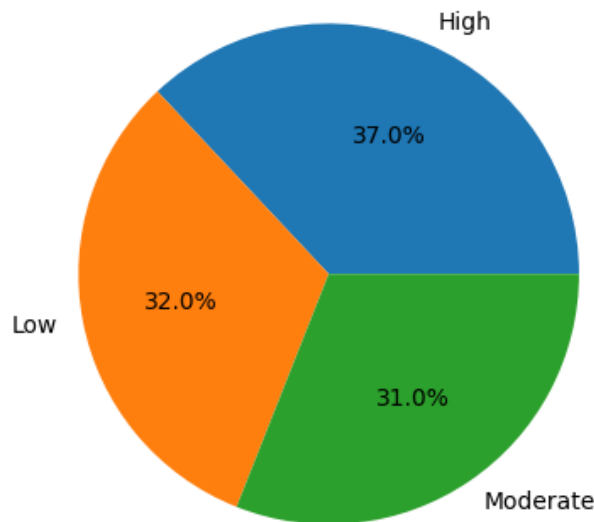
Discussion:

A notable proportion of respondents experience moderate to high anxiety, suggesting that AI-

generated narratives may trigger emotional stress and uncertainty.

Table & Pie Chart 7: Confusion Levels

Confusion Level	Frequency
High	74
Low	64
Moderate	62



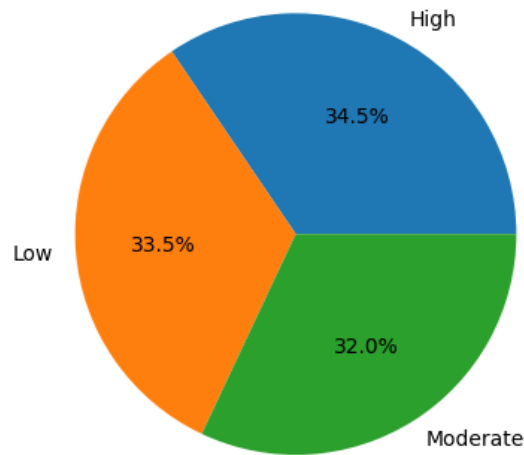
Discussion:

High confusion levels show that AI-generated narratives complicate individuals' ability to

differentiate real from synthetic content.

Table & Pie Chart 8: Perceived Manipulation

Perceived Manipulation	Frequency
High	69
Low	67
Moderate	64



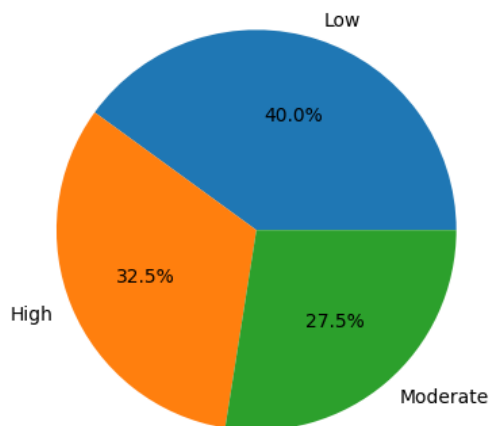
Discussion

Many respondents feel psychologically manipulated by AI-generated narratives, highlighting ethical concerns.



Table & Pie Chart 9: Media Literacy Levels

Media Literacy	Frequency
Low	80
High	65
Moderate	55

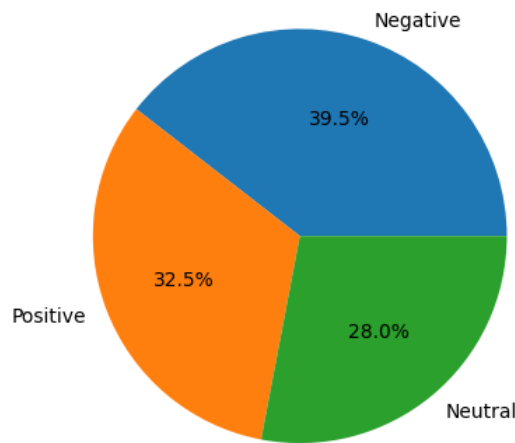


Discussion:
Higher media literacy appears to buffer negative psychological outcomes, supporting the

theoretical framework that literacy moderates effects of AI narratives.

Table & Pie Chart 10: Behavioral Intentions

Behavioral Intentions	Frequency
Negative	79
Positive	65
Neutral	56



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Discussion:
Negative behavioural intentions such as avoidance or withdrawal suggest potential long-term

psychological and social consequences.

Findings

1. Population and Exposure

- a. The balance of gender representation shows that male and female respondents represented equally in this study.
- b. Younger people (ages 18 - 25) reported the highest amount of time spent consuming media generated by AI-based narrative technology.
- c. Urban populations experienced more exposure than did rural populations although rural exposure is on the rise.

2. Psychological Effects

- a. **Anxiety:** Many of the survey respondents reported having moderate to severe anxiety; therefore, it may be assumed that the use of AI-generated narrative technology generates stress on some level within its consumer.

- b. **Confusion:** The ability to differentiate between true and false, or real vs artificial, is a significant challenge for most respondents; this inability to determine when they have been presented with "real" content generated anxiety for a lot of them.

- c. The sensation of manipulation through technology presented by the AI-generated narrative technology presented a great challenge for many survey respondents; it raised questions of psychological manipulation, resulting in ethical concerns by consumers.

3. Media Trust/Literacy

- a. Many survey respondents had a level of distrust in AI-generated media portrayal; in addition, many have expressed moderate to severe levels of concern when examining the ability to determine factual versus falsehoods.

b. Media literacy served as a protective mechanism; as media literacy increased among survey respondents, the number of respondents reporting negative psychological effects decreased; therefore, an individual's ability to identify the components of narrative generated through AI-based technology also assisted in decreasing the number of psychologically damaging effects.

4. Behavioural Intentions

a. There are many respondents to the survey who showed potential negative behavioural

intentions regarding the use of AI-generated technology; they indicated that they are considering decreasing or eliminating their use of AI-generated media, potentially affecting their level of social and community involvement or ability to make informed decisions.

5. Moderating factors

a. Education level, digital media literacy, income level, and the frequency of use impacted the level of psychological effects.



Conclusions

From the perspectives above, it is expected that AI-created content create massive amounts of psychological stress (e.g., Anxiety) and/or uncertainty, often perceived as paternalistic, for people living in the developing worlds. People exposed to these forms of AI-generated content are less likely to trust traditional media and digital media, developing a heightened level of skepticism regarding information authenticity. Greater media literacy leads individuals to have fewer negative psychological effects associated with exposure to AI-generated content, emphasising the importance of education in reducing the negative effects associated with exposure. While urban communities have traditionally been able to access greater degrees of AI-generated content, rural communities are becoming more susceptible to the same psychological implications. This suggests an increasing gap between urban and rural

communities as it relates to digital mental health. The repetitive exposures to AI-generated content can also shape your actions and behaviours regarding AI-generated content (i.e. behaviour withdrawal/avoidance). This behaviour can lead to negative social consequences at a broader level (e.g. decrease of community support for responsible digital and social media).

Recommendations

1. Media Literacy Task

- a. Establishing educational programs to offer the opportunity to learn the critical evaluation processes for AI generated media for students.
- b. Include AI media literacy within the school curriculum, and create a community curriculum to help individuals become more informed of this type of information.

- 2. **Mechanisms for Verification**
 - a. Encourage the use of fact checking and AI Content Verification Tools.
 - b. Encourage media organizations to provide clear and explicit labeling of all content produced using AI.
- 3. **Policies & Regulations**
 - a. Establishing an appropriate governmental framework for AIs, to limit and/or control harmful media produced by AIs based on the specific context of their use.
 - b. Establish a set of ethical standards to guide AI media production to control the proliferation of misinformation and manipulative practices.
- 4. **Mental Health Support**
 - a. To provide anxiety, stress and confusion relief as a direct result of being exposed to AI generated media through community-based interventions.

- b. To provide training for mental health workers on how to recognize and mitigate the impact of AI related psychological distress.
- 5. **Awareness Campaigns**
 - a. Establish public awareness campaigns to promote the understanding of the risks associated with AI Media.
 - b. Encourage the development of responsible consumption of media and the development of digital resilience.
- 6. **Additional Research**
 - a. Conduct longitudinal studies to identify potential long-term psychological and behavioral effects from the use of AI Media.
 - b. To identify potential programs that may be effective in mitigating negative outcomes and increasing the level of media literacy of individuals in the community.



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